Dear Rector, dear colleagues and guests,

Today the University of Economics – Varna marks its 93rd anniversary. It is a day of admiration, honor and respect for the predecessors and everyone after them who continued their deeds.

Deep meaning was set in the annual ritual on this day for the academic community to gather together and address their spiritual heritage, to reread what they once wrote. The words uttered fly away – the written ones remain. Rituals bear hidden messages that are passed on from generation to generation and deciphering them is the key to the nearly century-old experience, knowledge and spiritual development of our university.

Going back in history to the idea for establishing a higher school of commerce is an opportunity to cherish inspiration and discover landmarks for the future. Knowing the spiritual tradition allows us to rediscover the right way of development. The condition of every educational institution in any single moment presupposes its own history.

The significance and relevance of current issues could not be grasped fully without awareness of former problems and the methods for solving them. Today society is facing difficulties as a result of the economic and political crisis. However, much bigger and deeper is the crisis of the spirit.

If we go back to the distant 1920 when at its regular XXVth session the Varna Chamber of commerce and industry made the decision for turning the School of Trade set up in 1911 into a university, we have to report that the economic situation then was not easy either.

The idea of a higher school was born when Varna had a population of 41 thousand citizens1, of those a little more than half were literate. After the wars, in 1920 compared to 1911, import decreased almost 7 times and export – considerably more. With losing Dobrudzha the turnover of the Port of Varna started going down as well.

It is exactly at that time that the spiritual energy of the university forefathers in the face of the first lecturers Tsani Kalyandzhiev, Feodor Belmer, Marin Kotarov, Israel Shalom, Mincho Minchev and Naoum Dolinski was focused on how to improve the economic development of the region and the community.

In his report before the Chamber in 1920 the champion for establishing the university and first rector Prof. Tsani Kalyandzhiev pointed out: “the conditions in Bulgaria after the end of the First World war were much more unfavorable compared to 8-10 years ago when we came up with the idea of setting up a Higher school of trade” and added that “the need requires it even more”.

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1 41 317 citizens according to the „Statement about the situation of the Varna region in 1910-1911 r.”, Varna: printing house of D. Todorov & Co, 1911, p. 4.
He underlined that “given the burden inherited from the wars and the common backwardness, our country could not cope with only copying the methods of the more advanced countries. Instead, there was a demand for creative forces prepared on the basis of social theories and academic knowledge about our reality – something which could happen only in educational institutions that exist and develop in our situation.” Today his words about the basic principles of higher schools sound up-to-date:

- “to adjust the education of every citizen to the real conditions of production of time and to inspire those feelings and ideas without which no progressive development of any advanced civil organization is possible.”
- “to direct theory and methodology towards practical issues in order to achieve a more perfect organization of social forces in manufacturing, exchange and human relations.”

The needs of the society, region and country were set into the understanding of the university founders about its mission. Its goal was formulated in the first regulations of the Higher school of trade – to cultivate those socioeconomic and commercial-and-technical sciences that are necessary for studying and researching commerce and industry and thus meet the needs of the country.  

Prof. Kalyandzhiev used well-grounded arguments to reject the practice of centralizing “all important Bulgarian cultural offices in the capital of the country” and underlined that “the special goals of a higher school of trade requires their objective environment and appropriate professional ground that are now presented mostly in Varna.”

Taking into account the need for “that, as he called it economic psyche that gives cultural and professional food to lecturers and students”, he pointed out that the economic lifestyle and the pace of life as a whole are reflected into the Higher school, they leave an imprint in the psyche of lecturers and students by uplifting or lowering it.

For Prof. Kalyandzhiev the development of Varna and the region was a cause he worked for all his life: he chaired the cultural-and-educational community centre in the city that organized the first musical festivities in Varna in 1926 (known today as the “Varna summer” festival); in the 30s he was the initiator, founder and first chairman of the “League for Varna as a resort”; he worked tirelessly for turning Varna into a first-class sea resort.

Prof. Kalyandzhiev spoke about cultivating science because if “science, knowledge and culture do not underpin the state-and-political and economic life of the country, the latter would not be able to endure the pressure of the modern, experienced and far richer overseas competitors.” A champion for developing professional education, he pointed out repeatedly that “every professional education bears fruit only when it is set upon high literacy.”

In a paper written on the occasion of the annual deed of HST Prof. Naoum Dolinski says: “In the higher school the task of delivering a certain amount of positive knowledge steps back compared to the strive to educate the student’s thinking

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2 Regulations of the Higher School of Trade at the Varna chamber of commerce and industry, “News” magazine of the University of Economics – Varna, 1995, issue1, p. 82.
methodically in order to uplift his spiritual activity, make him learn to accept the surrounding reality with self-criticism and to provide him with a set of manners with which to have a real key to the complicated code of life.”

To live means to think, says an ancient wisdom. Happy is this that can learn the causes for things. To study and remember what you have learnt is a supreme joy.

Acquiring a higher degree of education with which to contribute for the spiritual development of a personality and society allows the citizens of Varna to call the Higher school of trade an Academy of trade – an institution which is entitled to “the completion and addition of all knowledge”.

Intensity of thinking, writes Prof. Dolinski, is a condition common for both sides of scientific teaching: the teacher’s intensity lies in the fact that he inspires for action the spiritual apparatus of his listener, whereas the listener’s intensity lies in an independent strive for finding the scientific solvation of the issues assigned.

Today again we rediscover the place of the live connection “lecturer – student” in the conditions of information overload of virtual space – an issue comparable to the access of information as a result of book printing for our predecessors.

A professor, Prof. Dolinski continues, cannot repeat other’s opinion or deliver accessible viewpoints, he has to create and teach, i.e. teach the summarized life and his own attempts to interpret it through his own viewpoint, otherwise lectures are pointless since Guttenberg’s invention makes it possible and accessible for everyone to read what is simply retold in lecture halls.

However, he added something essential – a student “cannot attend”, he has to “participate”. If he does not follow all mental movements of his lecturer, if he does not strive to go ahead of the output and discover his own logical way, in other words if after studying in the lecture hall he “doesn’t grow calluses in his brain”, then his lecture attendance is pointless because he is actually present at someone else’s mental feast and where other people get real food he has to do with a few useful remains only.

We are here in this university in order to teach and educate the human within ourselves – something that takes a whole life. The development of the university doesn’t lie in endless optimism, it is not only in keeping achievements either. It lies in farsightedness as regards changes, trends and variety of options.

Or, as Ovid and Seneca wrote a long time ago – “Times change and we change, too.” Yet, we need to add – we change with respect for the affirmed values of the institution, honoring our own history, taking pride in our achievements and trusting our own significance.

Students, lecturers and employees together – the whole academic community – we make the institution of the University of Economics-Varna alive.

Happy anniversary!

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7 Komenski Yan, Great didactics. Sofia: published by the Bulgarian Academy of Science, p. 272.


9 ibid, p. 61.