

## The Phenomenon of Philhellenism and its Manifestations

Ladies and gentlemen,

On April 1, 1844, a few days after the publication of the new Constitution, a series of 18 Resolutions which form an integral part thereof were published in the Government Gazette, all bearing the same date as the new Charter of 1844. Among them, the Second Resolution refers to those who had the right to be appointed as civil servants within the state under the new regime. In other words, this is the famous resolution on indigenous and non-indigenous people. This included the "indigenous" inhabitants of the Greek territory and "those who fought within the Greek territory until the end of 1827... and those who took part militarily and with evidence in the battles fought against the enemy after that date until 1829, both on land and at sea". More concisely, this regulation was said to apply to the Greeks and the "ancient Philhellenes". Therefore, we already have a definition of those who were legally recognized as Philhellenes and even equal to indigenous Greeks dating from 1844. This provision reiterated those of the Constitutions of 1823, 1827 and of the short-lived Constitution of 1832, which was also known as the "Hegemonic Constitution".

The fact that the Greek state decided to honour certain individuals, generally defined in the statutes since 1822 as "foreign Christians" who came and fought for national independence, and considered them as Greek citizens as of right, shows the respect and honour that surrounded the Philhellenes. After all, according to the Constitution, the status of Greek citizen was considered to be the supreme honour for any inhabitant of the country.

However, the phenomenon of Philhellenism cannot be limited to constitutional provisions. On the contrary, its scope was clearly wider than simply the provision for military participation.

At the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, within the spirit of classicism and the vogue for neoclassicism, the Romantics turned to the Greek Revolution as a vehicle that could justify their dreams. This took place in the unique circumstances of Western Europe after 1815 and the final defeat of Napoleon at Waterloo. Then, the progressive Western Europeans witnessed the collapse of their hopes for liberalism and reform in the shape of political projects akin to the recreation of Athenian and ancient Roman democracy, of course as they had imagined them idealized and embellished, but also tailored to the Western collective imaginary of an authentic "Golden Age" of the past. The Greek struggle for freedom and independence created in the minds of the classicists, people with antiquarian and/or liberal beliefs, the hope that it would be possible to revive the ancient glory and rebirth the Greece of Athens and Sparta – although not the Greece of Alexander and Byzantium, because these were hegemonic regimes and therefore "illiberal" according to their own ideas. Initially they set out, first in Germany and Switzerland, but also in Italy and Spain, and then in Britain and France, and finally in other countries of Europe, as well as in the United States, by publishing articles in their newspapers, with the aim of motivating and spreading the word about the struggle which they were aware had already begun. They were also informed about the hanging of Patriarch Gregory V, the massacres of 1821 in Constantinople, Smyrna, Cydonia, Cyprus and beyond, mainly by their own newspapers and the local consular authorities. Such news stirred and alarmed those who saw in the face of Ottoman sovereignty the "faithless" Oriental power that was still threatening Europe with its brutality, in the same way that the massacres of Chios, Psara, Kasos and the Exodus of Messolonghi, but also the surrender of Athens, would provoke horror later on.

The journalistic movement was soon followed by certain actions. Committees were formed and the collection of money for the dispatch of weapons and ammunition to the Greeks who were fighting for their existence started. At the same time, the recruitment of volunteers to be sent to war-torn Greece began, mostly consisting of veterans of the Napoleonic Wars and officers who had been disqualified from service because of their democratic convictions. These were the first battle-hardened Philhellenes, who were gathered in 1822 in the first Heavy Infantry Regiment and the Order of the Philhellenes who were decimated in the dramatic Battle of Peta.

Previously, however, most of them had taken part in other battles and had experienced the cruelty of war and the genocidal actions of the Ottoman conqueror. Some had fled Greece already in 1821, either because they could not stand the conditions, or because they could not find highly paid positions in the Greek Army, or because they imagined that here they would encounter Achilles and Pericles, and instead found Kolokotronis and the other chieftains and precursors, which totally shattered their illusions. Some were shocked by the harsh Greek reprisals during the invasion of Tripolitsa and forgot their own counterparts during the Napoleonic wars. Some of them, the adventurous and wage-seeking ones, appealed to the Sultan or to the Pasha of Egypt Mohammed Ali, father of the warlord of Moria Ibrahim Pasha, to serve in exchange for payment against the Greeks.

But there were also many Philhellenes from nearly all the countries of Europe at that time who realized in which place and for which people they were fighting, not only with the sentimental gaze of the first moment, but with the experience of the fellow-warrior and the sincere comrade. Quite a few of them quickly became emotionally involved. They fell in love with Greek women, mostly the sisters of their allies, and got married, putting down roots in the new land they had chosen as the homeland of their hearts. I will briefly cite the example of the Swiss doctor and journalist Ioannis-Jacob Mayer, who married Altani Georgiou Igleziou from Messolonghi. For him it was his second marriage, but for the young Greek woman it was of course her first. Together they had two children, a little boy and a little girl. They were all slaughtered and died together during the Exodus on the night of the 10<sup>th</sup> to the 11<sup>th</sup> of April 1826. We can also mention that the German doctor Heinrich Treiber married the Greek-Corsican Santa Origoni, an Athenian from her mother's side, a native of Greece, while the Portuguese colonel and nobleman Antonio Figueira d'Almeida married Zoe Mavrokordatou, sister of Alexander Mavrokordatos. Finally, Edward John Trelawny, a faithful companion of Byron and Shelley in Italy, followed the former to Messolonghi and after the death of his friend fled and joined Odysseas Androutsos, married his sister Tarsitsa and had two children. This last marriage was dissolved by a divorce issued in Kefalonia in 1827, with the aim of the return of the Philhellene to England, where having a Greek wife might have presented problems.

Obviously, getting married and putting down roots in the new homeland is a basic element of the Philhellenic presence in our country. But the leading Philhellenes who never visited Greece, such as the members of the leadership of the London Philhellenic Committee – to whom we owe the issuance of the “onerous” Loans of the Struggle, which allowed us to endure the ten-year conflict with the Ottoman Empire – played a much greater role. Prominent among them were John Bowring, Edward Blaquiere, Jeremy Bentham, Francis Burdett, John Cam Hobhouse, David Ricardo, Leicester Stanhope. We cannot omit the figure of Prime Minister George Canning, a key figure in the internationalization of the Greek Question, and on the road to the naval Battle of Navarino.

We should not forget the Piedmontese jurist, Alerino Palma, who was sentenced to death *in absentia* in his homeland for his participation in the 1820/21 rebellion of the Carbonari, and who refused to return to Italy long afterwards, under the reign of King Otto, when he was granted a pardon, and indeed

with a very contemptuous response to Italy. He is buried in Ermoupolis, where he died after a long service to Greece both with his writings during the Struggle and subsequently as a judge in the Greek courts.

Of course, the greatest figure of English Philhellenism remains Lord Byron, with the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his death in Messolonghi being commemorated this year. Both with his poetry and his letters, but mainly with the upheaval in public opinion over his death in besieged Messolonghi, he offered a huge contribution to the Revolution and to Greece, a contribution quite disproportionate to the time he spent in our country.

From French Philhellenism I will recall Charles Fabvier, our own "Faviero", a military man with long service in the Napoleonic army, a deeply liberal man, a freethinker and a fighter, who was active not only in Attica but also in the unsuccessful attempts to liberate Evia and Chios. Fabvier fled after the Battle of Faliro and the fall of the Acropolis of Athens, but returned to Greece after the Naval Battle of Navarino and served as Chief of the Regular Army under Kapodistrias. Among others, Auguste Regnaud de Saint Jean d'Angély, later a marshal of the French Army, served in Greece under Fabvier.

Among the very influential French Philhellenes we must, of course, include the great figures of poetry, journalism and politics Alfred de Lamartine and Victor Hugo, as well as the painter Eugene Delacroix.

In Germany, Goethe and Schiller, Wilhelm Müller and Friedrich Hölderlin stand out among the writers, Frederick Thiersch in the field of education and journalism, Wilhelm von Humboldt in the field of both education and politics. King Ludwig I of Bavaria, who offered financial aid to the Struggle, published a collection of poetry with Philhellenic content, strengthened the Philhellenic movement in his country, and finally offered to Greece the first king, Otto, who, despite what is said by some who are unfamiliar with the actual historical record, turned out to be more Greek than the Greeks.

We must not forget John Gabriel Eynard in Switzerland, a great financier of the Struggle, and the doctor Louis Antoine Gosse, who repeatedly saved Greek populations from the plague.

Italy offered us besides Palma, also Santorre Santarosa, who fell in Sphacteria for Greece. Russia gave us the gift of Alexander Pushkin's writings, but also the possible grandson of Catherine the Great, the officer Nikolai Rykov. I'm not going to give you any more names otherwise you will be completely confused.

Speaking for Corfu, I would like to make a clarification. International publications very often include among the Philhellenes the Ionian fighters and supporters of the Struggle. This is absolutely unacceptable. The people of the Ionian Islands, Corfu, Paxos, Lefkada, Kefalonia, Zakynthos and Citizens of Kythira (Tsirigotes) may have had a Western European education and culture, but the feelings that led them to the Struggle were purely patriotic. How could a non-Greek write the Hymn to Freedom and the Free Besieged or the Odes and the Líra ("The Lyre") of Kalvos? How could people like the Kapodistrias brothers risk their position in the society of the Ionian Islands and, as far as Ioannis Kapodistrias is concerned, in the whole Europe, or Dionysius Count de Roma, and ignore their Greek status? Therefore, never think of the people of the Ionian Islands as anything other than Greeks!

Philhellenism, however, also took unexpected forms. Philhellenism created a school in literature, in art (painting, sculpture, engraving, music), but also in everyday life, such as Philhellenic events, dances,

tea parties, topics of discussion in the literary salons of important hosts around Europe, and finally in the collector's obsession with Greek-themed small objects, mainly of folkloric style. Philhellenic topics inspired by poetry and literature, especially that of Byron, were introduced, both in the form of travel books, but also on vases, dinnerware and decorative wall plates, inkwells, drinking bottles and even oil, vinegar and pepper bottles! Romantic dresses, hats and Greek hairdos were commonplace in women's clothing and hairstyles. Finally, we should pay special tribute to the fans, a kind of indispensable complement to the everyday bourgeois female appearance, which were transformed into small paintings of Philhellenic interest. Paper wallpapers with Philhellenic themes already foreshadowed the stream of Orientalism that was to follow. Finally, the musicians often offered choral scores with supposedly Greek melodies. The significant response of the Philhellenic fundraisers, especially after the massacre of Chios and the exodus of Messolonghi, must also be included in this movement.

The movement of Philhellenism remained alive throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century, despite the disappointment that the young Greek state, which emerged from its founding fathers like the mythical Phoenix, was not a revival of the imaginary vision of ancient Athens. Moreover, even Athens itself did not resemble what they imagined in the West. There was also a Philhellenic movement in the War of 1897, but it was more pronounced in the Balkan Wars. I will recall here the participation of Ricciotti Garibaldi in the Epirus Front and the heroic death in the ranks of the Redshirts of the Greek-Spanish poet and patriot Lorenzo Mavilis in Drisko near Ioannina. What I would like to emphasize is that the end of Philhellenism basically came with the First World War. Traces thereof are preserved to this day through a romantic worship of antiquity, the work of archaeologists, some of the more recent travel guides and other activities that have now been adapted to the modern electronic and internet era.

Within the few moments I have available to test your patience, it is not easy to present the broad subject of Philhellenism adequately. It will, however, suffice to emphasize that Philhellenism contributed substantially to the building up of public pressure on the governments of the Western powers, the ones who like to call themselves the "Great and Protecting Powers of Greece", and facilitated initially the recognition of the Greeks as warriors, and finally led to the international recognition of a young state that was struggling in international isolation for its status. Furthermore, Philhellenism contributed to the granting of loans in 1824 and 1825, but also in 1828 and 1829, it forced the overthrow of the Holy Alliance and its authorities, and finally led to the classification of the Greek State, established in 1822 and recognized as fully independent in 1830, as a "First Class Force", namely, a kingdom equal to those of the Great powers under the Treaty of 1832. These, of course, are the positive aspects of Philhellenism.

For there is also a crucial negative point. Western Philhellenism, with its classicism and its antiquity, was not in a state to understand and admit the national integration of Greece, as demanded by the Great Idea since 1822, nor to accept the enlargement of the Greek borders, much less to accept the New Hellenic State as what it had declared itself to be, i.e. as the only legitimate heir and successor to the Byzantine Empire, inhabited by citizens who claimed reconnection to what had been forcibly interrupted on May 29, 1453. The Philhellenes rejected Byzantium and Orthodoxy, even though they accepted that it was not possible to continue the worship of the twelve Gods or the sacrifice of oxen. But most of them, and even the Protestants, considered Orthodoxy as a kind of idolatry and soon after 1830 they began sending missionaries to Christianize our country.

Concluding these few words of mine, and evaluating the contribution of Philhellenism and the Philhellenes, I must admit that they offered much to Greece, especially those first Philhellenes who

came, participated with us in the Struggle and remained in Greece, by choosing this country as the homeland of their hearts. The First Cemetery of Athens and the Heroes' Cemetery of Messolonghi, as well as many other cemeteries around Greece, preserve the graves of some of these men.