

Speech: President of the Society for Hellenism and Philhellenism

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Greetings

Today's event has a dual purpose.

The first is to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the Battle of Peta.

The second is to remember that in 1822, in Greece, here in Peta, the peoples of Europe realized for the first time their common values, based on Greek culture, and laid the foundations for the European consolidation.

The Battle of Peta is an important historical event and an iconic expression of the Philhellenic movement in Europe during the Greeks' struggle for independence, which contributed to the liberation of Greece.

However, this battle is even more important for Europe itself, because it is a historical milestone on the path to its unification.

The Greek revolution offered a valuable opportunity for the peoples of Europe and the United States to realize the common values on which Western civilization is based, to express for the first time their solidarity with a European nation suffering from barbarism and slavery, to organize activism, which shaped the concept of public opinion and turned it into a political tool to promote solidarity, justice and human rights, to which feminism was added for the first time.

This unprecedented movement encouraged thousands of volunteers from all over the world to travel to Greece, join the Regular Army and the Philhellenic Order, fight under the same flag and even give their lives for a noble cause.

This movement, which was strong enough to unite citizens of different nationalities, former enemies during the Napoleonic wars, provided the first seed for modern European unification. Europe always remains committed to the same values and defends them at all costs, especially today when our societies are threatened by any kind of barbarism or totalitarianism.

Two centuries after this historic event, we pay tribute to hundreds of Philhellenic volunteers who breathed their last in Peta, for Greece and the ideals it inspired in the Western world.

Symbolically I will refer to the French officer Joseph Baleste, who organized the first regular army in Greece and trained most of the fighters who participated in the battle of Peta. He met a tragic death in 1822 fighting for the liberation of Crete. His head and hand hung on Capudan Pasha's flagship, and his soul rested that Kanaris burned it.

To the German General Graf von Normann-Ehrenfels, commander of the Greek Regular army in Peta. This noble figure, the great military leader and brave Philhellenic. He fought on the front lines in Komboti and Peta, where he was seriously wounded. He died a few months later in Messolonghi, after he had time to be actively engaged in the fortification of the city. In fact, he was buried in one of its fortresses that bore his name in honor.

To the Italian Philhellenic Pietro Tarella, who participated in the Revolution from 1821 as a supporter of Dimitrios Ypsilantis. He then assumed command of the Infantry Regiment of the Regular Army in Peta. He met a tragic death fighting on the front line.

To the Italian Philhellenic Andrea Dania, who participated in the siege of Tripolitsa and Nafplion. He then took over as Commander of the Philhellenic Order in Peta. When they asked him if the Philhellenes set up tambourines, he replied that tambourines are their breasts. He died on the front line and was beheaded.

The Swiss Philhellenic Karl Werndly, able commander of the artillery at Peta. He fell fighting bravely after inflicting massive damage on the enemy. A young German Philhellenic of 17, Deiss, finally destroyed the cannons so they could not be captured by the enemy and threw them at them.

The Swiss Philhellenic Louis Chevalier, commander of a Philhellenic company, who heroically fell in battle.

The hero-martyr of the Battle of Peta, Ilarch Franciszek Mierzejewski, commander of the Philhellenic company, who fought bravely. In the end he and 14 other Poles fortified themselves in the Church of Saint George and even fought from the roof of the church. After hours of fierce fighting, when the enemies realized that they could not defeat them, they set fire to the church and burned them alive.

The German Friedrich Wilhelm Teichmann, who served as standard bearer at the Battle of Peta. She did not give up the flag and fought to the end using her pole as a weapon. He died with his body full of wounds.

The French Philhellenic officer Mignac, company commander of the Philhellenic Order. He fought bravely to the end. When he was surrounded with a wound in one of his legs, he leaned upright against an olive tree and continued to fight. After neutralizing 14 enemies, when his sword broke he committed suicide. His sacrifice was praised in a Greek song.

The Frenchmen Raybaud and Voutier, and the German Elster, who took part in the operations of the Epirus campaign. All three wrote three important books that are the primary historical sources for the events of the period. And finally the German Heinrich Treiber. One of the few survivors of the battle of Peta who participated in all the fields of battles and naval battles of the Greek Revolution. He lived in Greece and designed the country's first health system.

The other survivor is the German Elster, who along the way conducted the choir we will enjoy in a moment.

Philhellenes from Hungary, the Netherlands, Belgium, Austria, Denmark, the United Kingdom, Sweden, Spain also took part in the battle of Peta.

In today's event we honor the memory of these brave people, the romantic, selfless, idealistic Philhellenes of Peta, who put the values of Greek-centric Western civilization above those of their narrow national interests. Their example led to the Western world's defense institutions and European unification.

We also celebrate today Europe's determination to defend the European way of life, to strengthen defense and security mechanisms, and to fight so that all its citizens can enjoy freedom, democracy, justice and peace without exception.

A battle was lost in Peta. But the war of the values of Western civilization and the United Europe was won.

Thank you