

ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT
OF THE INTERNATIONAL OLYMPIC ACADEMY

MR. EPAM. PETRALIAS

at the Opening Ceremony on the Hill of the Pnyx

In the midst of the continual upheavals and tempests that rock the modern world, in these dramatic times, Greece has managed to find the spiritual serenity needed to lift her thoughts and sentiments above the realism and the exciting events of our era. This is a great Hellenic virtue that can rarely be found among other peoples.

It is therefore with special pride that we celebrate today the completion of the first decade since the foundation and putting into operation of the International Olympic Academy. It was founded at the suggestion of the Hellenic Olympic Committee, submitted in the year 1948 to the International Olympic Committee; the latter approved the suggestion and entrusted the foundation and management of the Academy to the Hellenic Olympic Committee.

The aim of the Academy is the study and propagation of the Olympic Idea which combines, as in a bundle of rays, the moral rules that govern competition and seeks to create the perfect type of man. During this first decade, much has been achieved, so that the pride felt by the Greeks is fully justified.

Thanks to the hard work of the Greeks and to their unshakeable faith in the Olympic Ideals, but most especially thanks to the eager support lent to the Hellenic Olympic Committee by the National Government, which has assumed — through the medium of the General Secretariat for Sports and the personal interest of the General Secretary Mr. C. Aslanides — the really high expense involved, there functions at Olympia today a really imposing Cultural Center, the Ideological Center of World Sports.

In antiquity, Hellenism, which had spread over the whole of the Mediterranean basin, had succeeded, thanks to the Olympic Games, in consolidating the idea of a Universal, Religious, Civilizing, Artistic and Athletic Unity. Olympia, with its religious ceremonies, the suspension of hostilities, the festive gatherings of thousands of spectators on its neutral territory, its theories and its Games, neutralized the political divisions and oppositions of the City-States of the times and cultivated the common conscience of the Greeks. The greatest achievement of Ancient Olympia was certainly the preparation and the realisation of the union of all Greeks.

It is under the inspiration of this high ideal, and of our loyalty and faithfulness to the Olympic Spirit, that we work at the Sessions of the International Olympic Academy. Olympia must become the Centre of the ideological union of the whole World; and this task has been undertaken by the Hellenic Olympic Committee with the guidance and the moral support of the International Olympic Committee.

From this rostrum, and on behalf of the Hellenic Olympic Committee, I wish to express to the honorable members of the International Olympic Academy, to the lecturers and to the participants, our great joy and satisfaction at their having accepted our invitation to take part in the Tenth Session.

Now that the first decade has elapsed since the foundation of the International Olympic Academy, my thoughts turn with deep emotion towards the great deceased founders of this fine institution, John Ketseas and Carl Diem the Olympian; their inspiration and their ideas have prepared the road we are now following.

The Hellenic Olympic Committee is fully aware of the extent of the work accomplished during the past decade, and has therefore decided to honour those organizers and lecturers who have worked up to the present with devotion and zeal to further the aims of the International Olympic Academy. The honours will be conferred during the closing ceremony of the Tenth Session.

Ladies and Gentlemen :

We appeal to the whole world and especially to the young of ardent heart and pure spirit, and urge them to join us in our efforts to safeguard, through the ages, the wisdom of the Olympic Ideal which is at the service of beauty, justice and truth.

May divine Olympia inspire you, so that your efforts be fruitful and when you return to your beloved homelands you become not only eager heralds, but also apostles of the moral teachings which spring from the institution of the Olympic Games, and which today, constitute our hope that even in its darkest hours Mankind can be directed towards a better future.