

THE FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE BALKAN WARS

THE CELEBRATION AT THE UNIVERSITY OF THESSALONIKI
IN THE PRESENCE OF H.M. THE KING
(October 26th, 1962)

Address by the Rector N. P. ANDRIOTES

Your Majesty,

The historical course of our Nation is characterized by an endless succession of rise and fall, triumph and disaster, because of the geographic position our country was fated to have as a cradle of culture, and also because of the singular consistency our race has. The poet said :

*Victories and triumphs
Slavery and torture
All glory, all the songs
And above all, Greece.*

and such is the historical destiny of our homeland.

Just as in the Chronicles of our Church the memory of each Martyr is a symbol for a joyful victory of man over spiritual death, so the long row of national calamities in our history heralds an equal number of re-births and symbolizes the indestructible endurance of our race in the boundless historical ring of the nations. From the fall of ancient Miletus into the hands of Persians sprang the trophies of Persian wars; through the fall of Constantinople was wrought the forbearance of our nation during the years of slavery, and from the destruction in Asia Minor derived the spirit and creative urge of modern Hellenism.

The nation has mourned over great anniversaries of calamities in heartbreak and anguish, and it has celebrated anniversaries of freedom and liberation in delirious national rejoicing.

Today is again a day of joy. Because half a century ago these lands of our national heritage were set free and northern Greeks united with the southern Greeks politically, and Modern Greece was literally born anew.

The double salvation of Macedonia, first from the yoke of the oppressor and then from the harpoon of an insidious counterclaimant saved our race from imminent destruction, gave it space to stand and air to breath, inspired strength so that it might face the future with courage and optimism. And the liberation of this historical acropolis of Hellenism, Thessaloniki, "which was the Slav's dream and the Greek's yearn", as the poet said, gave back to our people their faith in God's justice.

Blessed be that day when God stretched out his hand again over the destinies of our nation, sacred be the memory of the martyrs and the heroes who by their own blood re-enlivened the Greek dreams of so many generations. Let us, Greeks of to-day, be worthy of the new commandment of history, let us preserve the memory of this glorious day as a sacred relic in our minds and as a source of optimism in future moments of crisis, and let us wish that our children may celebrate the Hundredth Anniversary in greater splendour still.

The history of our national expeditions of 1912 and 1913 is for all of us, but especially for the student youth, a text of high educational value: it shows what our Nation can accomplish when it embraces its historical rights, when it is governed by wise Statesmen and when it is led by brave Kings who are loved by the people.

Let us give ear to this teaching once more, let us hear about it in the panegyric of our colleague Professor Charalambos Fragistas, Dean of the Law School, who was elected by the Senate of the Aristotelian University as the speaker of the day on the subject of "The Balkan Wars. Their meaning in the History of Greece".