

VENIZELOS AND THE BALKAN WARS (I)

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CHAPTER ONE THE CRETAN PRELUDE

At the end of the 1821 Revolution – and the subsequent foundation of the Kingdom of Greece – Crete remained part of the Ottoman Empire. The key point of the “Cretan Issue” was the strategic importance of Suda Bay, whence almost the whole of the Eastern Mediterranean could be controlled. As a result the Great Powers tried to maintain the rule of the island, since Turkey was then the “Sick Man of Europe”. In 1897, a Greco-Turkish war started. The Greek Army suffered a quick – and somewhat ridiculous – defeat at the hands of the Ottomans. The Sublime Porte, nonetheless, was not allowed to annex Greek territories. On the contrary: thanks to secret discussions between George I, King of the Hellenes, and the Austro-Hungarian government, Crete was proclaimed autonomous. The island was administered as a collective protectorate of the Mediterranean Big Four, namely Great Britain, France, Italy and Russia as well.

It was then and there that Venizelos emerged.

I

Eleutherios Venizelos is an enigmatic character in the Contemporary Greek Drama. Up to now nothing as far as his parents are concerned can be taken for granted. According to established scholarship, he was born in August 1864¹ to Kyriakos Venizelos and his wife, Stylianē². His birthplace was Mournies, a village near Canea (*Chania* in Greek), at that time the small capital of the island of Crete. The island was then Ottoman territory. The point is therefore, when and why Kyriakos Venizelos settled there.

¹ Most likely on the 11th of that month and year – according to the Old Style, i.e. the 24th Gregorian. See A. Lilly Macrakis, “Venizelos’ Early Life and Political Career in Crete” in Paschalis M. Kitromilidis (ed.), *Eleftherios Venizelos. The Trials of Statemanship* (Edinburgh University Press, 2008²), p. 39.

² There are people in Crete who still remember her as Maria.

A certain Kyriakēs Venizelos reached Crete on May 20, 1834, at the age of 26³. Eight years later, he was a poor pedlar, with no property on the island, unmarried – but with his mother and a sister depending upon him⁴. He claimed that he was Cretan by descent, but he refused to mention either his father’s name, allegedly dead, or his mother’s one⁵. Nevertheless, he was a Greek subject and stated to the Greek consular authority at Canea that he had the intention of going back to Greece within the year 1843⁶.

If Kyriakēs Venizelos were indeed the father of Eleutherios, he was an individual more obscure than his son. It should be noted that *Kyriakēs* is a variant of the baptismal name *Kyriakos*, and quite popular as a name among the Diaspora Greek Orthodox people throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. However that may be, Kyriakēs/Kyriakos Venizelos, albeit pretending to have Cretan ancestry, had his Greek passport under number 324, issued by the Prefecture of Nauplia⁷. He was allegedly registered in the Syra municipality⁸, Syros island, Cyclades, but was not able to produce any formal evidence⁹.

The conclusion to be drawn from all this is that almost everything Eleutherios Venizelos and his followers stated about Kyriakos Venizelos’ ancestry and achievements cannot be verified. In a letter that allegedly Eleutherios himself wrote in 1899 to his friend, Kōnstantinos Digenakēs, he told of his ancestry and father as follows:

“The genealogical tree of Venizelos family is rooted in Mystras, near Sparta¹⁰. For as early as the seventeenth century the Krevvatas family, one of the most distinguished in the Peloponnese, was established there. Panagiōtēs Krevvatas, a member of that family, renowned for wisdom and bravery, took part in the 1770 uprising against the Turks; [that uprising] was engineered by the Admiral Orlov, envoy of the Empress of Russia Catherine II. After the failure of the uprising, Turkish authorities kept watch on Panagiōtēs Krevvatas. As a result the latter, following the advice of an Ottoman friend, fled to the Ionian Islands, in order to avoid being put to death. Another member of the Krevvatas family was

³ AYE, 1843, 49/1, “Greek Subjects in Canea”; annex to the despatch No. 53 of Stylianos Peroglou, Greek consul at Canea, to Iakōvos Rhizos-Neroulos, Foreign Minister of Greece, Canea, 15/27 December, 1842.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Syra is a municipality on Syros island, dwelled chiefly by autochthonous people of Roman Catholic faith. Hermoupolis, on the other hand, the capital of island, has a population of immigrants, originated from the islands of the eastern Aegean Sea, who are members of the Greek Orthodox Church. With regard to Hermoupolis (= the city of Hermes), see D. Michalopoulos, *Vie politique en Grèce pendant les années 1862–1869* (University of Athens/Saripoleion, 1981), p. 32ff. passim.

⁹ AYE, 1843, 49/1, “Greek Subjects in Canea”; annex to the despatch No. 53 of S. Peroglou, Greek consul at Canea, to the Foreign Minister of Greece, Canea, 15/27 December 1842.

¹⁰ In the southern Peloponnese.

christened Benizelos, left his home as well and settled on Cythera (Cerigo Island)¹¹. It is there that he married and became a tradesman. After having spent some time on Cerigo [nonetheless], he moved to Canea, Crete, wherein he kept doing commerce. One of Benizelos Krevvatas' siblings, Kyriakos, was the father of Eleutherios Venizelos. He was a tradesman as well, and highly regarded by everyone in Canea. He was educated by the standards of his time and also an ardent nationalist. When still very young he [Kyriakos] took part in the 1821 great [Revolutionary] Struggle: he was secretary to Koumēs, the [Cretan] chieftain from Selinon¹², at the siege of Monemvasia [in the Peloponnese]. He was awarded the bronze medal of the Uprising. Three of his brothers fell in that “holy war” [as the Greeks of the time used call the uprising]; another [brother of him], Hadji-Nikolos Benizelos, was one of the three Cretans who were sent to confer with the Greek leaders [in the Peloponnese], when the Revolution broke out. Exiled in 1843 by the Turkish government, which confiscated his property and business assets, he remained an outlaw for a full 19 years”¹³.

Amazing is such a string of absurdities. First of all, and as aforementioned, it is dubious that Venizelos himself wrote this letter¹⁴; for it is not a family's account but a boasting of illustrious ancestry. The effort made by the author to connect Eleutherios' father and his lineage with noted events in the History of Modern Greece is more than obvious. Eleutherios himself, due to his irritable and cynical nature, would have unlikely written such pompous lines. Secondly, with regard to famous Kyriakos' connection with the Mystras Krevvatas family, harped on by several Eleutherios' biographers¹⁵, evidence was never produced¹⁶; for it is an utter myth¹⁷. Third, Monemvasia, in the southeastern Peloponnese, fell to the Greeks in 1821¹⁸.

¹¹ One of the Ionian Islands, offshore the southern Peloponnese.

¹² Selinon is an area in south-western Crete.

¹³ The letter was published *in toto* by Nik. V. Tōmadakēs, *Ho Venizelos ephēvos* (= The Puberty of Venizelos), Athens: Kydōnia, 1964, pp. 22 and partially by Lilē Makrakē, in *Eleutherios Venizelos, 1864–1910. Hē diaplāsē henos ethnīkou hēgetē* (= Eleutherios Venizelos, 1864–1910). The Forming of a National Leader), Athens: Educational Foundation of the National Bank of Greece, 1992, p. 100. A partial English translation is to be found in A. Lilly Macrakis, “Venizelos' Early Life and Political Career in Crete...”, p. 37; and also in Andrew Dalby, *Eleftherios Venizelos. The Peace Conferences of 1919–1923 and their Aftermath* (London: Haus Publishing, 2010), p. 4.

¹⁴ Lilē Makrakē, *Eleutherios Venizelos, 1864–1910...*, p. 101.

¹⁵ Some typical cases: C. Kerofilas, *Eleftherios Venizelos. His Life and Work* (London: John Murray, 1915), p. 4; N. V. Tōmadakēs, *Ho Venizelos ephēvos*, p. 27; Sp. V. Markezinēs, *Politikē Historia tēs Neōteras Hellados, 1828–1964* (= Political History of Modern Greece, 1828–1864), vol. II (Athens: Papyros, 1966), pp. 286–286; Constantin Iordan, *Venizelos și Români* (Bucharest: Omonia, 2010²), p. 11; Charles Personnaz, *Venizélos, le fondateur de la Grèce moderne* (Paris: Bernard Giovangeli, 2008), p. 35.

¹⁶ A. Dalby, *Eleftherios Venizelos*, p. 4; Steph. I. Stephanou, *Eleutherios Venizelos, plastourgos Historias* (= Eleutherios Venizelos, Maker of History), Athens, 1977², p. 5.

¹⁷ Lilē Makrakē, *Eleftherios Venizelos, 1864–1910...*, p. 101.

¹⁸ Kōnstantinos Paparrhēgopoulos, *Historia tou Hellēnikou Ethnous* (= A History of the Hellenic Nation), book XV (Athens: Galaxias, 1971 [first edition in 1860–1874]), p. 71.

It is highly improbable; therefore, that Kyriakos, then a child merely five years old were secretary to a chieftain in war turmoil¹⁹. Fourthly, if Kyriakos were member of such an illustrious family, with brothers actively involved and perished in the 1821–1829 Greek War of Independence, he would be known and honoured by the consular authorities of Greece in Crete. Not only was not professed such an esteem for him, but he systematically avoided to his death to mention the name of his parents, sister, and brothers. They are actually unknown up to our days. And last but not least, it is quite improbable that in 1843 Kyriakos “was exiled by the Turkish government, which confiscated his property and business assets”, and that “he remained an outlaw for a full 19 years”. For according to the Greek consul at Canea, in December, 1842, he had no property, and, if truth be told, he was not entitled to have. For Greeks subjects were granted the right to acquire property in Ottoman territory no sooner than the 1860s²⁰. Moreover, if he really left Crete in 1843, did so not as “exiled” by the Turks, but because, according to his statement to the Greek consular authority, “he wished to repatriate”.

The point is, however, that in 1846 Kyriakos Venizelos was back in Crete – as poor as ever. He had but one precious piece of luggage with him, namely his Greek citizenship; and he was wise enough to keep it for life. For contrary to a widespread opinion, he did so not for patriotic reasons but rather for practical ones. Thanks to the Capitulations system²¹, being a Greek citizen in an Ottoman province meant that the jurisdiction and, often, arbitrariness of the local Ottoman authorities and bureaucracy did not affect him²². As a matter of fact, he had neither to pay the famous *harac*²³, i.e. the head tax that the Sublime Porte collected from non-

¹⁹ No wonder that the “bronze medal” was never found. Only the wording of the diploma – allegedly – accompanying the medal was published in a pro-government Athens newspaper in 1912, i.e. when Eleutherios Venizelos was an all-powerful Prime Minister. (Lilē Makrakē, *Eleftherios Venizelos, 1864–1910...*, p. 106 [note 6].) Still, the mere wording of such a document cannot be regarded as “evidence”.

²⁰ AYE, 1843. 49/1, S. Peroglou to the Foreign Minister of Greece, No. 53, Canea, 15/27 December 1842; Sinan Kunalp [ed.], *Ottoman Diplomatic Documents on the Eastern Question. The Cretan Uprising, 1866–1869*, Part 1 (Istanbul: The Isis Press, 2010), doc. 383 Fuad Pasha, Ottoman Minister of Foreign Affairs, to the Ottoman representatives abroad, Constantinople, March 20, 1867, p. 335.

²¹ That means the network of privileges that citizens of Christian countries enjoyed in Turkey. Greece was involved in the Capitulations system. See S. Kunalp (ed.), *Ottoman Diplomatic Documents on the Origins of World War One. The Turco-Italian War, 1911–1912* (Istanbul: The Isis Press, 2011), doc. 1593: Osman Nizami Pasha, Ottoman Ambassador in Berlin, to Assim Bey, Ottoman Minister of Foreign Affairs, Berlin, June 17, 1912, p. 272.

²² According to Ottoman authorities, by 1866 40,000 Greek citizens were established in Ottoman territory. (S. Kunalp, *The Cretan Uprising, 1866–1869*, 1, doc. 129: Photiades Bey, Ottoman minister at Athens, to Aali Pasha, Grand Vizier and Ottoman Minister of Foreign Affairs, Athens, October 17, 1866, p. 123.)

²³ AYE, 1839, 49 (2–3), the Greek consul at Salonika to the Foreign Ministry of Greece, No. 91, Salonika, March 30, 1839; M. Soutsos, Greek consul in Epirus and Albania, to the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs, No. 237, Preveza, September 20, 1839.

Moslems²⁴, nor to perform unpaid labour (*corvée*)²⁵. He was a protégé of the relevant Greek consul, who was entitled to judge all civil and criminal cases arising between Greek subjects in Ottoman territory²⁶.

* * *

So, Kyriakos Venizelos was a pedlar, as every “tradesman” in Crete with money-capital no larger than the equivalent of 20,000 Greek drachmae²⁷. His ambition was to be a “true merchant”, i.e. to acquire fixed asset equivalent to 50–60,000 drachmae²⁸. During his wanderings, nonetheless, he met in Therison²⁹, a village about 15 km southward from Canea, in the foothills of the White Mountains, the aforementioned Stylianē, then in her mid-twenties³⁰, and fell in love with her. Stylianē was member of the Ploumidakēs family; and Giannēs³¹ Ploumidakēs, i.e. the future Kyriakos’ father-in-law, used to pride himself on his relationship with the chieftain Vasileios Chalēs, a remarkable character of the 1821 Revolution in Crete. If truth be told, this relationship was only a very distant one³². Yet the point is that Giannēs Ploumidakēs, head of a respectable Cretan family, did not wish his daughter to be married to a “social climber” such as Kyriakos was. The result was easy to foresee: a quarrel arose between the two men and a stormy period followed, embellished with nearly all the relevant spicy happenings of Cretan folklore. The conclusion was going to prove the astuteness of Kyriakos; for Ploumidakēs had managed to rally even the local Pasha’s interest in his family affairs. Mustafa Pasha, Governor-General of Crete, seized the opportunity and reduced Kyriakos to the following dilemma: If Kyriakos wanted to marry Stylianē, he had to settle permanently in Crete and consequently acquire Ottoman citizenship. Otherwise he would be expelled back to Greece.

²⁴ See Stanford J. Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey*, vol. I (Oxford University Press, 1978 [reprinted]), p. 120.

²⁵ AYE, 1865, 49/2b, the Secretary of the Greek Consulate at Canea to the Greek Legation at Constantinople, No. 290, Canea, May 20, 1865.

²⁶ AYE, 1865, 98/5b, the Foreign Minister of Greece to P. Delēgiannēs, Greek minister at Constantinople, No. 2837, Athens, June 9, 1865. See also Sinan Kunalp (ed.), *Ottoman Diplomatic Documents on “the Eastern Question”. The Cretan Uprising, 1866–1869*, Part 2 (Istanbul: The Isis Press, 2010), doc. 1360: Safvet Pasha, acting Minister of Foreign Affairs, to the Ottoman representatives abroad, Constantinople, January 5, 1869, p. 509.

²⁷ AYE, 1865, 49/2b, the Secretary of the Greek Consulate at Canea to the Greek Legation at Constantinople, No. 290, Canea, May 20, 1865.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ It is not yet sure whether he met Stylianē in Therison or (according to a local tradition) in Mournies, a village on the edge of Canea. See A. Lilly Macrakis, “Venizelos’ Early Life and Political Career...”, p. 37.

³⁰ Ibid, pp. 37–38.

³¹ Vernacular variant of the Christian name Ioannēs (= John).

³² A. Lilly Macrakis, “Venizelos’ Early Life and Political Career in Crete”, p. 38; Steph. I. Stephanou, *Eleutherios Venizelos...*, p. 8.

There is no doubt that the Ottoman Porte did not welcome people having foreign citizenship to her territory – especially if they had the Greek one. For, as aforesaid, such people were not, in practice, subject to the Ottoman law³³. Nevertheless, in all likelihood, Mustafa Pasha would not have paid attention to Kyriakos Venizelos, unless prompted by Giannēs Ploumidakēs. In point of fact, such was the case³⁴. For the latter disliked very much his son-in-law in prospect. Kyriakos, on the other hand, could not abandon his Greek citizenship for the Ottoman one: being subject of King Otho of Greece in Sublime Porte’s territory was somewhat a shield against the Ottoman authorities. Therefore, straightaway he married Stylianē in early 1846³⁵, placed her under the protection of the Greek consul at Canea and fled to Greece. There he awaited the fitting moment for going back to Crete. Yet, the hate of his father-in-law was so strong that he realized that only in the far future he would be able to join his wife³⁶. He opted therefore for a civil service career, and he became an employee of the Greek Ministry of Internal Affairs³⁷, namely secretary of the Missolonghi Sanitary Authority³⁸. He understood, however, that he could not become rich by merely working for the Greek Civil Service. As a result, he abandoned his post in 1858³⁹, and soon after, he returned to Crete. He could do so now, because the Reform Decree issued by the Porte in 1856⁴⁰ enabled him to have a marital life in Crete. But he never reconciled with his family-in-law⁴¹. In any case, the path to prosperity was open to him from then on.

³³ S. Kunalalp, *The Cretan Uprising, 1866–1869*, 2, doc. 1533: Hayder Effendi, Ottoman Ambassador in Vienna, to Aali Pasha, Vienna, March 25, 1869, p. 630. With regard to the Greek subjects in Crete: *ibid.*, doc. 1377: Conemenos Bey, Ottoman chargé d’affaires at Saint Petersburg, to Safvet Pasha, acting Minister of Foreign Affairs, Saint Petersburg, 26 December/7 January 1869, p. 521. Especially as far as Greek subjects in Ottoman territory were concerned, see doc. 1360, Safvet Pasha to the Ottoman representatives abroad, Constantinople, January 5, 1869, p. 509, which, among others, reads as follows: *Sont considérés de vrais sujets hellènes ceux qui sont issus de parents sujets hellènes ou ceux qui ont acquis cette nationalité en vertu du protocole de Londres. Pour les individus de cette [dernière] catégorie, le Gouvernement Impérial avisera à l’expulsion de ceux qu’il voudrait plus permettre le séjour dans l’Empire.*

³⁴ Odyseas Dēmētrakopoulos, “Dyo Othomanika Engrapha gia ton Patera tou Venizelou” (= Two ottoman documents concerning Venizelos’ father”, *Meletēmata gyrō apo ton Venizelo kai tēn epochē tou* (= Essays on Venizelos and his Era). Edited by Thanos Veremēs and Odyseas Dēmētrakopoulos (Athens: Philippotēs, 1980), p. 705.

³⁵ A. Lilly Macrakis, “Venizelos’ Early Life and Political Career in Crete”, p. 37.

³⁶ O. Dēmētrakopoulos, “Dyo othōmanika engrapha gia ton patera tou Venizelou”, pp. 704, 706

³⁷ EVP, I/2/1, Kyriakos Venizelos to Markos Renierēs, Canea, November 27th, 1877; Manousos Koundouros, *Historikai kai diplōmatikai apokalypseis, 1890–1923*. (= Historical and Diplomatic Disclosures. Historical Events, 1890–1923). Edited by Charikleia G. Dēmakopoulou and Eleutherios Skiadas (Athens: ELIA, 1997²), p. 329.

³⁸ *Ephēmeris tēs Kyvernēseos tou Vasileiou tēs Hellados* (= Official Gazette of the Kingdom of Greece], No. 44 [September 24, 1858), p. 288.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ Stanford J. Shaw and Ezel Kural Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey*, vol. II (Cambridge University Press, 1978), p. 87ff.

⁴¹ Giannēs Manōlikakēs, *Eleutherios Venizelos. Hē agnōstē zōē tou* (= The Unknown Life of Eleutherios Venizelos), Athens: Gnōsē, 1985), p. 52.

II

Was not Kyriakos Venizelos Greek by birth? Abundant literature was produced with the intention of proving that he was. The point is that he never mentioned the names of his father and mother, viz. the name of Eleutherios' grandfather and grandmother. As a result, his ancestry remains shrouded in mystery – and this very fact constitutes a strong indication that his parents were not Greek. Most likely he was an Armenian⁴², who came to Southern Greece from Ayvalık, a seaside town in Asia Minor, after the end of the 1821 Revolution, and as a Christian, became naturalized Greek⁴³.

Thanks to his early wanderings throughout the Kingdom of Greece, Kyriakos gained not only a convenient citizenship but a surname as well. In fact, Venizelos is the scholarly variant of the name *Benizelos*⁴⁴, still existing in the Peloponnese. He added, nonetheless, this surname only after his ambition to be 'someone' had been satisfied. A respectable merchant might not be known even in an Ottoman province merely as "Kyriakos from Ayvalık", as he used to be called during the early stages of his trade activity⁴⁵. Now, being someone and having a surname, he was ready to produce a prolific progeny. Eleutherios was his second son, i.e. the sixth surviving child of the couple.

The birth of Eleutherios, in August, 1864, was a strange one; and the copious literature covering his early life obscures things. Nonetheless, there are some irrefutable details, such as: a) The delivery was by no means an 'easy' one; b) Kyriakos, providing evidence of his indifference to religious matters, invited not only the available Christian Orthodox priest but even a *hoca* and a rabbi to assist Stylianē spiritually⁴⁶; and c) after the baby was born, it was 'abandoned' by an olive tree, near the house. In doing so, Kyriakos and Stylianē⁴⁷ were emphasizing their loyalty to a tradition common in Greek lands. For, if the life of a newborn child is judged to be in danger due to the family's misfortune, the baby is – supposedly – "dropped off"; and a passer-by (of course alerted by the family) 'finds' the baby and 'offers' it to its natural parents – as if the child were one of 'unknown origin'.

⁴² M. Koundouros, *Historikai kai diplōmatikai apokalypseis. Historika gegonota...*, pp. 329–330.

⁴³ The case of people coming into Greece and opting for Greek citizenship was foreseen by the Greek government as early as the 1st of January, 1822. (*Prosōrinon Politeuma tēs Hellados* [= Provisional Constitution of Greece], First Chapter, art. 5; in *Archeia tēs Hellēnikēs Palingenesias* [= The Archives of the Regeneration of Greece], vol. I [Athens: The Parliament of Greece, 1971], p. 26).

⁴⁴ Most likely from the words: Beni + Zelis (= Zelis' son). See Lilē Makrakē, *Eleutherios Venizelos, 1864–1910* (in Greek), Athens: Educational Foundation of the National Bank of Greece, 1992..., p. 101 (note 8).

⁴⁵ M. Koundouros, *Historikai kai diplōmatikai apokalypseis...*, p. 330.

⁴⁶ *Memoirs of H.R.H. Prince Christopher of Greece* (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1938 [ninth impression]), p. 104; cf. A. Lilly Macrakis, "Venizelos' Early Life and Political Career...", p. 39.

⁴⁷ Dēmētrēs Pourmaras, *Eleutherios Venizelos* (= Eleutherios Venizelos), Athens: Eleutheros (no date given), p. 17.

So it was with Eleutherios⁴⁸ and, accordingly, his birthday was celebrated on August 24, 1864 (New Style)⁴⁹. But if one has this story in mind, there are some other facts in the future prime minister of Greece's life to be taken into account. Eleutherios Venizelos was actually never ever dressed in the Cretan traditional dress⁵⁰. In this respect, he was in 'flagrant' contrast to his mother, a woman who was dressed all her life with in the typical clothes of the Cretan peasantry⁵¹. But though she was of a strong character⁵², she remained a shadowy figure in Eleutherios' life. She had nothing of the well-known maternal influence on her illustrious son's life. Nothing that could remotely smack of a Freudian case study, of an Oedipal nature. On the contrary, Kyriakos' (his father's) presence in his life was strong and vivid⁵³.

These are in keeping with the fact that merely in the early 1920s the names of Eleutherios' father and mother were established with some certainty⁵⁴. As a result, trustworthiness should be given to a curious statement that an Athens columnist made on March 20, 1936, i.e. a couple of days after Eleutherios had died: "We do not know yet who his mother and father were; we know nothing about his ancestry"⁵⁵. If the very fact that those male babies born to Stylianē, Kyriakos' wife, were moribund or seriously ill, is taken into consideration⁵⁶, the above statement should be regarded as reliable. And it was a member of the Greek Royal House that shot a Parthian shaft to the reputation of Venizelos a couple of years after the latter's death: "Venizelos was of mixed parentage, Turkish, Jewish and Armenian...He had [in fact] the characteristics of all three races: the ruthlessness of the Turk, the Armenian's love of intrigue and the keen brain of the Jew"⁵⁷. In short, was Venizelos apparently "adopted" or actually adopted by Kyriakos and Stylianē? Up until now, nobody has been able to provide us with an answer to that crucial question.

III

In 1866 an uprising of the Christian element of the Cretan population against the Porte's sovereignty occurred. Kyriakos' position was peculiar. He was a Greek citizen in Ottoman territory; and to be a Cretan-style "hero" was hardly the height of

⁴⁸ Steph. I. Stephanou, *Eleutherios Venizelos...*, p. 9.

⁴⁹ Andrew Dalby, *Eleutherios Venizelos...*, p. 5.

⁵⁰ Lilē Makrakē, *Eleutherios Venizelos, 1864–1910*, p. 243.

⁵¹ A. Lilly Macrakis, "Venizelos' Early Life and Political Career..." p. 38.

⁵² Lilē Makrakē, *Eleutherios Venizelos, 1864–1910*, p. 110.

⁵³ Steph. I. Stephanou, *Eleutherios Venizelos...*, p. 12.

⁵⁴ In 1920 his father's name was "Geōrgios" and that of his mother "Despoina". See Herbert Adams Gibbons, *Venizelos* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1920), p. 1.

⁵⁵ Daily paper *Hē Kathēmerinē* (= The Daily [Athens]), March 19, 1936. (In *Ho thanatos tou Venizelou ston athēnaiko typo* [= Venizelos' Death in the newspapers of Athens]. Edited by Helenē Gardika-Katsiadakē (Canea: "Eleutherios Venizelos" National Foundation, 2004), p. 472.

⁵⁶ G. Manōlikakēs, *Eleutherios Venizelos...*, pp. 54–55.

⁵⁷ *Memoirs of... Prince Christopher of Greece*, p. 104; cf. Thomas Ath. Vaidēs, *Eleutherios Venizelos* (in Greek), Athens: Patris, 1934, p. 60.

his ambition. He tried to appeal, therefore, to Greek public opinion for appeasement⁵⁸. It was in vain... and he left Crete for Syros, an island in the Cyclades group, in the Aegean. He settled there with his family most likely in October, 1866; and he went back to Crete only in 1872⁵⁹.

Strangely enough, although the Venizelos family were only refugees, they led a luxurious life. Kyriakos opened a general store in Hermoupolis, the Syros' capital, and his business flourished so much that he had means to hire a villa for his family's summer vacations⁶⁰. In early 1869, the uprising in Crete was over, but the Venizelos were uncertain of their repatriation. Life in Syros was easy going and the father had ample chance of making money. As a result, they returned to Canea in the summer of 1872⁶¹. Kyriakos had by now a well-lined purse and, subsequently, was a prosperous tradesman. But he never forgot Syros, where he had become rich. He maintained all his life the profitable Hermoupolis connections⁶². In fact, he was such a Syros enthusiast that, when the young Eleutherios had finished his elementary studies in Canea schools and begun his secondary ones in Athens, he suddenly made up his mind for his son to finish his schooling in Hermoupolis.

And so this was done. Eleutherios actually completed his secondary studies on Syros island on June 28, 1880. His grades were "very good" but his conduct left something to be desired⁶³. In the meantime the prosperous general store of his father was transferred – as aforementioned – from Syros island Crete. As with nearly all traders, Kyriakos did not trust university studies; for he destined Eleutherios to become his successor in business. His opinion was justified by the very fact that Agathocles, his elder son, was a clinically certified idiot who was not able even to stand up⁶⁴. After Kyriakos' death who would run his business? Eleutherios, of course, who was already serving his apprenticeship in his father's shop, learning the trade. If truth be told, he made an excellent merchant, never letting clients go without a purchase, cheerful and affable as he was⁶⁵.

Given nevertheless that Eleutherios was entitled by the Education Certificate obtained at Hermoupolis to pursue university studies, he managed to overcome paternal objections and enrolled in the Law School of the University of Athens

⁵⁸ Andreas Th. Drakakēs, *T'agnōsta chronia. Ho Eleutherios Venizelos stē Syro* (= The Obscure Years. Eleutherios Venizelos on Syros Island), Athens, 1985, p. 15.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ EVP, I/3/1: His certificate from the Royal "Gymnasium" at Hermoupolis.

⁶⁴ He died in 1896 on Melos island almost simultaneously with his mother. (Helenē Dalampira, *Ho tafos tēs Stylianēs Venizelou stē Mēlo* (= The grave of Stylianē Venizelos on Melos island), Athens 1992, pp. 12, 16.

⁶⁵ A. Lilly Macrakis, "Venizelos' Early Life and Political Career in Crete...", p. 42.

on October 8, 1880⁶⁶. According to a legend cultivated later by Greek Liberals, it was thanks to the pressure exerted by the Greek Consulate at Canea that Kyriakos finally sent his son to Athens⁶⁷. *Se non è vero, è ben trovato*. Being a Greek citizen, Kyriakos needed the protection of Greek consular authority – and the latter was interested in the family affairs of its *protégés* in the Canea microcosm.

However that may be, Eleutherios had the firm intention of studying Law most likely no later than in his last Syros days. He was clear-sighted enough to understand that the antagonism between the Great Powers over Crete led the way for ambitious young men able to grasp the opportunities offered. British interest for control over Crete was all but an open secret. The island was regarded by the Foreign Office as the “key of the Greek Archipelago”⁶⁸ and “one of Egypt’s keys” (the other one being Cyprus) in the early 1860s⁶⁹. The United Kingdom’s main concern over the island’s fate, moreover, was obvious already in 1806. For the Foreign Secretary then made it clear that British occupation of Crete should take place in case Russia attempted annexation of Ottoman territory⁷⁰. The Suda Bay was of outstanding strategic importance, because it was the “best natural harbour in the Levant”⁷¹.

Of course, things were getting complicated by the fact that Crete had been administratively annexed to Egypt in 1830⁷². The subsequent occupation of the island by troops of Muhammad Ali, then Viceroy in Cairo, was to finish only in 1840⁷³. The unrest provoked by the end of the island’s Egyptian administration fuelled hopes for Crete to be united with the Kingdom of Greece. At the same time, British consular authorities were actively – but unofficially – stirring up sentiment for Crete to be made a British protectorate⁷⁴. They failed in that, but not so much because the feelings in favour of the island’s union with Greece were so strong among the Christians of Crete. For, even though the latter were more numerous

⁶⁶ EVP, I/3/ 2: Receipt of payment of his enrollment fees.

⁶⁷ Steph. I. Stephanou, *Eleutherios Venizelos...*, p. 13.

⁶⁸ Archipelago = The Aegean Sea.

⁶⁹ Miranta Staurinou, *Hē anglikē politikē kai to Krētikō zētēma, 1839–1841* (= British Policy and the Cretan Issue, 1839–1841), Athens: Domos, 1986, pp. 47–48.

⁷⁰ And French occupation of Egypt. (Ibid., p. 47.)

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 49.

⁷² Athanase G. Politis, *Les rapports de la Grèce et de l’Égypte pendant le règne de Mohamed Aly (1833–1849)*, Rome: Istituto Poligrafico dello Stato per la Reale Società di Geografia d’Egitto, 1935, p. XVff.

⁷³ Thanks to the 1840 London Treaty (Ibid., p. XCI).

⁷⁴ Athanase G. Politis, *Le conflit turco-égyptien de 1838–1841 et les dernières années du règne de Mohamed Aly d’après les documents diplomatiques grecs* (Cairo: Société royale de géographie d’Égypte, 1931), doc. 83, S. Peroglou, Greek consul at Canea, to the Foreign Ministry, Athens, Canea, 6/18 April 1840, p. 100.

than the Moslems⁷⁵, a large number among them had blood ties with the autochthonous Moslems and, as such, were unwilling to remove the Sublime Porte's rule⁷⁶. The Ottoman administration, subsequently, was re-established. That was by common agreement of the Powers, namely the United Kingdom, Russia, Austria and Prussia – but the main Power to take advantage of such a development was Britain. Whilst an “English” protectorate over Crete was not feasible, direct Ottoman sovereignty over it was the best solution for the British. For if the island were annexed to Greece, the corollary would be the strengthening of Russia⁷⁷. As a matter of fact, Otho, the first King of Greece, was considered to be Russophile; while George I, whose Queen Consort, Olga, was née a Grand Duchess of Russia, was Anglophile (by necessity, not by sentiment)⁷⁸.

That was the background of Venizelos' ascendancy. The crux, however, was the marriage of a sister of him, *Katinkō*⁷⁹, to Kōnstantinos Mētsotakēs (fifteen years her senior), a wealthy Canean lawyer and politician – and Greek subject as well⁸⁰. Mētsotakēs was an active anglophile and, since by the end of the 1866–1869 revolution had been created the framework for an embryonic political life in Crete, there were plenty of opportunities to be grasped by astute persons like him. If the story of the Greek Consulate at Canea having intervened on behalf of Eleutherios' university studies is true, the authentic *deus ex machina* is to be found in the Mētsotakēs family. They had recognized the young man's potential and had subsequently informed the

⁷⁵ Ibid., doc. 13, S. Peroglou to C. Zographos, Foreign Minister, Canea, April 25/May 7, 1838, p. 16; cf. idem, *Les rapports de la Grèce et de l'Égypte...*, p. LXVI. During the 1866–1869 uprising in Crete, the Moslems numbered 90,000 according to the Sublime Porte but only 40,000 according to the Russian Chancellery. (S. Kunalp, *The Cretan Uprising, 1866–1869*, 1, doc. 239: Aali Pasha to Musurus Bey, Ottoman Ambassador in London, Constantinople, January 16, 1867, p. 201; doc. 258: Conemenos Bey to Fuad Pasha, Ottoman Minister of Foreign Affairs, Saint Petersburg, February 14, 1867 p. 254.)

⁷⁶ See Athanasios Th. Phōtopoulos (ed.), *Theodōrou Rhigopoulou, grammateōs tōn Kolokotrōnaiōn, Apomnēmoneumata* (= The Memoirs of Theodōros Rhigopoulos, Secretary of Kolokotrōnēs family), Athens, 1979, p. 196. It was a very peculiar situation, literally unique in the Balkans. The Cretan Orthodox Christians had invited the Turks to occupy Crete in 1645 and after the Ottoman occupation of the island was confirmed, they tolerated the famous “temporary marriages”. Ipso facto, Moslems were entitled to have sexual relations with Christian women for a determined period of time. Thereafter these Christian women were free to marry (permanently) their fellow Christians. Nonetheless, the children of those mixed, temporary connexions remained in the family of their Moslem father; and of course the offspring of the women's second marriage were the uterine brothers and sisters of the *siblings* their mother had with her first (Moslem) husband. (V. Bérard, *Krētikes Hypotheseis* [= Cretan Affairs]. Translated into Greek by G. Moraglēs [Athens: Trochalia, no date given], pp. 79, 84.)

⁷⁷ Miranta Staurinou, *Hē anglikē politikē kai to Krētiko zētēma, 1839–1841...*, p. 13.

⁷⁸ D. Michalopoulos, *Vie politique en Grèce pendant les années 1862–1869* (Athens: Saripoleion/University of Athens), pp. 163–165, 197.

⁷⁹ Variant of the Christian name *Aikaterinē* (= Catherine).

⁸⁰ On the Mētsotakēs family: AYE, 1843, 49/1, “Greek Subjects in Canea” annex to the despatch No. 53 of S. Peroglou to I. Rhizos-Neroulos, Canea, 15/27 December, 1842. Also: G. Manōlikakēs, *Eleutherios Venizelos...*, p. 58; A. Lilly Macrakis, “Venizelos' Early Life and Political Career in Crete...”, p. 49.

Greek Consulate. Due to their wealth, high status and Greek citizenship they had been able to convince the Greek consul at Canea to talk with Eleutherios' father.

IV

Eleutherios' university studies were finished only in 1887⁸¹. But he was unlikely to have done otherwise. For his father had died in 1883 and Eleutherios was forced to look after his family affairs. He, therefore, liquidated Kyriakos' general store at Canea and finally obtained his university degree, though studying for the most part at home. As a result, his grade was "Very Good" instead of "With Honours" which had hoped for. This fact had no practical importance. But it proved to be catalytic as far as his psyche was concerned; for it left him with a complex of "not-being-intellectual", which tormented him for the rest of his life. And it is noteworthy that this complex grew because of the frustration he felt at not having the means to pursue further studies in Germany⁸².

In late 1887, however, he was appointed a Canean lawyer⁸³ – though he had been practicing as a "solicitor" from 1884 onwards⁸⁴. As aforementioned, Canea, where Moslems were the overwhelming majority, was then the capital of Crete. It was an "ugly, little town, with nothing attractive in it"⁸⁵. Thanks, nonetheless, to the special administrative régime (in actual fact an semi-autonomous one) that Crete enjoyed after the Ottomans were defeated by the Russians in 1878 and the subsequent conclusion of the Chalepa Convention a large field of activity was already open to lawyers educated in "Europe", viz. Greece. Still, Eleutherios' professional beginnings were not promising⁸⁶, which was why he tried to make a career as a judge⁸⁷. But suddenly things changed for the better and he proved to be a very successful lawyer. Undoubtedly the *deus ex machine* was again K. Mētsotakēs, his brother-in-law. Not only was he a wealthy individual, but also the very founder and leader of the Liberal party of Crete⁸⁸, the editor of the weekly newspaper *Leuka Orē*⁸⁹, i.e. the Liberals' mouthpiece – and a successful lawyer as well. But in 1888 K. Mētsotakēs retired from all his posts, appointing Eleutherios Venizelos his

⁸¹ Steph. I. Stephanou, *Eleutherios Venizelos...*, *op. cit.*, p. 14. In the meantime he met at Athens, in November 1886, the British liberal politician Joseph Chamberlain. It was in his capacity as a member of a Cretan students' delegation. (See A. Dalby, *Eleftherios Venizelos...*, pp. 9–11).

⁸² G. Manōlikakēs, *Eleutherios Venizelos...*, p. 61.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, pp. 61–62.

⁸⁴ EVP, I/4/1–9; I/5/1; I/6/1–2.

⁸⁵ Panagiōtēs Danklēs, *Anamnēseis-Engrapha-Allēlographia-To archeio tou* (= Memoirs-Documents-Correspondence-his Archives). Edited by X. Leukoparidēs, vol. I (Athens: Vagiōnakēs, 1965), p. 217.

⁸⁶ G. Manōlikakēs, *Eleutherios Venizelos...*, pp. 62–63.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 62.

⁸⁸ Lilē Makrakē, *Eleutherios Venizelos, 1864–1910*, pp. 460–461.

⁸⁹ *Leuka Orē* = White Mountains.

successor in everything⁹⁰. Thanks to K. Mētsotakēs, therefore, Venizelos came to be the leader of a strong political party (he literally inherited it from his brother-in-law), a member of the local Parliament, the editor of an influential newspaper, and a successful lawyer⁹¹. In practice he was the leader of the anglophile party in Crete.

* * *

This was made apparent as early as the following year, 1889. Thanks to K. Mētsotakēs' retirement and financial aid⁹², Venizelos was elected to the local Parliament, in the ranks of the Liberals. Liberals then held a majority in Parliament thanks to universal suffrage, for the first time exercised in Crete⁹³. On the other hand the Conservatives i.e. the other strong Cretan political party, judged the time ripe for Crete to be united with Greece. The Russian Consulate at Canea openly encouraged them to do so⁹⁴; but the Greek Government's attitude was faltering⁹⁵. Anglophile Charilaos Trikoupēs was then in power in Athens and was setting in motion an economic development policy, which implied a pacifist one towards the Ottoman Empire. Venizelos, therefore, was against the "Conservative Uprising" that took place in Crete. And anxious not to be regarded as a "revolutionary" by the Ottoman authorities he voted against the union-with-Greece motion in the local Parliament. But he was almost alone in doing so⁹⁶; subsequently, he fled secretly to Athens in October 1889⁹⁷. He was not to return to Crete until mid-April 1890⁹⁸.

It was then and in the Greek capital that Eleutherios Venizelos publicly emerged as the Cretan anglophile champion. First of all, it was the British Consul at Canea, Alfred Biliotti, his friend⁹⁹, who had arranged his flight to Athens¹⁰⁰; and it was in Athens that he became an adherent of Trikoupēs' policy of internal development¹⁰¹. Since, moreover, he had left behind, at Canea, Maria Katelouzou, i.e. his wife-to-be, he regarded the Russians as responsible for the turmoil in his life¹⁰²: he was separated from his *fiancée* and had lost of his seat in the Cretan

⁹⁰ G. Manōlikakēs, *Eleutherios Venizelos...*, pp. 77–78; Lilē Makrakē, *Eleutherios Venizelos, 1864–1910*, pp. 194–195.

⁹¹ As far as his post-1888 legal activities are concerned: EVP, I/8/1–16; I/9/1–17.

⁹² Lilē Makrakē, *Eleutherios Venizelos, 1864–1910*, p. 229.

⁹³ Eleutherios K. Venizelos, *Hē Krētikē Epanastasē tou 1889* (= The 1889 Revolution in Crete). Edited by Giannēs G. Manōlikakēs, Athens, 1971, p. 50.

⁹⁴ Lilē Makrakē, *Eleutherios Venizelos, 1864–1910*, p. 247.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 246.

⁹⁶ A. Dalby, *Eleutherios Venizelos...*, p.13.

⁹⁷ AYE, 1889, A/12, the Greek Consul General at Canea, to Stephanos Dragoumēs, Foreign Minister of Greece, Canea, October 9th, 1889.

⁹⁸ G. Manōlikakēs, *Eleutherios Venizelos...*, p. 82ff.

⁹⁹ Lilē Makrakē, *Eleutherios Venizelos, 1864–1910*, p. 175.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 85.

¹⁰¹ E. Venizelos, *Hē Krētikē Epanastasē tou 1889*, p. 48.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 58ff.

Parliament. Needless to say, these ideas soon proved to be catalytic as far as the political and international life in South-Eastern Europe was concerned.

Upon his coming back to Canea, therefore, his ideas were evident: no more unrest against the Porte. His father acted as a precedent; for as early as 1877 he had demanded that uprisings against the Ottoman rule be stopped in Crete¹⁰³. In short, the Porte's sovereignty was to be continued – at least for the moment.

Venizelos, therefore, tried to prove again his loyalty to the Ottoman authorities; and he took a step that could have been fatal to his career. In December 1892 a Moslem, Tevfik Bedri Bey, was murdered in the Canea district, and four Christians were jailed as suspected of homicide. The four were taken to court and two of them, namely Geōrgios Papadakēs and Antōnios Larentzakēs, were sentenced to death and executed on January 8, 1894. Nonetheless, they were not guilty: the victim's murder was the result of a family dispute. This was a widely-held opinion in the Canea social microcosm – and proved to be true¹⁰⁴. The consequence was that no lawyer had been willing to prosecute the alleged murderers other than Venizelos and his friends, who managed to send two innocent people to the gallows¹⁰⁵. The protests of the Canea Christians, actually the entire Cretan Christian community, were so vehement that Venizelos feared for his life¹⁰⁶. And he was going to live in constant fear of assassination till he died in Paris in 1936: he was actually assassinated, but not by Cretans.

The 1893 trial, nevertheless, had been his *cause célèbre*¹⁰⁷, but it was a factitious one. In point of fact, it was fraudulently and cynically gained by him against innocent Christians – most likely for the considerable pecuniary advantage he derived from it¹⁰⁸.

V

He could not live in Crete anymore, unless constantly protected by the Ottoman authorities. So he kept his head down for a couple of years¹⁰⁹. It was not until 1895 that he tried to re-enter the political scene of his native island by editing another weekly newspaper, the *Augē* (= Dawn). But in 1895 a fresh Christian uprising took place in Crete. Unlike the 1889 one, it was incited not by Russians but by the British; and its aim was the island's autonomy and by no means union with Greece. The main character in this new drama was Manousos Koundouros, a magistrate with an Athens University degree, like Venizelos, but a bellicose chieftain as well.

¹⁰³ EVP, I/2/1, Kyriakos Venizelos to Markos Rhenierēs, Canea, November 27, 1877.

¹⁰⁴ G. Manōlikakēs, *Eleutherios Venizelos...*, p. 102.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 103–105.

¹⁰⁶ Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 121–123.

¹⁰⁷ A. Dalby, *Eleftherios Venizelos...*, p. 14.

¹⁰⁸ Cf. A. Lilly Macrakis, "Venizelos' Early Life and Political Career in Crete", p. 79 (note 46).

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

The Koundouros uprising for autonomy was successful. For now it was the turn of the British to trip up the Russians. It was thanks to the 1878 Russian victory against the Porte that the Chalepa Convention was concluded in that same year; and it was thanks to the Russian consular authorities' activity that the 1889 uprising for union with Greece was launched. The British answer was most effective: they managed to have the semi-autonomy granted to the Christians of Crete by the Porte (thanks to the Russians) developed into a parliamentary system based on universal suffrage.

As aforementioned, the 1895 insurrection had no "unionist" character. What is more, the Ottoman troops after the defeats they had suffered at the hands of the insurgents, abandoned the countryside and entrenched themselves in the island's cities¹¹⁰. The time was, therefore, ripe for essential changes in the political scene of Crete. In July, 1896, the Great Powers jointly decided to provide the populations of the island with the appropriate political régime. In other words, the Porte's sovereignty over the island was to become shadowy¹¹¹.

In the meanwhile, a Revolutionary Assembly was convened and a plan for Crete's future drafted as an autonomous state: the island would be under the Porte's suzerainty with a Christian governor, and a European police force¹¹². Venizelos had taken a seat in the Assembly. Nonetheless, his situation was tricky. He was regarded as an avowed pro-Turkish – and he was. The memory, moreover, of his 1894 innocent victims was still alive. As a result, he was very nearly murdered as soon as he first attended the Revolutionary Assembly. He escaped thanks only to Koundouros' intervention, who had already been elected President of the Revolutionary Assembly¹¹³.

Koundouros was now the seeming star of Anglophilia in Crete. Venizelos' political career was all but doomed; for the Cretan Christians merely put up with him. Koundouros, being confident of his success, rescued unhesitatingly Venizelos' life. Yet in doing so he committed a fatal error. The British did not want so much to rely upon Koundouros, because he was married to the daughter of the Russian consular agent at Rethymnon¹¹⁴. It made no difference whether Koundouros openly criticized Russia and the Russians. Venizelos was more trustworthy to the British; for his obscure ancestry, his ill reputation and, above all, his wretched family life made him a docile instrument in British hands.

Stylianē, his mother, and Agathocles, his idiot brother, died almost to the day in 1896¹¹⁵. Two years later K. Mētsotakēs, his brother-in-law and political mentor, passed away as well. But the most severe blow had been inflicted on him as early as 1894. His young and beautiful wife, Maria, whom he married in 1890, died while delivering Sophocles, their younger son. The cause of death is usually

¹¹⁰ M. Koundouros, *Historikai kai diplōmatikai apokalypseis...*, pp. 63–65.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 91.

¹¹² A. Dalby, *Eleftherios Venizelos...*, p. 14.

¹¹³ M. Koundouros, *Historikai kai diplōmatikai apokalypseis...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 94–95; cf. A. Dalby, *Eleftherios Venizelos...*, p. 15.

¹¹⁴ Maria Tsirimonakē, *En Rethymnō* (= In Rethymnon), Rethymnon, 1998², p. 32.

¹¹⁵ Helenē Dalampira, *Ho tafos tēs Stylianēs Venizelou stē Mēlo*, pp. 12, 16.

imputed to puerperal fever. But further investigation has now established that Maria died of an infection attributed to squalor¹¹⁶. As a sign of perpetual mourning, Venizelos was bearded for the rest of his life.

As a consequence, he was bound to take on a quasi-maternal role to his siblings. There were two: Kyriakos and the aforementioned Sophocles, a future prime minister of Greece. The point is that in 1896 Venizelos was an afflicted widower in charge of two little boys. What is more, his compliant attitude towards the Ottoman authorities had alienated the Cretan Christians from him. Actually, the most important clients of his law office were Turks¹¹⁷; for there was no sympathy for him among the Christians in Canea.

VI

The British opened all doors to him. Cretan Moslems put obstacles in the way of the island's autonomy. This is why Timoleon Vasos, colonel of the Greek Army and aide-de-camp to King George I of the Hellenes, landed on Cretan soil on the 3rd of February, 1897 and declared "he was occupying the island" in the name of his Sovereign¹¹⁸. Christian irregulars hoisted the Greek flag on a hill close to Canea, and European men-of-war shelled them. An – unavoidable – imbroglio ensued, and Venizelos appeared as the odd-job man: he hastened to the spot of the bombardment and thanks to his legal experience undertook the task of talking with the Powers' representatives. His main contacts were with the British; and the fact that the latter acceded to his suggestions convinced the Christian Cretans that he was the *persona grata* of the new order being created in their island¹¹⁹. For the moment he was not the target of his Christian compatriots' hatred. But anxious about his questionable political past, he addressed a circular letter to his friends advocating instant "Union with Greece" as the "best remedy for the island's pains"¹²⁰.

That famous "Union with Greece" would be in the years to come the main political instrument in Venizelos' hands. Now, having autonomy in their grasp, liberal politicians in Crete were going to use the unionist slogan as a cover for their own goals and ambitions. Such goals and ambitions were readily foreseeable; for "goals" meant the 'duties' assigned to them thanks to Great Britain, and "ambitions" signified Crete's political arena about to be dominated by them.

The role of the Conservatives, on the other hand, was apparently easier: they were constantly advocating "Union with Greece". As a result, they were more

¹¹⁶ G. Manōlikakēs, *Eleutherios Venizelos...*, p. 106.

¹¹⁷ EVP, I/12/1–55; I/14/3–18; I/15/1–31; I/16/1–4.

¹¹⁸ Édouard Driault and Michel Lhéritier, *Histoire diplomatique de la Grèce de 1821 à nos jours*, vol. IV (Paris: Les Presses Universitaires de France, 1926), p. 345.

¹¹⁹ Dr. C. Kerofilas, *Eleftherios Venizelos*, pp. 18–19.

¹²⁰ EVP, I/17/1. The letter (better: a declaration) was signed, on the 28th of January, 1897, by his new and old political friends as well.

trustworthy than the Liberals in the eyes of the local Christian population. They were backed, nonetheless, by Russia; and in the last analysis their success depended on whether the Tsar Nicholas II would effectively support them.

For the time being, the game was being played in Athens. As already mentioned, Olga, Queen Consort of Greece, was of Russian stock: she was the daughter of the Grand Duke Konstantin Nikolayevich, brother of the Tsar Alexander II. Her husband, King George I of the Hellenes¹²¹, was the second son of King Christian IX of Denmark. According to the secret shared with the French minister at Athens, Joseph Arthur Count de Gobineau, in the autumn of 1864, he “was sold to England”. He knew nothing about Greece, and was not willing to know¹²². But he was driven to accept the Greek Crown, after the fall of King Otho, by his father, because Lord John Russell, then Foreign Secretary of Great Britain, had promised the Danes British support in the Schleswig-Holstein issue¹²³. But the British policy towards his sibling in Athens was dishonest. According to secrets he, George I, divulged to Gobineau with bated breath, the British, after “having dragged him to Greece”, deserted him and re-appeared only in order to cause problems for him¹²⁴.

It was natural, notwithstanding, for the young sovereign¹²⁵ to be obedient to British dictates; for Britain had been the victorious Power in the Greek ‘battleground’ since King Otho’s removal in 1862¹²⁶. This was why, in 1875, King George accepted the parliamentary system to be established in Greece. As a matter of fact, he was by no means persuaded to take such a step, and he had tried to rule his adoptive country in an authoritarian manner¹²⁷. But he failed. Therefore, he unwillingly agreed to have a fully-fledged Parliament functioning in Athens.

Scholars discovered only in the 1980s the impact of the feelings of rancour he harboured against Britain throughout his life. Evidently, his frequent visits to the Viennese Court and his talks with the old Emperor of Austria and Apostolic King of Hungary, Franz Joseph, were no secret¹²⁸. But very few realized that he had achieved a secret rapprochement with Austro-Hungary and regarded – secretly as well – the old Emperor and King as his personal mentor¹²⁹; and strangely enough, he had the support of Ch. Trikoupēs, the well-known Statesman, whose obvious anglophilia had resulted in deep disappointment as well¹³⁰. The point of all this has been that in the last years of the nineteenth century Venizelos was, in British eyes,

¹²¹ King Otho was “King of Greece”.

¹²² Cf. Prince Nicholas of Greece, *Ta penēnta chronia tēs zōēs mou* (= The fifty years of my life), Athens: Greca, 1926, p. 25.

¹²³ D. Michalopoulos, *Vie politique en Grèce...*, p. 165.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*,

¹²⁵ He was merely 17 years old, when arrived in Athens, in October 1863.

¹²⁶ D. Michalopoulos, *Vie politique en Grèce...*, p. 73ff.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 166ff.

¹²⁸ Prince Nicholas of Greece, *Ta penēnta chronia tēs zōēs mou*, pp. 96–98.

¹²⁹ Paulos V. Petridēs, *Xenikē exartēsē kai ethnikē politikē, 1910–1918* (= Greece’s dependence on foreign Powers and [her] national policy, 1910–1918), Salonika: Paratērētēs, 1981, p. 286ff, *passim*.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 286.

the only reliable person in Greek lands. King George was pro-Austrian, the Cretan Koundouros had pro-Russian family connections, and K. Mētsotakēs, the old, assured pro-British champion was dead. Under these circumstances, the Venizelos ascendancy was no laughing matter: either Venizelos in power or the British influence would be lost. And so a tragicomedy was played out; the main stages of which were the following:

1. T. Vasos' landing in Crete – and his subsequent declaration that he was occupying the island in the name of King George I of the Hellenes – was an open provocation against the Sublime Porte. As a result, the beginning of a Greco-Turkish war was, therefore, easily foreseeable.

2. Before the Vasos landing took place, Theodōros Delēgiannēs, then prime minister of Greece was asked by members of his cabinet whether the Greek Army was able to combat the Ottoman one. The only reasonable answer was that it was not. Nonetheless, T. Vasos arrived in Crete – and, of course, hostilities between the Ottoman Empire and Greece broke out in early April, 1897.

3. Within thirty days the Greek Army was defeated by the Ottomans, and put to flight. The Ottoman troops occupied the whole of Thessaly and their entry into Athens was prevented thanks to the European Powers' mediation.

4. It was an ignominious defeat. But the island of Crete was declared autonomous under the Sultan's suzerainty and the collective protection of four European Powers, namely Great Britain, France, Italy, and Russia. (Germany and Austro-Hungary were with them only till April, 1898¹³¹.) Prince George of Greece, second son of the King George I, was accordingly appointed High Commissioner of the Powers in Crete. He arrived there in early December 1898 and was given a frenzied reception by the island's Christian population.

5. The conclusion is that Greece was militarily humiliated in 1897 but diplomatically triumphant. For Crete was, dynastically associated with the Kingdom of Greece, whilst the Ottoman rule there was in practice over.

The key person in this very matter was King George I of the Hellenes. In actual fact, of fact, it was he who urged the Greek government into war against the Porte, though everybody knew that the Greek Army was not yet fit for warfare. He was sure, nevertheless, that the war's outcome would be advantageous for his House.

Why was he so sure? The mystery was disclosed only in 1910. Before the war began, King George was staying in Vienna and having secret talks with the Emperor and the latter's Foreign Minister, Count Gołuchowski. They guaranteed that despite the defeat the Greek Army was to suffer at the hands of the Ottomans, Greece would not endure territorial losses. On the contrary, Crete was to be put under the rule of the Greek Royal House¹³².

¹³¹ Sp. V. Markezinēs, *Politikē Historia tēs Neōteras Hellados...*, II, p. 351.

¹³² Daily paper *Patris* (= Fatherland), No. 6008 (September 15, 1910); cf. É. Driault and M. Lhéritier, *Histoire diplomatique de la Grèce de 1821 à nos jours*, vol. V (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1926), p. 332.

* * *

Now all was light. Greece was defeated, but Crete was gained for the Royal Family of Greece. There emerged, nevertheless, a new problem: Prince George, the High Commissioner, was an open Russophile. Not only was he the cousin of Tsar Nicholas II, but he had saved the latter's life in Japan in 1891, when both of them were on official visit to that country¹³³. His appointment, moreover, was the effect of Saint Petersburg's cabinet manipulation and pressure¹³⁴. The point, however, is that Germany and Austria objected to him as High Commissioner; and though Emperor Wilhelm II had understood that the Cretan issue would be, in long run, of great benefit to Britain, he withdrew Germany from the Powers involved in Crete. Austro-Hungary copied Germany, but Italy did not. This was the first fissure within the Concert of Powers – and the Triple Alliance as well¹³⁵. Prince George, therefore, reached Canea on board a French man-of-war¹³⁶.

Be that as it may, his popularity among the Christian peasantry of Crete was enormous¹³⁷; and he did his utmost for island's overall development¹³⁸. At the same time, a constitution was drawn up by a committee, the most active member of which was Venizelos. The draft was submitted in March, 1899 to the Four Powers' representatives¹³⁹ and was promptly approved: it came into force in April of that same year¹⁴⁰. This very Constitution, almost entirely the personal achievement of Venizelos, proved to be a fatal trap set for Prince George. For it was pervaded by a blatantly authoritarian spirit¹⁴¹. If the High Commissioner submitted to the dictates of the British policy-makers, he would be given the freedom to govern as he desired; otherwise he would be removed. In other words, it was a duel between Venizelos and Prince George that was already underway: it was to finish in September 1906. For Venizelos was arguing for the independence of the island, whilst Prince George was advocating the latter's union with Greece.

VII

The High Commissioner began skirmishing with Venizelos by the time the latter was drafting the Constitution. A debate on Prince George's title was opened –

¹³³ Prince Nicholas of Greece, *Ta penēnta chronia tēs zōēs mou*, pp. 123–125.

¹³⁴ Geōrgios Aspreas, *Politikē Historia tēs Neōteras Hellados* (= Political History of Modern Greece), vol. I, part II (Athens: Chrēsima Vivlia, no date given [second edition], pp. 243, 283; É. Driault and M. Lhéritier, *Histoire diplomatique de la Grèce...*, IV, pp. 442–466.

¹³⁵ É. Driault and M. Lhéritier, *Histoire diplomatique de la Grèce...*, IV, pp. 450ff.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 466.

¹³⁷ Cf. P. Danklēs, *Anamnēseis-Engrapha-Allēlographia-To archeio tou*, I, p. 221.

¹³⁸ A. Dalby, *Eleftherios Venizelos*, p. 22.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

¹⁴⁰ *Episēmos Ephēmeris tēs Krētikēs Politeias* (= Official Gazette of the State of Crete), First Year, I, No. 24 (April 16, 1899), pp. 41–46.

¹⁴¹ Sp. V. Markezinēs, *Politikē Historia tēs Neōteras Hellados...*, II, p. 353.

and Venizelos jumped at the chance to declare that “Crete was entitled to her own ideas about her future”. Prince George riposted that “foreign policy” either of Greece or of Crete “was not everyone’s business, but that of the King of the Hellenes and his government”¹⁴². The gaps between the two men’s views were now obvious. The High Commissioner had of course the support of almost all the Cretan Christians; Venizelos, on the other hand, was backed by the British Consul and his allies at that time, namely the Italian and the French ones. Who was to gain the upper hand?

The Prince acted with moderation. After the Constitution came into force, he appointed Venizelos his “Councillor”, i.e. Minister, of Justice¹⁴³ – his Council (Cabinet) being five-strong. Koundouros, the ex-anglophile champion and Venizelos’ future bitter foe, was given the portfolio of Home Affairs. Things went well for a while. But in September 1900, the High Commissioner embarked on a tour of Europe. His purpose was to sound out the Powers’ intentions as far as Crete’s future was concerned. To his mind, the only good perspective was island’s union with Greece. If such a union were not feasible in the short run, only the strengthening of Crete’s ties with the Kingdom of Greece would assure the Christian population of the island that the future would be better for them than the past. Four out of his five Councillors concurred with his point of view; but Venizelos kept aloof. According to him Crete, already a “semi-independent” state, should aim to become a “really autonomous”, viz. an independent country¹⁴⁴.

The crux was not only independence or union with Greece: the matter was also whether the “Head of the Executive” would be an elective one – in other words whether Crete would be a republic or not. For if the island became a “totally autonomous” statehood, i.e. an independent republic¹⁴⁵, Venizelos would most likely be her President. Backed by the British as he was, and identifying with republican/democratic ideas and ideals, he would have – sooner or later – the whole island in his grasp. The key was now the attitude of Tsar Nicholas II.

The latter was the first to talk with the High Commissioner about the island’s future. They met each other in the Crimea, in the imperial residence. He was “very sympathetic” with the people who wished Crete to be united with Greece; yet he was not prepared to go ahead with this solution¹⁴⁶. Prince George and his Cretan subjects would have to wait.

The Tsar, however, had miscalculated. Russia being one of Crete’s Protective Powers, Russian men-of-war had now obtained a long-wanted naval base of theirs

¹⁴² A. Dalby, *Eleftherios Venizelos...*, p. 21. According to certain sources, nonetheless, this verbal conflict took place somewhat later, when the High Commissioner was about to start his tour to the Powers’ capitals. See Sp. V. Markezinēs, *Politikē Historia tēs Neōteras Hellados...*, II, p. 29.

¹⁴³ *Episēmos Ephēmeris tēs Krētikēs Politeias*, First Year, No. 28 (April 28, 1899), p. 48. The jurisdiction of this very portfolio encompassed foreign affairs as well.

¹⁴⁴ Sp. V. Markezinēs, *Politikē Historia tēs Neōteras Hellados, 1828–1964*, vol. III (Athens: Papyros, 1966), p. 29ff.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 38 (note 3).

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

in the “heart” of the Eastern Mediterranean. The upshot was that the Tsar was not inclined to give up this palpable, substantial gain for a *beau geste* in favour of the King of the Hellenes. Were Crete to be united with Greece, certain would be the loss of the Russian naval “facilities” in the island and questionable the attitude of King George in a major European crisis to ensue.

All this was true; but there was another side to the “Cretan Question”, which was overlooked by the Tsar. And this side was the delicate position of the High Commissioner, the Tsar’s *protégé*. For Prince George’s insular throne was already tottering. The British were by no means disposed to tolerate a Russophile ruler in Crete, and their acolyte, Venizelos, had personal ambitions to gratify, if Prince George were removed. British diplomacy and Venizelos’ ruthlessness were fearsome weapons against the High Commissioner and *mutatis mutandis* against Russia. But Nicholas II did not grasp the situation¹⁴⁷.

After the Crimea, Prince George visited England, where he talked with Edward, Prince of Wales, Sir Donald Mackenzie Wallace, foreign editor of the London *Times* and the Marquess of Salisbury, then prime minister of the United Kingdom. All of them turned down the idea of Crete’s annexation to Greece, but approved of the proposition that the ties between the former and the latter be reinforced¹⁴⁸. The same feelings were expressed to the High Commissioner in Paris, by the President of the French Republic Émile Loubet and the Foreign Minister Théophile Delcassé; and Rome as well, by the King of Italy Victor Emmanuel III and Emilio Visconti-Venosta, his minister of Foreign Affairs¹⁴⁹.

Critical confabulations took place subsequently. But while Prince George, after having talked with the rulers of Europe, hoped that Crete would be annexed at least *de facto* by Greece, a joint note of the Four Powers was issued on 23 February, 1901 (New Style). According to the note, the Prince was “warmly invited” to stay on in his office as High Commissioner¹⁵⁰, but neither union with Greece nor the strengthening of the ties between Crete and the Kingdom of Greece would be tolerated.

This response to the steps the Prince had taken, in order to meet the desire of him and his Christian subjects, provoked bewilderment on the part of Crete’s Christian population except for Venizelos. He likely expected such a Four Powers’ answer; and, what is more, he termed the regrettable outcome of Prince George’s tour of Europe as the intercession “of the finger of Destiny”¹⁵¹.

Why was the sad result of the High Commissioner’s steps regarded by his Councillor for Justice as Destiny’s intervention? Because the island’s union with of Greece, whether formal or *de facto*, would put the island under the rule of the King of the Hellenes; but, as aforementioned, he was an adherent of the Emperor

¹⁴⁷ É. Driault and M. Lhéritier, *Histoire diplomatique de la Grèce...*, IV, pp. 494–495.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 30–31.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

¹⁵⁰ A. Dalby, *Eleftherios Venizelos...*, p. 22.

¹⁵¹ Sp. V. Markezinēs, *Politikē Historia tēs Neōteras Hellados...*, III, p. 32.

Franz Joseph of Austro-Hungary. The British, therefore, were by no means ready to replace the Russophile ruler of Crete by his father, supporter of the Habsburgs. And the tool, of course, of such a policy against King George and his namesake son, Powers' High Commissioner in Crete, would be "democracy". Venizelos now undertook the task of saving from the "Russian styled" autocracy of the High Commissioner, "in whose veins the blood of Peter the Great run", the parliamentary system in Crete¹⁵². Little wonder, therefore, that similar arguments, namely the defense of democracy and the indictment of the Royal House of Greece being prone to authoritarian methods of rule, were to be used again by Venizelos during the First World War.

The gap then between Prince George and his Justice Councillor was obvious and deep. And Venizelos gave publicity to his point of view by means of an interview with the influential Athens paper *Acropolis*¹⁵³. He did not mince his words: he wanted Crete to be a fully autonomous (i.e. independent) state because in that way the Head of the Executive would be elective¹⁵⁴. It was obvious he was aspiring to a régime change in Crete.

VIII

Venizelos, nevertheless, was then a member of the administration he wished to abolish. Prince George pretended at first to know nothing of his Councillor's seditious activity. But finally, most likely on his father's advice¹⁵⁵, he dismissed Venizelos on March 18, 1901¹⁵⁶. Immediately afterwards came the elections for the Cretan Assembly, in which Venizelos did badly. For he was now anathematized by nearly the whole of Crete's Christian population as the only leading opponent of the island's union with Greece. The High Commissioner, on the other hand, was justly regarded as the pro-Union champion. As a result, he was idolized by the populace and it was thanks to him that the unionist movement grew to such an extent as to jeopardize the authority of the Four Powers' Consuls in Crete.

In other words, because of Venizelos' seditious activity the national sentiment of the island's Christians was being strengthened more and more – and soon would be out of control. Venizelos was isolated, and trying to make his living once more as a lawyer¹⁵⁷. For the British to rescue his political career was now of vital importance.

¹⁵² Ibid., p. 20.

¹⁵³ To be found *in toto* in the book by I. Ēliakēs, *Ho Eleutherios Venizelos ōs dēmosiographos* (= Eleutherios Venizelos as journalist), Athens: Dēmētrakos, 1932, p. 18ff.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., pp. 22–23.

¹⁵⁵ A. Dalby, *Eleftherios Venizelos...*, p. 23.

¹⁵⁶ EVP, I/21/1.

¹⁵⁷ EVP, I/22/1–195; I/23/1–95.

Accordingly a new British Consul-General, Esme Howard, arrived at Canea in July, 1903. His instructions were clear: Prince George should be removed, but with honour; for he was the “beloved nephew” of the King of England Edward VII¹⁵⁸. Of course, these instructions were to be meticulously observed.

The new Consul-General of the United Kingdom paved the way for Venizelos and his friends with the assistance of his French and Italian colleagues¹⁵⁹. On the March 10, 1905, therefore, the leader of the “Cretan liberals” left the Italian Consulate at Canea¹⁶⁰ for Therison, where his followers had gathered¹⁶¹. The slogan of the rebellion was well calculated: “Union with Greece” – and, if it were not feasible, the abolition of the autocracy of Prince George¹⁶². Of course, since union with the Greek Kingdom was for the time being ruled out by Crete’s Four Protective Powers, it was obvious that the rebels’ sole target was Prince George¹⁶³.

The latter was again in a delicate position. The Cretan populace had no sympathy with the rebels¹⁶⁴; and Koundouros, protagonist of the 1895 revolution, threatened to take his followers into the mountains, in competition with Venizelos¹⁶⁵. But the latter was well financed¹⁶⁶ and in constant contact with the Consuls of the Four Powers. The very presence of his armed bands near Canea, the island’s capital, was a challenge to High Commissioner’s prestige; for the problem was that Prince George had no means with which to face them. The Cretan Gendarmerie, modeled on the Italian Carabinieri, was still in embryo¹⁶⁷. What is more, Prince George was forbidden by the Powers’ Consuls at Canea to have a militia formed against the Therison rebels¹⁶⁸. As a result, only the British, Italian, French, and Russian troops camped out in the island could have scattered the rebellious Therison gathering. The High Commissioner asked, therefore, to “be lent a hand”, but when everything was ready for the Powers’ troops to crush the rebels,

¹⁵⁸ Lord Howard of Penrith, *Theatre of life: Life seen from the stalls, 1905–1936* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1936), p. 18.

¹⁵⁹ With regard especially to the French and Italian Consuls see Sinan Kunalalp [ed.], *Ottoman Diplomatic Documents on the Origins of World War One. The Final Stage of the Cretan Question, 1899–1913* (Istanbul: The Isis Press, 2009), doc. 289: Sadreddin Bey, Ottoman chargé d’affaires at Athens, to Tevfik Pasha, Ottoman Minister of Foreign Affairs, Athens, July 12, 1906, p. 157.

¹⁶⁰ A. Dalby, *Eleftherios Venizelos...*, p. 26.

¹⁶¹ Steph. I. Stephanou, *Eleutherios Venizelos...*, p. 38.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, pp. 38–39.

¹⁶³ *Les chefs des insurgés ont répondu aux Consuls qu’ils se réservaient de leur faire connaître, dans le délai convenu, leur résolution tout en faisant comprendre que tant que le Prince Georges restera dans l’Île, les insurgés ne déposeront pas les armes.* (S. Kunalalp, *The Final Stage of the Cretan Question, 1899–1913*, doc. 266: Sadreddin Bey to Tevfik Pasha, Athens, July 16, 1905, p. 143.)

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, doc. 276: Sadreddin Bey to Tevfik Pasha, Athens, September 16, 1905, p. 148.

¹⁶⁵ A. Dalby, *Eleftherios Venizelos...*, p. 27.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

¹⁶⁷ *Episēmos Ephēmeris tēs Krētikēs Politeias*, I, Eighth Year, No. 51 (16 September, 1906).

¹⁶⁸ S. Kunalalp, *The Final Stage of the Cretan Question, 1899–1913*, doc. 278: Sadreddin Bey to Tevfik Pasha, Athens, October 14, 1905, p. 150.

the British suddenly declared themselves unwilling to do so. For they did not want the 1900 Peking precedent to be repeated¹⁶⁹.

In point of fact, the 1900 events in the Chinese capital, viz. the Boxer rebellion, had nothing in common with the 1905 liberals' gathering at Therison. The argument, nonetheless, was so absurd that no reply could be given. As a result, only Russian troops, in the Rethymnon district, marched with success against the rebels, who were making raids into villages for food¹⁷⁰; but in other regions of the island, rural economic life was being gravely disturbed because of the impunity the rebels enjoyed¹⁷¹.

It was in that way that the summer of 1905 was spent on the island of Crete: the economic ruin of the island in practice was guaranteed. Yet in October, Venizelos, sensitive to cold weather, arranged to be granted an amnesty¹⁷². For winter is harsh in the Cretan mountains. The Powers' Consuls subsequently exerted pressure on the High Commissioner, and the latter *no lens volens* acquiesced. The amnesty was granted and the Therison camp was disbanded in November, 1905. The "comedy"¹⁷³ was over.

Henceforth everything would happen contrary to what Prince George hoped. The Consuls grasped the opportunity to have the control over Crete shifted from him to themselves; and accordingly, the Four Protective Powers imposed over Crete an economic control régime¹⁷⁴. Within the framework of this régime the Consuls were entitled to contact the Councillors of the High Commissioner thus circumventing him¹⁷⁵. It was the parliamentary system imposed on Crete – and only humiliations were in store for the Prince.

Be that as it may, the 1906 elections gave Venizelos a minority in the Assembly of Crete. That meant the populace kept regarding him as the foe *par excellence* of the pro-Union movement and Prince George as its beloved leader. But the latter had had enough. Though the Therison rebellion had met neither

¹⁶⁹ Lord Howard of Penrith, *Theatre of life: Life seen from the stalls, 1905–1936*, pp. 24, 35. Cf. S. Kunalp, *The Final Stage of the Cretan Question, 1899–1913*, doc. 226: Musurus Pasha, Ottoman Ambassador in London, to Tevfik Pasha, London, April 2, 1905, p. 126: ... *les troupes anglaises avaient reçu pour instructions d'assister la gendarmerie de l'Île au rétablissement de l'ordre, tout en s'abstenant d'attaquer les rebelles sur les hauteurs où ils se trouvaient.*

¹⁷⁰ S. Kunalp, *The final stage of the Cretan Question, 1899–1913*, doc. 250: Rifaat Bey, Ottoman minister at Athens, to Tevfik Pasha, Athens, June 6, 1905, p. 135; doc. 269: Sadreddin Bey to Tevfik Pasha, Athens, August 9, 1905, p. 144; doc. 271: Sadreddin Bey to Tevfik Pasha, Athens, August 19, 1905, p. 145. See also M. Koundouros, *Historikai kai diplomatikai apokalypseis...*, p. 190.

¹⁷¹ As far as the impunity is concerned, the Ottoman minister at Athens wrote to the Foreign Minister of the Sublime Porte as follows: *Je crains que le retard mis par les troupes internationales à... étouffer [the Therison insurrection] lui donne une plus grande extension tout en créant des sympathies en Europe.* (S. Kunalp, *The final stage of the Cretan Question, 1899–1913*, doc. 250: Rifaat Bey to Tevfik Pasha, Athens, April 5, 1905, p. 128.)

¹⁷² Ibid., doc. 282: Sadreddin Bey to Tevfik Pasha, Athens, November 10, 1905, p. 152; Steph. I. Stephanou, *Eleutherios Venizelos*, p. 39.

¹⁷³ S. Kunalp, *The final stage of the Cretan Question, 1899–1913*, doc. 251: Rifaat Bey to Tevfik Pasha, Athens, June 20, 1905.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., doc. 287: Naby Bey, Ottoman minister at Athens, to Tevfik Pasha, Paris, December 21, 1905, p. 156.

¹⁷⁵ *Episēmos Ephēmeris tēs Krētikēs Politeias*, Eighth Year, I, No. 32 (July 12, 1906), pp. 201–203.

military nor political success, Britain's support which Venizelos enjoyed enabled him to present everything in a light most favourable to him. Prince George, moreover, was having a love affair with the French Princess Marie de Bonaparte, who disliked life in Crete¹⁷⁶. So, he resigned in September, 1906¹⁷⁷, and a year later he married Marie. He was to spend the rest of his life in France¹⁷⁸. As for Venizelos, he posed now as the parliamentary dictator of Crete.

* * *

The outcome of the 1901–1906 turmoil in Crete was a heavy diplomatic defeat that the Russians suffered at the hands of the British. The Russians preferred the short-term advantages given to them thanks to their position as one of the Four of Crete's Protective Powers. As a result, they only half-heartedly supported Prince George, their tried friend, and finally let him be removed. The British, on the other hand, surmounted everything. They proved to be able to impose Venizelos, their acolyte, as Crete's strongman – and managed to do so against the manifest feelings of the Christian population of Crete. After Prince George abdicated, they took a step further: they confirmed that the Powers' High Commissioner in Crete would henceforth be appointed by the King of the Hellenes¹⁷⁹. Given the fact that King George's throne had been jeopardized owing to the 1897 Greek defeat by the Ottomans, the British were now able to handle him effectively. For if he proved to be 'loyal' to them and prompt to disregard his friendship with the Emperor of Austro-Hungary, they would likely accept Crete's annexation to Greece as "forthcoming"; if he would not, Cretan affairs would be in a stalemate once more. At the same time, they would be able to open the road for turning Crete into an exclusively British protectorate.

The issue, nonetheless, was to be clouded by the 1909 military coup in Athens and, furthermore, by the beginning of the First Balkan War. Radical changes in the Balkans were in store.

CHAPTER TWO THE MATURATION OF THE WARS

An axiom of the British Naval leadership read as follows: "All war is a question of communications. The Power controlling communications holds in the hollow of his hand the Power to whom communications are denied"¹⁸⁰. It is noteworthy, moreover, that World War I was foreseeable as early as 1900; for the preamble of the German

¹⁷⁶ M. Koundouros, *Historikai kai diplōmatikai apokalypseis...*, p. 190.

¹⁷⁷ *Episēmos Ephēmeris tēs Krētikēs Politeias*, Eighth Year, I, No. 45 (September 2, 1906).

¹⁷⁸ He and his wife became intimate friends of Aristide Briand, who sold to them his house in country. (PA, LG/F/3/14/21.)

¹⁷⁹ *Episēmos Ephēmeris tēs Krētikēs Politeias*, Eighth Year, I, No. 44 (September 2, 1906).

¹⁸⁰ PA, BL/53/4/3.

Navy Law, promulgated that very year, was regarded as a declaration of war against Great Britain¹⁸¹. It was quite natural, therefore, that, in the framework of the Royal Navy's planning, only oil-burning ships would be built from 1912 on¹⁸²; and the origin of the First Balkan War is to be found in Britain's rush for oil.

In 1911, when Winston S. Churchill was appointed to the office of First Lord of the Admiralty, the Royal Navy had already built or was in the process of building 56 destroyers dependent exclusively on oil and 74 submarines powered only by oil. What is more, a proportion of oil was used to spray the coal furnaces of almost all the other ships¹⁸³. Why so? Because immense were the advantages conferred by "liquid fuel" on ships: speed first of all, and capability of being easily re-fueled at sea as well¹⁸⁴. Oil, nevertheless, was not found in considerable quantities in the British Isles, even though the British had at their disposal the "best steam coil of the world", safe in the substratum of their own country¹⁸⁵. In other words, if Britain kept building oil-consuming ships, her naval supremacy would depend on oil¹⁸⁶. Little wonder therefore that the very beginning of the twentieth century witnessed the commencement of Britain's rush for petroleum; and the first steps aimed to control the relevant deposits of the Near East¹⁸⁷.

Thus, on May 28, 1901, the British concluded an agreement with the Shah of Persia, Mozzafar-al-Din Shah Qajar¹⁸⁸. In point of fact, it was a concession encompassing the whole extent of the Persian Empire. As a result the "Anglo-Persian Oil Company" began to exploit the Iranian substratum. Afterwards, it was the turn of Mesopotamia's petroleum wealth to be exploited. It is noteworthy that the first oil well was drilled there by the "Turkish Oil Company": the drilling started as early as 1902¹⁸⁹. The rich Caucasus deposits were exploited by famous oil-dynasties such as the Rothschild and the Nobel families¹⁹⁰. As a corollary, only the petroleum in Ottoman territory was 'available'. Thus, in the first ten years of the twentieth century the Persian Gulf was actually under British control¹⁹¹: the disintegration, therefore, of the Ottoman Empire was in sight, and in fact the main

¹⁸¹ "Since the preamble of the German Navy Law of 1900 gave... [to the British] deliberate notice of the intention of Germany to attack England with the object of destroying British Sea Power". (Ibid.)

¹⁸² W. S. Churchill, *The World Crisis, 1911–1918*, vol. I (London: Odhams Press [no date given]), p. 102.

¹⁸³ Ibid., p. 101.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 100.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 101.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ *Iraq and the Persian Gulf* (B.R. 524. Naval Intelligence Division, September 1944), pp. 269–280, 493.

¹⁸⁸ Alain Duret, *Moyen-Orient. Crises et enjeux* (Paris: Le Monde-Éditions, 1994), p. 192.

¹⁸⁹ Abdul-Mutalib Hasson Al-Marsoumi, "Petroleum Geology of Mesopotamia (general review)". (Retrieved in <http://www.geologyofmesopotamia.com/p57.htm> on April 30, 2011.)

¹⁹⁰ Simon Sebag Montefiore, *Young Stalin* (London: Phoenix, 2008), p. 92; Vanessa Martin and Morteza Nouraei, "Foreign Land Holdings in Iran 1828 to 1911", *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (April 2011), p.143.

¹⁹¹ Édouard Driault, *La Question d'Orient depuis ses origines jusqu'à la paix de Sèvres* (1920), Paris: Félix Alcan, 1921⁸, p. 461.

British desideratum with regard to the 1914–1918 fighting between Britain and Turkey was the “final recognition and consolidation of... [the British] position in the Persian Gulf”¹⁹²; that meant, first of all, “security...for oil production”¹⁹³.

The decision, of course, of the Ottoman Empire’s dismemberment was taken after the end of the 1877–1878 war between Russia and the Porte; yet the definite resolution was not made until February 1897¹⁹⁴. The Great European Powers, namely Britain, France, Russia, Austro-Hungary, Germany, and Italy, were in perfect agreement on that¹⁹⁵. Italy’s share was Tripolitania and Cyrenaica, today’s Libya. Little wonder at that, since Italians were interested in exploiting Libya’s substratum¹⁹⁶, wherein, in Ancient Times, the existence of oil had been witnessed¹⁹⁷. The 1911–1912 Italo-Turkish War notwithstanding, it proved that Arabs were not impatient to have the Sultan’s rule replaced by one of a European Sovereign¹⁹⁸. The Balkan peninsula, therefore – Europe’s powder keg thanks to the

¹⁹² PA, BL/63/2.

¹⁹³ Ibid. Cf. Vanessa Martin and M. Nouraei, “Foreign Land Holdings in Iran 1828 to 1911”, p. 145.

¹⁹⁴ É. Driault, *La Question d’Orient...*, p. 449ff.

¹⁹⁵ Sinan Kunalalp (ed.), *Ottoman Diplomatic Documents on the Origins of World War One. The Turkish-Italian War, 1911–1912*, Part 1 (Istanbul: The Isis Press, 2011), doc. 115: Tevfik Pasha, Ottoman Ambassador in London, to Hakki Pasha, Grand Vizier and acting Foreign Minister, London, September 22, 1911, p. 112; doc. 119: Reshad Hikmet Bey, Ottoman chargé d’affaires at Vienna, to Hakki Pasha, Vienna, September 23, 1911, p. 114; doc. 211: Seifeddin Bey, Ottoman chargé d’affaires at Rome, to Hakki Pasha, Rome, September 29th, 1911, p. 156; doc. 493: Tevfik Pasha to Assim Bey, Ottoman Minister of Foreign Affairs, London, October 27, 1911, p. 284. And also Part 2 (Istanbul: The Isis Press, 2011), doc. 1467: Mavroyeni Bey, Ottoman Ambassador in Vienna, to Assim Bey, Vienna, May 2, 1912, p. 200; doc. 1599: the same to the same, June 22, 1912, p. 276; doc. 1632: Tevfik Pasha to Gabriel Effendi Noradounghian, Ottoman Minister for Foreign Affairs, London, August 1, 1912, p. 302; doc. 837: Tevfik Pasha to Assim Bey, London, November 30, 1911, p. 428; and mainly the doc. 1835: Naby Bey, Ottoman Ambassador in Rome, to Gabriel Effendi Noradounghian, Rome, November 29, 1912, p. 415, where it was mentioned the following: *Tout d’abord, il y a lieu de rappeler que la première idée de s’accaparer de nos deux provinces africaines [Tripolitania and Cyrenaica] fut suggérée à l’Italie dès 1882 par l’Angleterre...*

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., 1, doc. 266: Saïd Pasha, Grand Vizier and acting Foreign Minister, to Tevfik Pasha, Constantinople, October 2, 1911, p. 178: *Affaires d’une mission minéralogique [italienne] envoyée Tripoli. Sur démarche Ambassade [italienne] Sublime Porte [a donné] à Vali ordre autoriser voyage mission qui, ayant déjà terminé ses études, est sur le point de rentrer à Benghazi.* And also doc. 109: Seifeddin Bey to Hakki Pasha, Rome, September 22, p. 108: *Je crois inutile de répéter que cette campagne est l’œuvre des journalistes et des politiciens encouragés par quelques institutions financières, le Banco di Roma en tête, et les brasseurs d’affaires.* As a matter of fact, Italians had taken interest mainly in Libya’s phosphate deposits; see doc. 5: Kiazim Bey, Ottoman Ambassador in Rome, to Rifaat Pasha, Ottoman Foreign Minister, Rome, February 17, 1911, p. 27; doc. 14: the same to the same, Rome, March 25, 1911, p. 37.

¹⁹⁷ Herodotus IV, 195. Paradoxical as it may appear, Italians did not exploit Libya’s oil. See Angelo Iachino, *Tramonto di una grande Marina* (Milano: Mondadori, 1966⁴), p. 41.

¹⁹⁸ T. E. Lawrence, *Seven Pillars of Wisdom. A Triumph* (New York: Doubleday, Doran and Co, 1936), p. 47; S. Kunalalp, *The Turkish-Italian War, 1911–1912*, 1, doc. 485: Fuad Simavi Bey, Ottoman acting chargé d’affaires at Vienna, to Assim Bey, Vienna, October 26, 1911, p. 280; Turkhan Pasha, Ottoman Ambassador in St Petersburg, to Assim Bey, St Petersburg, October 27, 1911, p. 285; doc. 498: Nihad Raif Bey, Ottoman Consul General at Malta, to Assim Bey, Malta, October 27, 1911. And also Part 2, doc. 1557: Rifaat Pasha, Ottoman Ambassador in Paris, to Assim Bey, Paris, June 6, 1912, p. 252; doc. 1599: Mavroyeni Bey to Assim Bey, Vienna, June 22, 1912, p. 276.

irredentist dreams “breaking the hearts” of the Christian populations – was the likeliest place for a new conflict to break out.

I

In the night of August 14/15, 1909, a military coup was triggered in Athens. It was a peculiar one; for, contrary to the ‘conventional’ way a putsch occurs, no ‘sensitive spots’ of the Greek capital were seized by troops. The garrison of Athens (and some naval officers as well) simply gathered in Goudi, a plain outside Athens¹⁹⁹, and demanded that reforms be instigated in the machinery of the State.

The coup was organized by the Military League, founded on July 4, 1909²⁰⁰. The League was doubtlessly inspired by the Young Turks revolution that took place in Salonika in 1908²⁰¹; yet no ideological affinity is to be found between the two revolts. The Young Turks, in fact, aimed at abolishing the Sultan’s autocracy and radically changing the ethos pervading the Ottoman Empire. The Greek Military League’s target, on the other hand, was the strengthening of the King’s authority; for the Crown’s indifference was regarded as being responsible for parliamentary inertia and apathy. Indeed the “Royal Republic”, viz. the parliamentary system established in Greece in 1875 had stripped the Crown of nearly all of its privileges in the domain of domestic politics. Little wonder, therefore, that the 1897 defeat of the Greek Army by the Ottomans was imputed to the incompetence of the ruling stratum of Greek society that cared solely about its privileges being upheld through the operating of the parliamentary government. The King had to intervene between Parliament, the Armed Forces and the populace, for a national consensus to be achieved. It was more than ever necessary for revenge to be taken on the Turks; or else there would be no room for Greek national self-respect.

Such an indictment reflected but a biased view of Greek life whether political or social. It is true that power had been monopolized from the end of the 1821 Revolution onwards by manipulation of a number of wealthy and influential families – the same more or less as those that ran the Christian populations of the Greek lands under Ottoman rule. They were collectively termed *tzakia*²⁰²; and the populace often considered them to be oppressors every bit as cruel as Ottoman officialdom had been²⁰³. The aftermath of the 1897 war, nonetheless, was

¹⁹⁹ Today incorporated into the major Athens area.

²⁰⁰ Nikolaos Zormpas, *Apomnēmoneumata. Hē epanastasē tou Goudi, 1909* (= Memoirs. The Goudi Revolution, 1909), Athens: Metron, 2005², p. 19. Colonel N. Zormpas was the leader of the Military League. See also Pericles I. Argyropoulos, *Anamnēseis. To zētēma tou Nautikou, hē exegersē sto Goudi, ho Dichasmos* (= Memoirs. The question of the Greek Navy, the Goudi uprising, the [Greek National] Divide). Edited by Dēmētrēs Michalopoulos, Athens: Arsenidēs, 1996, p. 34.

²⁰¹ Sir Basil Thomson, *The Allied Secret Service in Greece*. Translated into Greek by Kōstas Barbēs (Athens: Logothetēs [no date given]), p. 36.

²⁰² Plural of the word *tzaki*, meaning “fireplace”.

²⁰³ An explication of this sentiment: Anastasia Kyrkinē-Koutoula, *Hē othomanikē dioikēsē stēn Hellada. Hē periptōsē tēs Peloponnēsou, 1715–1821* (Ottoman administration in Greece. The case of the Peloponnesus, 1715–1821), Athens: Arsenidēs, 1996, p. 142.

something of an awakening. The Crown Prince, Constantine, was embarked on a systematic endeavour to re-organize the Army; and statesmen such as Geōrgios Theotokēs, prime minister from December 8, 1905 to July 7, 1909, backed wholeheartedly him²⁰⁴. Still, the point was that Prince Constantine, in the context of his reforms, did show favouritism; for above all he encouraged and promoted chiefly commissioned officers such as Engineers and the Artillery ones. As a result, those in the Infantry and Cavalry felt scorned by him and considered revolt to be an effectual means for “justice to be done”²⁰⁵.

Yet Prince Constantine was right. For Engineers and Artillery officers needed a solid education in the Sciences in order to meet professional requirements, whilst this did not apply so much to those in the Infantry and Cavalry. What is more, the Greek Army was carrying out police duties throughout the nineteenth century²⁰⁶; for brigands held sway in Greece (especially in her mountainous regions) from the 1830s on, and were not eradicated until the late 1920s. Such a task warranted undeniable and obvious social prestige; that is why Greek officers, NCOs and even privates got were in the habit of displaying a somewhat theatrical bellicosity based on handlebar moustaches, fiery countenances, well-tailored uniforms, clinging swords ready to be drawn in trivial disputes etc.²⁰⁷. Of course, this army was not fit to carry out tactical warfare; and the 1886 Koutra fighting against Ottoman border troops²⁰⁸, and especially the outcome of the 1897 Greco-Turkish war proved Greece to be essentially unprepared for a major armed conflict. Constantine’s reasoning, therefore, that the Army should be staffed by educated officers, was irrefutable; and, of course, those most likely to be educated were in the Engineers and Artillery. But as a rule Infantry and Cavalry officers – and NCOs alike – were scions of the aforementioned *tzakia*, i.e. the families who had monopolized wealth and political power²⁰⁹. Hence the officers of this ilk relied on their family connections and not on professional skills. The Crown Prince, on the other hand, was the centre of attraction of Army officers who were well-educated yet without means, like Iōannēs Metaxas, the future Prime Minister of Greece (1936–1940).

So, there arose a peculiar situation. The coup against the social stratum ruling Greece was engineered by the offspring of that very same social stratum. Those of the military involved in the revolt insisted on King George assuming essential political prerogatives. Seemingly, it occurred because they wished that politicians’ unresponsiveness be halted; yet in practice they aimed at carving out a career for

²⁰⁴ P. I. Argyropoulos, *Anamnēseis...*, pp. 33–38.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 51.

²⁰⁶ See mainly a masterpiece of Modern Greek literature: [Anonymous], *Hē stratiōtikē zōē en Helladī* (= Military Life in Greece), Athens: Galaxias, 1970² (first edition in 1870), p. 147ff.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 74–78.

²⁰⁸ Panagiōtēs Danklēs, *Anamnēseis-Engrapha-Allēlographia-To archeio tou* (= Memoirs-Documents-Correspondence-his Archives. Edited by X. Leukoparidēs, vol. I (Athens: Vagiōnakēs, 1965), pp. 125–126.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p.42 (a typical case).

themselves as well – without meeting the educational and competence requirements required by the Crown Prince of Army officering²¹⁰.

The coup, however, did not strike deep roots in the populace²¹¹. And to cap it all, the Naval officers who joined the coup had been thoroughly radicalized: their target was not Prince Constantine but his father the King. For the latter had espoused a plan formulated in the mid-1900s by the French rear admiral François-Ernest Fournier. The Greek Navy was to be re-organized by the French officer, whereupon the British government would back him with money²¹². The point was that in the context of such a “re-organization” the Greek Navy would be merely a ‘subsidiary’ of the French and British ones. As a matter of fact, only submarines and light destroyers were designated for Greece²¹³.

Despite the secrecy surrounding the confabs, a couple of Greek naval officers smelled a rat and launched a press campaign against the King and the French admiral. The so-called “Fournier plan” was subsequently repudiated²¹⁴; and no doubt the coup-de-grace was given to it by the Emperor of Germany Wilhelm II. He paid a visit to his Achilleion Palace, in Corfu²¹⁵ in April 1908, and had an opportunity to discuss the affair with officers of the Greek Navy. He did not mince his words: Greece lacked heavy battleships²¹⁶. Greek officers found him to be right and, after the Goudi coup, they lobbied the government to buy an armoured cruiser, built in the Orlando shipyards, in Leghorn²¹⁷, Italy²¹⁸. The ship was named “Geōrgios Averoff”, and it was the only truly important man-of-war that Greece possessed to the outbreak of World War Two.

II

Paradoxical as it may appear, after the Goudi coup prevailed, the troops who had revolted asked to be granted an amnesty by the King²¹⁹, which was done²²⁰. The effect of the rebels asking for an amnesty made them appear somewhat

²¹⁰ It is noteworthy that the prologue to the Goudi coup was written by 300 Army NCOs manifesting against the government in the very centre of Athens in May, 1909. P. K. Enepekides, *Gloria und Spaltung* (Athens: Zacharopoulos, 1992²), p. 86.

²¹¹ N. Zormpas, *Apomnēmonemata...*, p. 112.

²¹² Édouard Driault and Michel Lhéritier, *Histoire diplomatique de la Grèce de 1821 à nos jours*, vol. IV (Paris: Les Presses Universitaires de France, 1926), pp. 565–566.

²¹³ P. I. Argyropoulos, *Anamnēseis...*, pp. 42–45.

²¹⁴ Ibid., pp. 43–44; É. Driault and M. Lhéritier, *Histoire diplomatique...*, IV, p. 571.

²¹⁵ He had purchased it after the death of Elisabeth, Empress of Austro-Hungary.

²¹⁶ P. I. Argyropoulos, *Anamnēseis...*, pp. 44–45.

²¹⁷ Livorno in Italian.

²¹⁸ Commodore K. Paizēs-Paradelēs, *Ta ploia tou Hellēnikou Polemiku Nautikou, 1830–1979* (= The ships of the Greek War Navy), Athens: General Staff of the Navy, 1979, pp. 1–4.

²¹⁹ P. I. Argyropoulos, *Anamnēseis...*, pp. 62–63.

²²⁰ *Ephēmeris tēs Kyvernēseōs tou Vasileiou tēs Hellados* (= Official Gazette of the Kingdom of Greece), I, No. 182 (August 19, 1909).

ridiculous²²¹. The Naval officers, therefore, were displeased; and their discontent fuelled fresh sedition, now an exclusively “naval” one. The crucial battle occurred in Salamis Bay in mid-October 1909, in the very waters where the famous battle had taken place nearly 2,500 years earlier²²². The ships of the rebels were defeated by the loyalists; the split, nonetheless, between the moderate Army officers and the radical Naval ones now stood in stark.

The Naval officers of the League, however, had fallen into two of the fatal errors of would-be insurrectionists: they failed to conceal their plans from prying eyes²²³; and were too late in taking action. The defeat they suffered engendered the reconciliation of the King with the “middle-of-the-road” commissioned officers who led the Military League and, by the same token, blacklisted the individuals who were in a position to bring about true betterment in the public life of Greece. Crown Prince Constantine, above all, was dismissed from his post as Commander-General of the Army and fled abroad merely a couple of weeks after the Goudi coup²²⁴. Many Greek people, nevertheless, continued loving him, and did not wish him to leave his post²²⁵. But he was adamant in his decision; for he realized that, had he not left, the crown of his father would be jeopardized. By the same token, Dēmētrios Gounarēs, a right-wing statesman, was cast aside by the new political order prevailing in Greece²²⁶.

Gounarēs is the most tragic character in the Greek Nation’s recent History. He was born in Patras, in the Peloponnese, in 1867, to a self-made, wealthy merchant, of old native stock. He studied Law at the University of Athens and furthered his studies at Leipzig, Heidelberg, Munich, Göttingen, Paris, and London²²⁷. It was soon after he gained a reputation as a barrister in his native city that he was elected a member of Parliament for the first time in 1902, aged 35. His was of an ascetic disposition²²⁸. Unlike his parliamentary colleagues, he did not care about money but was an avid reader of classical and modern Literature. He was the political mentor of the Military League²²⁹; yet he failed to seize power after the Goudi coup. For Constantine’s downfall had had a fatal effect on his political career. By means of a press smear campaign²³⁰, he was falsely bracketed with the Crown Prince and so the bulk of the League officers turned their backs on him.

²²¹ Spyros Melas, *Hē epanastasē tou 1909* (= The 1909 uprising), Athens: Birēs, 1957, pp. 294, 296–297.

²²² *Memoirs of H.R.H. Prince Christopher of Greece* (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1938), p. 113.

²²³ S. Melas, *Hē epanastasē tou 1909*, p. 340.

²²⁴ Daily paper *Kairoi* (= The Times [Athens]), August 26, 1909, p. 3.

²²⁵ Ibid.

²²⁶ *Kairoi*, August 29, 1909, p. 3.

²²⁷ Dēmētrēs Michalopoulos, “Dēmētrios Gounarēs. Hē zōē kai to telos henos anthrōpou, 1867–1922” (= Dēmētrios Gounarēs. The Life and Death of a Man, 1867–1922), in *Hē Dikē tōn Oktō kai hē ektelesē tōn Hexi* (= The Trial of the Eight and the Execution of the Six), Athens: Historical Institute for Studies on Eleutherios Venizelos and his Era, 2010², p. 125.

²²⁸ PKP, I/58/209, Panagiōtēs Pan. Varnakiōtēs (civil servant, born in Patras) to Panagiōtēs Kanellopoulos, Athens (no date given).

²²⁹ *Kairoi*, August 8, 1909, p. 1; newspaper *Patris* (= Fatherland [Athens]), August 20, 1909, p. 1.

²³⁰ *Kairoi*, August 27, 1909, p. 1; August 29, p. 3.

Little wonder at it. For Gounarēs, in his capacity as an MP, had embarked, in the early 1900s, on a campaign against high finance; namely the twenty-year-monopoly of the Greek raisin by a British consortium. Such a monopoly failed; but Gounarēs was, of course, targeted by the capitalists and raisin-producers involved²³¹. Raisins were the main source of income of the peasantry in the Achaia region²³² – the very constituency that Gounarēs represented. Not only did the raisin-producers see in him (at least for the moment) their enemy, but the Greek politicians that regarded the British monopoly as a lucrative business for themselves, feared him. To cap it all, Gounarēs did not attempt to conceal his intention of putting into effect radical changes in Greek society and statehood²³³. He was emerging as the champion of the middle and lower social strata. As such he was good enough to be the adviser of a military conspiracy²³⁴ – but not an individual to be entrusted with real power.

And so the way was paved for Eleutherios Venizelos to reach Athens and assume control of Greek politics.

* * *

The Military League had need of a mentor; for what was going on behind the political scene of Greece was not easily grasped even by the offspring of the Greek ruling social stratum. The Crown Prince, who could have effected the necessary reforms in Greek public life, was forced out of the country; and Gounarēs was brushed aside. Who was to assume the leadership of the radical and amnestied Army officers, who had gained the docility of the Sovereign and the deposition of the Crown Prince? What of the military that wished the Armed Forces to be reformed, but were themselves mired in outmoded patterns of warfare? It was more than an enigma: it was an imbroglio. And little wonder that from this imbroglio an individual like Venizelos came to the fore.

To begin with, nobody among the leading members of the League saw in him the deliverer of Greece. It was no earlier than October 1909, i.e. roughly at the time of the

²³¹ D. Michalopoulos, “Dēmētrios Gounarēs...”, pp. 128–129.

²³² Until 1912 the value of raisins sold abroad accounted for 45% of Greek exports. (Kostas Lourmpas, “Hē stafida tou Aigiou” [= The Aigion raisin], in *Praktika tou ektaktou achaikou pneumatikou symposiou, 2006* [= Proceedings of the extraordinary symposium on Achaia], Athens, 2009, p. 408. As far as the political impact of the raisin trade is concerned see D. Michalopoulos, *Vie politique en Grèce pendant les années 1862–1869* (Athens: National University of Athens/Saripoleion, 1981), pp. 25–27. Raisins were the unique source of income for the Greek Revolutionary Army in the Peloponnese during the 1821–1829 Greek Revolution. See Theodōros K. Kolokotrōnēs, *Aphēgēsis Symvantōn tēs Hellēnikēs Phylēs* (= Account of Events Concerning the Greek Nation). Edited by Tasos Ath. Gritsopoulos (Athens, 1981), p. 177.

²³³ Aristos Kampanēs, *Ho Dēmētrios Gounarēs kai hē hellēnikē krisis tōn etōn 1918–1922* (= Dēmētrios Gounarēs and the 1918–1922 crisis in Greece), Athens: Pyrsos, 1946, pp. 17–19; Heracles Malōsēs, *Hē politikē Historia tou Dēmētriou P. Gounarē* (= The Political Life of Dēmētrios P. Gounarēs), Athens: Nea Epochē, 1926), p. 35.

²³⁴ And trusted by the King as well. (P. K. Enepekides, *Gloria und Spaltung*, p. 36.)

radical-minded Naval officers' coup²³⁵, that the proposal to summon Venizelos from Crete to Athens took place; yet this proposal was rejected out of hand. Such a rebuff was quite natural. The political ascendancy of the League was largely the product of the latent but effective toleration of King George; and the Sovereign had little – if any – sympathy for Venizelos. The latter had forced the High Commissioner of the Four Powers in Crete, i.e. a son of King George and cousin of Tsar Nicholas II, out of the island. The result was that the dynastic association of Crete with the Kingdom of Greece vanished for ever. In addition, the slap in the face of Tsardom was not easily forgotten. As foretold, Olga, Consort of the King of the Hellenes, was née Russian Grand Duchess; and King George had a good sense of balance. He was ostensibly a professed Anglophile yet tacitly pro-Austrian; the British, nonetheless, were – if the need arose – the so-to-speak supreme protectors of his family²³⁶. The Crown Prince, married to Sophia, sister of the German Emperor Wilhelm II, was considered to be pro-German. And last but not least the King enjoyed holidays in France, where his son George, after having been driven out of Crete, lived in holy wedlock. Venizelos' intrusion into Greek politics was to cloud the whole of the Greek politics; and this time the Crown of the Hellenes would be deliberately jeopardized.

In point of fact, kingship had not struck deep roots in Greece. King Otho, the first Sovereign of Greece, was overthrown in 1862, after nearly thirty years on the throne. This 'precedent' haunted King George till his death in 1913. So, he told and retold his siblings that they must always bear in mind that they were foreigners in Greece; yet they must make Greeks forget it²³⁷. Nonetheless, it was his very obsession of being an "adopted" King that would soon serve as an instrument for his siding totally with the British.

III

Whatever the facts of the matter, public opinion whether in Greece or in Crete still saw in Venizelos an openly pro-Turkish politician. His 1893 *cause célèbre*, detrimental to innocent people who were sent to the gallows, had obscured his reputation; a large part of his political clientele in Crete was Moslem²³⁸; and Greek nationalists resented his idea that the Ottoman Empire be transformed into a Greco-Turkish statehood²³⁹.

²³⁵ Sp. V. Markezinēs, *Politikē Historia tēs Neōteras Hellados, 1828–1964* (= Political History of Modern Greece, 1828–1964), vol. III (Athens: Papyros, 1966), p. 95.

²³⁶ Cf. *Memoirs of... Prince Christopher of Greece*, p. 113.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

²³⁸ Sinan Kunalp [ed.], *Ottoman Diplomatic Documents on the Origins of World War One. The final Stage of the Cretan Question, 1899–1913* [Istanbul: The Isis Press, 2009], doc. 312: Rifaat Bey, Ottoman minister at Athens, to Tevfik Pasha, Ottoman Minister for Foreign Affairs, Athens, May 25, 1906, p. 171.

²³⁹ EVP, I/28/3, El. Venizelos to Stephanos Provatakēs, Canea, August 12, 1908.

Of course he was now trying to become Crete's parliamentary dictator; for the new High Commissioner, Alexandros Zaïmēs (appointed by King George²⁴⁰) was all but a shadowy figure in politics. Upon arrival at Canea, on September 18, 1906, he stated that his main concern was to “toe the line of the Four Protective Powers of the Island”²⁴¹. On February 8, 1907, moreover, the new Constitution of the State of Crete came into effect²⁴². The island was now proclaimed a “totally autonomous State”²⁴³, under the joint protection of Great Britain, France, Italy and Russia²⁴⁴. Though the Sultan's suzerainty was preserved²⁴⁵, the High Commissioner was to be nominated by the King of the Hellenes. Nonetheless the prerogatives of both Sovereigns, Ottoman Emperor and King George, in the rule of Crete would be all but nominal. Last but not least, the new Constitution actually restricted the High Commissioner's authority: it was a parliamentary system that was being imposed on Crete²⁴⁶. No wonder that the standard-bearer of such a régime was Venizelos; for he was given the portfolio of Justice and Foreign Affairs on the Executive Committee appointed by the Assembly²⁴⁷. But thanks to his previous policies his Cretan well was seemingly running dry²⁴⁸.

In terms of International Relations, furthermore, the Cretan issue was now a chaotic one²⁴⁹. What did the Protective Powers have in store for Crete? The restoration of the Sultan's rule? Was Greece going to annex the island? Or was Crete to be an independent Republic? To cap it all, on April 28, 1908, it was officially announced that the troops of the Four Protective Powers were to withdraw from the

²⁴⁰ A reward for having consented to Prince George's ousting from the post of High Commissioner in Crete. (S. Kunalp, *The final Stage of the Cretan Question...*, doc. 338: Sadreddin Bey to Tevfik Pasha, Athens, August 25, 1906, p. 182.)

²⁴¹ *Episēmos Ephēmeris tēs Krētikēs Politeias* (= Official Gazette of the State of Crete), I, Eighth Year, No. 53 (September 18, 1906).

²⁴² *Episēmos Ephēmeris tēs Krētikēs Politeias*, I, Ninth Year, No. 7 (February 8, 1907).

²⁴³ Art. 1.

²⁴⁴ Ibid.

²⁴⁵ Albeit the Porte insisted upon the sovereignty of the Sultan. Cf. S. Kunalp, *The final Stage of the Cretan Question...*, doc. 1024: Hakky Pasha, Grand Vizier and Minister for Foreign Affairs, to Ghalib Kemaly Bey, Ottoman chargé d'affaires at Athens, Constantinople, September 24, 1911, p. 524. Regardless of what was implied, the “sovereignty” of the Sultan's was a “platonic one”. (Ibid., doc. 477: Pzenny Effendi, Ottoman Consul General at Corfu, to Rifaat Pasha, Ottoman Minister of Foreign Affairs, Corfu, July 24, 1909 [annex], p. 262.)

²⁴⁶ Art. 33ff.

²⁴⁷ Lilē Makrakē, *Eleutherios Venizelos, 1864–1910. Hē diaplasē henos ethnīkou hēgetē* (= Eleutherios Venizelos, 1864–1910. The Forming of a National Leader), Athens: Educational Foundation of the National Bank of Greece, 1992, p. 441; Andrew Dalby, *Eleftherios Venizelos* (London: Haus Publishing, 2010), p. 31.

²⁴⁸ P. K. Enepekides, *Gloria und Spaltung*, p. 124.

²⁴⁹ Cf. S. Kunalp, *The Final Stage of the Cretan Question...*, doc. 521: Hakky Bey, Ottoman Ambassador in Rome, to Rifaat Pasha, Ottoman Minister for Foreign Affairs, Rome, August 3, 1909, p. 282: *D'ici là la Crète me paraît destinée à rester un pays unique en son genre: l'Europe maintiendra un « statu quo » mal défini, souveraineté ottomane pour nous, union avec la Grèce pour les Crétois et Dieu sait quel mélange d'espoirs et de désespoirs pour le Royaume [de Grèce].*

island²⁵⁰. The evacuation was accomplished in July 1909²⁵¹; still Suda, near Canea, owing to its high strategic importance²⁵², remained occupied by the Powers' troops with only the Ottoman flag flying²⁵³. It was the last remnant of the rule of the Sultan.

In autumn 1908, accordingly, the Cretan Assembly renamed itself the "Parliament of Crete" and proclaimed that the Island be "indissolubly united with the Kingdom of Greece"²⁵⁴. Hopes were actually raised thanks to the Young Turk Revolution, in July of that same year; and during the subsequent flare-up of the Eastern Question, Crete could be annexed to Greece. Yet the Protective Powers were adamant: no annexation unless the Sublime Porte consented²⁵⁵. The Porte, on the other hand, was resolute: Ottoman "sovereignty" over Crete was non-negotiable²⁵⁶. Should, therefore, Greece annex the island, a fresh Turco-Greek war might be ignited²⁵⁷.

Zaimēs grew tired of this imbroglio and in September 1908, abandoned his post and went back to Athens; yet he had not tendered his formal resignation²⁵⁸. Was now the appropriate time for Venizelos to act. He actually intended Crete to be an independent statehood; and by the same token he was sure of Britain being the dominant Power as far as the Cretan issue was concerned²⁵⁹.

As foretold, the British – overtly or covertly – disapproved of the island's annexation to Greece. They wished Crete to be a protectorate of theirs: independence, therefore, would be a good step towards such a hope being attained²⁶⁰. The point

²⁵⁰ *Episēmos Ephēmeris tēs Krētikēs Politeias*, I, Tenth Year, No. 19 (April 28, 1908).

²⁵¹ S. Kunalp, *The Final Stage of the Cretan Question...*, doc. 433: Naoum Pasha, Ottoman Ambassador in Paris, to Rifaat Pasha, Paris, June 23, 1909, p. 238; doc. 458: Azarian Effendi, Under Secretary to the Ottoman Ministry for Foreign Affairs, to Rifaat Pasha, Malta, July 8, 1909, p. 251; Naby Bey, Ottoman minister at Athens, to Rifaat Pasha, Athens, July 27, 1909, p. 267.

²⁵² With regard to Suda's importance: *ibid.*, doc. 477: Pzenny Effendi to Rifaat Pasha, Corfu, July 24, 1909 (annex), p. 262.

²⁵³ *Ibid.*, doc. 1201: Saïd Halim Pasha, Ottoman Minister for Foreign Affairs, to Tevfik Pasha, Ottoman Ambassador in London, Constantinople, February 16, 1913, p. 603; N. V. Tōmadakēs, entry "Krētē. Historia (= Crete. History) in *Megalē Hellēnikē Enkyklopaideia* (= The Great Hellenic Encyclopaedia), vol. XV (Athens: Pysos, 1931), p. 187.

²⁵⁴ *Vasileion tēs Hellados. Parartēma tēs Ephēmeridos tēs Kyverniseōs en Krētē* (= Cretan Annex of the Official Gazette of the Kingdom of Greece), I, No. 1 (September 24, 1908); No. 9 (October 2, 1908).

²⁵⁵ *Vasileion tēs Hellados. Parartēma tēs Ephēmeridos tēs Kyverniseōs en Krētē*, I, No. 14 (October 15, 1908).

²⁵⁶ S. Kunalp, *The Final Stage of the Cretan Question...*, doc. 412: Rifaat Pasha, to the Ottoman Ambassadors abroad, Constantinople, June 9, 1909, p. 228.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, doc. 521: Hakky Bey, Ottoman Ambassador in Rome, to Rifaat Pasha, Rome, August 3, 1909, p. 282; doc. 536: Turkhan Pasha, Ottoman Ambassador in Saint Petersburg, to Rifaat Pasha, Saint Petersburg, August 7, 1909, p. 288; doc. 540: Reshid Pasha, Ottoman Ambassador in Vienna, to Rifaat Pasha, Vienna, August 9, 1909, p. 289; doc. 547: the same to the same, August 11, 1909, p. 292; doc. 550: Hakky Bey to Rifaat Pasha, Rome, August 12, 1909, p. 293.

²⁵⁸ Thomas Ath. Vaïdēs, *Eleutherios Venizelos* (in Greek), Athens: Patris, 1934, p. 63.

²⁵⁹ *I. Metaxas. To prosōpiko tou hēmerologio* (= I. Metaxas' diary), vol. II. Edited by Chr. Christidēs (Athens: Govostēs [no date given]), p. 39 (entry of October 29, 1910).

²⁶⁰ Lilē Makrakē, *Eleutherios Venizelos...*, pp. 253, 257–258.

now was to keep the issue open until the right moment – and, if the case arose, to play off the Ottomans against the Greeks. The Greek government was aware of the British goal²⁶¹; yet it was to do very little to counter such tactics. As a matter of fact, Greece was a powerless country and, after King Otho was overthrown, Britain had the upper hand in Greek politics.

In short, by 1909 Crete had become a quasi-independent State. So, Venizelos was in a position to be summoned to Athens to have the King, the Military League and the politicians thoroughly siding with the British. Crete was left in a happy chaos. Nearly two thirds of the population were Christians²⁶², whereas in the early nineteenth century half the population had been Moslems²⁶³. Ottoman officials began considering the partition of the island as a fair solution²⁶⁴. The outcome of the First Balkan War, nonetheless, brought about annexation to Greece. The point is: Why did not Crete become a British protectorate? Although historical scholarship has not provided a definite answer so far, French hostility to such a prospect is a plausible likelihood²⁶⁵.

IV

The Military League was being blackmailed: by means of the British and French press it would be associated with the Young Turks, unless it agreed to be led by an upright politician²⁶⁶. Who was he to be? Venizelos, of course. Emile Joseph Dillon, a noted British publicist and Venizelos' acquaintance, paid a visit to Athens and harped on about his talents²⁶⁷. No sooner did he point to the "Cretan Statesman" as Greece's "Saviour" than influential Athens newspapers showered Venizelos with praise²⁶⁸. The bulk, nonetheless, of the radical-minded military stubbornly refused to hand over to him the League's political leadership. The proposal

²⁶¹ AYE, 1890, AAK, the Foreign Minister of Greece to the Greek Consuls in Crete, April 1890.

²⁶² S. Kunalp, *The Final Stage of the Cretan Question...*, doc. 477: Pzenny Effendi to Rifaat Pasha, Corfu, July 24, 1909 (annex), p. 261; cf. Lilly Macraki, *Eleutherios Venizelos, 1864–1910*, p. 258.

²⁶³ S. Kunalp, *The Final Stage of the Cretan Question...*, doc. 467: Hakky Bey to Rifaat Pasha, Rome, July 12, 1909, p. 255.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, doc. 477: Pzenny Effendi to Rifaat Pasha, Corfu, July 24, 1909 (annex), p. 262.

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, doc.1187: Tevfik Pasha to Gabriel Efendi Noradounghian, Ottoman Minister for Foreign Affairs, London, October 1912, pp. 598–599.

²⁶⁶ N. Zormpas, *Apomnēmonēumata*, pp. 62–64.

²⁶⁷ Sp. V. Markezinēs, *Poilitikē Historia tēs Neōteras Hellados...*, III, p. 95; Iōannēs Ēliakēs, *Ho Venizelos kai hē politikē* (= Venizelos and politics), Athens: Kalergēs [no date given], pp. 52–53; Dēmētrēs Pourmaras, *Eleutherios Venizelos*, Athens: "Eleutheros" (no date given), p. 179.

²⁶⁸ Giannēs Manōlikakēs, *Eleutherios Venizelos. Hē agnōstē zōē tou* (= The Unknown Life of Eleutherios Venizelos), Athens: Gnōsē, 1985, p. 250; Helen Gardikas-Katsiadakis, "Venizelos' Advent in Greek Politics, 1909–1912" in Paschalis Kitromilidis (ed.), *Eleftherios Venizelos. The trials of Statesmanship* (Edinburgh University Press, 2008², p. 89. Cf. Steph. I. Stephanou, *Eleutherios Venizelos, plastourgos Historias* (= Eleutherios Venizelos, a History Maker), Athens, 1977², p. 44.

was submitted to the directory of the League again and again – but every time it was turned down²⁶⁹.

At length, the proposal was adopted thanks mainly to Epameinōndas Zymbrakakēs (nicknamed: *Pamikos*), a hot-tempered military officer of Cretan descent. He was a character typical of the people who had engineered the 1909 Goudi coup. He had volunteered as a private in the Greek Army; soon after that, he became an NCO and in the end he was commissioned in the Cavalry. He lacked education but gained promotion thanks to his political connections. Still, he used to fight duels with anybody he disliked and, amazingly enough, he survived. He was notorious, moreover, for his love affairs and his contacts with the Royal House²⁷⁰. As a result, his prestige among junior officers was enormous. He was the virtual leader of the Military League and by no means the mild-mannered Artillery colonel Nikolaos Zormpas, who was given the conventional command of the 1909 coup by the bulk of the seditious officers. For N. Zormpas had been accused of cowardice in the 1897 Greco-Turkish war and, albeit found innocent²⁷¹ he was besmirched and saw his promotion delayed²⁷².

No wonder, therefore, that Zormpas wanted Crown Prince Constantine ousted from the Army; for he saw in him the very person who had his advancement put on hold²⁷³. By the same token, he wished King George to assume real power in Greek politics – and in military affairs as well²⁷⁴. Zymbrakakēs, on the other hand (thanks to his connections with the Royal Court), did not disapprove of the measures taken by Constantine²⁷⁵, though he was – as aforementioned – a carbon copy of the radical military type. In any case he, the bellicose *Pamikos* was now the pivotal figure within the League. He was informed of Venizelos' policy in Crete – and he disliked both him and it²⁷⁶. After Dillon's campaign, however, he changed his mind and persuaded his colleagues to summon Venizelos to Athens²⁷⁷.

The point however is that the League still did not trust Venizelos. That is why the leading officers composed and signed a letter to him, setting out the conditions of his being summoned and the task to be fulfilled by him in Athens²⁷⁸. Most likely he was invited merely for a meeting in the context of which he was to 'give advice'; in other words, he was to serve, for a while, merely as the mentor of the League. Nonetheless, this document disappeared and nobody has as yet been able to discover

²⁶⁹ G. Aspreas, *Politikē Historia tēs Neōteras Hellados* (= Political History of Modern Greece), vol. II Athens: Chrēsima Vivlia (no date given; second edition), pp. 125–126; D. Pournaras, *Eleutherios Venizelos*, p. 185.

²⁷⁰ P. K. Enepekides, *Gloria und Spaltung*, p. 108.

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 108.

²⁷² *Ibid.*

²⁷³ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁶ D. Pournaras, *Eleutherios Venizelos*, p. 176.

²⁷⁷ Sp. V. Markezinēs, *Poilitikē Historia tēs Neōteras Hellados...*, III, p. 95.

²⁷⁸ Steph. I. Stephanou, *Eleutherios Venizelos...*, p. 44.

a copy of it²⁷⁹. As a result, whereas the “Cretan Statesman” was called to Athens merely for co-operation with the League, thanks to the lack of this very document, his coming has largely been seen as the “Beginning of a New Era”²⁸⁰.

V

Venizelos reached Athens on December 26, 1909. He wore “cracked boots” and “frayed trousers”²⁸¹. Yet his programme was quite clear: Greece should prepare for war²⁸². In the framework of her preparation an entente should be accomplished between Greece and the other Christian Powers in the Balkans, namely Bulgaria and Serbia²⁸³.

Such an entente was an old dream. As early as 1867, thanks to Charilaos Trikoupēs, then Foreign Minister of Greece, a Greek-Serbian treaty had been concluded and signed at Bad Voeslau, in the environs of Vienna. The treaty stipulated the alliance of the two countries against the Ottoman Empire. Greece and Serbia, accordingly, were to provide an Army 30,000 strong on the Greek side and 60,000 by the Serbs by March 1868 (art. 2). The intention of the alliance was to “wholly free the Christian populations of Turkey’s European lands and of the Archipelago islands as well” (art. 4). If such a grandiose goal could not be achieved, Serbia would annex only Bosnia and Herzegovina, whilst Greece would annex Epirus and Thessaly²⁸⁴.

Nonetheless, a war of Serbia and Greece against the Ottoman Empire did not take place. Yet it was thanks to the outcome of the 1877–1878 Russo-Turkish war and the subsequent Congress of Berlin that Greece annexed Thessaly and, in Epirus, the Arta district²⁸⁵. In 1897, the long-awaited war between the Ottoman Empire and Greece flared up thanks to the Cretan issue. Greek public opinion hoped that the capture of Constantinople and, generally speaking, the *Megaloides*, i.e. the “resurrection” of the Byzantine Empire, were at hand; instead of which the occupation of Thessaly by Ottoman troops occurred. If truth be told, even Crown Prince Constantine, Generalissimo of the Greek Army, was astonished at seeing his troops disbanded almost without a fight. Accordingly, he did not mince his words: the Greek Army was “undisciplined” and “unable to carry on a war”; an army of “cowards, constantly running away from the battlefield”²⁸⁶.

²⁷⁹ Giannēs Manōlikakēs, *Eleutherios Venizelos. Hē agnōstē zōē tou*, p. 251.

²⁸⁰ Steph. I. Stephanou, *Eleutherios Venizelos...*, p. 46.

²⁸¹ *Memoirs of... Prince Christopher of Greece*, p. 113.

²⁸² EVP, I/30/4, El. Venizelos to Vladimēros Bensēs, Halepa, June 7, 1910.

²⁸³ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁴ Édouard Driault and Michel Lhéritier, *Histoire diplomatique de la Grèce de 1821 à nos jours*, vol. III (Paris: Les Presses Universitaires de France, 1925), p. 129.

²⁸⁵ The relevant documents were published by the Foreign Ministry of Greece. (Hypourgeion Exōterikōn, *Diplōmatika engrapha aphorōnta eis to methoriakon zētēma* [= Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Diplomatic Documents concerning the Border Question], Athens, S. K. Vlastos, 1882.

²⁸⁶ N. Zormpas, *Apomnēmoneumata*, p. 143.

As foretold, the 1897 war was all but a farce. For King George I of the Hellenes, before the hostilities began, had ventured in Vienna the outcome and aftermath: Greece would be militarily defeated but diplomatically triumphant. And so it was: Crete was declared an autonomous statehood, dynastically associated with Greece. Yet Crown Prince Constantine had no feelings of triumph. Regardless of his father's surreptitious arrangements, he considered himself to be responsible for the defeat and, accordingly undertook to reorganize the Greek Army from top to bottom.

* * *

Constantine was born on July 21, 1868. He was educated within the Royal Palace. He had a good knowledge of History, both Greek and European, and Geography. Moreover, he was fluent in English, German, French – and Classical Greek as well. He had received a tough military training and joined the Army as a sub-lieutenant. Soldiering soon proved to be his passion²⁸⁷.

He furthered his studies at the universities of Leipzig and Heidelberg, Germany, where he followed courses in History, Law, and Archaeology. He attended the German War Academy and served as an officer of the 2nd Regiment of the Imperial Guard. In 1889, he married Sophia, sister of the Emperor of Germany Wilhelm II²⁸⁸. In 1890 Sophia adopted the Greek Orthodox faith; as a result, thanks also to her mild character and organizing talents, she became popular in Greece. The couple had six children and led a happy life. Still, the 1897 debacle was a severe blow to Constantine's prestige and self-esteem. He asked, therefore, the advice of Kaiser Wilhelm II, his brother-in-law; and the latter agreed to have talented, young Greek officers educated in Germany²⁸⁹. One of them was I. Metaxas, Constantine's ardent follower during the First World War.

VI

Meantime, a new foe was emerging for Greece, namely Bulgaria. In 1870, the Bulgarian Orthodox Church was given the right by the Porte to secede from the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople. The Bulgarians, still under Ottoman rule, wanted their very own 'national' Church to be established, on the grounds that the Ecumenical See in Constantinople was run by Greeks. A precedent did exist:

²⁸⁷ Sp. V. Markezinēs, *Politikē Historia tēs Neōteras Hellados, 1828–1964*, vol. II (Athens: Papyrus, 1966), p.183ff. passim; Th. Vellianitēs, entry “Kōnstantinos, Vasileus tōn Hellēnōn” (= Constantine, King of the Hellenes) in *Megalē Hellēnikē Enkyklopaideia*, vol. XV (Athens: Papyrus, 1931), pp. 577–579.

²⁸⁸ Sp. V. Markezinēs, *Politikē Historia tēs Neōteras Hellados...*, II, p. 196ff.

²⁸⁹ I. Metaxas. *To prosōpiko tou hēmerologio* vol. I. Edited by Chr. Christidēs (Athens: Govostēs [no date given]), p. 377 (year 1898), p. 461ff.

in 1833²⁹⁰, the Church of the Kingdom of Greece had declared itself to be autocephalous²⁹¹, i.e. independent of the Patriarchate of Constantinople. Since the Greek Orthodox Church had split into two in the first half of the nineteenth century, why were the Bulgarians still required to submit to the spiritual jurisdiction of the Greek Patriarch of Constantinople²⁹²?

The Porte agreed to the splitting away but the Ecumenical Patriarchate did not; and the latter, furthermore, proved to be prompt to react. For when the Bulgarians' ecclesiastical independence was officially celebrated in May, 1872, a Synod²⁹³ summoned by the Patriarch Anthimus VI judged the Bulgarian Church "schismatic", and condemned it²⁹⁴.

Truth to tell, the Exarchate²⁹⁵, as the Bulgarian independent Church used to be called, enjoyed less self-rule than the Greek Autocephalous one. Yet the issue had a pronounced political bent; for according to the 1870 arrangement made by the Porte, provinces where two thirds of the Christian Orthodox population formally wished to join the Exarchate, could go over to the latter's spiritual jurisdiction. As far as Bulgaria proper was concerned, no problem existed seeing that it was natural for her people to want to shake off the spiritual yoke of the Greeks. The nub now was Macedonia, i.e. the very heartland of Ottoman dominions in Europe.

An exhaustive study of the Macedonian Issue would be beyond the scope of this essay. Still attention should be paid to the fact that the church feud spilt over rapidly into a political and national one. For those inclining toward the Exarchate were considered to be Bulgarians; whilst those who opted for the Patriarch of Constantinople were regarded as being Greeks²⁹⁶. Both Exarchists and Patriarchists, nonetheless, were of Macedonia the autochthonous people; and this people, namely the Slav-Macedonians, spoke a tongue little different from Bulgarian.

There is no doubt that Slavs had overrun Macedonia during the early Middle Ages²⁹⁷. Yet these "Southern Slavs" were granted statehood by the

²⁹⁰ The independence, nonetheless, of the Church of the Kingdom of Greece was not recognized by the Patriarchate of Constantinople until 1850.

²⁹¹ *Autocephalous* = Self Headed (<Autokephalos [in Greek]).

²⁹² A summary of the issue in Kriste Misirkov, *On Macedonian Matters*. Translated into Greek by Dēmētrēs Karagiannēs (Athens: Petsivas, 2003), p. XIII ff.

²⁹³ Synod = Council of the Church.

²⁹⁴ In September 1872.

²⁹⁵ Exarchate<*Exarchus*<*Exarchos* = the ecclesiastical head of a province.

²⁹⁶ A typical case made known to Iōannēs Metaxas in 1940 by the retired colonel Chrēstos Pipsos, retired colonel of the Greek Army. (AYE, 1940, 60.1.)

²⁹⁷ Georges Ostrogorsky, *Histoire de l'État byzantin* (Paris: Payot, 1969), p. 122ff.; Louis Bréhier, *Vie et mort de Byzance* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1969²), pp.40, 122; Dion. A. Zakythēnos, *Hē Vyzantinē Autocrotoria, 324–1071* (= The Byzantine Empire, 324–1071), Athens, 1969, pp. 82–85, 110–113. See also George C. Soulis, "On the Slavic Settlement in Hierisos in the Tenth Century", *Byzantion*, XXIII (1953), pp. 67–72; idem, "The Legacy of Cyril and Methodius to the Southern Slavs", *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, XIX (1965), pp. 19–43.

Bulgarians²⁹⁸; hence *Bulgari, qui Sclavi appellantur*, viz. the “Bulgarian Slavs”²⁹⁹ were to be a commonplace in Macedonia’s History not only in the Middle Ages but in Modern Times as well. For “Bulgarian”³⁰⁰ was now the common ‘currency’ of Macedonian Slavs³⁰¹.

It is with just reason that the foundation of the Exarchist Church is regarded as the spiritual and cultural emancipation of the Bulgarians³⁰². Still the struggle was to continue at the political level; and the apple of discord of course was Macedonia. For, as aforementioned, if the autochthonous Slav populations declared themselves to be Exarchists, Macedonia would be annexed to Bulgaria some day. But in the late 1890s the so-called “Exarchist movement” in Macedonia split in two, namely the pro-Bulgarian Verhovists and the Centralists. The latter uttered the slogan “Macedonia for the Macedonians”, whilst the former proclaimed “Two nations [Macedonians and Bulgarians, but] one People”³⁰³. Be that as it may, on July 20, 1903, an uprising against Ottoman rule – organized by the Centralists – broke out in Macedonia³⁰⁴, but it failed; and terrible were the reprisals of the Sublime Porte³⁰⁵. Since, furthermore, a pronounced social character was given to the Centralist movement (landless peasantry against propertied people), Greece had to counter this; for, as a rule, wealthy people were either Moslems or Greek-speaking at least. Had the Slavic-speaking peasants, thanks to the Centralists’ organization and guidance, gained the upper hand, Macedonia would have been lost to Greece.

Such a loss was not a point to be sanctioned in the late nineteenth century. The Greek political leadership wavered with regard to Greece’s future enlargement. Should the Kingdom expand northward into Epirus wherein compact Greek populations lived? Or eastward into Macedonia? The true interest of Greece, however, as regards the “Macedonian Affairs” became evident only in the 1890s³⁰⁶. And this ‘oscillation’ was to assume a violent character in the second decade of the twentieth century; for it was to culminate in the 1916–1917 National Divide of the Greeks.

²⁹⁸ D. A. Zakythēnos, *Hē Vyzantinē Autocratoria...*, p. 110; G. Ostrogorsky, *Histoire de l’État byzantin*, p. 157.

²⁹⁹ George C. Soulis, “On the Slavic Settlement in Hierissos in the Tenth Century”, p. 72.

³⁰⁰ In Modern Greek: *Voulgarēs*.

³⁰¹ See mainly K. Misirkov, *On Macedonian Matters*, p. xi.

³⁰² The Bulgarians’ struggle for spiritual and cultural independence, began in the eighteenth century. For it was in 1762 that the monk Paisij Hilendarski, wrote his *Istorija Slavenobolgarskaja*, which brought about the national awakening of the Bulgarians. (The *Istorija Slavenobolgarskaja* by Paisij has been translated into Greek by Vaitsa Hanē and published by the “Kyriakidēs Bros”, Salonika, in 2003.)

³⁰³ K. Misirkov, *On Macedonian Matters*, pp. xv–xx.

³⁰⁴ The *Ilinden* Uprising.

³⁰⁵ Albert Londres, *Comitadjis ou le terrorisme dans les Balkans*. Translated into Greek by Dēmētrēs Michalopoulos (Athens: Petsivas, 2008), pp. 28–30.

³⁰⁶ Spyros Brekēs, *Historia tēs Neōteras Hellados. Dekatos enatos aiōnas* (= A History of Modern Greece [Nineteenth Century]), Athens, 2001⁴, p. 293 ff. *passim*. (mainly p. 348).

Whatever the facts of the matter, in the early 1900s Greek leadership was unanimous in stating that Macedonia was the overriding national priority: proselytism of the Macedonian peasantry to the Exarchist Church must be halted. True, such a proselytism was fuelled by the work of the “Bulgarian”, i.e. Exarchist armed bands. As a result, gangs of Patriarchist irregulars – staffed nonetheless by officers and NCOs of the Greek Army – were dispatched to and throughout Macedonia in order to fight Exarchists (whether Verhovists or Centralists)³⁰⁷. Greek gangs enjoyed the silent quasi-toleration of the Ottoman authorities, and fought effectively against the “Bulgarians”. A bloody imbroglio ensued brought to an end only by the 1908 Young Turkish revolt. The point, nonetheless, is that for the first time Greek Army officers were taking part in real – and furthermore irregular warfare, with more or less effective results.

Abbreviations

AYE	Archives of the Foreign Ministry of Greece (Athens)
EVP	Eleutherios Venizelos Papers (Athens)
PA	Parliamentary Archives (London)

³⁰⁷ See mainly Geōrgios Tsontos-Vardas, *Ho Makedonikos Agōn* (= The Macedonian Struggle). Edited by Giōrgos Petsivas, vols. I–III, Athens: Petsivas, 2003; Iōannēs Karavitēs, *Ho Makedonikos Agōn. Apomnēmoneumata* (= The Macedonian Struggle. Memoirs). Edited by Giōrgos Petsivas, vols I–II, Athens: Petsivas, 1994