

Greece National Day Special

Honoring a long and worthy struggle for freedom

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Two hundred years ago a handful of dedicated Greeks took it upon themselves to fulfill the aspirations of an ancient nation whose awakening of national identity and self-identification process had been very much completed and started the long effort for self-determination. So

against all odds they commenced a struggle that through many bloody stages, like the delivery of any child, gave birth to the modern state of the Hellenes. It took 11 years of heroic deeds and fratricidal struggles to lay the foundations of the modern Greek state practically against the will of all the great powers that formed the establishment of that period.

We are proud of this heritage, and every time that we as a nation face a difficult situation, we turn to this heritage for guidance, comfort and inspiration.

Many countries in the 19th century fought for their rightful place in the chorus of independent nation states, and

Greece was at the forefront. What we used to call the Greek Revolution must be seen in the context of the spirit of enlightenment of that time. The new ideas of freedom from tyranny, of rule of law and natural human rights embedded in the American and French revolutionary constitutions found their way into the fundamental laws of three successive constitutions of the nascent state.

In our commemorations of course we pay tribute to our heroes, but we also pay homage to all those foreign volunteers who swarmed to Greece to fight alongside the revolutionary troops, greatly contributing to their effectiveness. Special mention should be made of Lord Byron, who fought and died defending Messolonghi.

But the Greek revolution was not only a military event, which is still studied; it was part of a global nationalistic backlash against the notion of empire. By its appeal to the political and revolutionary intelligentsia of Europe, as the awakening of an ancient and glorious nation against its tyrant, it was seen as a pivotal rebellion against the continent's long-established order of powers. Many other budding nation-states would follow in 1830 and 1848, among others paving the way to widespread social and

national evolution among other entities in Europe.

I cannot help but draw a parallel with modern Japanese history, where the birth of the modern state came through the blood of civil war and international conflicts. Japan also saw a long social maturation lead to an abrupt political change, after which the new state had to fight its way into the international established order.

The bicentennial of the Hellenic Republic coincides with Japan's staging of the Olympic and Paralympic Games, a remarkable event by a remarkable country during extraordinary times. The ancient Greek spirit of courage, resilience, strenuous effort and full personal sacrifice on the altar of excellence, for us, will match the modern Greek spirit, whose qualities have given birth and still inspire modern Greece.

It fell to Japan to carry the Olympic torch during one of the most difficult and demanding periods in the history of the games. And I think fate's choice is judicious. Only Japan can do it. Realizing the Olympic and Paralympic Games under the conditions set by the COVID-19 pandemic is no small feat and commands respect for the capacities of Japan.

If the coronavirus pandemic still poses

a threat to all and therefore precludes us from honoring and celebrating this fundamentally important part of our heritage, we can still draw from the lessons of resilience, endurance and perseverance in our fight against the deadly disease and in a sense, by abiding by these lessons, pay tribute to the honor of our ancestors.

I call on all of our friends to join and reflect on the teachings of this unequal fight that gave glory to all those who participated and left us with the obligation to emulate their deeds.



Santorini Island, formed by a mighty volcanic eruption around 1600 B.C., has become one of the world's top tourist destinations.



The Parthenon is the most well known of the ancient ruins at the Acropolis in Athens.

This content was compiled in collaboration with the embassy. The views expressed here do not necessarily reflect those of the newspaper.

Congratulations to the People of Greece on Their Independence Day



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