

THE ANNIVERSARY OF OCTOBER 28, 1940 AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Friday, October 15/28, 2022, the national anniversary of October 28, 1940, was celebrated by the Patriarchate.

On this day at around 10.30 a.m., a Doxology was held in the Catholicon of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

This Doxology was held as a thanksgiving to God for His help to our nation to repel and defeat the German Nazi and Italian Fascist forces during the war of 1944-1945, as a prayer for the repose of the fathers who fought and fell heroically in this fight.

The doxology was presided over by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, of the Holy Sepulchre High Priests and Hieromonks and deacons co-ministering with Him and of the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem, Mr Evangelos Vlioras and of the staff of the Greek Consulate General, Holy Sepulchre monks, members of the Greek Embassy and the Arab-speaking flock of the Patriarchate.

After the Doxology, a reception followed in the Patriarchate.

Then His Beatitude spoke through the following address in Greek:

His Excellency Consul General of Greece Mr Evangelos Vlioras,

Dear Holy Fathers and Brothers,

Reverend Christians and pilgrims,

The celebration of the anniversary of October 28, 1940, is a sacred commemoration of the historical indelible event of those who defended the honour, freedom, and national territorial integrity of our fallen fathers and brothers

against the arrogant invasion of Fascism and the military forces of Fascism.

The group and cold-blooded executions of our innocent fellow human beings, men and women and children, but also the concentration camps and the systematic genocide of hundreds, thousands of people are the undeniable testimonies of the Nazis possessed by the diabolical hatred. "Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer", (1 John 3:15), says Saint John the Theologian.

Hence, Our Mediocrity, accompanied by the honourable members of our Venerable Hagiotaphite Brotherhood as well as pious people along with the visiting pilgrims, went to the Most Holy Church of the Holy Sepulchre, where we offered thanksgiving praise "to the Holy Triune God" Who has given us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Cf. 1 Cor 15,57).

Moreover, we prayed for eternal memory and blessed repose of the souls of those who fought heroically and of those who were martyred for the faith and the country of our blessed race and nation.

The blasphemy against the human person, the apparent insanity, the pride and the stupidity of the Nazis, these evil things, the ones that caused the Second World War, unfortunately, did not achieve anything, as the psalmist also says: "The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one" (Ps. 14, 2-3).

We say this because the demonstrated self-sacrifice of the Greek fighters in the field of frontal combat against the unrepentant invaders on the tops of the wild mountains of Northern Epirus was burning with the fire of love for the country and freedom. The generative cause of the admirable heroism of the Greeks was faith in God and the power of

prayer.

The Greek-Christian and Greek-Orthodox mindset, which is highlighted today by the solemn anniversary of October 28, 1940, was admired by the nations and peoples of the earth. And this is because our enemies were “brought down and fallen: but we are risen, and stand upright” (Cf. Psalm 19:9).

The epic of 1940 was recognized internationally as a prominent event in world history on the one hand and a distinguished station in the historical course of the Greek Nation on the other. The epic of 1940 demonstrated boldly that “God is not unjust”, (Heb. 6-10) and “his righteousness endures forever” (2 Cor. 9,9).

Today humanity is threatened by the veiled form of Nazism and Fascism and we are referring to the violent invasion of the ideology of the so-called “New Order of things”, where an international political and economic ruler is a group of “crooked and perverse” (Phil. 2:15) people – according to Paul – they impose and legitimize their morbid self-religion in the name of so-called human rights. There is no lack of those who alter the historical truth, thus reducing the moral value of the ideals, which highlighted the unrepeatable epic of 1940.

Therefore, we are called to preserve the epic of 1940 as a sacred tradition for the coming generations, listening to the order of the wise Paul saying: “Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong” (1 Cor. 16,13). This legacy of our Orthodox faith and sacred tradition as well as cultural and historical heritage was sealed by the sacrificial blood of the martyrs and freedom fighters, but also by the unsullied ethnic Rum-Orthodox sentiment of the people against the powerful German military forces.

In conclusion, let us cry out loud;

Long live the “No” of October 28, 1940!

Long live the pious Nation of the Romans!

Long live Greece!

Long live our Venerable Hagiotaphite Brotherhood!"

The Consul General of Greece responded to His Beatitude's Message as follows:

"Your Beatitude,

Venerable High Priests,

Dear Fathers,

Dear children,

Colleagues,

Ladies and gentlemen,

With national pride, Greeks everywhere, today we celebrate the anniversary of October 28, 1940, a focal point of memory and honour for one of the most glorious moments of our modern history that encapsulates the memories, experiences and values that have always guided our national life.

Today's anniversary of October 28, 1940, 82 years since that glorious moment that is a point of reference for Hellenism everywhere, gives us the opportunity to recall in our thoughts and in our hearts the generation of men, women and children who filled the collective our history with countless pages of heroism, self-denial and self-sacrifice.

In the mountains of Epirus, in the ravines of Albania, in the fortresses of Macedonia, in the waters of the Aegean, the Mediterranean and the Atlantic, in the Middle East, in occupied Greece, in all the "places where there were no daily and school days", according to Odysseus Elytis, the Greeks, gave everything they had most precious to preserve our national independence and integrity, timeless ideals of all

the struggles of the Nation from 1821, until today.

Giorgos Seferis, seconded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Directorate of Foreign Press at the competent deputy ministry, recorded in his diary that historic day, as follows: "I fell asleep at two in the morning, reading Makrigiannis. At half past three, a voice on the phone woke me up: "We are at war." Nothing else, the world had changed. The dawn, which a little later I saw breaking behind Hymettos, was another dawn: unknown. She is still waiting where I left her. I don't know how long he will wait, but I know he will bring the great noon."

And the "great noon" united and brought together the whole of Greece. Organizations, bodies, spiritual institutions, the Church, ordinary citizens, old people, women, and children, all participate directly in the titanic effort to strengthen the front. As the historian Marina Petraki writes: "with enthusiasm and passion, stirred by the flags, the war marches and the voice of the announcer on the radio, [the Greeks] dress in khaki and start for the front as if going to a celebration. And it was indeed a celebration. The most brilliant celebration of modern Greek history. Although they had five days to report, eighty per cent showed up on the first day."

The Archbishop of Athens and All Greece Chrysanthos, in his message on October 28, 1940, encourages the Greeks, reminding them of the power of faith and prayer.

"The Church believes that the children of the Motherland, obeying the will of Her and God, will hasten with one soul and heart to fight for altars and hearths and for Freedom and honour and will thus continue the uninterrupted for centuries series of honourable and glorious struggles [...] "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" [Matt. 10-28]. Let's cast our care on the Lord

and He will be a helper and a perceiver in the defence against the unjust attack of the enemies. These in chariots and these on horses, and we in the name of the Lord God and in bravery and courage are magnified.”

The atmosphere of war creates an unprecedented rivalry, which motivates and captivates a huge army of civilians in the rear, fighting alongside the armed force of the front line, creating an unrepeatable moment in Greek History.

To everyone, the known and the unknown, soldiers and civilians, who defended our national dignity with heroism, self-denial, self-sacrifice and bravery during the war and later, during the years of cruel occupation, until the liberation of Greece, we reverently bend the knee.

As Greeks who have the privilege and responsibility to leave or serve in the Holy Land, we recall, today, with emotion, in our memory, the eighty fallen that Greece left on these soils, during the Second World War, in Cemeteries of Haifa, Ramle and Gaza City.

Akir Airport, near the city of Ramle, was also the cradle for the rebirth of our Air Force in the Middle East in September 1941.

After all, we should not forget that when the fortunes of the War appeared negative for the Allied Struggle, Jerusalem and the Consulate General of the Motherland in this city were, from June to August 1942, the seat of the Government of Free Greece, with the blessed Patriarch Timotheus, the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood and the Hellenism of the city, the majority of them refugees from Asia Minor, to offer all possible help to the Vice-President of the Government Panagiotis Kanellopoulos, to the members of the Government, to the officers and staff of our Armed Forces, to service agents, including Giorgos Seferis and to refugees, from Alexandria and Cairo, including the writer Stratis Tsirkas.

The national anniversary of October 28 does not merely testify to a historical event but reveals our collective identity based on universal values: democracy, love of freedom, national dignity, commitment to the performance of duty and awareness of the debt towards History.

Your Beatitude,

Venerable High Priests,

Dear Fathers,

Dear children,

Colleagues,

Ladies and gentlemen,

In difficult and particularly conflicting times, the Venerable Patriarchate of Jerusalem and the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood bear witness to and reinforce the Resurrection Message and the timelessness of our Orthodox Faith and the presence of Hellenism in the Holy Land.

The Patriarchate of Jerusalem, as the pre-eminent exponent of the Orthodox faith and the Greek tradition, remains, throughout the centuries, a living example of God-bearing life, faith and hope and a guardian of our moral and spiritual values.

In our age, as in any other, national unity and vigilance, adherence to the moral and spiritual values of our Orthodox faith and the ideals of freedom and democracy, are essential resources for our effective response to circumstances.

The anniversary of October 28, 1940, reminds us that the unity and the strong will of the Greek people to preserve their freedom and national pride determined the victorious outcome of this struggle.

With these thoughts in mind, I invite everyone to exclaim:

Long live October 28, 1940!

Long live Greece!”

In the afternoon of the same day, a school ceremony will take place in the Patriarchal School on the hill of Zion.

From Secretariat-General