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THE SPEECH OF IOANNIS KOLETTIS AND THE EMERGENCE OF THE GREEK "GREAT IDEA"

Abstract

This paper aims to show how the Greek Great Idea came about, as well as the impact it had on Greek society, science, foreign policy, as well as on the building up of nationalism. The full text of the speech made by Ioannis Kolettis on January 14, 1844 is provided in one section of this paper. It is our belief that it should be published for the sake of the past, the present, and the future. Kolettis, originally an Aromanian from Epirus, then a part of the Ottoman state, was a highly influential politician in independent Greece. He participated in the building of the institutions of the new state. His speech was allegedly not meant to inflame Greek nationalism and reinforce aspirations for territorial expansion of the first independent and Orthodox state in the Balkans. What Kolettis wanted to get across was that all those who participated in the uprising of 1821, regardless of whether they were born in the territory of the new state or in the Ottoman Empire, had the right to Greek citizenship. However, the words he used in the speech, especially the term "The Great Idea" (Μεγάλη ιδέα), led to a flare-up of nationalism and a change in the views of the past, especially on the issue of ancient Macedonia and Byzantium, as well as to a public display of territorial claims to the neighbouring Ottoman state. His speech became a guide for the future foreign and national policy of the Kingdom of Greece.

From the beginning of the 19th century, the Balkans have often found themselves in the center of interest of the Great Powers for a simple reason, and that is their geographical position in the region. In the past two centuries, this part of the European continent has often been the arena of various military, political and economic conflicts between the Balkan states, in which the great powers have often interfered, and are still interfering. The Balkans are said to be a powder keg, an underdeveloped part of Europe, but also - a crossroads of civilizations. One of the reasons for the conflicts we still witness is the nationalism of the Balkan states, but also the interests of the Great Powers which, we must be realistic, often use the misunderstandings and conflicts in the region to achieve their interests. When we talk about nationalism in the Balkan states, we must note that its roots go back to the 19th century, when the wars for liberation from the Ottoman rule began. No matter how unrealistic it may sound, the

emergence and development of nationalism in the Balkans is almost identical in every country in the region. In some places it appeared faster, accompanied by the emergence of the state, in other places - later. It was the states that appeared first on the political map of the Balkans, with the support of the European powers, that developed their nationalism earlier, today believing that they have some greater 'historical rights' than the others. The case of the emergence of Greek nationalism is very interesting. In contrast to Serbia, where in 1844 Ilija Garašanin compiled the "Načertanije", i.e. the first Serbian state national program, the Greek Great Idea (Μεγάλη ιδέα) appeared in the extreme south of the Balkans. It is interesting to note that Greece was independent, while Serbia was an autonomous state. Also, unlike the "Načertanije", which is a clear political and national program, the Greek Great Idea had its origins in a speech by the then politician and member of the assembly in Athens, Ioannis Kolettis. However, that speech had a strong echo that led to great changes in Greek society and, in some way, various ideas and programs for the territorial expansion of Greece emerged from it. Kolettis' speech was given in public, in an assembly, while Garašanin's program was secret and, until the beginning of the last century, was unknown to everyone except some groups of Serbian politicians.

Ioannis Kolettis was by origin an Aromanian from Epirus, born in Syrrako, and educated in Ioannina and Pisa. He was an influential participant in the Greek uprising. After the creation of the Greek state, he served as Minister of Defence and Navy, then held the position of Chairman of the Council of Ministers, and was later a Greek envoy in the French capital and leader of the so-called "pro-French" party in Greece (Jovanovski, Minov, 2017: 223-225). Kolettis had a remarkable career and was very influential in Greek society due to his education and ability. As such, it comes as no surprise that the explosion of nationalism and irredentism in the Balkans and in the Eastern Mediterranean began with his speech in the Greek assembly, where he used the term "The Great Idea" for the first time.

The political situation in Greece actually allowed Kolettis to deliver his speech that would have an enormous impact, not only on Greek, but also on Balkan history and beyond. In Greece there was a great dissatisfaction with the rule of "the Bavarians", as King Otto and his advisers, who came from Bavaria, were called. The king ruled in an autocratic manner. The German language was used in administration, together with Greek, and Greek officials were in charge only of departments within the Council of Secretaries (Jovanovski, Minov, 2017: 225). In an orthodox conservative society such as the Greek, the separation of the local church from the Patriarchate of Constantinople in 1833, in an uncanonical way, caused enormous tensions in the state. Stavrianos notes that one of King Otto's greatest mistakes was treating the Greeks as if they were incapable of participating in their own government (Stavrianos, 2000: 293). In such a situation, a rebellion by the Greeks was inevitable, waiting only for a reason. The initial trigger for the revolt was the decision by the Great Powers to determine the annual debt of the Greek state, which it had amassed since its very forma-

tion. In Athens, circles in Greek society that were dissatisfied with Otto's rule organized a kind of coup d'état on September 3, 1843, forcing the king to agree to the introduction of a constitution in the country and to a separation of powers (Jovanovski, 2005: 29-30). The leaders of the pro-Russian and pro-English party in the country, Metaxas and Mavrokordatos, entered the scene. During the events of September 3, Kolettis was at his post in Paris as the Greek representative in France. The new situation could not leave him indifferent, especially since he was considered leader of the pro-French party in the small Balkan kingdom. Kolettis returned from Paris in October 1843, welcomed by thousands of his followers. He immediately took up action aimed at regulating the numerous issues that Greek society was dealing with. The arrival of Kolettis in the country took place at the right time, considering that the Constituent Assembly was about to start work. Kolettis also became a part of the Assembly that began work on November 8th, 1843 (*idem*: 30).

In January 1844, during the debates on the draft text for the first Greek constitution, there were serious discussions about the rights of those that had been born within the territory of the kingdom and those that had been born in the Ottoman territory and had come to Greece during the uprising. Their number was hardly insignificant. Those who had been born outside the territory of the state (the heterochthonous) held high positions in the administration, while those that had been born within the territory of the kingdom (the autochthonous) struggled to secure any such positions in the public service sector (Jovanovski, Minov, 2017: 226; Michailidis, 2006: 157). In Greece, there was strong public feeling that the Greeks, as well as the other Orthodox Christians from the Balkans, who had come to the kingdom from other parts of the peninsula during and after the war of independence, should be expelled from the positions they had in the public sector, and even be deprived of their Greek citizenship (Mackridge, 2009: 175). Young graduates from the University of Athens strongly opposed the right of the so-called "outside-born Greeks" to hold public offices (Kolettis, 2007: 246). In the discussion that took place, the heterochthonous felt that the war of independence affected the entire Greek nation, both in the Kingdom of Greece and in the Ottoman state, and thus they deserved political rights in the independent Greek state. The arguments of the autochthonous were in complete opposition. They insisted on limiting the geographical area to the territory at the time of the war, hinting at a specific region in the most southern parts of the Balkan Peninsula in which only those born within its borders had political rights. (Michailidis, 2006: 157)

Kolettis, himself heterochthonous, fervently supported the cause of those not born within the kingdom. He firmly believed that not only those who were residents of the kingdom were Greeks, but also those who lived outside the borders of the small independent Greek state (Clogg, 2002: 47).

In such an atmosphere, on January 14, 1844, Ioannis Kolettis delivered a speech that would play a decisive role in the development of Greek nationalism and the territorial demands of the young and weak Balkan state. In his speech,

he made mention of a Great Idea (Μεγάλη ιδέα) in the context of the right of every nation to have such an idea, without explaining what he meant by the term, and it is clear that he had no intention to do so. With the speech, Kolettis wanted to show that Greek citizenship was also a right of those born outside the borders of the kingdom, not only of those who had come from within the territory of the New Greek state (Fleming, 2008: 31). But his reference to Rigas, to the uprising of 1821 that led to the creation of the Greek state, and to his country's destiny to enlighten the East as its decline enlightened the West - likely referring to the fall of Byzantium and the departure of many of its subjects to the western part of the European continent, as well as of the contribution of Ancient Greece to Europe - soon caused an avalanche of changes in Greek society on a national level. There are two versions of Kolettis' speech, and we shall present the one we have at our disposal.

As with any speech or national program that has a goal, or where the very goal derives from it, so it was with Kolettis' speech - at least at the beginning, the term 'The Great Idea' was not completely clear; however, it became clear very quickly. A decade after Kolettis' appearance in the Greek assembly, at a time when Europe was facing the Crimean War, a study appeared in France about King Otto, who became the main protagonist of the Great Idea, i.e., the territorial expansion of the small and insufficiently strong and developed Greek state. This study explained the purpose of the Great Idea in a very interesting way, as well as the role of the Greek king and the local politicians (Forcade, 1854).

His speech, its goals and its results are still a topic of discussion among scholars. Eli Skopetea notes that there is no adequate certainty regarding the content of the Great Idea, although there are many interpretations and definitions - but not by Kolettis himself (Skopetea, 2005: 195). On the other hand, we can be sure that Kolettis' speech and the use of the term 'The Great Idea' was intended to show that there was to be a liberation and unification of the enslaved Greeks. It is interesting to note that Ploumidis, in his article dedicated to this speech, emphasizes that it was inspired by the works of Rigas Velestinlis and the independence struggle of 1821 (Πλουμιδης, 2018 : 556). According to him, the speech of the Greek politician was also aimed at bridging the gap between the nation, the Greek race, on the one hand, and the state of Greece, on the other (*idem*). For Fleming, the so-called Great Idea drove the territorial expansion aimed at reviving Byzantium (Fleming, 2008: 31). For Leontis, the Kolettis' speech is an ideology of nationalism, which places both the Greeks who lived within the kingdom of Greece and those who lived in the Ottoman state - that is, the territories that were in any way connected with Greek history - in the same imaginary territory (Leontis, 1995: 76). On the other hand, Roderick Beaton's thinking as regards Kolettis' speech is interesting. In his opinion, Kolettis' speech, far from defining the nation, uses nationalist language appropriate to the time, making a demand for an ethnically-based identity (Beaton, 2019: 128). It is unclear to him how this identity relates to the phrase The Great

Idea, which for Beaton strangely hangs in the air. It shows that Kolettis' speech itself caused ambiguities which were cleared up later, with the development of the Great Idea. Yet for Beaton, the Great Idea would be a program of national expansion with the idea of the young Greek kingdom growing into an empire like that of Byzantium - an Orthodox power centred in Constantinople (*idem*: 129). In the same spirit, an interesting opinion is presented by Ioannis Zelepos, according to whom the lack of a clear essential program was the strength of the Great Idea. He believes that this motto allowed for different interpretations, and could serve as an ideological link in a society that was otherwise poorly integrated and characterized by strong internal contradictions (Zelepos, 2014: 63). Traykova believes that, at first glance, there is no discrimination against other Balkan peoples in Kolettis' speech, connecting her reasoning with the part of the speech where Rigas Velestinlis is mentioned, for whom even today there are discussions as to whether he is a supporter of a Balkan federation, or the founder of Greek nationalism (Traykova, 20: 229). However, she believes that, although this idea is liberating in itself at first, it will develop as nationalistic and aggressive toward other Balkan peoples (*idem*: 230). Analysing the text of Kolettis' speech, the reasons for it, as well as the consequences, Petrunina notes that the term 'The Great Idea' contains three ascertainments - at the political level it meant a passionate desire to achieve unity of the nation; at the historical level - confirmation of that unity, and finally, it holds the historical mission of Greece as a mediator between the East and the West (Petrunina, 2010: 325). Here we would like to once again mention Ploumidis. According to him, one of the most important goals of the Great Idea was the action to civilize the East, i.e., to transfer and promote the Western culture that belonged to the Greeks (Πλουμιδης, 2018: 558-559). Konstantinova believes that the basic postulate of the Great Idea was that "the free Greek state should be accepted solely and only as a nucleus around which the Greeks will unite in order to resurrect the territorial integrity, military strength and cultural superiority of a Greek empire" (Konstantinova, 2008: 47).

However, in the whole speech there is another story, which is rarely mentioned. As I noted above, there are two published versions of Kolettis' speech; we shall publish the one we have access to. Writing on this subject, as well as on the content of the term Great Idea, Skopetea says that in the disputed presentation, as it was conveyed, it is not used as a term, except to the extent that it is acceptable to the audience (Skopetea, 2005: 195). In fact, she noticed that the speech in which Kolettis used the term "Great Idea" was actually used by him to achieve the best possible results in the upcoming vote (*idem*: 196). If we accept this claim by the Greek historian, and there is no reason to oppose it, then we may conclude that the speech in which the Greek Great Idea was promoted, over time, became the driving force of Greek nationalism, which was then in its infancy, bringing about significant changes in the Balkans and in the Aegean - changes that affect even the present.

We believe that the arrival of Kolettis at the head of the Greek government in August 1844 contributed to the beginning of actions that proved to be crucial in the shaping of what the Great Idea is, especially when it comes to the territory that should be included in the future greater Greek state. Skopetea writes that Kolettis' rule of Greece contributed significantly to its establishment (Skopetea: 196). In fact, Kolettis, as Prime Minister, wanted to show that Greece was the apostle that was supposed to free the enslaved Greeks and unite them in one big and strong empire, and in that direction it was to be shown that the government cultivated this idea and worked on its realization as its primary task (Βερεμης, Κολιοπουλος, 2006: 134 - 135)

In all honesty, Kolettis skilfully used the Great Idea in order to preserve the stability of his own government; he encouraged certain anti-Ottoman activities, for which both he and the government in Constantinople were aware that they could not violate the territorial integrity of the Ottoman state (Βερεμης, Κολιοπουλος, 2006: 226 – 227). This stance of Veremis and Koliopoulos coincides with the previous one of Skopetea, that Kolettis skillfully used the Great Idea for his internal political needs. It would prove to be a good basis for the further use of the national question in the internal politics of the country. However, history and facts, as well as their interpretation, always have more than one side. Although, as I noted previously, Kolettis used the Great Idea for internal political needs, there were intellectuals who felt that his actions concerning the national question were either not enough or non-existent. For example, the famous Greek intellectual Alexandros Soutsos wrote a poem in 1845 in which he criticizes Kolettis, whom he calls, together with Mavrokordatos and Metaxas, “ants who are mocked by Muslims” (Politis, 2021: 265).

The Serbian historian Terzić, in his book dedicated to Serbian-Greek relations, noted that if we consider Kolettis as the father of the political idiom of “The Great Idea”, which reflected the Greek national aspirations, then the Greek intellectuals were those who provided these aspirations with the appropriate ideological content (Terzić, 1992: 77). The term “The Great Idea” will refer to the unification of the territories that were considered Greek in both the Balkans and in Asia Minor, and the influence of Greek culture in these areas will be used as an excuse (Gourgouris, 2021: 145).

When it comes to the intellectuals, Gourgouris believes that Greek society was engulfed by the fire of the Great Idea, and its influence culminated in the multi-volume *History of the Greek Nation* by the founder of modern-Greek historiography, Constantine Paparrigopoulos (*idem*). Paparrigopoulos' name is associated with Ioannis Kolettis, and thus with the Great Idea, not only for ideological and nationalistic reasons. Paparrigopoulos, as a heterochthonous Greek, lost his job immediately after the Constitution of 1844 came into effect. The Greek historian ardently supported Kolettis' work, thus securing his favour. As a result Paparrigopoulos found a job as a high school teacher in Athens in 1846 (Jovanovski, Minov, 2017: 231). He would never forget Kolettis'

help, so in the preface to the second volume of his *History of the Greek Nation*, Paparrigopoulos wrote about the role of the aforementioned Greek politician in the emergence of the Great Idea (Skopetea, 2005: 196-197). And Paparrigopoulos himself was to be one of the founders of the idea of the continuity of the Greek nation from antiquity to modern times. Leontis correctly observes, as the imagined territory increased in size, thus the Great Idea connected the new Greeks with their past, with the Greeks from the times of the Ottoman rule, as well as with those from Byzantine times (Leontis, 1995: 76).

The Great Idea was perceived from the start as an irredentist program that called for the national unification of all Greeks. According to Stouraiti and Kazamias, its concept was linked to visions of imperial greatness associated with Byzantium (Stouraiti, Kazamias, 2010: 12). And not only that, but after Kolettis' speech came the incorporation of Byzantium and Ancient Macedonia in the Greek identity and past. In that regard, we fully agree with Konstantinova's opinion that historical science in Greece faced the task of opposing the theories that threatened the Great Idea, justifying it and giving it national significance, thereby helping to strengthen the existing political and social structures in the country (Konstantinova, 2008: 48). Very soon after Kolettis' speech comes the beginning of the rehabilitation of Byzantium in Greek history, tradition, folklore and language. In 1852, the Ionian Spyridon Zambelios published a book containing Greek folk songs from the Middle Ages. It was in this book of his that he noted that the Greek past should be divided into three eras - modern, medieval, and ancient (Ζαμπελιος, 1852: 20). In that way, the medieval past, that is, Byzantium, was inserted as a necessary condition for showing the continuity of the Greek nation from antiquity to the modern period. The founder of modern Greek historiography, Constantine Paparrigopoulos, who was close to Kolettis, played a decisive role in the rehabilitation of Byzantium and its insertion into history. Almost three of the five volumes of the second edition of this work, completed in the period 1885-1887, were devoted to Byzantium (Jovanovski, Dodovska, 2017: 116). His rehabilitation of Byzantium and its insertion into Greek continuity from antiquity to the present had a major, if not decisive, influence on Greek political thought (Kitromilides, 1998: 31). Paparrigopoulos' name is also associated with the insertion of Ancient Macedonia into Greek history, tradition and identity. Before Kolettis' speech and the promotion of the Great Idea, most of the intellectuals in Greece, including Paparrigopoulos himself, considered Ancient Macedonia an enemy of Greece. However, Kolettis' speech changed this view toward Macedon and the ancient Macedonians. In 1853, Paparrigopoulos wrote in a school textbook that Philip, the King of Macedon, who in 338 BC. Imposed his authority over all of Greece, was not a foreigner; the Macedonians, although not mentioned in the earlier stages of history, were actually Greeks (Παπαρρηγοπουλου, 1853: 57). This position by the Greek historian came to serve as a basis for all further views on Ancient Macedonia as a part of Greek history, tradition and culture. As noted by Rudometof, the change of position concerning Ancient

Macedonia was in the direction of securing Greek unity (Rudometof, 2001: 108). We would add here that the reassessment of the past of the Ancient Macedonians was also in the direction of proving the right of Greece over Macedonia as a historical Greek land. We can conclude that Kolettis' speech led to a reassessment of the role of ancient Macedonia and Byzantium in the Greek past and their insertion as an integral part of it. This process may have happened anyway, but it is questionable whether without Kolettis' speech the process would have been expedited as it was in the middle of the 19th century.

Very soon after Kolettis' speech, the Greek intellectuals began writing about the borders of the united, great Greek state. They most probably considered it their duty. The prominent Greek intellectual Alexandros Soutsos, who was undoubtedly influenced by the words of Kolettis - although, as we have seen, he had also criticized him in the pamphlet "Panorama of the Athenian People's Assembly" - emphasized: "Our throne remained there. Our religious leader - the Patriarch - remained there. The great pillars of the building - Ionia, Thrace, Bulgaria, Epirus, Macedonia and Thessaly - remained there. So that's where we need to focus our eyes towards..." (Данова, 1980: 90). The influential intellectual Cleomenes Oikonomou stated in his pamphlet "For a satisfaction of Turkey, or for war against Turkey" that he dedicates it to "the entire Greek people in free Greece, the entire Mediterranean Sea, Asia Minor, Thessaly, Epirus, Macedonia, Albania, the Ionian Islands, Thrace, Serbia, Bulgaria, Dacia and Syria" (*idem*, 105). The renowned Greek politician Alexandros Mavrokordatos, perhaps the only Phanariote who succeeded in Greek politics, in 1848 sent a memorandum to the Greek king in which, in addition to emphasizing the Slavic threat to Greek interests, he noted that Greece had to annex Thessaly, Epirus, Crete and Macedonia (Vikelas, 1893: 309-313). Latris, a participant in the liberation uprising of 1821, in one of his books from 1855, pointed out: "When we say Greece, as we have said many times, we always mean... in the north - the Danube, Montenegro, the borders of Serbia and the Black Sea, to the east - the mountains of Scythia and Amman and the Cappadocian Euphrates through which Greece is separated from Armenia and Syria, as well as from Dacia via the Danube, to the west - the Adriatic and the Ionian Sea, and to the south the Mediterranean Sea" (*idem*, 175). A professor at the Law Faculty of the University of Athens, Nikolaos Saripolos, in a conversation with the Greek King George I, included Crete, Thessaly, Epirus, Thrace, Macedonia, the Black Sea to Trabzon, Asia Minor, the Aegean Islands and Cyprus in a still un-liberated Greece. Kolettis' speech caused an avalanche of ideas about how far the future expanded Greek state should extend. This shows that it was taken as a call for national unification and territorial expansion of the Greek state, which would happen in the future.

Reading Kolettis' speech itself, as well as the literature dedicated to it, one question arises - did the Greek politician do it only because of the problem between the autochthonous and the heterochthonous citizens of the Greek state, or did he have ideas and a desire for a territorial expansion of

Greece? While writing about Kolettis with my colleague Minov, we noted that his speech in the Greek assembly was not a random promotion of the desire for a territorial expansion of the Greek state at the expense of the Ottoman state (Jovanovski, Minov, 2017: 227). Researching the biography of Kolettis, it is easy to see that he did not think of the borders of the Greek kingdom of 1832 as final. In his conversation with the French politician Guizot, with whom he was also a friend, he noticed that from the borders of his country he could see the enslaved place where his father's grave was (Guizot, 1865: 244). In addition, when he was called upon to give his opinion on Athens as the New Greek capital, he unhesitatingly opposed the possibility, believing that Constantinople should be the centre of the Greek world and the Greek state (Doumanis, 2010: 180). On the other hand, it should be noted that he was aware of the entire situation both in his country and abroad. Kolettis believed that the Great Idea and the territorial expansion would be realized only when there were conditions for it, which did not exist at the time when he was the head of the Greek government, admitting that at the time his country could have even disappeared (Guizot, 1865: 299).

In the end, we would like to explore whether the Great Idea was an independent Greek invention, or whether it was a product of the times. The answer can be found in the writings of Dimaras, Terzić and Gourgouris. Analysing the reasons for Kolettis' speech, as well as its aims, Dimaras noted that it was possible that the term "The Great Idea" which Kolettis used in his speech arose from his stay in Paris as the Greek ambassador, where he was in contact with French intellectuals and read extensive literature where that term is encountered (Δημαράς, 1982: 409-411). According to Terzić, it was probably no coincidence that the same year, 1844, saw the appearance of national programs of three Balkan nations - the Serbs, the Greeks and the Bulgarians (Терзић, 1992: 60). Here we will just comment that Garašanin's "Načertanije" was a national program, written under the influence of Polish emigration, remaining a secret until the beginning of the 20th century; the Great Idea, on the other hand, is a term from a speech by a Greek politician in the constitutional assembly. Complementing what was written by the Serbian historian, we will try to provide an answer to the question of the originality of the idea. The Greek intellectual Gourgouris believes that the Great Idea is not a Greek innovation, but a reflection of every nationalist idiom. According to him, the Pan-Slavism of the Russians or the English term "Empire" are also Great Ideas - expressions of expansionist ideas (Gourgouris, 2021; 146). This means, and the future has confirmed it, that the Greek Great Idea was also expansionist in its being, born at a time when such ideas were usually born, and Kolettis himself stated that every nation has its own Great Idea. When we look at how his speech changes the views of the Greeks about the past of ancient Macedonia and Byzantium, as well as how it inflamed debates about how far the future Greek state or empire should extend, we can conclude that a careful reading of his speech provides an answer to the question of whether it is nationalistic

or not. The answer is affirmative. Changes in the region, territorially and ethnographically, in the following decades only confirm our opinion.

The text of the speech made by Ioannis Kolettis in the Greek Constituent Assembly:

“When I remember the hour, that hour when I was called under oath to fight for the independence of the homeland, my hair stands on end; I swore, you swore my lords, with all that is ours, even our lives, to pledge for the freedom of the Hellenes, of the whole of Christianity. Many of us who then took that oath are still alive; you all might have sworn it. That oath, that holy oath, my lords, we must execute it today, when we have the foundation of our political existence, the establishment of our political belief as a basis for our unification. Yes, my lords, we have two gospels, one belonging to our faith, the other to our state. According to the geographical position, Greece should be seen as the centre of Europe; on the right it reaches the West, and on the left it covers and connects the East. It seems that Greece was destined, in her decline, to light up the west, and now in her rebirth to light up the east. We are they, my lords, who live in glorious Greece; and it is up to us to provide the East with a noble education. Because of the importance of every oath and the realization of every great idea, I did not hear the deputies of the previous assemblies talking about the problems of the provinces but about the good of all Christianity. Ah! How I wish Germanos, Zaimis and all the other heroes, whose names remind us of our liberation struggle, were here to listen to what we are arguing about and how we are trying to stifle a great idea, which should instead delight our hearts. Where are you, Kolokotronis, Zaimis, Ypsilantis, Botsaris, Karaiskakis, Miaoulis, where are you all, whom the Great Idea has called you to arms? When I remember Rigas’s song, my heart starts pounding with excitement!

Indeed! We were united in one soul, we took up arms and achieved, if not completely, then partially, our goal, for the freedom of all Hellenes, for the freedom of Christianity we became one soul, and now we are fighting - what are we fighting about? We are wasting our precious time - why? To distinguish who are Greeks, who are Christians and who we ourselves are? We, who took the flag of our fatherland in hand, to give freedom to all Christians. Did we not all take an oath, in which all those Greeks participated, whose eyes are now directed toward us, to see if we will follow it - if we will fulfil our promises? Guided by this thought, I considered it my duty, as a patriot, to express my opinion in this way as I expressed it the day before yesterday on the question of the church, and also as I expressed my opinion when I was Minister, and when we were to determine the resident city of the kingdom, which can be found as evidence in the state archives. These two opinions that I have given a prove, how faithful I have remained to my oath. My intentions are such that, if they were possible, I would open your breast and find the oath buried in your hearts - and why should I not find it? You are representatives of people whose ancestors have proven themselves to be the most perfect-

ly educated people. After they have done so much to accomplish the great goal of Christianity, you quarrel over the constitutional provision—“Who is a Greek?” You, who are gathered here, and where is that? You, whose luck has become to occupy the stage for a speech, and where is that? In Athens, yes, in Athens! Do I still need to tell you who the Athenians were, and what they had to achieve? Due to the fact that I am also Greek, and I speak to Greeks, I will not offend you, my respected MPs. In Athens everything was related to the education of the people. The people who lived in Athens carried out such heroic deeds, which have not been repeated to the present day. Athens, and with it the whole of Greece - because, unfortunately, it was impossible to construct one whole, a single body - fell into destructive quarrels and civil wars. They fell, and with their fall they illuminated the Earth. A nation, which by its fall enlightened many other nations, today stands up again, and not as before, when it was divided into many small states, but as a united state with its own government, religion and political existence forever guaranteed by the constitution. Should he, who possesses a Greek heart, which beats in all of you, now deal with ideas that are narrow-minded and unworthy of his reputation and the reputation of the Greek people, and when should he? In an era when the West is electrified by the sound of our weapons, and rushes to support us with a sense of recognition, because the movement started from the sources of Hellenic enlightenment. The peoples of the West sympathized with our suffering, their governments supported the process to lend us a hand at the call of the inner voice: “A nation like the Greeks should no longer rot in slavery.” Did not the nations support us with all possible means, did they not make sacrifices of every kind? If you had the opportunity, my gentlemen, to look at the whole civilized world, you would feel its sympathy and admire its philhellenism. For eight years, my fellow deputies, I have resided in a part of the European world, and I am not in a position to describe to you their enthusiasm, and this is righteous, as our struggle was so great, that everywhere there are still heirs of our forefathers. On my journey to Palermo I met a population of 16,000 Greek colonists, who, unable to endure slavery, fled there a century ago. With candles in their hands, these colonists climb for Easter on a nearby high mountain and direct their eyes toward Greece with the cry: “Christ is risen!” When will Greece rise again, to welcome him again? These Greeks are looking toward our country, while we are deliberating on who should be considered Greek? We consider some to be Greeks and others to be non-Greeks, because the latter, due to circumstances, geographical position, due to their small population in enemy territory, were prevented from taking part in our struggle?

The Allied Powers listened to the voice of their peoples, and decided to confirm our freedom. Among other things, it was already time, because there was a terrible danger. The enemies came close to destroying us, but no, that was not possible, because I still see the Peloponnesians on the mountains, who, after hiding their families in inaccessible places, continued the fight and

every day they sent 20, 30, 50, 100 enemies to the underworld. Yea, for the honour of a general, to whom the distinction belongs, to be the representative of the people in this assembly, it is said that the enemy commander promised him two million if he would surrender Nafplion, our last remaining stronghold. This commander received an answer that the haven of freedom would not surrender. To the liberty of all, my friends, we all took an oath; but the circumstances of our politics imposed upon us the obligation of confining our oath to a certain demarcation line. The protocols determined our territorial width, they allowed for the right to raise a shield to the Christians and Greeks, who, although they fought, sacrificed and survived the saddest fate - to remain outside the borders, were condemned not only in European Turkey, but also in Asia, not only in the Greek territorial parts, but also in Montenegro, as the echo of the songs of Rigas reached there. Let us remember Dervenakia. 40,000 enemies flooded the land to root out freedom, but were defeated, and by whom? By the Peloponnesians and others. Nikitas, on one occasion received the nickname "Eater of Turks". With what zeal did Hatzi Christos take part in every battle and fight on the side of Nikitas with the Bulgarians! Every deed, every act of heroism, all the casualties received the attention of Europe and, therefore, the protocols on the right of migration spread to all parts of the Ottoman state.

In these conditions, my fellow deputies and comrades, and you, new generation, who will proudly follow your ancestors, who prepared the independence of the people - is it fair, is it reasonable, to throw the question into the chaff rack: Who is a Greek? Who has that right, and who does not? Who has civil rights, and who does not? And by whom are these questions asked? By us, who took up arms, united by oath, and gave our oath on the eve of all the national congresses, which ended with the conclusion: "Everyone who believes in Christ is a Greek!" We, I say, have to solve such questions, and what is the reason for that? As far as I can conclude from all the modifications so far, it is only the existing unfairness in the occupation of state offices. Yes, my friends, I also fully agree with this, an injustice has occurred, but is it necessary to debate which Greeks should enjoy civil rights? Are we not able to find the way by which we will prevent, now and in the future, every bad state of affairs? They whose names are entered in the great list of the Etairiai, are they not Greeks? Did they not take the same oath as we did? Do we know where these holy men are? I call them holy, because at the time of their oath the sword had already been waved over their heads. What made them vote several days ago to unite with the Great Church? What is that lofty thought, which dwells in the breast of every Greek? They thereby intend to let the entire Christianity know that they are not unfaithful to it, and that according to the obligation accepted by the oath, they are one soul with Christianity. On the one hand, they make such laudable conclusions, and on the other hand, they debate about the civil rights of the Greeks due to the fact that party interests appear during the allocation of state functions.

Several days ago a poor woman came to my house with her child. Her condition confirmed her poverty. I asked her who she is. She answered, I am the wife of Captain Georgaki of Olympus. The wife of Captain Georgaki of Olympus! Of the hero who is known to all of you, to the entire Panhellenium. Of that Captain Georgakis, who, after killing so many enemies, lit a fire and burned himself with his comrades. The child of that hero came in 1843 to Greece and should not enjoy civil rights? Will any of us challenge them? Will anyone have the guts to do this? I give you only this example, but there are more like this, many more. We have been debating for so many days to come to conclusions, to insert articles into the constitution, which, once accepted, will prevent the Minister from receiving such individuals, who possess indisputable rights. What are we proving to the Powers who opened the path for us and who tell us – ah! I dare not say, let me pass in silence. You will have the same feelings with me – and we wanted to close this path? We accept the protocols prepared for our independence, while the rest should not have our sympathy. Consider, think, what the Powers would say to this - unofficially - “we didn’t set hurdles for you, even if you wanted to” - I must not express myself as I want and as I think. Who will benefit from these negotiations? Ah! You understand that, you know this yourself, but who will take care of it, who will encourage it, may I say? Also this is clear to you, and this itself belongs to those things that I myself cannot leave out. When some speak that they address the non-Greeks, they say nothing. Only I know whom I am addressing with my speech. Those convictions, those intentions are known to me, as well as to Christianity.

Religion, our holy religion, the guardian of our national unity, has united all of us Christians; should freedom divide us? Should the freedom born in Athens cause a rift between us, should it make us challenge civil rights? To whom? To ourselves. Religion and freedom went hand in hand during the liberation struggle. Our palikars led one banner, and our metropolitans, girded with swords, as we ourselves saw, led another; should we now pounce on our present disputes, if we wish to include them in our state constitution? What will our descendants, all the races of mankind, and primarily the race that is our immediate successor, say about this? Some think that the Greek people are demanding their rights - and who, my lords, does not know the Greek people? They will never, never and never challenge the rights of their fellow citizens. This nation is led by diverse individuals, members of both the resistance and the citizenry, and has never reduced or altered the rights of its brothers in faith. We must not be unfair to the Greek people who, as I have had the opportunity to see in many situations, enjoy a good reputation, and with regard to their national interests, are guided by three words. When a military campaign is to be undertaken, it will read: “Give us pay; the homeland cannot afford to pay us; and yet we shall march without pay.” I need not speak further to your deeply sensitive hearts. My throat is sore, and I do not believe that I should be able to explain to you all that I have hitherto said, but never-

theless my physical strength seems to be strengthened by the righteousness of my convictions. What you feel, what you know, I called from your memory; I wish to draw your attention to several more things, and allow me to be open in my presentation. If, my lords, the reason for our debates were pure truth, then we would not have before us by now 40 requests for modification. The truth cannot be hidden, because it is unique, it will be revealed. Forty requests for modification have been made, because we are moving in a deceptive circle and we are unable to go back to the order and discover the truth that can come from these 40 requests for modification.

We are in constant motion, and yet we accomplish nothing. You know how many Greek citizens reside in Turkey. Have you asked our diplomatic representative about this? Have you asked him how he gets along with them? Thousands, my lords, reside there, and give the diplomatic envoy no small worry; their protection is a difficult task, and we wish to put that in our constitution - which it is unfair for the diplomatic envoy to worry about providing protection to his Greek countrymen. Our negotiations do not take place in secret, listeners and the press are present. Do you want to say that our parliamentary conclusions set the opposite behaviour to that of our diplomatic representative? Everyone wants to know whether we have stayed true to our oath, whether we have kept our promises or just wasting our time, and everyone is trying to show that they are capable of coming up with modifications. Precious, deeply sensitive Greeks! Is such a situation not sad? Let us stop the injustice, let us prevent its future attack, but not by doing so taint the gospel of our political existence, as it is sacred; and partisan and passionate elements should not be tolerated! All injustices are done on purpose, often out of mindlessness; the Bavarian government did many such things. In order to reach the end, we felt compelled to take efficient means, and the performance itself took place in a very national way, yes - we sought justice at one moment with musical support and dance performances, and there we came together. The assembly will be composed of Greeks; many of us will be declared MPs. The Government and the Senate will also be composed of Greek citizens. The king will not be able to say that he appoints this or that man as governor, and this or that man for another service. The House of Deputies will breathe down the neck of the government, the Deputies will serve as a protective guard, if improper appointments should happen, the Deputies will quietly inform the ministers, and if the latter do not hear about it and wish to commit other irregularities, then the House of Representatives will declare that the Minister no longer has its confidence and the Minister will be removed. Are we afraid of the continuation of these debates? Of whom? Of ourselves, so as not to do injustice.

With all that, my lords, I do not contradict your opinion that the bad should be cured and that satisfaction should be granted. I myself vote for the gospel of our political existence to appear blameless and a conclusion to be drawn, which, as a consequence, would help purify the public service and

oblige the government to avoid similar irregularities in the future. In memory of our oath, we will return to the path of justice, to the wishes of all, responding with decisions in the spirit of Christianity and our great future, and we will move more energetically towards the realization of the great goals of our homeland.

(Alexander Clarus Heinze, *Der Hellenische Nationalcongress zu Aten in den Jahren 1843 und 1844*, Leipzig, 1845, pp. 160-169)

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