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Establishing a Revolutionary Newspaper: Transplanting Liberalism in a Pre-Modern Society

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Abstract: *In late 1823 two representatives of the London Philhellenic Committee (a Philhellenic group established to support the Greek War of Independence from Ottoman rule) arrived in Missolonghi in Western Greece to administer a loan to the revolutionary Greek government and help the Greek cause. The visit of Lord Byron and Col. Leicester Stanhope was short. Lord Byron died in early April of 1824 and Col. Stanhope was recalled to Britain one month later. During this short period, they managed to establish three newspapers in liberated Greece but also to antagonize each other on the ideology and content of these newspapers. The objective of Stanhope was to disseminate Bentham's liberal ideas in Greece and the objective of Byron was the international recognition of the Greek War of Independence. Their never-ending fights led to the first major episode of newspaper censorship in the history of modern Greece: Byron confiscated an issue of a newspaper because he thought it was damaging to the revolutionaries' international standing and he tried to undermine Stanhope's position by discrediting him to the London Committee. Stanhope did the same by accusing*

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1. This essay is dedicated to the memory of Stavros Tsakyrakis, a good friend, a leading constitutional scholar, a champion of individual rights and liberties, a hero of the resistance against the Greek Junta. It was presented at a graduate seminar on the "The Greek Revolution in the Age of the Revolutions" at the Department of History of the University of Athens and at the 50th Annual Conference of the Consortium on the Revolutionary Era, 1750-1850, in Tallahassee, Florida (both in February 2020). I am thankful to my colleagues Maria Efthymiou and Vasso Seirinidou for the inspiration and guidance, to Lauren Clay, Denise Davidson and Yulie Foka-Kavalieraki for their useful comments in a preliminary draft and Angeliki Diamantopoulou, Despoina Lazaridou, Maria Theotokatou and Katerina Tsertou for excellent research assistance. My research was generously supported by the Templeton Foundation, the Institute for Humane Studies and a research grant from the University of Athens.

Byron of illiberalism. Byron and Stanhope were also involved in the civil war that erupted during the revolution. Their brief stay in Greece brought out major antinomies in their conceptions of liberty, liberalism, democracy and radicalism but also of national interest and revolution. In this paper I am presenting the establishment of three newspapers by Byron and Stanhope, their inevitable conflict and the different ways they perceived the ideas of liberty by drawing on their extensive correspondence and on the memoirs of Byron's companions to the Greek adventure.

We must eliminate all newspapers; we cannot make a revolution with free press. Newspapers are instruments of the oligarchy.

Ernesto "Che" Guevara (1959)²

A Nation is never free if the law does not allow freedom of speech. If Greeks desire freedom, they should be very careful to protect the article in our [revolutionary] constitution that protects freedom of the press. I know that this freedom upsets the few authoritarian minds who don't want the People to wake up and realize their true value and thus expel them. The good patriots should only have one concern: the multiplication of the independent newspapers so the liberated Greek can learn his great and sacred rights. So, the free citizen can understand that from now on, he doesn't have to flatter anyone, he doesn't have to fear anyone, only the impregnable Laws voted by him.

Theodoros Negris (1824)³

It has been a great American achievement of the past two decades, whatever the vexations, that so vigorous, searching, and uncharitable a critique of our wars has gone on while we were fighting them. This can never have happened before in the history of civilized peoples.

Harry Kalven, Jr. (1971: 35)

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2. Allegedly – according to his comrade and later defector, José Pardo Llada (Jacobsen 2019: 132). Llada was one of the leading revolutionaries, a close friend of Castro and Che, who defected because of his objections to the turn of the regime toward communism.
 3. Theodoros Negris was a liberal intellectual, a revolutionary, a journalist and the Secretary of State in the first revolutionary Government (1822-3). This excerpt was published in the 20 December 1824 issue of the *Newspaper of Athens* [Εφημερίς Αθηνών], a month after his passing. All the translations from Greek are mine.

The crucial issue here is to determine when there is a danger and what are the “negative consequences” that supposedly justify restrictions on speech [...] The danger from the propagation of any idea, even the most subversive or detestable, is the inevitable price of liberty.

Stavros Tsakyrakis (1997: 284)

1. Introduction

Lord Byron was, probably, the most internationally well-known and popular writer in the early 1820s. He was an aristocrat but also a revolutionary. He was a romantic poet but also a pragmatic liberal. He defended freedom of speech, but he was also the protagonist in the first major censorship case in the history of Greek press.

This not-so-well known incident is an illustrative case study for several questions which we will attempt to reply: What is the role of a free press during a revolution, especially during a struggle for national independence? Is the press, during a war, useful only for propaganda purposes? What should be the objectives of a newspaper in a traditional society which is not only unacquainted with the printing press but also predominantly illiterate? What is the target audience for such a newspaper? The illiterate revolutionaries or the world at large, i.e. foreign officials, diplomats, concerned citizens, opinion makers?

The Greek War of Independence (most commonly known as the Greek Revolution) erupted in late February 1821⁴ in the Danubian Principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia and in early March 1821 in the southern Balkan peninsula and the Aegean islands and ended (successfully) in 1829. It was a nationalist revolution, organized by merchants and intellectuals. The intellectual elite of the Orthodox Christians who spoke Greek was influenced by the 18th century Enlightenment, earlier from the other elites in the Ottoman Empire (Kitromilides 2013).

It was not only a nationalist and religious revolution but also democratic and liberal. The French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars were the triggering events: the Greek Revolution was organized by a group of small-time businessmen (with ties to Freemasonry and the Russian Decembrists), who founded the *Society of Friends* (*Φιλική Εταιρεία*), a secret organization, in September 1814 in Odessa. Still, leading Greek intellectuals, like the liberal Adamantios Korais and statesmen, like Count Ioannis Kapodistrias, foreign minister of Russia from 1816 to 1822, were negative to the idea. They, respectively, believed that Greeks

4. Greece adopted the Gregorian calendar in 1923. The Greek revolutionary authorities, the fighters, the newspapers and the Greek historians are almost exclusively using the Julian calendar when describing events of this period. The lag between the two calendars is 12 days. I am using dates from the Julian calendar unless specifically indicated otherwise [N.S. = new style dates].

were not ideologically ready to claim their independence, and that the international situation was extremely hostile to revolutions after the Congress of Vienna (1814-5).

Even though the Greek revolution was dangerous for the status quo that the Congress of Vienna had established in 1815, it generated conflicting sentiments in Europe. Klemens von Metternich, the powerful Chancellor of the Austrian Empire, was very hostile and suspicious of the Greek rebels. He thought that this was not a purely local insurgency of aggrieved Christians against the cruel and corrupted Ottomans, but the sperm of a broader turmoil in the Balkans, a threat to multiethnic empires, a radically liberal uprising. He was right. The Greek War of Independence struck a chord with liberal thinkers and activists but also with romantic poets and writers. These were the Greeks after all, fighting to liberate their "sacred" land from the "uncivilized" Muslim conquerors. But Greeks were also doing something radical, they established a provisional republican government based on liberal principles. This led to an astonishing Philhellenic movement in Europe which was instrumental for the final success of the Greeks. Not only romantic Philhellenes, but also liberals from all over Europe flooded into Greece to continue fighting for a cause that was lost in all other areas of Europe. These freedom fighters had, sometimes, goals that were not necessarily compatible with Greeks' interests and priorities.

2. Liberal intellectuals in a traditional society

When the revolution broke, there were three powerful groups in Greek society. Rich landowners, brutal brigands and of course the powerful Greek Orthodox Church. If they had managed to form an alliance and win the war, the result would have been probably the formation of a loose federation with a premodern institutional structure. These three, dominant in Greek society, groups were overtaken by a small group of young liberal intellectuals. Most of them were studying in Europe when the Revolution erupted and rushed to come back to join it with a clear agenda: to transform the new country into a modern European constitutional state. Their leader was Alexandros Mavrokordatos,⁵ a 30-year old political mastermind who was the only Greek revolutionary with a solid political agenda. Mavrokordatos was a part of the Percy and Mary Shelley circle in Pisa.⁶ He became a moderate liberal in this circle and he was the politician who, as early as 1820 had a very sophisticated geopolitical vision of Greece, not as the natural ally of traditional Orthodox Russia but of liberal and commercial Great Britain.

5. There are two excellent but short biographies of Alexandros Mavrokordatos in Greek (Protosaltis 1982, Loukos 2010). There are also significant monographs on his early life (Theodoridis 2012) and the group of westernized young intellectuals he led (Diamandouros 1972; see also Petropoulos 1968). His major contribution to the Greek War of Independence has been rather recently appreciated by Greek historians. However, he remains a controversial figure for non-academic historians and lay people (Hatzis 2020b: 20-21).

6. For the Pisa circle see Cline (1952) and Cameron (1973) but also Panagiotopoulos (1986).

How did the Greek liberals manage to dominate politically but mostly ideologically the Greek Revolution? They were, after all, a group of people with no political power or military experience. Most of them had been born in areas, like Constantinople or the Northern Balkans, far away from Southern Greece, the center of the revolution. Even their clothes were different. The Greek warlords and the Greek primates wore traditional Albanian and Greek dresses. The Europeanized intellectuals stood out and often were mocked for their way of dressing and behaving. They were called, dismissively, *pen pushers* (*καλαμαράδες*) and they were distrusted by local chieftains.

Before answering the question, one should not underestimate the dressing as a way of signaling ideas. Alexandros Mavrokordatos is, again, an illustrative example. While in Pisa he dresses as an Ottoman,⁷ but before he embarks from Marseille to Greece, to join the revolution, he changes his dress. He is getting rid of anything Ottoman and he dresses following the French fashion of the Directoire: an excessively high cravat, a variegated hose, a short waist of the coat, the fob-chain, great length of hair.⁸ Mavrokordatos doesn't return to traditional Balkan dressing, even when this could help him politically. He systematically wears European frock and tailcoats, accepting the fact that this dressing alienated him from the rest of the revolutionaries.

The main reason, initially, for the traditional society to tolerate and even depend on these weirdly looking intellectuals, was the latter's, unprecedented for the Levant, human and social capital. They could speak foreign languages (especially French⁹ but also Italian, German and English), they had a wealth of knowledge, they had travelled extensively, they had administrative, political and institutional experience, they could negotiate with foreign-

7. Percy Shelley refers to him as "our turbaned friend" (Percy's Letter to Thomas Love Peacock of 21 March 1821 [N.S.] in Shelley 1914: 861). In the same letter we read: "We are surrounded here in Pisa by revolutionary volcanoes, which, as yet give more light than heat" (ibid 860). But in less than a fortnight, Mary Shelley wrote to Claire Clairmont: "Greece has declared its freedom! Prince Mavrocordato has made us expect this event for some weeks past. Yesterday, he came *rayonnant de joie* – he had been ill for some days, but he forgot all his pains. [...] Greece will most certainly be free. The worst part of this news to us is that our amiable prince will leave us – he will of course join his countrymen as soon as possible – never did man appear so happy – yet he sacrifices family-fortune-everything to the hope of freeing his country" (Mary's Letter to Clairmont of 2 April 1821 [N.S.], in Shelley 1944: 136).

8. See his portrait by Friedel (1830).

9. "Prince Mavrocordato has received me with so much hospitality, that I shall ever retain a lasting sense of his Highness's liberal principles, and moderate and upright conduct. When I add, that he unites to all the first-rate qualities of a statesman, the most critical and accurate knowledge of his own language, as well as of the Arabic, Persian, Turkish, Wallachian, French, and Italian languages, and that he reads English with the utmost facility and the most correct pronunciation, I feel I am only describing a patriot, a scholar, and a philosopher, worthy in every respect of your Excellency's good opinion" (letter of Lord Charles Murray to Sir Frederick Adam, Lord High Commissioner of the Ionian Islands – from Messolonghi [sic], 28 June 1824 [N.S.], published in Blaquiére 1825: 109-110). Mavrokordatos was taught English by Mary Shelley in Pisa. He taught her, in exchange, ancient Greek. For the details see Beaton (2013: 68-79).

ers, they could build a modern state. That is why they were considered as a necessary evil, even by their enemies.

The liberal westernized intellectuals and politicians managed to pass three liberal and republican constitutions, approved by three consecutive national assemblies (1822, 1823, 1827). Mavrokordatos became the first Greek Prime Minister in January 1822 and he was responsible for the foreign policy of the revolutionaries from 1822 to the mid-1826.

3. Philhellenes

The Greek Revolution of 1821 was a revolution that was considered by many, when it broke, of great importance. Every educated person in Europe and the Americas saw in this revolution the rebirth of Ancient Greece. But European and American liberals saw also an opportunity. The Greek revolution became literally a laboratory for the implementation of the most radical ideas of the era.

Mavrokordatos himself brought with him (from Marseilles) a well-known Carbonaro, Vincenzo Gallina. Gallina offered technical support to the drafting committee of the first Constitution, by suggesting ideas based on the few available constitutions of the time. For his services, Gallina was officially honored by the Provisional Greek Government,¹⁰ a rather dangerous political decision for the time.

Greek government had a dilemma, which is illustrated in the Gallina's active participation in the first National Assembly: its natural allies were the radical liberals, but their participation could damage Greek international standing. The Congress of Vienna condemned the Greek Revolution, but it was reluctant to actively prosecute it. The revolutionaries had even the audacity to request officially the political assistance of powers like Russia, France and the United Kingdom and the neutrality of Austria and Prussia by emphasizing their two powerful identities, Greeks and Christians, while downplaying the radical nature of their institution-building even in the Greek Declaration of Independence ("our revolution is not seditious"). They failed temporarily to engage the European courts. Nevertheless, eventually, after a period of bewilderment, the three powers (United Kingdom, Russia and France) decided to intervene in favor of the Greeks. As early as 1824 there were various plans (mostly from Tsar Alexander I and the British Office of Foreign Affairs) for the international recognition of Greeks as autonomous inside the Ottoman Empire (with the Danubian principalities as a model). But the radicalized Greeks considered anything less than full national independence as a defeat. George Canning, the British foreign minister, and briefly prime minister, saw this prospect more as an opportunity for Britain and less as a risk. In late 1824 the official British policy was ready to accommodate an independent Greece, if Greeks managed to stabilize their successes.

10. See Appendix to Law 6/1822 (11 March 1822), signed by Mavrokordatos himself.

It is not a coincidence that 1824 was the year that Greece received the first loan from the City. George Canning decided to encourage City investors by a gesture of the highest political symbolism. He personally participated in a dinner in London organized by the Lord Mayor and a group of powerful British Philhellenes. It was a welcoming dinner for Greek representatives to London and at the same time a networking event with bankers, financiers and power brokers.

The “London Greek Committee” was founded in late February 1823 in the Crown & Anchor Tavern on the Strand. Its overt mission was to assist the Greeks in their struggle for independence. Its not-so-covert mission was to transplant liberal ideas in Greece, rather aggressively. Since the Greek Committee was so instrumental in the issuing and the disbursement of the loan, they could use it as an instrument of political pressure to the Greek government.

The founders of the Committee were some of the staunchest members of the Bentham circle in London, John Bowring¹¹ and Edward Blaquiere. Bentham himself was a member but also a political mentor of the group.¹² Three members of the group visited Greece for reconnaissance but also to handle the loan and check its use: Edward Blaquiere, Colonel Leicester Stanhope¹³ and Count Giuseppe Pecchio. All of them published their impressions and correspondence after their return to London.¹⁴ However, the most famous member of this group was Lord Byron.¹⁵

In late 1823, Lord Byron¹⁶ and Col. Leicester Stanhope arrived in Greece as representatives of the Philhellenic Committee of London but also of Greece’s London creditors. They should have collaborated, but they didn’t, necessarily, share the same plan. They both wished to

11. Bowring was not only Jeremy Bentham’s literary executor – Bentham died literally in Bowring’s arms.

12. For the personal involvement of Bentham, see his 17 February 1823 [N.S.] letter to Samuel Parr (Bentham 1843b: 534-6), the open letter he addressed to the Greeks on 24 November 1823 [N.S.] (Bentham 1843b: 538-9 – brought to Greece by Col. L. Stanhope) and the correspondence with the Revolutionary Parliament, Alexandros Mavrokordatos and Theodoros Negris (Bentham 1843a: 580-92).

13. As Rosen (1992) has demonstrated, neither Blaquiere (ibid 125-143) nor Stanhope (ibid 144-163) were genuine disciples of Bentham. According to Rosen, Blaquiere and Stanhope, rather than Bentham and Byron, formed the ideological polarities in Greece (ibid 164-184). “Bentham, the theorist, was working on a different level and towards different objects from the ideologues Blaquiere and Stanhope” (ibid 247).

14. There is a magisterial account of the Bentham’s circle involvement in the Greek War of Independence written by F. Rosen (1992). See also the recent monograph by Tzourmana (2015), a study on the political, social and intellectual background of the Greek London Committee.

15. For the Byron involvement in the Greek Revolution, the best account was given recently by Beaton (2013).

16. “You must have heard that I am going to Greece. [...] I am at last determined to go to Greece; it is the only place I was ever contended in. [...] They all say I can be of use in Greece. I do not know how, nor do they; but at all events let us go” (Byron’s letter to Edward Trelawny of 15 June 1823 [N.S.], in Trelawny (1828: 160-1). Byron was persuaded by Edward Blaquiere. According to Gamba (1825: 3-4): “No one could accuse him of being a blind enthusiast. In his travels during his younger days, he has imbibed a greater personal esteem for the character of the Turks than for that of their slaves.” However, “[n]o undertaking could interest him more strongly; the object, the scene, the danger, were powerful incentives.”

help the Greek revolutionaries defeat the Ottomans and they would both try to unite the Greeks who were in the middle of a civil war. However, Col. Stanhope had a second agenda: to disseminate liberal and utilitarian ideas among the revolutionaries¹⁷ and to establish liberal institutions. Stanhope was a lieutenant-colonel in the British Army. Byron and Stanhope met at the Ionian island of Cephalonia and they arrived in Missolonghi where Alexandros Mavrokordatos was based, in December 1823.

Byron and Stanhope stayed at the same house and worked closely with Mavrokordatos. Byron, the poet, was more interested in military affairs and eager to participate in military operations. Stanhope, the soldier,¹⁸ on the other hand, had no such interest. His agenda was to set up three or four newspapers in various areas of liberated Greece,¹⁹ a postal service to connect these newspapers, facilitate news-sharing and create a public sphere, and schools organized in the monitorial system ("Bell-Lancaster method").²⁰

4. The *Greek Chronicles*

There were some setbacks with the newspapers (the Turks confiscated, temporarily, the printing presses and there was a scarcity of type pieces and typeset matter in Latin) but he finally managed to print the first Greek newspaper in 1 January 1824. The title of the newspaper was *Greek Chronicles* (*Ελληνικά Χρονικά*) and that day is, still, considered as the birthdate of Greek Press.²¹ Actually, in 1824, three other papers were published, two of them by

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17. Stanhope had a plan "for making Mr. Bentham the apostle of the Greeks" (Parry 1825: 189).
 18. "Lord Byron began joking with me about Colonel Stanhope's occupations, and said he thought the author would have his brigade of artillery ready before the soldier got his printing-press fixed." (Parry 1825: 42). See also Maurois 1922 for a similar view. An American physician and philhellene, Howe (1828: 188) respected Stanhope ("excellent man", "devoted Philhellene") but he also thought that he was a utopian: "[He] seemed to be acting just the part which any one would have prophesied that Byron would have played – that of a visionary enthusiast. With him, the only means of saving Greece, were establishing free presses, Lancastrian schools, and posts. 'It is false,' said he, 'that gold and iron are the sinews of war; they are only the accessories.'"
 19. He declared his political goals in a letter to the Greek Government (7 January 1824) (: "II Comitato d'Inghilterra ha mandato qui diverse stamperie per spargere il lume del secolo decimo nono, e farlo operare sul destino della nazione Greca. La lunga esperienza in Inghilterra, in Swizzera, e nei stati uniti dell' Anglo-America ha provato a tutti che la publicita degli atti tanto giudiciari che parlamentari e d' ogni altro, e necessaria alia giustizia, alia liberta, ed al buon governo, ed in conseguenza alia pace e felicitadi tutte le nazioni. Per questa ragione desidero imprestare una delle dette imprimerie all' Eccellentissimo Governo Generale della Grecia, a vista che esso abbia la volonta ed i mezzi per metterla in utile attivita. Ho scritto al Signor Dr. Psylas a Athene, onde sapere se e disposto di condurre la detta imprimeria su *principi perfettamente liberali ed imparziali* alia sede del E. Governo. Sperando di partire il piu presto possibile per la Peloponnese, vi sollicito di rispondermi prontamente su questa comunicazione. Ho l' onore di protestarmi." (Stanhope 1824: 60-61 [my emphasis] originally in Italian).
 20. For an overview of their relation, cooperation and frictions, see Dakin (1955: 63-79) but also Rosen (1992: *passim*, esp. 185-218).
 21. The first newspaper that was published in Greek, from 1790 to 1797 was the *Journal* (*Εφημερίς*). Published in Vienna, its editors were involved in revolutionary activities and eventually had been arrested. There were also newspapers published in the early years of revolution, all of them written by hand with one exception.

Stanhope and Byron (see below) and one, a semi-official newspaper, for the island of Hydra, under the name *Friend of the Law* (*Φίλος του Νόμου*). The editor of the *Friend of the Law* was another Carbonaro, the Italian Giuseppe Chiappe with ties to Lazaros Koundouriotis, a rich ship-owner and the largest financier of the Greek Revolution. The four newspapers had two common characteristics: (a) they were semi-official and (b) they were controlled by liberals. They were connected to each other (often reprinting each other's stories) and they managed not only to create a public sphere but to define the vocabulary of the revolution in a way that it was unprecedented for the period.

Stanhope chose as editor of the *Greek Chronicles*, another radical liberal, the Swiss Johann Jakob Meyer, who came to Greece to fight for the revolution.²² Meyer was the most radical member of the Mavrokordato circle.²³ He was a republican, an admirer of the American system of government with strong anti-monarchy sentiments. He was unpredictable and a zealot, the ideal partner for Stanhope.²⁴

An enthusiastic Stanhope wrote to Bowring on 16 December 1823: "The press will be at work immediately. The journal will be called the *Greek Chronicle*; and the motto decided on is, 'The greatest good of the greatest number.' Lord Erskine's and Lord Byron's letters will appear in it immediately" (Stanhope 1824: 33). Two days later everything was ready to go:

The press will be at work next Monday. Its first production will be a prospectus. On the first day of the year 1824 the *Greek Chronicle* will be issued: Dr. Meyer is the editor, and I have hired an intelligent man to assist him and have furnished him with much matter. It will be printed in Greek and Italian; it will come out twice a week, and the price will be six dollars per annum. Pray endeavor to assist its circulation in England, and send out all newspapers and other matter. I hope to establish presses in other parts [...] Money expended in England will not do one-tenth as much good

The *Greek Trumpet* (*Σάββατο Ελληνική*), a semi-official newspaper has published three issues before its editor, Theoklitos Farmakidis, resigned to protest censorship. Farmakidis was a liberal priest and a scholar, a political ally of Alexandros Mavrokordatos (who was considering him for the post of the editor of *Greek Chronicles*). However, the *Greek Chronicles* were the first revolutionary newspaper with a consistent circulation for more than two years.

22. "[H]e was a young Swiss surgeon, and had joined the Greek army as volunteer at the very commencement of the insurrection. He became attached to a beautiful Missilonghiote girl, married her, and became a Greek, in dress, language, and feelings. He gained the love and esteem of all about him, and was one of the most useful men in supporting the siege" (Howe 1828: 310). "He was an enthusiastic democrat in his political opinions, and a man of indefatigable energy." (Finlay 1877: 396). For his questionable activities in Zurich and his expulsion from the University, see Papalexandrou (1971: 93-94).
23. Meyer was primed by Mavrokordatos to act as editor of a newspaper, before the arrival of Stanhope (Beaton 2013: 220) and after Farmakidis became unavailable.
24. When Stanhope on his way to Greece, met Ioannis Kapodistrias at an inn in Lausanne, on 12 October 1823, Kapodistrias warned him and the Greek Committee not to "attempt to Anglicanise Greece". Stanhope replied drily, "we rather wish to Americanize her" (Stanhope's letter to Bowring of 13 October 1823 [N.S.], in Stanhope 1824: 10).

as money expended here. For example, - for 200l. I can set the press at work [...] *send me money*" (idem 37-38, emphasis in the original).²⁵

Stanhope was enthusiastic on the initial success of his endeavors, despite the many setbacks and constraints. His overall plan was to establish four different newspapers in various areas of Greece, since he had brought four presses (two lithographic) with him. Together with the establishment of a reliable postal service, he was hoping to create the conditions for the circulation of (liberal) ideas in revolutionary Greece. He presented his overall plan in a letter he sent to John Bowring after his arrival in Missolonghi (23.12.1823):

I propose to establish another press, at the seat of the legislative body; and the lithographic ones may be placed at Calamata, Candia, and Athens. I have addressed the general government of Greece on the subject of the posts, and have offered to undertake the conveyance of the mails from Corinth to Napoli, Tripolitza, and Gastouni. This will enable us to circulate letters and newspapers all over Greece, the Islands, and to Europe.

He is so dedicated to his goal as to be totally indifferent to anything else, even Byron's shenanigans (Parry 1825: 43) and doubts. His systematic hard work pays off. When the first issue is published, Stanhope (1824: 51) is exuberant:

My dear Bowring, Here you have our Greek Chronicle. The passage from Bentham is from his pamphlet on the liberty of the press, pp. 9, 10. The prospectus I have distributed to the members of the two last parliaments, and to all the Primates, Capitani, and Sages of Greece, the islands of the Archipelago, the Ionian Isles, &c. I have written to Dr. Psylas, to invite him to conduct a paper at the seat of the government which is now at Cranidi. I have, also, written many articles for the press. If you could send me a couple of men who could speak French, German, or Italian, and who could write strong articles in plain language, they would do incalculable good here.

5. The Inevitable Confrontation

We don't know when and how Stanhope realized that the Bentham motto was actually attributed to Benjamin Franklin – and it was written in ancient Greek (*τὰ πλείω ὀφέλη τοῖς πλείοσι*). This cryptic motto had only one explanation: to avoid the identification of the Greek War of Independence with the radical Benthamites.²⁶ Byron and Mavrokordatos

25. His plan for a bilingual newspaper failed ("for want of roman letters, we cannot print the Chronicle in Italian" – letter to Bowring, 31 December 1823 [N.S.], *ibid* 50).

26. Bentham was aware of the possible resistance to the introduction of his ideas in Greece. He writes to Samuel Parr on 17 February 1823 [N.S.]: "Doctor Corai [the foremost Greek liberal intellectual of the time, permanently residing in Paris], a renowned literary leader of the Greeks, a sojourner in Paris for the last thirty years, recommends it to his country to translate the works of Bentham, in preference to all others, on Legislation.

agreed on that²⁷ and they decided to restrain Stanhope. Since Mavrokordatos was not confrontational and he couldn't have the kind of authority towards Stanhope that Byron had (Koumariou 2010: 370), the latter undertook the difficult task. He was ready to do it since he had many reservations about the need and the usefulness of newspapers at this stage of the revolution. According to Howe (1828: 189) Byron thought that Greeks didn't care much about the Press, it was something that it was imposed on them by liberals who were foreign to their needs. He predicted from the very beginning that the Press will eventually lead to political confrontation.²⁸ He was not happy, either, with the choice of Meyer as the editor of the *Greek Chronicles*:²⁹

Dr.³⁰ Meyer, the editor, with his unrestrained freedom of the press, and who has the freedom to exercise, an unlimited discretion, – not allowing any article but his own and those like them to appear, – and in declaiming against restrictions, cuts, carves, and restricts (as they tell me) at his own will and pleasure. [...] Of all petty tyrants, he is one of the pettiest, as are most demagogues, that ever I knew. He is a Swiss by birth, and a Greek by assumption, having married a wife and changed his religion.

Doctor Julius Millingen, a member of the Byron circle, gives another reason for Byron's dislike. According to Millingen (1831: 15-16) Byron "often boasted of his being at heart devoutly aristocratical", so he resented the republican Swiss³¹ for his lack of respect:

Want of manners and of respect were faults which, even in republican Greece, he could never forgive. For instance, the insurmountable dislike, he professed against Dr. Meyer, arose entirely from his having observed him, one day, sit down, without

Having other intelligent disciples in that country, I have some reason to think something in that way has for some time been going on. In a case such as this, there is always no small danger of suppression. If they find it suit their personal views, the ruling few, who apply to you for your ideas, give publicity to them; if not, they stifle them. I give the man in question to understand that, in the present instance, if I do anything for them, this must not, shall not be. I require from him the assurance, that in his opinion, whether it happens to suit their views or not, if I send them anything, they will give fair publicity to it: at any rate, that they will oppose no obstruction to the divulgation of it; and that he will employ such influence as he possesses in the endeavour to secure this treatment to it. I give him at the same time to understand, that our correspondence on this subject is destined for publication; and that to do what depends upon myself towards securing my farthing candle from being kept under the bushel till the time for its being of use is at an end, I shall light up a gas-light from it in this country, and send it off to Greece, where it shall render itself visible to all eyes" (Bentham 1843b: 535).

27. Not only them. See Dimitropoulos (2018: 357-358) and Hatzis (2020a: 355-356).
28. "Hitherto it has been a subject for the hymns and elegies of fanatics and enthusiasts; but now it will draw the attention of the politician" (Gamba 1825: 207).
29. Letter to Samuel Barff, 19 March 1824 [N.S.], in Byron (1833: 478).
30. Meyer was also a practicing physician (without graduating from the medical school) and the head of the Missolonghi hospital.
31. An antipathy shared by Byron's early biographers: "a hot-headed republican [...] particularly unfitted for the post" (Edgcumbe 1909: 112).

being invited, to Colonel Stanhope's table, and help himself to a tumbler of porter. So strong was his aversion to him on this account, that he expressly forbade his servants ever to allow him to enter his room; and during his last illness he would, on no account, agree to the doctor's being called into consultation.³²

Edward Blaquier (1825: 12), the other representative of the London Committee, who was less fanatical than Stanhope and the only one whose perspective on the Greeks and their struggle was not the typical colonial/orientalist one,³³ since he was not an aristocrat but a genuine democrat with an unusual capacity for empathy, made a more weighted remark:

The Greek Chronicle, the first paper which appeared in Greece, is conducted by Dr. Meyer, a German, who has become a Greek citizen through his marriage with a native of Messolunghi, where his journal is published. Though what the French call *une tête exaltée*, and rather too fond in indulging in personalities, Meyer unites a degree of enthusiasm with a love of improvement, which will make him a very useful citizen of his adopted country. [emphasis on the original].

Byron, initially, expressed only his doubts and he tried to mock Stanhope. His attitude, however, became eventually clearly hostile towards him (Parry 1825: 188, 191) as he gradually realized that Stanhope was not the typical military officer but an ideologue, a zealot who could harm Greece by jeopardizing her chances for international recognition and at the same time offering to Greeks intellectual services which were not demanded and needed:

He is a mere schemer and talker, more of a saint than a soldier; and with a great deal of pretended plainness, a mere politician, and no patriot. I thought Colonel Stanhope being a soldier, would have shown himself differently. He ought to know what a nation like Greece needs for its defence; and should have told the Committee that arms, and the materials for carrying on war, were what the Greeks required. [...] Books are sent to a people who want guns; they ask for a sword, and the Committee give them the lever of a printing press.

Their relations worsened as they had many disagreements and quarrels³⁴ on the usefulness of the Press but also on the views expressed in *Greek Chronicles*. It was not only a conflict

32. Byron was rather right on Meyer character. He was petulant and unabashed. After Byron's death, Meyer, shamelessly, wrote a blatant lie to Stanhope: "Lord Noel Byron died in my arms. How strange that the man who always talked against my newspaper should die in my arms". He added "Thanks be to God, I have won [...] Byron is dead! Is his death harmful to Greece? No." (Meyer's letter to Stanhope of 17 April 1824, in Beaton 2013: 308).

33. See, e.g. "I feel proud that in Greece, as in Hindostan, I have contributed to the first establishment of a free press" (Stanhope to Bowring, 23 December 1823 [N.S.], in Stanhope 1824: 45). See also Parry (1825: 149): "Stanhope has brought with him Nabob airs from Hindostan; and while he cajoles the people, wishes to govern them."

34. "[S]ome conversation ensued about the newspaper, which was never to Lord Byron a pleasant topic, as he disagreed with his friends about it." (Parry 1825: 34). "Stanhope and Byron could never agree" (Howe 1828:

about freedom of the press. Byron was a mature realist now, not the impulsive libertine of his earlier days. He realized what the stakes were and one of his policies (in a total concurrence with Mavrokordatos) was the placation of the powers (including Great Britain) that were crucial to the Greek question, not their provocation.³⁵ Byron's closest associate, Count Pietro Gamba (formerly a leading Carbonaro), presents Byron's reasoning with clarity.

Lord Byron's view of the politics of Greece, was that this revolution had little or nothing in common with the great struggle with which Europe had been for thirty years distracted, and that it would be most improvident for the friends of Greece to mix up their cause with that of the other nations who had attempted to change their form of government, and by so doing to draw down the hatred and opposition of one of the two great parties that at present divide the civilized world. Lord Byron wished to lay it down for granted, that the contest was simply one between barbarism and civilization – between Christianity and Islamism – and that the struggle was in behalf of the descendants of those to whom we are indebted for the first principle of science, and the most perfect models of literature and of art. For such a cause, he hoped that all politicians of all parties, in every European state, might fairly be expected to unite (Gamba 1825: 209-210).

Mavrokordatos subscribed to this realist view but he was reluctant to censor the newspaper.³⁶ This would have been unconstitutional³⁷ and could lead to a clash with the London Committee at a crucial time: when the first installment of the loan was impatiently expected by the Greek government.³⁸ Byron and Mavrokordatos tolerated some imprudent op-eds like the one published in n. 18 of the *Chronicles* (1 March 1824). Under the title "Spanish Affairs", Meyer attacked the King of Spain, characterizing him a tyrant and calling Spain "a poor place" because of the defeat of the liberals. There was a strong reaction. Byron received a "notice from the Ionian Islands, that the newspaper printed at Missolonghi would no longer be permitted to circulate there without some restriction, as the last number contained a tirade against kings in general."³⁹ "This gave Lord Byron a great deal of vexation.

188). "[Byron] insisted upon having my 100l. and threatened, if I refused it, to libel me in my own Chronicle." (Stanhope to Bowring, 7 January 1824 [N.S.], in Stanhope 1824: 67). Byron offered 250 Spanish dollars for the launching of the newspaper. But see Rosen (1992: 198).

35. See Beaton (2013: 221-222) for the illustrative Captain Yorke incident ("[Byron] warned that it was the height of political folly for the Greeks to put their future relations with foreign powers at risk in this way"). See Biddulph (1910: 64-76) for Yorke's perspective.
36. On his relationship with Byron, see Minta (1998: 252-253)
37. See Stanhope's letter to Bowring of 24 January 1824 [N.S.], in Stanhope (1824: 75).
38. See Hatzis (2020a: 354, 361).
39. See also the earlier op-ed against monarchy as a form of government, published on the 16 February 1824 issue (no. 14) (we are not fighting the Turks to offer our land to a King).

[...] He promised, however, that he would do what lay in his power to prevent such articles appearing in future." (Parry 1825: 82-83).

But they couldn't avoid confrontation. The last straw was the publication of the 20th issue of the *Greek Chronicles* on 12 March 1824. This op-ed in the last page of the newspaper was, supposedly, a call to Hungarians to support the Greek cause. But it was actually a bold provocation to the Austrians.

So completely heedless of the consequences was Dr. Meyer, that he published in the 20th number of his newspaper an address to the Hungarians, conceived in so liberal and revolutionary a language, that it could not fail to excite the animadversion of the court of Vienna, already so ill-disposed towards Greece; and induce her perhaps to take measures to hasten the ruin of her rising liberties. Lord Byron felt himself in duty bound to destroy every copy of that number, and obliged the editor solemnly to promise the government, that he would abstain from any critical observations on the political conduct of European cabinets (Millingen 1831: 82).

Byron (with the consent or after an appeal by Mavrokordatos) censored the issue (Parry 1828: 99, see also 82-84). He destroyed almost every copy. Mavrokordatos and Byron were justifiably furious since Meyer and Stanhope were doing their best not only to confirm all the accusations of radical liberalism against the Greek Revolution but also to present it as a threat to the European order (St. Clair 2008: 186-187).

The issue of censorship had already led to a very unpleasant fight, with Stanhope calling Byron "a Turk" and Byron mocking liberalism and English liberals.⁴⁰ It also led to Stanhope's decision to leave Missolonghi in late February. Before Stanhope's departure, Byron managed to publish his own journal with the same printing press.⁴¹ Latin typesets had been arrived and a new newspaper, *Telegrafo Greco*, a multilingual edition (written in Italian, English, French and German), started its publication, funded by Byron and edited by Gamba. The target audience was European courts, governments and opinion makers and its political goal was to help Greek international standing by persuading Europe that this was a War of Independence, a religious war of Christians against Muslims, not a liberal revolution. The prospectus announcing publication emphasized that this was not a Jacobin Revolution, it was not related to Carbonari, Spanish and Portuguese Liberals. It had Christian principles,

40. Stanhope's letter to Bowring of 28 January 1824 [N.S.], in Stanhope (1824: 80).

41. "More than ever convinced, that nothing could be more useless, and even more dangerous to her yet vacillating interests at home and abroad, than an unlimited freedom of the press; he insisted on Count Gamba (a person entirely at his disposal), becoming editor. He cautioned him, to restrict the *Telegrafo Greco* to a simple narrative of events as they occurred, and an unprejudiced statement of opinions in respect to her political relations and wants; so as to make them subjects of interest to her friends in the western parts of Europe." (Millingen 1831: 113).

it was a nationalist war of independence.⁴² The Byron plan⁴³ failed miserably, it was a futile attempt. The editor of the newspaper (Gamba) was a Carbonaro and the Greek Revolution was already “discredited” in the eyes of conservative Europe:

The sentiments, imprudently advocated in this prospectus, induced the authorities in the Ionian Islands to entertain so unfavourable an impression of the spirit, which would guide its conductors, that its admission into the heptarchy was interdicted under severe penalties. The same took place in the Austrian states, where they began to look upon Greece as ‘the city of refuge,’ as it were, for the carbonari and discontented English reformers. The first number appeared on the 20th of March; but it was written in a tone so decidedly opposite to what had been expected, that it might, in some degree, be considered as a protest against the prospectus. Lord Byron was the cause of this change. (Millingen 1831: 113)

Telegrafo Greco published 39 issues, from March to December 1824, without making any difference. Its demise was inevitable, despite the fact that both Stanhope and Mavrokordatos helped Byron with the publication and they didn’t undermine his endeavors.⁴⁴

A disillusioned Stanhope left Missolonghi for Athens. He decided to set up a second newspaper there, without Byron’s interference. Byron tried to sabotage him by writing against him to the members of the London Committee: “I hope that the press [the *Newspaper of Athens*] will succeed better there than it has here. The Greek newspaper has done great mischief both in the Morea and in the islands, as I represented both to Prince Mavrocordato and to Colonel Stanhope that it would do in the *present* circumstances, unless *great caution* was observed, – N.B.” emphasis by Byron). In another letter to Samuel Barff⁴⁵ will do his best to cause trouble for Stanhope:

If Lord Guilford is at Zante, or, if he is not, if Signor Tricupi [a leading member of the Mavrokordato’s group] is there, you would oblige me [...] by telling them, that from the very first I foretold to Col. Stanhope and to P. Mavrocordato that a Greek newspaper (or indeed any other) in the *present state* of Greece might and probably *would* tend to much mischief and misconstruction, unless under some restrictions;

42. Mavrokordatos’ views were identical. See his unpublished guidelines to a “secret” agent to Russia in Hatzis (2020a: 357).

43. “It was easy to foresee, that, if properly conducted, this paper would immediately supplant *Ελληνικα Χρονικα* [sic], which, being written in Romaic, could enjoy but a very limited circulation in Europe.” Milligan (1831: 114). See also, Gamba (1825: 174): “We resolved to publish another, in several languages, and Lord Byron promised to furnish some articles himself”. Byron had recently done that for a much more radical publication, *The Liberal* (Marshall 1960).

44. “This Journal has been conducted in so slovenly a manner ever since, that its extinction will not be a very great loss to Greece” (Blaquiere 1825: 116).

45. Byron’s letter to Barff of 19 March 1824 [N.S.], in Byron (1833: 477-8). Spyridon Trikoupi was already alarmed (Hatzis 2020a: 355, fn.23).

nor have I ever had anything to do with either, as a writer or otherwise, except as a pecuniary contributor to their support in the outset, which I could not refuse to the earnest request of the projectors. Col. Stanhope and myself had considerable differences of opinion on this subject, and (what will appear laughable enough) to such a degree, that he charged me with *despotic* principles, and I *him* with ultra radicalism." [emphasis on the original].

Byron's circle saw things in the same way. Millingen (1831: 81-2) is trying to rationalize and justify Byron's authoritarian behavior:

If Lord Byron did not approve Colonel Stanhope's opinion, it was not because his lordship was not a liberal; but because he foresaw that not only no sort of advantage would accrue from it to the nation at large, but that it would become a firebrand of discord at home, and increase the number of enemies abroad. Had the colonel [Stanhope] made more use of his reflection, would he not have perceived how injudicious it was, at a moment when many of the powers were looking on the Greek revolution with jealousy and suspicion, to incite the editor to comment boldly, not only on their hostile dispositions towards Greece, but to declaim against their internal tyrannical administration?⁴⁶

Stanhope managed to set up the second newspaper in Athens (*Newspaper of Athens – Εφημερίς Αθηνών*). He chose a Greek for editor, Georgios Psyllas, a liberal intellectual with studies in Pisa, Jena, Göttingen and Berlin – a former student of Goethe. Psyllas was a more moderate liberal than Meyer but his newspaper supported similar positions with the Missolonghi and Hydra newspapers.⁴⁷

6. Epilogue: Transplanting Liberalism in a Pre-Modern Society

There were at least seven different newspapers published in Greece from 1824 to 1828, with a continuous circulation for at least two years (Argyropoulou 1970). These newspapers had all a political patronage of some kind and they took sides during the various phases of the Greek Civil War. However, they were essentially free to publish their editor's views – even the most radically liberal and democratic. They published, regularly, op-eds and letters to the editor which were contradictory to their political views. The incidences of censorship were so few that one could wonder if this was the result of a genuine liberal climate

46. See also Rosen (1992: 144-218).

47. "I am making arrangements for the establishment of a press at Athens. I have engaged Professor Psyllas to write for it, and have written to Hydra for a printer. The '*Free Press of Athens*' will have the following motto, 'Publicity is the Soul of Justice'" (letter to Bowring of 11 March 1824, in Stanhope 1824: 111). This was, again, a Bentham motto. Psyllas presented this as a Meyer motto. Even today, the Association of Greek Journalists use this motto in their lecture hall as a phrase coined by Meyer. For the same misunderstanding, see Papalexandrou (1971: 97).

supporting freedom of the press and deliberation or just an aspect of embarrassment and discomfiture towards something totally unfamiliar. Sometimes freedom of the press was considered more important, even from the national interest as the lively political debate in the newspapers demonstrated.

Nevertheless, this was unprecedented for the southeastern Europe and the Middle East,⁴⁸ even for Western Europe and North America.⁴⁹ This was the legacy of Col. Leicester Stanhope since the most important of these newspapers was the *Greek Chronicles* which he nurtured and protected. It was the first newspaper to be published in the liberated Greece and the most legendary. Because of Stanhope's endeavors, or as a reaction to them, three other newspapers followed in the same year. That is why 1824 is the year that is considered as the founding year of the Greek Press and Stanhope as his founder.⁵⁰ Despite the setbacks, the constraints and the opposition, Stanhope was more than satisfied when he was writing to Bowring on 24 March 1824 [N.S.], "There is now a rage for newspapers" (Stanhope 1824: 123).

But Stanhope was naïve enough to associate himself with a formidable warlord, Odysseas Andoutsos, who presented himself as a genuine liberal.⁵¹ Stanhope tried, in good faith, to help Greeks unite during the first phase of the Civil War. However, he managed to become part of the problem. The British government, not incidentally, recalled him back to military service. He returned to London disillusioned and disappointed.⁵² The London Committee preferred to send other representatives to Greece, mostly the popular among Greeks, Edward Blaquiere.⁵³

Byron died on 19 April 1824 [N.S.]. His death was tragic but also useful for the Greek War of Independence. Missolonghi became familiar in every part of Europe. When the Ottoman forces captured it, in mid-April 1826, the backlash in Europe was such that the European

48. "With the establishment of *The Telegraph*, the unsalubrious unknown fishing town in Western Greece had more newspapers than the whole of the Ottoman Empire." (St. Clair 2008: 187).

49. See, e.g. Curtis (2000), Walton (2006), O'Donnell (2013) and Crook (2015).

50. Stanhope was honored for his services to the Greek cause by Othon, King of Greece, in early September of 1843, a few days before the outbreak of a pronunciamiento which led to the adoption of a new constitution, after 15 years of authoritarianism.

51. "[Odysseus] has lately sympathised with the people, and taken the liberal course in politics. He [...] promotes public liberty. Just such a man Greece requires". For Odysseus, see Minta (2007: 1104) ("[his] true motif was [...] to gain access to the proceeds of the Greek loan. Odysseus was the most unprincipled of all the major Greek leaders and Mavrokordatos never had any doubts about what was at stake").

52. Bentham, however, continued to trust him: "Stanhope is, moreover, a highly distinguished Philhellene: of his services in that cause, in that unhappy country, - services like all others that have been expended there, unhappily so unavailingly, - his interesting work on Greece, among other things, contains some particulars" (letter to Jean-Baptiste Say of 9 September 1828 [N.S.], in Bentham 1843c: 2-3).

53. Edward Blaquiere's contribution to the Greek Revolution is underappreciated despite his unrelenting efforts to promote the Greek cause (see, e.g. Rosen 1992: 234-243). For an explanation see, again, Rosen (ibid 126). See also Blaquiere (1824; 1825; 1828).

Courts rushed to find a solution. In what way, can one appreciate his involvement in the founding of Greek Press? Millingen (1831: 81), under the influence of Byron, considers the whole endeavour, an outright failure:

The publication of a newspaper, which appeared at this time, produced little or no sensation on the Mesolonghiots. The greater part of the military chiefs, both in Peloponnesus and Continental Greece, could not read; and among the primates, as the event proved, few gave themselves the trouble of looking at a paper. Indeed there were not in the whole country forty Greek subscribers; and had it not been for the numerous subscriptions from the Ionian Islands and London, the printer would not have had sufficient money to pay even for his ink. If, under the circumstances of the moment, a newspaper could have been productive of advantage to the Greek public, it should have been written in a spirit very different from that, which animated the articles of the Greek Chronicle.⁵⁴

He was grossly mistaken. The Greek newspapers were widely read in Europe. They were all available to London through the Foreign Post-office (*The Times* 9.7.1824). Stanhope managed to establish a philhellenic network of distribution.⁵⁵ Even the conservative London *Times* welcomed *Greek Chronicle* with exultation:

[*The Greek Chronicle*] supplies us with little information on the state of Greece which had not previously reached us through other channels. [...] The very appearance, however, of a newspaper in such a quarter, at such a time, and in such a language, is not without its interest, - recording, as it does, the noble exploits of a people recovering their independence after ages of oppression, - addressed to the descendants whose journalists were THUCYDIDES and XENOPHON, and composed in a dialect which, with some variations in grammar and construction, was spoken by HOMER and PLATO (*The Times*, 17.4.1824, capital letters by *Times*).

Even though most Greeks were illiterate at the time, there was a great interest in what the newspapers published. In the beginning they were amazed:

I was at Athens when the first number arrived there; Odysseus and Gourrah were thrown into consternation, and being themselves unable to comprehend its contents, they sent down to the city for some learned persons to interpret them. Publications address to persons incapable of understanding them, if they can be productive of no great utility, will at least do very little injury, I believe the paper in question to be nearly harmless (Waddington 1825: 173-174).

54. Parry (1825: 188, 190) agrees: "I am a plain man, and cannot comprehend the use of printing presses to a people who do not read".

55. "I beg of you to send the prospectus of the Greek Chronicle to the three German Committees, and desire them to get the sub-committees subscribe to it" (Stanhope to Bowring, 6 January 1824 [N.S.], in Stanhope 1824: 62).

Waddington was wrong to underestimate the speed that ideas and concepts were espoused by the traditional society. It was a matter of a few months for powerful warlords and primates starting to feel very cautious of the way they appeared in newspaper stories describing battles or political maneuvers.⁵⁶ They sent letters to the editor,⁵⁷ they tried to exert influence, to “shape” the public opinion. They realized the power of the new medium and they tried to use it. But they also recognized the need for the liberal intellectuals to run them, to write in them, to educate public opinion with the new concepts and ideas, to explain modern institutional structures. Thomas Gordon (1832: II 180) understood that when he wrote:

The press was now in full operation, and we must do Colonel Stanhope the justice to say, that though it did not accomplish all the benefit he expected, yet neither did it produce the bad consequences many persons anticipated: on the whole, it was certainly useful, by praising meritorious actions, lashing selfishness, and introducing something like public opinion.

The *Greek Chronicles* published 226 issues (from January 1824 to February 1826). Its publication ceased during the third siege of Missolonghi. Mayer and the other staff of the newspapers were tragically killed in the desperate Exodus [Sortie] of April 1826. He is now considered as one of Greece’s national heroes, rightfully so.

For Mavrokordatos and Byron, the behavior of the petulant Swiss was perilous. Mavrokordatos managed, eventually, to appease and accommodate him. But in early 1824 none of them had any experience on how this might work. Mavrokordatos and Byron had liberal instincts, but they were also pragmatists. They were certain that a Greek newspaper, as the mouthpiece of the revolutionaries, should be a medium for the dissemination of the official Greek policy, not a market for ideas or a polemical instrument. The newspaper should have emphasized Christianity and philhellenism and an abstract idea of liberty, mostly national liberty. Any reference to liberalism itself, any reference to the democratic, republican ideals were considered dangerous for the Greek cause.

However, “[t]he object of the Greek struggle for independence for many British liberals was not independence in itself and at any cost, but independence seen as an opportunity to establish a government which secured civil and political liberty and constitutional democracy”

56. “The jibe, often made against Stanhope, that he forgot that the Greeks were unable to read, was quite ridiculous. Thousands could read and those who could not read themselves listened to the reading aloud by their literary fellows” (Dakin 1955: 67-68).

57. “That [the press] had an effect, is demonstrated by the sensibility with which such aristocrats as Sisini and Londos winced under its censures, and the pains they took to defend their characters in long and laboured articles” (Gordon 1832: II 180). The most illustrative is the Petrobeis affair in the summer of 1825, when a powerful primate had to defend himself against high treason charges, published in the *Friend of the Law* with a letter to the editor, published in *Greek Chronicles*. See also more examples in Dimitropoulos (2018) and Hatzis (2020a).

(Rosen 1998: 90). This is true for Stanhope and Bowring. But not for Byron and Blaquiere. In addition, the version of liberalism advocated by people like Bowring, Blaquiere or Stanhope was not necessarily Benthamite, since Bentham's theory and the early liberal ideology of the three philhellenes were not always compatible (Rosen 1992).

Byron was a *sui generis* liberal (Gross 2000). He had liberal instincts, he was ready, when young, to act as a radical and shock Georgian England but he was not an ideologue, despite his association and friendship with the Shelleys and the Hunts. "To paraphrase Theodor Mommsen on Caesar, Byron had liberal ideas to propagate and remember, but he was born to be a king. The ideals cramped his role as an opportunist looking for a kingdom to rule".⁵⁸ He was an aristocratic liberal, he was not ready to reject the society of status to accept a society of contract (Maine 1861). "In Greece without any question of a social revolution that might unseat him, he contributed his intelligence to promote political liberty as the collective base for individual freedom".⁵⁹

Despite his reluctance he was ready to experiment, even when he had many doubts. Frequently, he shared his doubts without undermining Stanhope's plans. When Stanhope, in the Capt. York incident, evoked the principles of equity and the law of nations which supported Greek rights, Byron "started into a passion: He contended, that law, justice, and equity, had nothing to do with politics."⁶⁰ Stanhope was furious and disappointed on his views. But Byron's reply was disarming: "And yet, without my money, where would your Greek newspaper be? [...] Judge me by my actions, not by my words".⁶¹

It is very difficult to untangle romanticism, early liberalism and revolt. Byron's contribution to the Greek but also to the liberal cause in Europe should not be underappreciated. Woodring's assessment (1970: 330) of the romantic poets' political influence was accurate when he wrote: "Politically, the romantics contributed most to later generations in deepening the liberal ideal."

Mavrokordatos' case is equally interesting. He is the one who is responsible for the "intellectual revolution" that Blaquiere (1824: 18) insightfully noticed in his first trip to Greece. Mavrokordatos was definitely a liberal (Theodoridis 2012), but a moderate one⁶² because he was more a pragmatist than a liberal. He tried not to lose sight of the big picture, even in the most difficult periods for him (late 1823, early 1826).

We should not forget that Liberalism was not a well-defined set of political ideas or an institutional framework. Even the word was recently introduced. Liberals were identified

58. See Woodring (1970: 152, but also 168). See also Gross (2000).

59. Woodring (1970: 229).

60. Stanhope's letter to Bowring of 28 January 1824 [N.S.], in Stanhope (1824: 79).

61. Gamba (1825: 140, emphasis on the original).

62. See a very interesting note on the unpublished Stanhope archive in Dimitropoulos (2018: 360, fn 28).

with the American political system, the French Revolution, the radical Whigs, the Spanish *liberales* and the Italian *carbonari*. Mavrokordatos was instrumental for the introduction (even reluctantly) of these ideas in Greek politics and institutional building, despite his concerns, despite the arguments against the introduction of these ideas in Greece, since were, supposedly, “unfit for the people to whom it was addressed”.⁶³ It is not a coincidence that the Greek Constitutions were liberal and republican but without copying foreign models, they inaugurate a genuine Greek democratic political and institutional tradition.⁶⁴ His contribution to this legacy cannot be exaggerated (Diamandouros 1972).

Mavrokordatos created the environment that made possible for Stanhope to arrive and found the Press, for Mayer to become a national hero and for the *Greek Chronicles* to secure a legendary status in the modern Greek history.⁶⁵ When Byron said to Mavrokordatos that if he was in his place, he “would have placed the press under a censor” the Greek politician replied: “No, the liberty of the press is guaranteed by the constitution”.⁶⁶ When he had the chance to appoint an editor to the newly established Official Gazette of the Greek provisional government (*Γενική Εφημερίς της Ελλάδος*) in 1825, he chose, again, a liberal intellectual who couldn’t be controlled easily, Theoklitos Farmakidis.

His overall approach and tolerance created a tradition and a model for the other newspapers. As Beaton (2013: 223) correctly stresses, there were only three occasions of pre- or post-publication censorship in the paper’s two-year history. Despite the fact that this was a revolutionary newspaper, during a critical period of a War of Independence,⁶⁷ published in a traditional society of peasants, primates and warlords, without any experience of a political debate, tolerance or freedom of speech. That is why Meyer always was sure that Mavrokordatos was on the right side of things.⁶⁸

63. See Gordon (1832: I 325). For opposite views by Bentham, see Rosen (1992: 96-102) and Blaquiére (1824: 18-19).

64. As Kitromilides (2018: 19-20) insightfully notices.

65. “I declare that we have sworn to defend Mesolonghi foot by foot, and to accept no capitulation. Our last hour approaches.” (Finlay 1877: 397). Finlay names Meyer as one of the four leading Philhellenes: “Greece owes a debt of gratitude to this disinterested stranger who served her before kings and ministers became her patrons” (ibid). The fate of the printing press is also legendary: “Les caractères de l’imprimerie qui avaient été employés à tracer, dans le journal de Missolonghi, les détails d’un siège si mémorable, à répandre parmi les peuples les exploits de la garnison et les noms de tant de héros, furent dispersés et enfouis dans la terre avec les presses brisées, pour qu’après avoir servi à un usage si saint, ils ne fussent point souillés par la main des barbares” (Fabre 1827: 303-304).

66. See Stanhope’s letter to Bowring of 24 January 1824 [N.S.], in Stanhope (1824: 75). Byron (through Parry 1825: 83) corroborates the absence of real censorship (“those who wrote the articles never submitted them for inspection. They were persons, possessing power and authority, who could not well be controlled, and who had unfortunately more zeal than discretion.”).

67. Even Meyer was reluctant to discuss military plans in the newspaper (Beaton 2013: 230). See also Dimitropoulos (2018: 354-355).

68. Beaton (2013: 250, 253, 267). See also Beaton’s thoughts (ibid 266) (“if Byron had lived a little longer, and if his and Mavrokordatos’ policy had prevailed, Greece could have been spared the worst effects of two civil wars within a year”).

A year after his return to Britain, Stanhope realized his mistake and changed his views considerably. In a rebuttal to Parry's (1825) recollection of the last days of Byron,⁶⁹ he revealed something that was essentially contradictory to many of his arguments in his letters to Bowring:

Lord Byron was a friend to the Freedom of the Press, but he feared its dangerous influence in Greece. I too had my fears: I condemned all interference for the present with foreign politics, and all *violent personal philippics* against soldiers and statesmen in power. I rebuked the worthy Editor of the *Greek Chronicle* for his attack on Austria and on Collocotroni. He told me, that Mavrocordato encouraged his animadversions on the latter. [emphasis on the original]

However, he characterized Mavrokordatos "a well-meaning and clever man" and he detested the eulogies but also the irreverent comments of Parry for the Greek leader. The letter was published three weeks before the Exodus, before the death of Mayer, the "worthy Editor".

It's of no use to try to disentangle what really happened in such extraordinary times and with such extraordinary personalities. Byron and Stanhope, Mavrokordatos and Meyer, were all⁷⁰ responsible for something which looked like a miracle in the backwaters of Ottoman Empire. These were four different types of Liberals, having different experiences, different political goals, different stakes. Nevertheless, they achieved their goal, they managed to educate Greeks, to transplant liberal ideals in a traditional society, to transform traditional illiterate persons to modern agents.

Two months before the Exodus, Meyer was threatened by a powerful warlord, Georgas Tzavellas who felt that the newspaper understated his military contribution. Meyer was afraid that Tzavellas with his cronies would attack the printing press to damage it and molest the staff. And then something extraordinary happened. An unlikely group, a committee of warlords and primates, visited Meyer and ensured him that he can continue his work safely, under their protection. They emphasized that he was welcome to write whatever he wished. To express his opinions, even against them. They would safeguard freedom of the press (Kassomoulis 1941: 194-195).

The story of the establishment of the first Greek newspaper is a way to understand the power of free Press during a revolution. All the newspapers published in Greece from 1824 to 1831 were edited by liberal intellectuals. Their legacy is difficult to understate. Greek

69. In a letter published in the liberal *Examiner*. The letter was written in London, on 14 May 1825 [N.S.] by an angry Stanhope ("Sir, I this morning read your historical work, entitled *The Last Days of Lord Byron*. From the fictitious libels it contains, you should have called this romance *Parry's Slanders*") but it was published after a year in the newspaper (*The Examiner*, 2 April 1826 [N.S.], p. 4-5). Apparently Stanhope who is the one who have sent the letter to the newspaper, since there is a short editorial note characterizing Parry a "caulker in the dock-yards", a "slanderer", a "sot", a "bully", and a "poltroon" who "cannot write ten words of English".

70. See the introductory comments by Dimitropoulos (2018: 253).

newspapers were consistently, during the 19th century, very critical to any kind of authority, even against the Kings, powerful prime ministers and governments. But the most important repercussion was the absolute ideological hegemony of liberal thinking in revolutionary and post-revolutionary Greece. Liberalism was identified with freedom of the press and liberal ideas remained dominant, despite the emergence of extreme irredentist nationalism in the late 19th century.

In a prophetic editorial, written in Laybach on 14 April 1821 and published by the conservative French newspaper, *Gazette de France*, the Greek revolution was linked to the insurrections in Spain, Naples and Piedmont and it was characterized as “the most important event of the moment”. The well-informed writer mentioned “a secret society, on the model of our political Freemasonry [with] lodges established at Smyrna, Constantinople, and in Peloponnesus [...] in direct communication with the Carbonari at Naples.” In one of the first uses of the word in the French language, the insightful writer observed: “Six hundred leagues are no great distance, now that *liberalism* navigates with full sails and is making the tour of the world.” [emphasis in the original].

Greece was the next port of call.

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