

Democracy

Roland Becker

OUR ship dropped anchor in Phaleron Bay late in the evening of a buoyant August day. All was still except for the metronomic beating of the water against the sides of the ship. The stars seemed near as I leaned on the rail and gazed at the multitude of glittering lights before me. The shoreline was marked by the streetlights of the boulevard lining it.

Over to the left, the city of Pireaeus was visible. A carpet of lights swept inland and seemed to disappear into the sky. And there, above the carpet of twinkling rays of light, as if on a cloud, aloft from reality, stood the most famous of ancient structures. The Parthenon, with its Doric columns gleaming in the lights of the modern era, portrayed the beauty of classic Athens—Athens, the capitol of the nation that had seemed crushed under oppression time and time again, only to reappear; Athens, the city whose history was summarized by Sylla when he said, "The inflated skin may be dipped under water, but cannot be sunk."

It was my privilege to walk the streets of this ancient city, to wander in the footsteps of the great statesmen of twenty-five centuries ago. I visited Pryx Hill, where the ancient Athenian Assembly met. I wonder how many times Socrates spoke from its orator's platform. I visited a triangular rock, known as Areopagus, or Mars Hill, from which Saint Paul delivered his message to the Athenians. I visited the Acropolis.

It would be folly to attempt to describe the beauty of this, the greatest of all citadels. It would be folly for one so lacking in wisdom to attempt to convey its history and its significance. Facts, such as "The Parthenon's construction was started in 447 B. C. and was almost completed in 438 B. C.," are too cold and impersonal. I would rather ask the reader to think of the Acropolis as a visible monument to the wisdom of the philosophical mind. I would rather ask the reader to think of it as an indestructible shrine to "Athens, the eye of Greece, mother of art and eloquence." I would rather portray to the reader the realization that was mine, the realization that "I" am small and insignificant, but that "we" are great and mighty, and that "we" shall endure.