A War Of Independence Essay, Research Paper

When a suppressed nation decides to take up action in order to achieve its freedom, many issues

are raised, for, such actions do not affect only the conquered and the conquerors but they have an

enormous impact on all neighbor nations. Therefore, the Greek war of independence is a

multidimensional event which did not have to do only with the two peoples directly involved

(Turkish and Greek) but with the rest of the European countries as well. For this reason the

Greek war of Independence has to be examined within the broader context of the relations of the

European states, their economic and imperialistic interests and plans, their recent experience of

wars and how all these factors are interwoven.

After the defeat of Napoleon, European states decided that they had somehow to preserve a

balance in Europe so as to avoid any future offensive advances of any country. For this reason,

the most powerful countries of Europe (Great Britain, Austria, Russia, France and Prussia)

gathered in Paris in 1815, in an effort to secure a lasting peace in the Continent. Actually their

main purpose was to contain the so far offensive policy of France. As a matter of fact we can

verify this from a state speech that Lord Castlereagh, the British Minister of Foreign Affairs,

gave at the Cabinet in 1820: “It was a union for the Reconquest and liberation of great

proportion of the Continent of Europe from the Military D minion of France. [...]. It was never

intended as a union for the Government of the World, or for the Superintendence of the Internal

Affairs of other States” (quoted in J. Joll, 71). However, at the back-stages of all these official

conferences many secret agreements were being concluded among the allies, the one trying to

steal away power from the other.

That is how the European picture, more or less, looked like when the Greek struggle for

independence broke out in 1821 –in the beginning rather unsuccessfully– in the Danubian

Principalities under the leadership of Alexander Ipsilantis. In fact, during that time the Great

Powers were at the Conference of Laibach with an agenda full of insurrections in Spain and

Italy. Consequently, the news concerning Greece were the last thing the Great Powers wanted to

hear. Especially Metternich, the Austrian chancellor, was altogether appalled by the news and

he tried to influence the Tsar against the Greeks. According to Gaston Isambert, in order to

apprehend Metternich’s foreign policy “we have to penetrate deep to +. de Metternich’s

character”. Isambert also claims that Metternich was viewing the sultan as a means to make the

subjugation of nations a legitimate action. Furthermore, Metternich was very much afraid that the

Russians, under the pretext of protecting the Greek Christians, might interfere in the internal

affairs of the Ottoman Empire (Isambert, 65-66) and thus find a way out to the Mediterranean

Sea.

As far as how the British viewed the Greek uprising, Finley says: “The British Cabinet was

more surprised by the Greek Revolution, and viewed the outbreak with more aversion than any

other Christian government [...]. The immediate suppression of the revolt seemed therefore to be

the only way of preventing Greece from falling under the protection of Emperor Alexander, and

of hindering Russia from acquiring naval stations in the Mediterranean.” (Finley, 2). At that time

Castleragh was the head of the Foreign Office and it seems that more or less he was sharing the

same anxieties with Metternich. However, in letter that Castlereagh sent to Bagot, the British

ambassador in Russia, on 28 October 28 1822, he does not seem to be quite sure of how the

Greek question should be handled: “Ought the Turkish yoke to be forever riveted upon the necks

of their suffering and Christians subjects?” (quoted in Joll, 83 ). In this statement we discern

some sympathy, and maybe even a willingness to help the Greeks but reading the same letter

further down we can understand why the policy of Gastlereagh and generally of England had

been rather inconsistent, especially during the first years of the Greek revolt. Castlereagh feared

that, even if the Turks could be removed from the Greek territories, the Greeks would not be

capable of forming a government without the influence of a foreign power and the power he was

referring to was Russia. Castlereagh concludes his letter by saying that he could not put into

danger “the frame of long established relations, and to aid the insurrectionary efforts now in

progress in Greece” (quoted in Joll, 84). Accordingly, one can argue that, as far as the eastern

Mediterranean issue was concerned, what had brought together Castlereagh and Canning was

their common wish to maintain the peace in the East and that this can be considered as the

quintessence of the British and Austrian policy of that period.

Alexander I of Russia

At this point it is worthwhile mentioning Castlereagh’s reference to Russia as the possible

power influencing the Greeks. As a matter of fact, at that time, everybody thought that Russia

was supporting the Greeks. Russia, more than any other European state, had obvious reasons for

longing a Greek revolution against her “eternal” enemy, Turkey, because if the Ottoman Empire

collapsed, the Russians would have access to the Mediterranean Sea. Furthermore, Russia was

in the eyes of the other states as a probable sponsor of the revolution since both nations

belonged to the Orthodox faith. Additionally, the belief that the Tsar was behind the Revolution

of Greece became even more intense by the Greeks themselves. In fact, Greeks had the false – as

it turned out to be later on – impression that Russia would come to their rescue. This impression

was justified by the fact that Tsar Alexander had vaguely given some faint hopes to the

revolutionaries before the revolution. (Finley, 1). However, the Tsar and his ministers were in a

dilemma. On the one hand, the Greeks, being in friction with the Turks, were affecting

tremendously the commercial activities of Russia. This was because during the years before

1821, Russia started exporting grain to the Western European countries using mainly Greek

vessels that carried the Turkish flag. However, since Greeks were in conflict with the Ottoman

Empire, the former were not allowed any more to pass through the Straits and consequently the

exporting power of Russia was curtailed. (Anderson, 60). On the other hand, it goes without

saying that the Tsar did not wish any alteration of the existent status quo in Europe. Monarchies

should be preserved, and therefore, Tsar Alexander’s objective would, naturally, be to preserve

his monarchical rule.

In Laibach the Powers were taken aback. Metternich and Castlereagh on the one side were

against any Russo-Turkish conflicts, let alone war, and on the other side there was Russia facing

a two-blade knife. Both Castlereagh and Metternich put all their efforts on influencing the Tsar

against the Greeks. That is how the Tsar decided to keep a rather neutral stance.

Caslereagh

Though the Greek Revolution took place in 1821, it was not officially discussed before the

Conference of Verona (October-November 1822). However, during the period between the two

conferences the Great Powers were feverishly trying to influence one another on their conduct

regarding the Greek issue. This atmosphere is successfully described by Finley who says that

Europe was threatened by a “war of opinion”. (Finley, 3).

This is how the diplomatic arena had shaped when the Great Powers met at the Conference of

Verona in 1822. Castlereagh died before the Conference took place and was succeeded by

George Canning. + mentioned this takeover of the Foreign Office by G. Canning since historians

identify him as the main cause for the shift of the British policy towards the Greek cause and for

the reevaluation of the relations of England with the other European Powers. However,

Castlereagh had started differentiating his position from the alliance some months before he

died; the reason was not disagreements concerning Greece but the insistence of Alexander + on

applying to Spain the principles of the Protocol of Troppau, something that Gastlereagh did not

want. (Bridge & Bullen, 40). It is also clear that “Alexander, unlike Gastlereagh, had evolved

no clear strategy with which to pursue Russian aims in the postwar world.” (Bridge & +ullen,

28). Actually, it appears that “Lord Gastlereagh as the representative of this country, demurred

to pledge which his sovereign could not undertake independently of Parliament”, showing how

Castlereagh felt to the proposal of Alexander to come to the “assistance in case of domestic as

well as of international difficulty.” (L. Courtrney, 372).

Canning, did not attend the conference of Verona but he sent the Duke of Wellington, who was

given instructions to maintain strict, neutral stance (D. Dakin, 148-149). Furthermore,

“Wellington had been instructed, if necessary, to break the unity of the Congress.” (Temperley,

66). However, what was mainly to be discussed at this Congress was the Spanish question,

which in turn could have helped the Greeks. The Spanish question had always been the apple of

discord between the Great Powers, and had the revolution of Spain divided the Powers into

different groups, the Greeks could have taken advantage of this. The strong European states,

though, were flexible enough to form the appropriate groups and agreements according to the

subject in question. (Isambert, 142). Surprisingly but logically enough the Great Powers had not

included in the Conference of Verona the Greek Revolution. Had they done so they would have

officially accepted that indeed there were problems in the East and the Greek Revolution would

have been established for good. Furthermore, they might have added fuel to the fire encouraging

the Greeks to increase their hostilities against the Turks.

In regard to the Conference f Verona and especially to how the British conducted their policy,

+ should give a general account of how Stratfort Canning (G. Canning’s cousin), +.+. Courtney,

Isambert and +. G. Stapleton Canning’s private secretary), viewed Canning himself and his

policy. Stratfort Canning, cousin of the new Foreign Minister of England, claims that his

cousin’s policy must be related to his personality as this was farmed during his youth. He gives

us same extracts of poems that G. Canning wrote about Greece when he was 9 years old saying

that these poems would serve “as for the indications they afford of the source where our young

author derived the first elements of that character which he displayed in afterlife.” (Str. Canning,

29). Further down, Str. Canning gives a general idea of Canning’s foreign policy: “To our

foreign relations he gave a tone which had the effect of maintaining our national dignity without

compromising the country’s peace, although he had often to deal with powers either hostile to

our Constitutional system or jealous to our commercial prosperity. He laid the foundations of

Greek independence, he limited the action of despotic influence abroad;” (Str. Canning, 41).

Courtney, on the other hand, believes that “Mr. Canning soon came to recognize the impropriety

for our joining in the attempts to prevent internal changes in several European countries, and

was thus led to maintain the policy and duty of non-interference.” and that Canning also

considered it vain to prevent any manifestations of national content. However, Courtney adds

that Canning did not adopt right from the beginning a concrete stance to the Greek issue as he did

with Spain (Courtney, 1897, 373). Similarly, Isambert says that “Nothing at the Congress of

Vienna announced openly that there was a change of policy in England” (Isambert, 1900, 149)

and he gives quotation of Stapleton’s: “England has not the right to intervene in the Orient. She

is obliged to respect the sovereignty of the Ottoman Empire to the same degree that she would

like others to respect Hers. The above statement, it is true, shows no signs that Canning was

considering of helping the Greeks in any way. Sometimes, though, the real truth lies under

apparent truths. Namely, Canning was aware that any attempt of his to help the Greeks either

directly or indirectly would provoke his allies, which he wanted to avoid at all costs. In this

respect he had somehow to appease the suspicions of the Great Powers and try to exercise a

neutral attitude, at least during and short after the Congress of Verona.

George Canning

But what happened and how did this Congress end? Actually Isambert argues that this Congress

was the epilogue of the abandonment of the Greeks from Tsar Alexander due to a memorandum,

to the Porte in November, 1822. According to the terms of this memorandum, Turkey had, first

to guarantee amnesty to the Greeks, second to evacuate the Principalities and third to raise the

restrictions concerning trade and passage through the Straits. This memorandum was basically

aiming at the reestablishment of the diplomatic relations between Russia and Turkey (something

that both Austria and England wanted and worked for). Furthermore, it was vital for the

commercial activities of Russia and also it could probably appease the Greeks and slow dawn

hostilities in the area (Isambert, 142).

In any case, it would be naive to accept that this diplomatic step of Russia was taken to relieve

the Greeks per se. Additionally, it is needless to say that what the Tsar did was appreciated by

Great Britain and Austria who thought that a Russo-Turkish war had been avoided, at least for

the moment.

Prince Metternich

However, after the Congress of Verona, on 14 February 1823, Canning sent a letter to Stradford,

the British ambassador in Constantinople, ordering him to inform the Porte that England would

not maintain the earlier friendly relations with Turkey unless the Porte changed its attitude

toward her Christian subjects. In March 1823 he also formally recognized the Greek blockades

against the Turks. Of course it is plausible that this recognition was aiming at the protection of

the British vessels from the Greek pirates and Anderson further claims that “it meant no

weakening of Britain’s neutral attitude in the struggle.” (Andersan, 58). Nevertheless, no matter

what was the real reason behind Canning’s recognition of the blockades of the Greeks, it still

was important for the Greeks since the outcome was the same. Canning took further actions: he

replaced +. Maitland, the British High Commissioner in the Ionian Islands who was against the

new policy of Canning, with Fr. Adam. These we could say are the very first actions denoting

the shift of the British policy concerning the Greek cause.

Nevertheless, before I refer to Canning’s policy as this was shaped in the year 1824, I shall try

to figure out what events or thoughts triggered Canning to alter it. Because even if we accept as

true that Canning’s sympathy for the plight of the Greeks was genuine, it is not a reason, strong

enough, for statesman to base his policy on. Accordingly, some of us would ask: what were

those facts that brought Canning’s philhellenism on the surface? First, it is true that even before

G. Canning held his post at Foreign Office, there was a rather strong philhellenic tendency

among the British people and some were actively involved in the Greek War of Independence:

Lord Byron, General Thomas Gordon, and Abney Hastings. The sympathy that the British people

felt for the Greeks could not let Canning unaffected. Actually, Finley writes: “the British

government consequently opposed to the revolution; but it had not, like that of Russia, the power

to coerce the sympathies of the Britons.” (Finley, 2).

Stratford Canning

Yet, the growing British philhellenism could not had been enough to make Canning change his

policy toward the Greeks. For, Great Britain, before the Greek Revolution which changed

dramatically the picture in the East, had serious economic reasons to long for a strong and

unified Ottoman Empire. The first reason was that the Russians had at all costs to be kept away

from the Mediterranean Sea. The second reason was that the Ottoman Empire provided the

British with safe passage to India. A third point was that England wanted to maintain the

position she had at the Ionian Islands. But if she was to accept the slow disintegration of the

Ottoman Empire and an independent Greek state, she would not be able to justify her position in

the Ionians.

However, speaking from a military point of view, the years 1821-1823 had been quite

successful for the Greeks and Canning probably realized that “the Sultan, harassed by the calls

of a disorganized and decaying Empire would be unable, effectually to withstand the armies of

the Tsar” (Courtney, 376). + bit later, when by the end of 1823 Greeks’ attention is directed to a

civil war and yet the Sultan fails to crush them, Canning became even more resolute and fervent

concerning the Greek issue. In this manner, Isambert claims that the fact that Canning becomes

gradually more attached to the side of the Greeks is not linked to his sympathy towards the

suppressed nation but rather to his conviction that the British could benefit from such a policy.

(lsambert, 148). Therefore, we could say that what Canning tried to do was to adjust his policy

and interests to the new circumstances. Yet, Lord Strangford, the British ambassador at

Constantinople, did not share the same thoughts as his Minister and he was afraid that the new

policy would endanger the integrity of the Ottoman Empire. Nevertheless, what Strangford

failed to see was that the Ottoman Empire had already lost its integrity. So what Strangford, did

was to interpret the instructions of Canning in a somewhat favorable way for the Porte.

Nevertheless, Lord Strangford’s conduct could not escape the attention of G. Canning who in

1824 replaced him with his cousin, Stratford Canning.

Reading the preceding paragraphs dealing with Canning’s policy, we come up with a question

mark: what were the reactions of the other Powers to the British Foreign Secretary’s attitude?

No wonder, it shook both Russia and Austria. Isambert writes about Metternich: “The new

element was to appear in the policy of Metternich in 1823; it is his hatred for Canning and the

cooling of the Austro-English alliance that marked the proceeding years. Meternich and Canning

have a profound dislike for one another: the stubbornness of the former is at the opposite side of

the progressive activity of the latter.” Furthermore, Isambert states that what Metternich did was

to follow simultaneously two diplomatic paths: the official one using it as a front-window and

the other one the secret, the one that could serve his purposes and for which he had employed +.

de Gentz. (Isambert, 161-162).

On the other side there was the Tsar, who understood that what Canning was doing would

inevitably increase the influence of the British in Greece. So, the Tsar decided to take up action

to cut down Canning’s diplomacy. After all “Russia naturally wished to preserve her position as

protector of the Greeks, and to retain the honor of being the first Christian government that

covered her co-religionaries with her orthodox aegis.” (Finley, 31). Accordingly, Tsar

Alexander +, in January 1824, made a proposal to the Powers. This proposal entailed the

establishment of three, autonomous Greek Principalities similar to those Principalities of

+ ldavia and Wallachia. However, this was a rather clumsy step because it blew away the hopes

of the Greeks that the Tsar would help them to create an independent state, and similarly the

project did not satisfy the Sultan either. Furthermore, the Tsar, instead of intimidating Canning

and cease his influence in Greece, enforced it. “+ll historians studying the Greek Revolution

agree that Foreign Office changed its policy towards the agitated Greece from the moment

Russia (9 January 1824) proposed the division of Greece into semi-independent principalities.”

(Kordatos, 1977, 31). Consequently, the Tsar not only failed to strengthen his position, but he

reached the apposite result.

Naturally, Canning did not waste any time: he saw to the publication of the Russian proposal

–which was not supposed to reach the Greeks– at the French newspaper “Le Constitutionnel”

on the 3lst of May. When the Greeks were informed of the plans that the Tsar had for them, much

to his discontent, started orienting their attention to Great Britain.

However, so far I have referred only to what the Foreign Powers did and, to a lesser extent, to

the reactions of the Turks. What about the Greeks, who, after all, were directly interested? Well,

the Greeks were not only directly interested, but also directly influenced by the Conferences,

decisions and objectives of the Great Powers. Already, at the beginning of this paper +

mentioned the hopes of the Greeks which were directed towards Russia. However, gradually

these hopes faded away especially after the Tsar’s project of 1824. The truth is that every Greek

politically involved had each one’s own ideas about where they should ask for help. Kolettis

was said to be pro-French, Mavrokordatos pro-British, Kolokotronis sometimes (at the

beginning) pro-Russian and sometimes pro-British.

Nevertheless, + noticed that these foreign parties prevailed one over the other according to what

each Power represented by these parties, was doing at a given time. + could not say if it is a

mere coincidence the fact that after the Congress of Verona and especially after the Tsar’s

memorandum the British party in Greece takes the upper hand and the Greeks are addressing for

help to Canning, who, after all, had already given them some positive signs. On the other hand,

the growing English interest in Greece has also his origins in the very nature of Greek politics.

Dakin claims that “at every turn the Greeks tended to form factions and to put forward rival

plans; if one group of patriots sought the assistance of a foreign power another group would

compete for the assistance or would set going a rival intrigue with another power. ” (Dakin,

160). My opinion is that probably the whole matter is a vicious circle; the divergent behavior of

the Great Powers stimulated the formation of different groups in Greece, and in this respect the

divided Greeks indirectly offered the Powers an open field to benefit for their own purposes.

In the meantime, Alexander + was trying to drag Austria and England to another Conference in

St. Petersburg but “Canning`s aim was to hold it off as long as possible, and only to consent to it

as a last resource.” Furthermore, Canning had given instructions to Bagot, the British

ambassador in Russia to take part in no meeting of the Holly Alliance. These orders Bagot

disregarded “and committed England to the conference scheme.” (Temperley, 332)

While a Conference was probably to be held in Russia, Canning received a letter from the

Greeks on 4th November, expressing their indignation about the Memorandum of Russia -what

else did this letter suggest other than which foreign party in Greece was at that point

strengthened? Canning’s reply was friendly, however, somewhat ambiguous. Virtually, “England

had been neutral as regards South America, and intended to be equally so towards Greece,”

(Temperley, 333). + would interpret the stance of Canning at this time, as that of letting Austria

and Russia consume themselves into reaching an agreement which on the one hand would be

worked out without England’s approval and on the other hand, would be unlikely to satisfy

neither the Greeks nor the Turks. And last but not least, Canning managed to separate his policy

from that of the Holly Alliance’s without provoking its members.

Apart from these diplomatic implications which have an indisputable importance and influence

on the Greek struggle, there is another fact of immense significance, which has been interpreted

in many different ways. It has to do with the loans that the Greeks managed to raise from British

banks; another sign of which of the Great Powers had the greatest influence on the Greeks’

thoughts! Paparrigopoulos states that negotiations in London for the floating of the first, after the

formation of the Greek Government, loan, which was actually granted at the beginning of 1824,

denoted practically the conviction that the British nation had for the success of the Greek

Revolution,” (Paparrigopoulos, 167). Markezinis seems to agree “The subscription of these two

loans, known as the loans of Independence, was a success, an overall recognition, with

important political effects. It constitutes the recognition of the Greek state,” (Markezinis, 29).

However, were the loans actually floated as an indirect acceptance of the recently formed Greek

government? “We should emphasize that during that period (1823) the stock-market of London

was going through an enormous crisis. There was in circulation a great amount of money with

1ow interest. For this reason London stock-market was giving loans to weak countries (Chile,

Argentina, Colombia, Denmark, Brazil, Mexico, etc.) at a high interest.” (Kordatos, 238-239).

More specifically, the Greek government was discredited to such an extent that the first loan

(1824) was floated at 59% and the second one (1825) at 51,5%, and even worse, for the same

reason, they had to mortgage the National Lands. The first loan was agreed to 800,000 pounds

sterling and the second to 2.000,000 pounds sterling but because of the high rate the Greeks got

into their hands for the first one only 300,000 pounds and for the second one only 600,000. Is it

because ‘”by the end of that year there were distinct signs that philhellene feeling was on the

wane”? (Anderson, 57). I cannot answer; maybe there was not any philhellene feeling after all,

or maybe there appeared to be one so that foreigners offer their help and then ask in return

double as much. Makriyannis, a Greek fighter, wrote: “The creditors ask for their money; we do

not give them a penny -they intervene in our affairs.” (Makriyannis, 497). These, however, are

nothing more than mere assumptions, that do not prohibit the probability that there were true

philhellenes. At any rate, if we take into account that “the small part (of the loans) that finally

reached Greece, served rather the civil war than the struggle for independence” (Markezinis,

29) we shall see that even the Greeks themselves tried to get the best, each one for his own, out

of the whole situation and had the tendency to forget their real objectives.

That is how we move to the year 1825. In Greece, at that time there was civil war. Ibrahim

Pasha –employed by the Sultan as extra help– set foot onto the Peloponnese and was directing

to Nafplion and yet Mavrokordatos had imprisoned Kolokotronis, a prominent Greek general.

Luckily for the Greeks he was later freed (31 May 1825) after Koundouriotis’, a prominent

politician, persistence. Greeks were in a dreadful plight and under such precarious

circumstances human beings sometimes in their efforts to escape, fail to see some pitfalls.

Similarly, the members of the Greek government facing the danger of being swallowed by the

Sultan, signed the “Act of Submission” (July 22nd, 1825) that was addressed to England. The

Greek delegation reached London in September 1825 and met with Canning on the 29th of the

same month. The delegation asked from Canning to choose a monarch for Greece expressing at

the same time their preference for Leopold, Duke of Saxe-Comburg. Much to the disappointment

of the Greek delegates, Canning’s reaction was far from their expectations: he politely rejected

their proposal claiming that he could not abandon the neutral policy he had adopted till then, for

he would put into danger the British interests. After all, what was Canning doing: two steps

forward one step backward? Was he doing the Greeks a good turn and when they ate the bait he

was to cool their heels to have grounds to ask something in return or was he just cautious not to

attract the attention of the European powers and of Turkey putting at stake his country’s interests,

as he was claiming? Bearing these questions in mind, should we accept, that those Greeks who

had signed this particular Act of Submission — actually at that time there were two more Acts of

Submission, one addressed to Russia and another one to France — were traitors, as more or less

Kordatos characterizes them? (Kordatos, 31). I believe that Kordatos’ stance is absolute; I

definitely agree that by this Act the Greeks opened a path for Canning for more intervention but

did they have any alternative? And furthermore, as Isambert observes, had not been Canning

(exercising an unquestionably sophisticated diplomacy) who in his letter on 1 December 1824,

was encouraging the Greeks to a future British intervention? (Isambert, 185).

After the Act of Submission Canning “was ready to negotiate between Turkey and Greece

single-handed and at once. Also, he was prepared to consider cooperation with Alexander of

Russia” (Temperley, 342). Similarly, Anderson writes “By September Canning was willing to

mediate between the Porte and its Greek subjects, and to cooperate in this way with Alexander”

(Anderson, 64). But why only now and not earlier, was Canning willing to negotiate? Probably

because “he thought a conference might be inevitable, but insisted that it could not be held until

diplomatic relations between Russia and Turkey were reestablished” (Temperley, 333).

Furthermore, I think it is self-evident that while he was turning down all proposals for official

settlement, he was breaking fresh ground concerning his relations with Greece and weakening

the position of the other Powers. However, now that Canning is ready to sit at the table of

negotiations, Tsar Alexander I died (December 1st, 1825), and his successor, Nicholas I, ‘”was

much less willing than Alexander I to sacrifice the real interest of Russia to dreams of

international cooperation.” (Anderson, 63). However, Canning sent the Duke of Wellington to

congratulate the new Tsar, giving him instructions to avoid the possibility of war.

In the meantime, Str. Canning met Mavrokordatos in January 1826 and the latter expressed the

Greeks’ preference of a solution provided by the powers in concert” and not a solution coming

from the Russian side alone. (Dakin, 178). Actually, at the third National Assembly of the

Greeks one of the main issues of the agenda was to vote and give official permission to Canning

to interfere. Here I give in translation an extract from the letter addressed to Str. Canning, in

regard to the British intervention: “Your Excellency, the legal plenipotentiaries of the Greek

Nation request you to employ for it (the Nation) your favorable cooperation [...]. They give you

the power to negotiate and carry out a peace in accordance to the honor and the interests of the

Greek Nation.” (Mamoukas, 132-133). Canning having the ‘green light’ instructed Wellington to

inform the Tsar about the proposal the Greek government made in 1825 (Act of Submission).

However, Nicholas sent an ultimatum to the Porte in an effort to settle his differences with the

Turks himself, directly. He also told the stunned Duke of Wellington that he would not sent an

ambassador to Constantinople unless England would back up the Russian ultimatum. (Dakin,

179). Anyhow, in this gloomy atmosphere the protocol of 4th April 1826 was signed in St.

Petersburg. According to this protocol Greece was declared an autonomous but tributary state,

and the `Greek territory’ had to be evacuated by the Turks. However, it failed to define what

was to be included in the ‘Greek territory’ (Temperley, 355). To the same respect Isambert

writes that when Nicholas asked whether France should participate in the entente, Wellington

was negative saying that France was opposed as much as Austria to the employment of `moyens

coercifs’ in the East. (Isambert, 259-260). In this attitude we can more clearly perhaps discern

Canning`s purpose of detaching Russia from Austrian and French influence. However, though

Canning reached more or less his goal, the acceptance of the Russian ultimatum –concerning

Russia’s affairs with Turkey — was a precondition for the protocol to be signed. It gave

Nicholas the advantage of commencing a war without necessarily violating the protocol. Last

but not least, even though a tributary, Greece was acknowledged as a state, which was of

immense importance for the Greeks. Nevertheless the British were not utterly satisfied by the

terms of the protocol and were planning in a more “elaborate arrangement”. (Dakin, 180).

Finally the Sultan at a separate meeting with the Russians accepted the Protocol of St.

Petersburg (in Akkerman, in October 1826), for he did not wish to be engaged in a war with

Russia.

Soon after the Conference at St. Petersburg was over, new negotiations emerged, for, the

Protocol just signed was not specific about how the Powers were to achieve their influence in

the Porte. In this series of negotiations France was participating as well. The result of these

meetings was the Treaty of London (6th July 1827). France was assigned to draw up the project

of the Treaty. This project included the following terms: it omitted reverences to the Protocol of

St. Petersburg and it was to be signed by the Allied Powers; it provided Turkey with mediation

of all the Powers and in case of mediation total independence to the Greeks was not to be

recognized; the Greek state was to be paying tribute to Turkey, and, with regard to the borders

of the Greek state, the Powers and Turkey were to set them by a future conference. However, the

significance of this treaty lies on a supplementary article according to which the Powers were

entitled to prevent any friction if the Turks did not accept their mediation. It was this article that

later on in 1827 enabled Russia, England and France to open fire against the Turks in Navarino.

If we were to evaluate the treaty of London what could we say? Courtney states very clearly the

accomplishments of Canning: “He had succeeded in his policy so far that he had prevented war,

that he kept back Russia from obtaining a preponderant authority in South-Eastern Europe and

that he saved Turkey from being beaten and humiliated, whilst he had favored and promoted the

aspirations of the Greeks.”(Courtney, 379)

On the other hand, if we want to make an evaluation that concerns Greece alone we should

notice that the allies did not include any borderlines which turned out to create problems and

disputes in the future and perpetuate the whole issue. Additionally, concerning the negotiations

over the Greek borders only the Powers and the Turks were to participate. The Greeks were

once more left out of the game. Bearing in mind the above are we to assert that, out of this

Treaty the Greek nation found itself worse off than before? For the Greeks it had been a success

the fact that were recognized as a state in a so perplexed context of international interests that

were pursued by politicians and diplomats who employed all their skills. What the Greeks had

achieved at that time was a miracle.

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