THE OUTBREAK OF THE GREEK REVOLUTION: WHAT WENT ON BEHIND *THE* SCENES

Yunan Devriminin Patlaması: Perde Arkasında Neler Oldu

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*... The soundest education and training
for a life of active politics
is the study of History...*

Polybius, *The Histories*, I. 1. 2.
(Translated by W. R. Paton.)

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Abstract

The alleged founder of the “Brotherhood of Death” had been Demosthenes, the orator and statesman of ancient Athens. The hierarchical structure of the American “Skull & Bones” society is almost the same as that of the Philiki Hetaireia after Alexander Ypsilantis was appointed “General Delegate of the Authority”. The same occurs in the American “Bones”. To enlarge upon the American Brotherhood would be beyond the scope of the present essay, of course. As soon as the War of Independence was triggered off in Southern Greece, Demetrios Ypsilantis, Alexander's younger brother and a Russian army officer, reached the Peloponnese. Then, he considered himself the military and political leader of the risen up Morea and Mainland Greece. Accordingly, he formed a new black-dressed “Sacred Battalion” with the Skull and Bones badge, of course. Simultaneously, he hoisted the black-white-red Phoenix flag of Philiki Hetaireia and persuaded the commander-in-chief of the Greek army in the Peloponnese, Theodoros Kolokotronis, to raise it as well. Suddenly, there was a thunderbolt out of the blue. Alexandros Mavrokordatos, President of the Executive Branch of Greece's Provisional Administration, issued a decree on 15th March, 1822, by which the blue and white flag was substituted for the black-white-red Hetaireia's one. The 1821 Greek Revolution was the product of a worldwide conspiracy. The protagonists were the Russian Decembrists and the American -allegedly- secret

Öz

“Ölüm Kardeşliği”nin kurucusu olduğu iddia edilen kişi, antik Atina'nın hatip ve devlet adamı Demosthenes'ti. Amerikan “Skull & Bones” (Kafatası ve Kemik) birliğinin hiyerarşik yapısı, Alexander Ypsilantis'in (Etnik-i Eterya) Philiki Hetaireia'da yönetsel yapıdaki genel delege olarak atanmasından sonraki oluşturduğu birlikle hemen aynıdır. Aynı şey Amerikan “Bones” birliğinde de görülür. Amerikan Kardeşliği'ni sağlayacak olan birlikler ve bu birlikleri geliştirmek, elbette, bu makalenin kapsamı dışında olacaktır. Güney Yunanistan'da Bağımsızlık Savaşı başlar başlamaz, (Alexander) İskender'in küçük kardeşi ve bir Rus ordusu subayı olan Demetrios Ypsilantis Mora'ya ulaştı. Ardından, kendisini bağımsızlığa kavuşan Mora ve Yunanistan anakarasının askeri ve siyasi lideri olarak ilan etti. Kendi liderliğini ilan ettikten sonra “Skull and Bones” (Kafatası ve Kemik) rozeti ile siyah elbiseler giyen yeni bir “Kutsal Tabur” kurdu. Aynı zamanda Philiki Hetaireia'nın siyah-beyaz-kırmızı olan ve “Zümrüd-ü Anka Kuşunun” bayrağını göndere çekti. Mora'daki Yunan ordusunun başkomutanı Theodoros Kolokotronis'i de “siyah-beyaz-kırmızı” bayrağın altına girmeye davet etti ve onu ikna etti. Ancak ansızın bu bayrağın renklerinde bir değişim meydana geldi. Yunanistan geçici idaresinin “Yürütme Organı Başkanı” olan Alexandros Mavrokordatos, 15 Mart 1822'de, “siyah-beyaz-kırmızı” Etniki Eterya bayrağı yerine sadece “mavi ve beyaz” renkli bir bayrağın kabulüne ilişkin kararnameyi yayınladı. 1821 Yunan Devrimi, dünya çapında bir komplonun ürünüydü. Bu komplonun kahramanları Rusya'da “Decemberist” (Aralık

society with the macabre name “Skull and Bones”. It is noteworthy that the national anthem of Greece echoes the memory of this even nowadays active society. Needless to say, its emblem consists exactly of a skull and bones, and it is believed to be the branch of German secret society. In our study these bands of brother-hood of America and Russia would be scrutinized with a special reference to the Greek Revelation of Independence.

Keywords: Decembrists, “Skull & Bones”, Philiki Hetaireia, Alexander Ypsilantis - Jean Capo d’Istria, Wallachia and Moldavia, Alexander I, Czar of Russia.

Devrimcileri) ile ürkütücü bir isme ve şöhrete sahip olan Amerika’daki “Skull and Bones” (Kafatası ve Kemik) gizli örgütüydü. Yunanistan’ın milli marşının, günümüzde bile geçmişteki bu örgütlerin söylemlerini yansıtmaya dikkat çekicidir. Amerika’daki kafatası ve kemik sembolünü kullanan kardeşlik cemiyetinin motiflerinin ileride Nazi Almanyasının gizli teşkilatlarına da ilham kaynağı olduğunu vurgulamakta yarar vardır. Çalışmamızda Amerika ve Rusya’daki kardeşlik cemiyetlerinin Yunan bağımsızlık savaşı ile olan bağlantısı ele alınacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Aralık Devrimcileri, Kafatası ve Kemik, Etniki Eterya, Alexander İpsilanti - Jean Capo d’Istria, Eflak ve Moldavya (Boğdan) , Rus Çarı I. Alexander

In the afternoon of the 22nd February 1821, Alexander Ypsilantis crossed the Prut River, marking the border between the Russian and the Ottoman Empires, entered Moldavia, and proclaimed the revolution against the Sublime Porte.¹ Ypsilantis, a major-general of the Russian army, had lost his right arm at the 1813 battle of Dresden and numbered among the Czar's favourites.² His family was well-known. His ancestors were officials of the Grand Comneni Dynasty that in 1204 founded the Trebizond Empire, which they ruled until its 1461 conquest by the Ottomans. The Ypsilantis House survived, nonetheless, and distinguished themselves in the service of the Ottomans. Of course, they were *Phanariots*, and as such several members of the Ypsilantis’ family (*Ipsilanti* in Romanian) had been appointed princes of Wallachia and Moldavia, the suzerain of which was the Ottoman *Padishah*.³ Nonetheless, the mother of Alexander Ypsilantis, namely, Elisabeth, was a Wallachian lady descended from the aristocratic Văcărescu family.⁴

Most likely by an ancestor of A. Ypsilanti, and the latter was elected, in April 1820, “General Delegate of the Authority”, the *Philiki Hetaireia* was founded in Bucharest.⁵ It is easy to understand that the “Authority” in question was the Russian Imperial Crown. For, merely two days after Ypsilantis entered Moldavia, he issued a proclamation wherein there was the assurance that a “Mighty Power”, namely Russia, was backing his revolutionary movement.⁶ Furthermore, the mastermind who had organized the insurrection was Count Jean Capo d’Istria. When, in fact, the Ottoman authorities, after putting down the “sedition”, got hold of Ypsilantis’ correspondence, they found evidence that the Czar’s Foreign Secretary had formed the idea “of a

¹ Gustav Friedrich Herzberg, *Neue Geschichte Griechenlands von der Erhebung der Neugriechischen gegen die Pforte bis zum Berliner Frieden* (Gotha: Friedrich Andreas Berthes, 1879), pp. 3-41; Alex. Despotopoulos, “Hē Epanastāsē stē Moldovlachia” (= The Revolution in Moldavia and Wallachia) in *Historia tou Hellēnikou Ethnous* (= A History of the Greek Nation), vol. XII (Athens: “Ekdotike Athenon”, 1975), pp. 20-31.

² Iōannēs Philēmōn, *Dokimion historikon peri tēs Philikēs Hetaireias* (= A Historical Essay on the *Philiki Hetaireia*), Nauplion: Th. Kontaxēs & N. Loulakēs, 1834, p. 268.

³ Kurt W. Treptow (ed.), *A History of Romania* (Iași: The Center for Romanian Studies & The Romanian Cultural Foundation, 1996), p. 205ff. passim.

⁴ Nicolae Iorga, *Byzance après Byzance* (Bucharest: Association Internationale d’Études du Sud-Est Européen. Comité National Roumain, 1971), p. 250.

⁵ Kōnstantinos Paparrēgopoulos, *Epitomos Historia tou Hellēnikou Ethnous* (= A Succinct History of the Greek Nation). Edited by Man. Prōtopsaltēs and Mich. G. Petridēs (Athens: “Dēmētrios Dēmētrakos”, 1952), p. 600; Iōannēs Philēmōn, *Dokimion historikon peri tēs Hellēnikēs Epanastaseōs* (= A Historical Essay on the Greek Revolution), vol. I (Athens: P. Soutsas & A. Ktenas, 1859), p. 33.

⁶ *Monophylla tou Agōna, 1821-1827* (= One-leaf Documents of the [Greek] Struggle [for Independence]), Athens: Historical and Ethnological Society of Greece, 2012, doc. A-4; cf. Kurt W. Treptow (ed.), *A History of Romania* (Iași: The Center for Romanian Studies & The Romanian Cultural Foundation, 1996), p. 235.

universal insurrection among the Greeks”.⁷ Of course, neither Alexander I nor Capo d'Istria was in a position to act overtly because of the serious diplomatic complications that such a “public attitude” would bring about. Thus, Ypsilanti was the seeming *ephor*, in other words, the commander of the *Philiki Hetaireia*.⁸ At the same time, he was only the executive person of Capo d'Istria's injunctions, which had the approval of the Czar.⁹ That is why in the correspondence of the *Philiki Hetaireia*, both the Emperor and his Foreign secretary were identified by the eloquent pseudonyms “Philanthropist” (the former) and “Benefactor” (the latter).

Moreover, the Emperor gave Ypsilantis a “limitless leave of absence” in person.¹⁰ Without considering these points, the revolutionary proclamation of A. Ypsilantis in Moldavia appears senseless. In the autonomous Romanian principalities, there were no Ottoman troops (except in the fortress of Brăila).¹¹ Why, then, did Ypsilantis start the revolutionary war over there? It is not difficult to provide the answer because Capo d'Istria had planned and subsequently resolved, and his plans had the Emperor's approval. The Czar, in fact, was not disposed to declare war on the Ottoman Empire, but if the Orthodox Christians, the *Padishah*'s subjects, rose against the Porte, he would support them.¹² Consequently, Capo d'Istria briefed Ypsilantis as follows: “Let us have quite a few revolutionaries in Greece, and Russia will march into battle.”¹³ As a result, the Russian troops along the Prut River were instructed to enter Ottoman territory.¹⁴

The Czar's plan consisted in ensuring first the success of the insurrection in Moldavia and Wallachia and, then, accomplishing a triumphant march to Constantinople.¹⁵ It would be something like a “Christian Orthodox Crusade” against the Ottoman Porte, thanks to which Russia would obtain what she was seeking, namely an outlet to the Mediterranean “warm sea”. The plan was not so absurd as it sounds. As already mentioned, thanks to the Russian protection that the two Romanian Principalities enjoyed, Ottoman troops were not entitled to enter the Romanian Principalities unless with the Czar's consent.¹⁶ Moldavia and Wallachia, moreover, were ruled by Greek/Grecized princes, and the government apparatus in both countries was staffed with Greeks. On the other hand, the Serbs were in “revolutionary commotion” from 1804 onwards¹⁷, and the Bulgarians, Orthodox people akin to the Russians,¹⁸ appeared ready to revolt.¹⁹ Last but not least: The crews of the Ottoman fleet, at anchor in the Straits, were trained and practically supervised by Greeks, chiefly natives of Hydra, the “nautical island” par excellence.²⁰ However, a slight difference between the Czar and Capo d'Istria did exist: The former cared more about the Balkan

⁷ Theophilus C. Prousis, *Lord Strangford at the Sublime Porte (1821): The Eastern Crisis*, vol. I (Istanbul: The Isis Press, 2010), Strangford to Castlereagh, Constantinople, March 24, 1821, p. 52.

⁸ Ioānnēs Philēmōn, *Dokimion historikon peri tēs Hellēnikēs Epanastaseōs*, vol. I, p. 33.

⁹ *Briefe eines Augenzeugen des griechischen Revolution vom Jahre 1821. Nebst einer Denkschrift des Fürsten Georg Cantacuzeno über die Begebenheiten in der Moldau und Walachey in den Jahren 1820 und 1821*. Edited by Vasilēs Panagiōtopoulos. Translated into Greek by Christos M. Oikonomou (Athens: National Hellenic Research Foundation & “Asinē”, 2015), epistle VI, p. 192, and “Memorandum”, p. 261.

¹⁰ K. Paparrēgopoulos, *Historia tou Hellēnikou Ethnous* (= A History of the Greek Nation), vol. XV (Athens: Galaxias, 1971), p. 17.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

¹² K. Paparrēgopoulos, *Epitomos Historia...*, p. 600.

¹³ I. Philēmōn, *Dokimion historikon peri tēs Hellēnikēs Epanastaseōs*, vol. I, p. 32.

¹⁴ *Archeio Emmanouēl Xanthou*, vol. III, doc. no. 99, p. 158.

¹⁵ *Briefe eines Augenzeugen des griechischen Revolution vom Jahre 1821...*, Epistle VI, pp. 91-92.

¹⁶ A. Despotopoulos, “Hē Epanastasē stē Moldovlachia”, p. 20; N. Iorga, *Histoire des relations russo-roumaines* (Jassy: “Neamul Românesc”, 1917), pp. 183, 192, 198-199.

¹⁷ *Français et Ottomans en Illyrie et dans l'Adriatique au temps de Napoléon. Inventaire des papiers du général Donzelot (1763-1843) établi par Anne Mézin* (Istanbul: Les éditions Isis), pp. 71, 77, 170, 220, 509.

¹⁸ Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 166, 168, 173, 177.

¹⁹ *Briefe eines Augenzeugen des griechischen Revolution vom Jahre 1821...*, epistle VII, p. 199.

²⁰ Vas. VI. Sphyroēras, *Ta hellēnika plērōmata tou tourkikou stolou* (= The Greek Crews of the Turkish Fleet), Athens, 1968, p. 60ff.

Christians in general, whilst the latter sympathized mainly with the Greeks. But in the first stages of the planned insurrection, such a discrepancy of views was meaningless.

Therefore, Ypsilantis entered Moldavia in his capacity of a Russian general, and (seemingly) loyal to his sovereign, he tried to stir up the indigenous population. The very day after he crossed the Prut, he proclaimed the “Nation of the Moldavian Land”, written in Romanian and with the Cyrillic alphabet that was in use by the natives of the two principalities.²¹ And when a couple of days later he entered the Wallachian territory, he emitted one more, written in Greek and Romanian, now addressed to the “Dacians”, i.e., Romanians proper.²² The crux point was that, whilst in the Greek text of the proclamations, the Wallachians were called Dacians, after the ancient inhabitants of today’s Romania, in the Romanian text they were named precisely “Romanians”, this last term written with the Greek letter omega. It was one of the first times that the people of that land were called as such. Consequently, Ypsilantis was aiming at the national awakening of the native population. He reminded, therefore, the Greek-speaking (and more or less Grecized) ones, who constituted the ruling class, of the “glorious past” of their race that had defied so long the Empire of ancient Rome. And, at the same time, the native Orthodox peasants were reminded of the “splendid Christian Roman Empire” of the Middle Ages, i.e. the Byzantine one, to some extent revived in the Romanian Principalities thanks to the Phanariots’ rule,²³ but to which Russia was the legitimate and actual heir.

It was a masterly approach to the Romanians’ psyche. Let us stress once again that, in point of fact, in Moldavia and Wallachia, both the higher and the lower social strata were fond of their “Roman past”. The former, because the Dacians were eventually Romanized, that is to say, assimilated by their Roman conquerors.²⁴ And the socially inferior classes, because from medieval times onward, the Orthodox Christians in the Balkans and the Near East, either actual or former or even nominal subjects of the Byzantine Emperors, were as a rule called “Romans”.²⁵ It is noteworthy, moreover, that this appellation still exists in the official appellation of Romania as well as in the unofficial one of Greece (*Rōmeiko*, *Rōmiosynē*, *Rum millet* in Turkish, and so on).

A string of proclamations came next, addressed to the members of *Philiki Hetaireia*, to the Greeks established in Moldavia and Wallachia, and to the Greeks in general.²⁶ Now Enlightenment principles were mingled with the exaltation of the Orthodox Faith and the invocation of the Ancient Greeks’ military virtues. Ideologically speaking, these proclamations constituted a peculiar mixture of progressive ideas, ecclesiastical obscurantism²⁷, and admiration for classical Greece. Yet, Ypsilantis could not act otherwise. Rigas Pheraios was the first to understand that without invoking the -alleged- ancient past of Modern Greeks, it would be impossible to accomplish their insurrection against the “barbarian Turks”. Thus, he rehabilitated the memory of Alexander the Great,²⁸ which had been “sullied” because of Demosthenes’ rivalry with the Macedonians. On the other hand, Montesquieu had already remarked that

²¹ *Monophylla tou Agōna...*, doc. A-2.

²² *Ibid.*, doc. A-9.

²³ See the famous book authored by Nicolae Iorga (1871-1940), *Byzance après Byzance*, first published in 1934.

²⁴ K. W. Treptow (ed.), *A History of Romania*, p. 26; Dan Berindei, “L’idée de Rome chez les Roumains (XVIIIe-1848)”, *Les Roumains en Europe au XIXe siècle. Études et essais historiques* (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Române, 2008), pp.91-98.

²⁵ Dion. A. Zakythēnos, *Hē Vyzantinē Autokratoria, 324-1071* (= The Byzantine Empire, 324-1071), Athens, 1969, pp. 12-14.

²⁶ *Monophylla tou Agōna...*, docs. A-3, A-4, A-5.

²⁷ Cf. Montesquieu, *Considérations sur les causes de la grandeur des Romains et de leur décadence* (Paris: Garnier-Flammarion, 1968), p. 171ff.

²⁸ D. P. Paschalēs, entry “Rēgas Pheraios” (= Rigas Pheraios), *Megalē Hellēnikē Enkyklopaideia* (= The Great Greek Encyclopedia), vol. XXI (Athens: “Pyrros”, 1933), p. 126A.

*La source... de tous les malheurs des Grecs, c'est qu'ils ne connurent jamais la nature et les bornes de la puissance ecclésiastique et de la séculière.*²⁹ (= The source of all the calamities brought over the Greeks consists in their never having been able to know the nature and bounds of ecclesiastical power and of secular power.)

And further,

*... il n'y a jamais eu de nation qui ait porté une haine si violente aux hérétiques que les Grecs.*³⁰ (= There has never existed a nation that took a more violent dislike to heretics than the Greeks.)

As a matter of fact, the monks, from medieval times onward, were all-powerful within the Orthodox Church.³¹ The Patriarch of Constantinople always emanated from their ranks, and, as a rule, they abhorred the Roman Catholics.³² The monks, nevertheless, numbered among the pillars of Ottoman rule in Greece and, in general, in the Balkans.³³ The Patriarch was a high dignitary of the Porte and, needless to say, supported Ottoman rule.³⁴ The corollary of all that was that without treating the Orthodox clergy and its flock tactfully, the insurrection against the Ottoman rule would be impossible.

However, something went wrong. As early as 1st March, the *Reis Efendi*, i.e., the Foreign Minister of the Sublime Porte, came to know about the insurrection in the Romanian Principalities.³⁵ And, paradoxical as it may appear, the Russian Envoy in Constantinople, Baron Grigory Alexandrovich Stroganov, hastened to pass the information to the Ottoman dignitary.³⁶ At the same time, the Russian consul-general in Wallachia. "... advised the subjects and protégés of Russia, to lose no time in taking their departure."³⁷

A couple of days later, on 16th March, Baron Stroganov was summoned "to a conference at the Porte". And it was then and there that the Russian diplomat "pressingly invited" or "rather demanded" that the Porte should immediately send "strong reinforcements of troops" to the disturbed provinces".³⁸ What is more, in mid-March, the Czar, in Laibach (today Ljubljana) by then, constrained Capo d'Istria to address an epistle to Ypsilantis, in which it was announced to the latter that the Emperor repudiated the insurrection and crossed his name off the list of Russian

²⁹ Montesquieu, *Considérations*..., p. 178.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 166

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 174; cf. K. Paparrēgopoulos, *Epitomos Historia*..., pp. 161-162; Steven Runciman, *The Great Church in Captivity*. Translated to Greek by N. Paparrodou, vol. I (Athens: "Bergadēs", 1979), pp. 161-162.

³² K. Paparrēgopoulos, *Epitomos Historia*..., p. 382; Michael Ch. Ghitakos, *Monē Hagnountos* (= The Hagnountos Monastery), Athens, 1972, p. 27.

³³ K. Paparrēgopoulos, *Epitomos Historia*..., pp. 473-474; George Finlay, *The History of Greece under Turkish and Venetian Domination*. Translated into Greek by Miltos Garidēs. Edited by Tasos Vournas (Athens: Tolidēs, n.d.), pp. 176, 194, 260.

³⁴ K. Paparrēgopoulos, *Historia tou Hellēnikou Ethnous*, book XIV (Athens: "Galaxias", 1971), pp. 55-58; S. Runciman, *The Great Church in Captivity*, vol. II (Athens: "Bergadēs", 1979), p. 343ff. Cf. Stanford J. Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey*, vol. I (Cambridge University Press, 1976), p. 152; Neoklēs Sarrēs, *Osmanikē Pragmatikotēta* (= Ottoman Reality), vol. I (Athens: "Arsenidis & Co.", n.d.), p. 272.

³⁵ A. Despotopoulos, "Hē Epanastasē stē Moldovlachia", p. 31; I.K. Mazarakēs-Ainian, *Monophylla tou Agōna*, "Eisagōgē" (=Introduction), p. 11.

³⁶ I.K. Mazarakēs-Ainian, *Monophylla tou Agōna*, "Eisagōgē" (=Introduction), p. 11.

³⁷ Th. C. Prousis, *Lord Strangford at the Sublime Porte*..., Strangford to Castlereagh, Constantinople, March 24, 1821, p. 51.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

officers.³⁹ In vain did Capo d'Istria try to excuse Ypsilantis: Alexander I was adamant.⁴⁰ Most likely, he was influenced in this respect by Metternich, but he was already well disposed to adopt the latter's suggestions. And the last stroke occurred on Sunday, 23rd March. The Patriarch of Constantinople, Gregory V, being pressured by the Porte and, further motivated by the Russians' stance, officially excommunicated Ypsilantis and his followers.⁴¹ And last but not least, the Romanians did rise up, but under the leadership of Tudor Vladimirescu, a Wallachian chieftain of the Pandurs, i.e. the local peasant militia, who had already been decorated by the Russians for "his bravery and skill".⁴² However, the purpose of Vladimirescu was somewhat different from that of Ypsilantis. Unlike the latter, who was launching a primarily nationalist Greek revolution, the former called for the "ousting of the evil ones" who ruined the country, namely the Phanariots in particular and the Greeks in general.⁴³ If truth be told, the natives of the Romanian Lands: "... [étaient] avilis et accoutumés à trembler sous un prince grec. (= [Were] degraded and were used to trembling under a Greek prince."⁴⁴

Vladimirescu affirmed, therefore, loyalty to the Porte and assured the Ottomans that the social reforms he was aiming at were supportive of the continued suzerainty of the *Padishah*.⁴⁵ However, his reassuring declarations did not prevent the Czar from denouncing him as "an obscure adventurer" and revoking his Russian decoration.⁴⁶ The Russian Emperor thus got the opportunity to invite once more the Porte to take the "most appropriate measures to reestablish calm in the Principalities".⁴⁷ And as a pledge of his good faith towards the Porte, he prohibited the Russian troops that he himself had mobilized from crossing the Prut River.⁴⁸

What followed was easy to foresee. The imperial repudiations as well the patriarchal excommunication negatively affected the revolutionaries' morale.⁴⁹ And when the Ottoman troops, numbering 30,000-strong, invaded Wallachia in mid-May, resistance was easily put down. Ypsilantis, on the other hand, captured Vladimirescu and put him to death on the night of the 8th to the 9th of June. Yet his elite military unit, the *Hieros Lochos* (Sacred Battalion), was massacred by the Turks at Drăgășani on 19th June. A couple of days later, Ypsilantis fled to Austrian territory, where he sought asylum under the pseudonym of "Alexander Comnenus".⁵⁰ The remnants of his army held out against the Ottoman troops no later than early October of the same year...⁵¹

What had happened? How can the brusque, nay, violent, volte-face of Emperor Alexander be explained? His stance admits of two equally plausible interpretations, namely: A. Ypsilantis was after establishing a new kingdom that would embrace not only Greece and Constantinople,

³⁹ I. Philēmōn, *Dokimion historikon peri tēs Hellēnikēs Epanastaseōs*, vol. II (Athens: G. Karyophyllēs, 1859), pp. 127, 334-337.

⁴⁰ *Archeion Iōannou Kapodistria* (= The Iōannēs Kapodistrias' Archives), vol. VI (Corfu, 1984), a letter of Capo d'Istria to Alexandra Sturdza, Leybach, March 18/30, 1821, p. 163; cf. P. K. Enepekides, *Rhigas-Ypsilanti-Capodistria* (Athens: "Hestia" Collaros, 1965), p. 123.

⁴¹ A. Despotopoulos, "Hē Epanastasē stē Moldovlachia", p. 34.

⁴² K. W. Treptow (ed.), *A History of Romania*, p. 233.

⁴³ Cf. Stanford J. Shaw & Ezel Kural Shaw, *Reform, Revolution, and Republic: The Rise of Modern Turkey, 1808-1975* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), p. 17.

⁴⁴ According to Horace François Sébastiani, French Ambassador in Constantinople from 1806 to 1808. (Armand Goșu, *Între Napoleon și Alexandru I* [Bucharest: Editura Academiei Române, 2008], p. 186.)

⁴⁵ K. W. Treptow (ed.), *A History of Romania*, p. 234-235.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 235-236.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 236.

⁴⁸ K. Paparrēgopoulos, *Historia tou Hellēnikou Ethnous*, book XV, p. 25.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 26; G. F. Herzberg, *Neue Geschichte Griechenlands*... p. 37.

⁵¹ G. F. Herzberg, *Neue Geschichte Griechenlands*... p. 45.

of course, but Moldavia and Wallachia as well, with himself as sovereign.⁵² B. Ypsilantis was in contact with the “Decembrists,” i.e. the Russian plotters who were attempting to occasion a conflict between Russia and the Ottoman Porte to succeed in subverting the Russian monarchy.

Arguments in favour of the first assumption are: the vainglory of Ypsilantis⁵³, as well as his bitter strife with Vladimirescu. As a matter of fact, Ypsilantis entered the Romanian Lands pompously and was received by Benjamin, the Orthodox Metropolitan of Moldavia, with royal honours.⁵⁴ Furthermore, at the initial stages of the campaign, he was more interested in organizing theatre companies and distributing dignities and offices than in getting his troops ready for battle.⁵⁵ The point is that Vladimirescu, too, regarded himself as the future prince of Wallachia,⁵⁶ and as a result, the clash between the two excessively ambitious leaders grew unavoidable as well as detrimental to their allegedly common cause. And last but not least, the rehabilitation of Alexander’s name, achieved by *Rhigas*. In Orthodox Christendom, the name day is far more important than the birthday. The Czar was named Alexander, and his patron Saint was Alexander Nevsky (1221-1264), the Grand Prince of Kiev who had been canonized in 1547 thanks to his military victory over the German invaders at the 1242 Battle of the Ice. He still today is regarded as the Liberator of the Russian Lands (along with Dmitry Donskoy, who defeated the Tatars on the Don river in 1380 and was canonized as well). Consequently, after Emperor Alexander I defeated the French, he pretended that he was Russia's Alexander the Great.⁵⁷ Ypsilantis, nonetheless, was an Alexander, too. Why could he not become another “Alexander the Great”, a “genuine” one this time? After all, and unlike the Czar, Ypsilantis was a Greek. What a glory for him if he could enter triumphantly in Constantinople! Psychological subtleties, not easy to grasp today, but always important...

As for the second supposition, there is a lot of indicative evidence:

1. As soon as Ypsilantis became the “General Delegate of the Authority” within the *Philiki Hetaireia*, he brought about a significant change. He put its structure on a par with that of the Russian “Decembrists”. The latter had three membership ranks,⁵⁸ while the *Hetaireia* four in theory and practice seven.⁵⁹ Ypsilantis abolished the ranks of *Hetaireia* except two, added a new one (reserved exclusively to the military). So the Greek Friends' Society hierarchy grew similar to the Russian conspirators' one.⁶⁰

2. He had friends among the “Decembrists”, who helped him to prepare his campaign in the Romanian Principalities;⁶¹ major-general Mikhail Fyodorovich Orlov was one of them.⁶² Such sympathy should not provoke surprise. The “Decembrists” had compassion for the “stateless and

⁵² See mainly N. Iorga, *Byzance après Byzance*, p. 250.

⁵³ K. Paparrēgopoulos, *Historia tou Hellēnikou Ethnous*, book XIV, pp. 16-17.

⁵⁴ A. Despotopoulos, “Hē Epanastāsē stē Moldovlachia”, p. 25; Metropolitan Benjamin, in his real name Veniamin Costache, was descended from an aristocratic Moldavian family. (A. Goșu, *Între Napoleon și Alexandru I*, p. 55.)

⁵⁵ K. Paparrēgopoulos, *Historia tou Hellēnikou Ethnous*, book XIV, pp. 21-22.

⁵⁶ K. W. Treptow (ed.), *A History of Romania*, p. 236.

⁵⁷ See, for instance, Henri Troyat, *Les compagnons du coquelicot* (Paris: Flammarion, 1959), p. 236.

⁵⁸ Mitrofan Viktorovich Dovnar-Zapolsky, *Taïnoe obshchestvo Dekabristov* (=The Secret Society of Decembrists), Moscow: I. D. Sytin, 1906, p. 11.

⁵⁹ *Archeio Emmanouēl Xanthou* (= The Archive of Emmanuel Xanthos), vol. I (Athens: Historical and Ethnological Society of Greece, 1997), pp. xi-xii; G. L. Arsh, *Taïnoe obshchestvo Filiki Eteriya* (= The Secret Society “Philiki Hetareia”). Translated into Greek by Serapheim Papadēmētriou (Athens: “To Laïko Vivlio”, 1966), pp. 63-64.

⁶⁰ I. Philēmōn, *Dokimion historikon peri tēs Hellēnikēs Epanastaseōs*, vol. I, pp. 36-37.

⁶¹ G. L. Arsh, *Taïnoe obshchestvo* ..., p. 97.

⁶² George F. Jewsbury, “The Greek Question. The View from Odessa”, *Cahiers du monde russe* (Paris), vol. 40, no. 4 (1999), p. 753; Evrydiki Sifneos, *Imperial Odessa: Peoples, Spaces, Identities* (Leiden: Brill, 2017), p. 90. As for M. F. Orlov see Andrei Anikin, *Russian Thinkers, Essays on Socio-Economic Thought in the 18th and 19th Centuries* (Moscow: “Progress Publishers”, 1988), pp. 33, 89, 91, 96, and 104ff., passim.

oppressed nations”, namely the Greeks and the Jews, and accordingly wished to be conducive to their liberation.⁶³ What is more, the time looked ripe for revolutionary action. The 1820 rebellion in Spain constituted a strong stimulus for insurrection in Russia and the Balkans.⁶⁴

3. The flag Ypsilantis hoisted no later than he entered Moldavia was black-white-red. The black reminded the revolutionaries' slogan “Freedom or Death”; the white was a sign of the Justice of Greeks' struggle against the Ottomans. The red stood for the Greek Nation's to-be-recovered sovereignty.⁶⁵ Moreover, the flag had on one side the Phoenix, i.e. the Greek mythical, majestic bird that “cyclically regenerates from its ashes”, and on the other the Greeks' isosceles cross. It goes without saying, the latter implied the Christian Orthodoxy (in opposition to Roman Papacy, equally hateful to both Greeks and Russians); and the Phoenix indicated the masonic lodge established in Russia, that was named after the mythical bird and under the veil of which were run the “official” headquarters of *Philiki Hetaireia*.⁶⁶

All right so far. Yet, there was something peculiar. The colours of Ypsilantis' insurrection were identical to those of the North German Confederation, established in 1866 thanks to Prussian Minister-President Otto von Bismarck.⁶⁷ As already mentioned, although despotically ruled, Prussia was a country in which several principles of the Enlightenment were put into effect. What is more, in the eyes of the *lato sensu* Illuminati the unification of the German states, big or small, into a confederation would be the model of the European New Order being prepared;⁶⁸ the Swiss Confederation, happily reorganized on the Czar's initiative and through the action of Capo d'Istria, was regarded as a “good omen”.⁶⁹ However, the Foreign Minister of the Austrian Empire, Prince Klemens von Metternich, was apprehensive of Germany's unification in the framework of the dreamed confederation.⁷⁰ For Austria, a state heir to the Holy Roman Empire would forever lose her primacy within the German world. And his concern increased because of Bavaria's Royal House of Wittelsbach, who, despite the fervent Roman Catholicism of their subjects being in flagrant opposition to the North German Protestantism, was not damaging to Germany's confederative unification.⁷¹ And further, the Bavarian Kings took as a model the Prussian Monarchy; in other words, though retaining their authoritarian rule, they reformed their country in concert with principles of Enlightenment.

All that was going to impact Europe in general seriously and Greece in particular. After all, the future King of Greece would be a Wittelsbach...

4. Ypsilantis was dressed in a black uniform and carried a “Skull and Bones” badge; and likewise did his elite military unit, the “Sacred Battalion”. The latter was formed by young Greeks, former students mainly at German and Russian universities,⁷² resolved to “win or die”. Paradoxical as it may appear, the Skull and Bones crest were most likely taken from the Prussian “Hussars of Death”. Let us repeat once more that Prussia was by no means regarded as a

⁶³ M. V. Dovnar-Zapolsky, *Taĭnoe obshchestvo Dekabristov*, p. 78.

⁶⁴ Ch. Seignobos, *Histoire politique de l'Europe contemporaine. Évolution des partis et des formes politiques, 1814-1896* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1903), pp.273-275

⁶⁵ *Sēmaies Eleutherias* (= Flags of Freedom), Athens: Historical and Ethnological Society of Greece, 2014, p. 10.

⁶⁶ Notis Botzaris, *Visions balkaniques dans la préparation de la Révolution grecque (1789-1821)*, (Geneva: Librairie E. Droz, 1962), p. 75.

⁶⁷ https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conf%C3%A9d%C3%A9ration_de_l%27Allemagne_du_Nord (retrieved on November 27, 2021).

⁶⁸ *Archeion Ioānnou Kapodistria*, vol. VI, “Apperçu des idées de l'empereur sur les affaires de l'Allemagne”, p.69.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 67.

⁷⁰ *Mémoires, documents et écrits divers laissés par le prince de Metternich, publiés par son fils, le prince Richard de Metternich*, tome V (Paris: E. Plon, 1882), Metternich to Count Antoine Apponyi, Austrian ambassador to France, Vienna, June 6, 1832, p. 286.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, Metternich to Baron Gise, Bavaria's Foreign Minister, p.347.

⁷² P. K. Enepekides, *Rhigas-Ypsilanti-Capodistria* (Athens: “Hestia” Collaros, 1965), p. 273ff.

“reactionary Kingdom” by then. After all, the Masonic lodges were particularly active there and, as a rule, teamed up with the Illuminati. The famous *Euergeten* (from the Greek word meaning “benefactor”) constitutes a typical case.⁷³

And now, let us go back to the question: Why did Alexander I repudiate Alexander Ypsilantis? Because of the latter’s imperial ambitions? Because of Ypsilantis’ subversive affiliations? The more logical answer would be: because of both these. In that same year (1821), the Czar was gradually given enough information about the Russian secret societies, their branches, and their leaders’ profile.⁷⁴ Yet, he remained apparently cool. For he was not in a measure to break up his victorious army. That was now the pride and glory of Russia’s imperial Crown. However, he began distrusting his army, nobility, and even people.⁷⁵ That is why he welcomed the approaches of Prince von Metternich and listened sympathetically to his “advice” and suggestions.⁷⁶

* * *

No sooner did A. Ypsilantis enter the Austrian Empire’s territory than he asked for a passport to reach Hamburg and eventually the U.S.A.⁷⁷ Why America? Did he have connections in the United States? Did he consider himself able to create relationships, once in “Washington’s liberated land”? A clear answer has not been provided so far; still, the first supposition seems plausible. The Illuminati had already established important intellectual strongholds in the U.S.A.⁷⁸

Be that as it may, a pseudonymous passport was issued for him by the relevant Austrian authority, yet, a bit later, the latter withdrew it brusquely.⁷⁹ Moreover, Ypsilantis was taken in custody into the Castle of Palanok in Munkács (today’s Mukachevo), and jailed therein under deplorable conditions that worsened his already fragile health.⁸⁰ However, the prime mover of his imprisonment was not the Emperor of Austria Francis I but the Czar, who, being in a towering rage, confiscated all the property that the Ypsilantis family had in Russia and left Elisabeth, Alexander’s mother, in extreme poverty.⁸¹ In vain did the jailed revolutionary plead his homonymous Emperor of Russia and the King of Prussia, Frederick William, whom he regarded as his “natural protector”, to be released. It was to no avail that he declared, once set free, to reach not America but Greece.⁸² Of course, he lied,⁸³ and none believed him. He was banished even from Russia, while, at the same time, Greeks who fled their country in struggle against the Porte were promptly given asylum in the Czar’s Empire.⁸⁴ Only the favour to be confined in Theresienstadt (today Terezín), Bohemia, instead of Munkács was granted at last. After the succession of Alexander I by his brother, Nicholas I, Ypsilantis was released. In 1827 and early in 1828, he died miserably in Vienna.⁸⁵

⁷³ Michael Voges, *Aufklärung und Geheimnis* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1987), p. 111.

⁷⁴ M. V. Dovnar-Zapolsky, *Taínoe obshchestvo Dekabristov*, p. 77; cf. Patrick O’ Meara, *The Decembrist Pavel Pestel. Russia’s First Republican* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), p. 23.

⁷⁵ Henry A. Kissinger, *A World Restored. Metternich, Castlereagh and the Problems of Peace, 1812-1822* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1957), p. 281.

⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 288; P. K. Enepekides, *Rhigas-Ypsilanti-Capodistria*, pp. 127-131.

⁷⁷ I. Philēmōn, *Dokimion historikon peri tēs Hellēnikēs Epanastaseōs*, vol. II, p. 189.

⁷⁸ Antony C. Sutton, *America’s Secret Establishment. An Introduction to the Order of Skull & Bones* (Billings, Montana: Liberty House Press, 1986), p. 80.

⁷⁹ I. Philēmōn, *Dokimion historikon peri tēs Hellēnikēs Epanastaseōs*, vol. II, pp. 189- 191.

⁸⁰ Ibid., pp. 191-193, 213-214.

⁸¹ Ibid., pp. 214-217.

⁸² Ibid., pp. 216-217.

⁸³ Ibid., p. 217.

⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 213; Helenē E. Koukkou, *Iōannēs Kapodistrias. Ho anthrōpos, ho diplōmatēs, 1800-1828* (= Ioannis Kapodistrias. The Man, the Diplomat, 1800-1828), Athens: “Hestia” Collaros, 1978, p. 131.

⁸⁵ P. K. Enepekides, *Rhigas-Ypsilanti-Capodistria*, pp. 134-150.

* * *

As soon as the War of Independence was triggered off in Southern Greece, Demetrios Ypsilantis, Alexander's younger brother and a Russian army officer, reached the Peloponnese. He arrived in the capacity of being his brother's deputy. Then, he considered himself the military and political leader of the risen up Morea and Mainland Greece. Accordingly, he formed a new black-dressed "Sacred Battalion" with the Skull and Bones badge, of course. Simultaneously, he hoisted the black-white-red Phoenix flag of *Philiki Hetaireia* and persuaded the commander-in-chief of the Greek army in the Peloponnese, Theodoros Kolokotronis, to raise it as well.⁸⁶ Suddenly, there was a thunderbolt out of the blue. Alexandros Mavrokordatos, President of the Executive Branch of Greece's Provisional Administration, issued a decree on 15th March, 1822, by which the blue and white flag was substituted for the black-white-red *Hetaireia*'s one.

Furthermore, everyone who insisted on hoisting the latter was declared an outlaw.⁸⁷ Demetrios Ypsilantis persisted in hoisting his brother's flag but did it all on his own. He died in Nauplion, capital of independent Greece, in 1832, not without having won the last battle of the Greek Revolution against the Ottomans in 1829, at Petra, Boeotia.

Black-dressed officers of Demetrios Ypsilantis' Sacred Battalion, with the emblem of Skull & Bones on their hat. On the left, Theodoros Kolokotronis wearing the uniform of major of a British military corps and holding the Phoenix three-coloured flag. (Source: *Sēmaies Eleutherias...*)

During the first half of the 1820s, a city in Michigan, U.S.A., was named Ypsilanti.⁸⁸ Was it after Demetrios, or after Alexander who imprisoned, lamented his fate, or after both? According to the official history, the name-giver was Demetrios, and, so far, there is no reason to raise any objection.

During the first half of the 1830s, moreover, the famous "Brotherhood of Death" was founded, nowadays known as "Skull & Bones" or plain "Bones". Needless to say, its emblem

⁸⁶ Nikolaos K. Kasomoulēs, *Enthymēmata stratiōtika tēs Epanastaseōs tōn Hellēnōn, 1821-1833* (= War Memoirs. The Greek Revolution, 1821-1833). Edited by Giannēs Vlachogiannēs (Athens: Bankeion Foundation, 1940), p. 159.

⁸⁷ The decree in *Sēmaies Eleutherias*, p. xlv.

⁸⁸ Manos D. Vatalas, entry "Hypsilantē" (Ypsilanti), *Megalē Hellēnikē Enkyklopaideia*, vol. XXIII (Athens: "Pyrssos", 1933), p. 761A;

consists exactly of a skull and bones, and it is believed to be the branch of German secret society. What is more, the alleged founder of the “Brotherhood of Death” had been Demosthenes, the orator and statesman of ancient Athens. And last but not least, the hierarchical structure of the American “Skull & Bones” society is almost the same as that of the *Philiki Hetareia* after Alexander Ypsilantis was appointed “General Delegate of the Authority”. As already mentioned, the latter had established three ranks of membership instead of the previous four, but one of the ranks introduced by Ypsilantis was reserved exclusively to the military. The same occurs in the American “Bones”. Only two ranks exist, obviously because there is no need for the military any longer.⁸⁹ To enlarge upon the American Brotherhood would be beyond the scope of the present essay, of course.

The “Brotherhood of Death”, alias “Skull & Bones”. *Est hodie in bonis* (= It is for today in the bones): A nineteenth-century announcement of a weekly meeting. The number 322 is the year of Demosthenes' death. (Source: Antony C. Sutton: *America's Secret Establishment...*)

⁸⁹ See the monograph authored by Antony C. Sutton, *America's Secret Establishment. An Introduction to the Order of Skull & Bones* (Billings, Montana: “Liberty House Press”, 1986), pp. 6, 200-201.

A sculpture of Alexander Ypsilantis made in the latter half of the nineteenth century. The Skull and Bones are clearly visible.

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