

ALEXANDER PUSHKIN: HIS ATTITUDE TOWARD THE GREEK REVOLUTION 1821-1829

After the end of the Napoleonic wars, the European monarchs assembled at the Congress of Vienna to resume the task of creating a new order and establishing peace on the continent. Dominated by the spirit of conservatism, they were determined to maintain the European balance of power which had been threatened by the French Revolution and the rise of national liberation movements. The alliance of the monarchs was strong enough to check and prevent any revolutionary movement at its genesis. Yet their efforts to achieve stability and peace were not capable of withstanding the nascent forces of nationalism, which challenged, time and again, their legitimist policies. Like the so-called "wave of Bolshevism" which followed the October Revolution of 1917, Europe was threatened, after the end of the Napoleonic wars, by the explosive forces of nationalism.

The first outbreak in the Balkans after the Congress of Vienna was the Greek revolt against the Ottoman Empire in 1821. The reaction which the Greek struggle produced throughout Europe and America, varied from apathy and hostility to the most unreserved sympathy and enthusiasm. The rulers of the monarchical governments of Europe remained passive spectators and, in many instances, enemies of the dramatic spectacle between the Greeks and the Turks. To them, the Greek revolt embodied two of the most repugnant tendencies: revolution and nationalism.

But the struggle of the Greeks for their national regeneration made a great impact on the European romanticists and liberals. To these individuals, imbued with the classical spirit, the cause of Greece became a sacred one. The exploits of the Greek Christians brought a storm of enthusiasm and support for their struggle against Ottoman rule. The wave of sympathy for the Greek cause was best expressed in the Philhellenic movement.

Philhellenism was a unique phenomenon in the European politics and perhaps the clearest indication of the nascent forces of romantic liberalism. It appeared at different times, in different countries, before and throughout the

nineteenth century, yet at no time did it gain so great a momentum as during the course of the Greek Revolution. Literary romanticists, liberals and humanitarians from Europe and America expressed their support for the Greeks not only by actively participating in their struggle, but morally as well.

In Russia Philhellenic sentiments found support among different segments of society. At the outbreak of the revolt, Russian public opinion demanded an immediate intervention on behalf of their co-religionists. Count Stroganov, John Kapodistrias and the "war party" in St. Petersburg sympathized with the Greek insurgents and pleaded with Alexander I to declare war on Turkey on the side of the Greeks. The Russian liberals and the nascent movement of the Decembrists threw their support behind the Greek revolutionaries. Likewise, Philhellenic sentiments found artistic expression in the pens of the Russian poets and writers, and particularly in the writings of Russia's greatest poet, Alexander Sergeevich Pushkin.

Pushkin was a contemporary of the Greek Revolution. Living in Kishinev, Bessarabia, when the Greek revolt broke out in the Principalities, the young poet followed closely the struggle of the Greeks for their national liberation. Among the Russian poets, he was perhaps the first to hail enthusiastically Ypsilantis' undertaking and record the exploits of the Greek insurgents in the Principalities. He wrote poems, letters, stories, and notes inspired by or dedicated to the Greek struggle. His sentimental love for Greece, which we call Philhellenism, was nourished and strengthened by the romantic movement of the twenties. His writings on the Greek Revolution were indicative of his sympathy and support for Greece and the Greek cause.

In studying Pushkin and the Greek Revolution the following questions will be considered: what was Pushkin's initial reaction to Ypsilantis' undertaking in the Rumanian Principalities? How did he record the exploits of the Greeks in his literary works? Why did he become disillusioned and skeptical with the Greeks and the Greek revolt? Finally, what was his attitude toward the Greek Revolution, in general, and the recognition of Greece's independence in 1829, in particular? ¹

1. For further studies on Pushkin and the Greek Revolution, see Demetrios J. Farsolas, "Alexander Pushkin and the Greek Revolt in Danubian Principalities, 1821-1829", *Neo-Hellenika*, II (Austin, Texas, 1971); B.A. Trubetskoi, "Pushkin, the Southern Decembrists and the Hetairists," in his book *Pushkin v Moldavii* (3rd ed.; Kishinev, 1963); A.V. Fadeev, *Rossia i vostochnyi krizis 20-kt godov XIX veka* (Moscow, 1958), especially Chapter II; N.V. Izmailov, "Pushkin's Poem about the Hetairists," in *Pushkin. Vremennik pushkinskoi komissii*, III (Moscow, 1937); and V. Selinov, "Pushkin and the Greek Revolt," in *Pushkin. Stati i materialy*, ed. M.P. Alexeev, Vol. I, No. 2 (Odessa, 1927).

These are some of the questions which the present essay will attempt to give an answer.

I

Pushkin was born in Moscow on May 26, 1799. His mother, Nadezhda Osipovna, was the granddaughter of Abram Hannibal, son of an Abyssinian prince captured by the Turks and sent as a gift by the sultan to Peter the Great. Abram's first wife was a beautiful Greek girl, Eudokia Andreou Diopereou, the daughter of a Greek captain of a galley. He married her in 1731, but after several years their marriage ended in divorce. "Abram's first wife," Pushkin wrote in his autobiography, "a woman of Greek origin, was a great beauty. She bore him a white daughter. After divorcing her, he forced her to take the veil. He gave her daughter, Polyxena, an excellent education and rich dowry, but refused to see her." ²

From his father, Sergei Lvovich, Pushkin inherited a name six hundred years old, revered in earliest Russian annals of feudal military aristocracy, and he was proud of it. But the family had, by Pushkin's time, lost its wealth and social position. Of importance, however, for his poetic career was the fact that his father was a writer and enjoyed quite a reputation among intellectuals.

Pushkin's parents found the oldest of their children unmanageable, apparently dull, alien, and ugly with his tightly curled dark hair, swarthy skin, and thick lips. Eager to get rid of him, they placed him in the Lyceum at Tsarskoe Selo, near St. Petersburg. On his graduation from the school in 1817, he was appointed Collegiate Secretary in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs where he served under John Kapodistrias, the Greek who was in charge of Russian foreign policy. Once out of school, he entered the great society of St. Petersburg with enthusiasm and love of life. The intellectual and political ferment which agitated the young generation of the aristocracy in the capital, brought him closer to those who belonged to secret societies. Pushkin began to write serious and satirical poetry which reflected a new influence of political liberalism or radicalism. He hailed freedom, attacked serfdom and ridiculed the autocratic regime. The poem *Ode to Liberty* amounted to deliberate warnings to all tyrannical abuse of unbridled power of the monarchs:

2. "The Beginning of a new Autobiography," in A.S. Pushkin, *Sobranie Sochinenie*, ed. D.D. Blagoi et. al. (10 vols.; Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatelstvo khudozhestvennoi literatury, 1959-1962), VII, 289. [Cited hereafter: *Sochineniia*]. Cf. S.I. Opatovich "Evdokia Andreou Hannibal, First Wife of the Negro General Abram Petrovich Hannibal, 1731-1753," *Russkaia Starina*, XVIII (1877), 69-78.

Despotic miscreant,
 I hate you and your throne!
 Tremble, o tyrants of the world!
 And you, unwakened slaves, listen:
 Be strong, take courage, and revolt! ³

Conservatives and reactionaries in the capital were horrified, but the young generation came to regard Pushkin's political poetry a reflection of their own ideas and aspirations. As his popularity among intellectual circles and army officers grew, the secret police began watching him, and soon they had him under surveillance. He was threatened time and again with imprisonment or exile. "Pushkin must be sent to Siberia," Emperor Alexander I said. "He had deluged Russia with his subversive verses. All young people know them by heart."⁴

The punishment seemed severe. Pushkin's friends were in an agony of apprehension at hearing the news. It was rumored about the city that Pushkin was going to be sent to Siberia. Several individuals, among others, the historian Karamzin, the poet Zhulovsky, and particularly Engelhardt, his former Lyceum principal, used official channels to save the poet from being sent in exile to Siberia. But the supreme appeal on behalf of the poet was made by Kapodistrias, Pushkin's superior at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, whom Zhukovsky called him for his many civic accomplishment "Our Aristides" (*Nash Aristidi*)⁵—an allusion to the Athenian statesman and general known in the history of ancient Greece as "Aristides the Just." Kapodistrias discussed the matter with Karamzin and Zhukovsky, and their views formed the basis for the final decision which he presented to the emperor. ⁶ Alexander I, who liked to think of himself as an enlightened ruler, ordered that Pushkin be "transferred" to southern Russia to the office of General I.N. Inzov, chief of Russian southern colonies. On May 6, 1820, Pushkin left St. Petersburg carrying with him a letter of recommendation to General Inzov from the Foreign Ministry. The letter was written by Kapodistrias and approved by the emperor. It was a kind of introduction and its linient and moderate tone were all to the credit of its author, Kapodistrias, who wrote:

Mr. Alexander Pushkin, former student of the Tsarskoe Selo school and latterly attached to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, will have the

3. *Sochineniia*, I, 44-45.

4. I.I. Pushchin, *Zapiski o Pushkine i pisma* (Moscow, 1927), pp. 53-54.

5. Leonid P. Grossman, *Pushkin* (Moscow, 1960), p. 160.

6. *Ibid.*

honor of presenting this note to Your Excellency. Its purpose is to place this young man under your tutelage and to ask you to accord him your benevolent protection. Permit me to give you a few details about him: Beset with sorrows and troubles throughout his early childhood, young Pushkin left home without regret. His heart devoid of all filial affection, could know no passion except that of independence. As a student he soon showed signs of extraordinary genius. He made rapid progress at school; he was widely admired for his wit, but his character seems to have escaped the vigilance of his teachers. When he made his entry into society, his strength lay in his vivid imagination, but his weakness in a total absence of those inner feelings which serve as principles which experience gives us through education. There is no depths to which this unfortunate young man has not sunk, just as there is no perfection to which he cannot attain through the transcendent superiority of his talent. He owes to his poetic writings a kind of celebrity as well as some very serious errors, and some very respectable friends, who will open the way to salvation for him, if there is still time and if he will but resolve to follow it. A few short poems and, in particular, an ode to liberty, brought Pushkin to the attention of the government. While characterized by great qualities of composition and style, the ode is full of dangerous principles derived from the contemporary school, or, in other words, from that system of anarchy which bad faith calls the System of Human Rights, Liberty and the Independence of Peoples... He appears to have repented – if one is to judge by his tears and protestations. His sponsors, moreover, believe that he is sincere, and that by sending him away from St. Petersburg for a short time, giving him some work to do, and, surrounding him with good examples, he may yet become an excellent servant of the state, or, at least, can be made of him a man of letters of the highest distinction. It is in accordance with their wishes that the emperor has authorized me to grant young Pushkin a leave of absence and recommend him to you. He will be in your personal service and will work in your office as supernumerary. His fate will depend upon the effects of your good counsel. Be good enough, therefore, to give him freely your advise. Enlighten his inexperience by telling him that excellence of the mind without those qualities of the heart are nearly almost baneful; and there are many examples which prove that men who are endowed with genius but have failed to seek protection in religion and ethics against dangerous excesses, have

brought only unhappiness upon themselves and their fellow-men. Mr. Pushkin seems to wish to follow a career in the diplomatic service, which he has already begun in the Foreign Ministry. I could ask for nothing better than to keep him in my office, but he will be accorded that favor only on your recommendation and at such time as you decide he has deserved it. You were not, I know, expecting such a commission, and if it is a troublesome one in any way, you must take comfort in the high and justified opinion we have for you.⁷

II

Pushkin arrived in Kishinev, then the capital of the newly acquired province of Bessarabia, a few months before the outbreak of the Greek revolt in the Danubian Principalities. Kishinev at that time had a flourishing Greek community and was the center of revolutionary activities of the Philike Hetairia. In Kishinev Pushkin became acquainted with Alexander Ypsilantis,⁸ the leader of the Hetairia, and his brothers George, Nicholas and Demetrios, Prince George M. Kantakouzinis,⁹ Michael Soutsos,¹⁰ the hospodar (governor) of Moldavia, Vasilis Karavias, Constantine Pendedekas, Constantine Doukas, and other Greeks,¹¹ all members of the Hetairia and participants in the revolt in the Principalities. Through association with these Greeks, Pushkin learned about the activities of the Hetairia and the impending Greek revolt. "One should be aware he wrote to a friend, "that a secret society (Philike Hetairia), with the goal of the liberation of Greece, was organized as early as thirty years ago, and it has become widespread. The members of the society are divided into three degrees. The military caste has made up the lowest degree; the second, citizens. Each member of this latter degree has the right to attach comrades to himself – but not to attach soldiers, whom only the third, highest degree has been selecting. You see the simple course and chief idea of this society, the founders of which are still unknown. A separate faith, a separate language, independence of book-publishing; on the one hand enlightenment, on the other ignorance."¹²

7. Letter of K.V. Nesselrode, Minister of Foreign Affairs, to General I.N. Inzov, May 4, 1820, *Russkaia Starina*, LIII (1877), 241.

8. F.F. Vigel, *Vospominaniia* (Moscow, 1865), VI, 117; *Russkii Arkhiv*, IV (1866), 1125, 1127, 1150, 1236-1238; Izmailov, *op. cit.*, III, 339 ff.; B.V. Tomashevskii, *Pushkin* (1813-1824) (Moscow, 1956), I, 456-465; Grosman, *op. cit.*, p. 169.

9. *Russkii Arkhiv*, IV (1866), 1236 ff.

10. *Sochineniia*, VII, 305, 312; *Russkii Arkhiv*, IV (1866), 1240.

11. See I.P. Liprandi's comments on Karavias, Pendedekas and Doukas in *Russkii Arkhiv*, IV (1866), 1408-1411.

12. Letter to V.L. Davydov, March 1821, *Sochineniia*, IX, 25-26. See also *The Letters of*

The Hetairia, despite its many shortcomings regarding methods of organization and operation, provided the only leading force in the struggle against the Ottoman Empire. It was, in other words, the mother, or rather, the midwife of the revolution of 1821.¹³

Ypsilantis and the Hetairists gathered a small army in Kishinev and formed a corps of five hundred Greek volunteers under the name, equally famous in every period of the history of Greece, of the "Sacred Battalion" (Ἱερὸς Λόχος). Hundreds of Greeks poured into the city from other parts of Russia, particularly from Odessa. Kishinev at that time was dominated by the psychology of warlike life, anticipating the beginning of the great event. In Bessarabia, on the southern fringes of Russia, Pushkin saw the Greeks ready for attacking the Turks. He recalled these moments in a stanza he wrote and appended to his famous poem *Eugin Onegin*:

The Pyrenees were shaken furiously,
The vulcano of Naples was in blazes;
And the one-armed Prince [Ypsilantis] from Kishinev
Waved to his friends in Morea [Peloponnesus].¹⁴

Encouraged by the rebellion of Ali Pasha of Jannina against his master, the sultan, and the revolutions in Spain and Italy in 1820, the radical faction of the Hetairia urged Ypsilantis to strike without delay. He hesitated, at first, for he was aware of the difficulties they would encounter without elaborate military preparations. The revolt was initially planned to begin in the Peloponnesus, but the project appeared unfeasible for various reasons. He then decided to raise the revolt in the Danubian Principalities where he hoped Russia would eventually aid his undertaking, and the Rumanians and other Balkan peoples would collaborate with him against their common enemy – the Turks.

Pushkin, who witnessed these feverish preparations of the Greeks, wrote on the eve of the revolt the poem *War* ("Voina") in which he envisaged the resounding din of clashing armies and "feast of vengeance:"

Alexander Pushkin, trans. J. Thomas Shaw (Madison, Wisc.: University of Wisconsin Press, 1967), p. 81. [Cited hereafter: *Letters*].

13. Emmanuel G. Protopsaltis, *Ἡ Φιλικὴ Ἑταιρεία [The Philike Hetairia]* (Athens, 1964) p. 14.

14. *Sochineniia*, IV, ch. v. 195. Ypsilantis had lost his right arm in the battle at Dresden (1813) during the Napoleonic wars, and this was the reason why Pushkin called him "the one-armed Prince" (*bezruki kniaz*). *Sochineniia*, IV, 552; cf. George Finlay, *A History of Greece*, ed. H.F. Tozer (Oxford, 1877), VI, 110.

War! The revolt is finally under way;
 The banners of warlike honor are unfurled!
 Blood I behold; I see the feast of vengeance;
 The fatal bullets whistle about my head!
 And how many strong impressions
 Have touched my thirsty soul! ¹⁵

On February 21 (March 6, n.s.), 1821, Ypsilantis and his army crossed the Pruth river and raised the banner of revolt in Moldavia. He entered Jassy and issued proclamations to his countrymen to rise against the Ottoman tyrants. ¹⁶ "In them," Pushkin wrote, "it is said that the Phoenix of Greece will arise from its own ashes, that the hour of Turkey's downfall has come, and that *a great power (Russia) approves of the great-souled feat!*" ¹⁷ Greeks, Rumanians, Serbians, Bulgarians, and Albanians, with flintlock guns, and sabers, and pistols, and every available weapon, were going to the army of Ypsilantis. "The rapture of men's mind," Pushkin wrote characteristically, "has reached the highest pitch; all thoughts are directed to one theme: the independence of the ancient fatherland. In Odessa, crowds of Greeks had been gathering together. All had been selling their property for nothing; they had been buying sabers, rifles, pistols. Everybody was talking about Leonidas, about Themistocles. All were going into the forces of the lucky Ypsilantis. The lives, the property of the Greeks are at his disposal. At the beginning he had ten million [piasters]. One Pauli gave six hundred piasters to be repaid upon the restoration of Greece. Ten thousand Greeks have signed up in his troops." ¹⁸

Pushkin was impressed by Ypsilantis' undertaking. Everything appeared indicative of an excellent start. "The first step," he remarked hopefully, "is excellent and brilliant. He has begun luckily. And, dead, or a conqueror, from now on he belongs to history – twenty-eight years old, an arm torn off, a magnanimous goal! An enviable lot." ¹⁹ He was convinced that "Greece will come out victorious and that the twenty-five million of Turks will leave Hellada (Greece) which is the legal heir of Homer and Themistocles." ²⁰

Pushkin's conviction of a successful outcome of the Greek revolt was

15. *Ibid.*, I, 137, 576.

16. Ypsilantis' proclamation was translated into Russian and sent to Emperor Alexander I. See *Russkii Arkhiv*, VI (1868), 293-297; cf. Protospaltis, *op. cit.*, 284-286.

17. Letter to Davydov, March 1821, *Sochineniia*, IX, 24-25; *Letters*, P. 80.

18. *Ibid.*, 25; *Letters*, p. 80.

19. *Ibid.*, 26; *Letters*, p. 81.

20. "The Kishinev Diary (1821)," *Sochineniia*, VII, 303.

further strengthened by the fact that Russian troops began tactical manoeuvres near the Moldavian border.²¹ The question, however, was what was Russia going to do. If the Russian army would "cross the Danube as allies of the Greeks and as enemies of their enemies,"²² Pushkin would then have the opportunity to engage himself in warlike action and fight for the *eleftheria*²³—the freedom of Greece. The fire was so near, and the cause so noble! And the reminiscences of antiquity added to the prestige of these Greek insurgents. The struggle for freedom he had talked so often with the conspirators in St. Petersburg and southern Russia, was suddenly a reality, here, on the fringes of the empire. He, like Byron two years latter, was caught up in the excitement of the Greek struggle. The cause of Greece stirred his imagination. Following the example of the European Philhellenes, Pushkin looked forward to leave Kishinev. "I arrived in Kishinev," he wrote to a friend, "not long ago, and I am abandoning blessed Bessarabia soon—there are countries more blessed. Idle peace is not the best state of life."²⁴ He planned to join the ranks in the army of Ypsilantis. He informed his friend, Gnedich, that he did not expect to see him soon, for "local circumstances smell for a long, long separation."²⁵

Pushkin's desire to participate in the Greek struggle resounded even in the closing lines of his poem *War*:

But why are the horrors of war-striking delaying?
Why has not yet the first battle begun to boil? ²⁶

Meanwhile, the government became suspicious of Pushkin's involvement in the Greek affair. The Emperor Alexander I, who was at the Congress of Laibach (Ljubljana) when the Greek revolt broke out in the Principalities, instructed Kapodistrias, Pushkin's immediate superior in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs where the poet still nominally belonged, to write a letter to General Inzov, Pushkin's chief in Kishinev, asking about the effects of the Greek revolt on the Russian officers, in general, and on Pushkin, in particular. "Some time ago," Kapodistrias wrote, "I sent young Pushkin to Your Excellency. I would like

21. Pushkin's poem *To General Pushchin* was written with this occasion. *Sochineniia*, I, 155, 581.

22. Letter to Davydov, March 1821, *Sochineniia*, IX, 26; *Letters*, p. 81.

23. The word *eleftheria*, which in Greek means freedom, was familiar to Pushkin. See his poem "Elleferiia," *Sochineniia*, I, 498, 624.

24. Letter to A.A. Delving, March 23, 1821, *Sochineniia*, IX, 28, 414; *Letters*, p. 83. Cf. *Sochineniia*, I, 576.

25. Letter to N.I. Gnedich, March 24, 1821, *Sochineniia*, IX, 30; *Letters*, p. 84.

26. *Sochineniia*, I, 138.

very much to know your opinion of this young man, especially in the present circumstances. Is he inclined to follow the dictates of his own heart which is fundamentally good, or those of the unwholesome and subversive imagination?"²⁷

The general, however, was careful not to implicate Pushkin into the Greek revolt. He replied to Kapodistrias that "despite of the troubled times we are going through now, Pushkin has not taken part in this affair,"²⁸ meaning, of course, the Greek uprising.

It is true that Pushkin did not participate in Ypsilantis' revolt, but the desire to do so resounded in the poem *To V.L. Davydov*, in which he seemed ready to go there, where

In the mountains and on the banks of Danube
Our one-armed Prince is rising in revolt.²⁹

In another poem he wrote later, he recalled with affection those unforgettable days of the Bessarabian spring of 1821:

Here, filling the air of the northern desert with the sound of my lyre
I wondered during the days when, on the banks of the Danube
The magnanimous Greek called for freedom.³⁰

But Pushkin's enthusiasm for Ypsilantis' undertaking and his eventual, readiness to participate in it, was expressed in his own writings. Nearly two months after the outbreak of the revolt in the Rumanian Principalities, he wrote a letter to Prince Ypsilantis and sent it with a young French officer who left Kishinev to enlist in the army of the Hetairists.³¹ There is no doubt to assume that the young poet might have asked Ypsilantis to volunteer in his army. We can only speculate, of course, for, unfortunately, the letter has been lost. Still hoping that Russia would enter the war on the side of the Greeks, he wrote to his friend Turgenev that "if there is hope for war, for Christ's sake, leave me in Bessarabia."³² Rumors that he had fled to join the army of the Hetairists spread among his friends in St. Petersburg.³³

27. Letter of Count John Kapodistrias to I.N. Inzov, April 13, 1821, from Laibach, *Russkaia Starina*, LIII (1887), 242.

28. Secret letter of General I.N. Inzov to Count John Kapodistrias, April 28, 1821, *Russkaia Starina*, LIII (1887), 243.

29. *Sochineniia*, I, 144-145, 578-579.

30. *To Ovidiu*, *Sochineniia*, I, 167.

31. "The Kishinev Diary (1821)," *Sochineniia*, VII, 305.

32. Letter to S.I. Turgenev, August 21, 1821, *Sochineniia*, IX, 34, 416; *Letters*, p. 88.

33. *Sochineniia*, VII, 431.

But the prospects of Russia entering the war diminished by the end of August. Alexander I, at the insistence of Metternich, did not wish to implicate Russia into the Greek affair. He was more interested in maintaining the bonds of the Holy Alliance rather than supporting a national movement which ran contrary to the legitimist principles of the alliance of European monarchs. In the meantime, Ypsilantis and the Hetairists, failing to gain support from the Rumanian population and the rest of the Balkan peoples, were defeated by the Turkish army in a matter of few months. The revolt terminated in complete disaster, and the Turks recaptured easily Wallachia and Moldavia. Pushkin might have joined the army of the Hetairists had the revolt been successful, and had Russia backed their undertaking. Yet, if the young poet did not participate in the Greek struggle, as did Lord Byron and the other European and American Philhellenes, his writings on the Greek revolt became the main channel of artistic expression of his Philhellenic sentiments.

III

Pushkin wrote a considerable number of letters, poems, notes, and stories inspired by or dedicated to the Greek revolt. With his pen he captured important phases of the Greek struggle in the Rumanian Principalities. He rejoiced at the victories of the Greeks and expressed sympathy for their sufferings. His broad humanity, perhaps the most appealing of all Pushkin's personal characteristics, was manifested in his compassion and love for the anguish of a people who fought to throw off the yoke of foreign tyranny. He approached the Greek struggle not merely as a sentimentalist, but also as a humanitarian.³⁴ In his poem *Faithful Greek Woman! Dont Cry! He Fell like a Hero* ("Grechanka vernaia! ne plach! on pal geroem"), written on the death of a Hetairist,³⁵ the poet consoled the Greek woman at the death of her husband, but at the same time, he praised the gallant Hetairist who died for "the great, sacred goal:"

34. In his compassionate letters to V. N. Zhukovsky, October 1824, and November 29, 1824, concerning the plight of an orphan Greek girl, the daughter of the Hetairist Andreas Sophianos, who died in the battle of Sculeni, Pushkin wrote: "Can't the orphan be given refuge? Move [Empress] Maria's heart, O poet! and we shall justify the ways of providence. I cannot calmly think all this through; perhaps I would anger you, if I poured out what I have on my heart." And elsewhere: "Will there be something for my little Greek girl? She is in a pitiful plight, and her future is even more pitiful. The daughter of a hero, Zhukovsky! Heroes are akin to poets through poetry." *Sochineniia*, IX, 111, 122; *Letters*, pp. 182, 190.

35. The poem was written probably on the death of Kantagoni (Kondogonis) [Athanasios Karpenisiotis?], who fell in the battle of Sculeni. Cf. "Kirjali," *Sochineniia*, V, 264-265.

Faithful Greek woman! Don't cry! He fell like a hero,
When the enemy's lance thrust deeply into his chest.
Don't cry! Didn't you show him before the first battle

The bloody path to honor?

Then, in the grievous presentment of the parting hour,
Your husband extended solemnly the hand,
And his daughter expressed her blessings in her tears.
But look! The black flag of freedom is unfurled!
Like Aristogeiton he twined the sword of myrtle,
And rushed into the field; and, falling had accomplished
The great, sacred goal!³⁶

Pushkin sang not only the sufferings of the Greek woman, but also her beauty. In the poem *To a Greek Girl* ("Grechanke"), he extolled the beauty of a Greek woman. The poem was written for and dedicated to Calypso Polychroni, a Greek refugee who came to Kishinev before the outbreak of the revolt in the Principalities. Calypso, it was rumored around Kishinev, had met Lord Byron in Greece and fell in love with the famous poet. Whether she knew him or not is not certain. Pushkin, however, was fascinated to have met this Greek girl. He wrote to his friend Vyazemsky: "If you come to Odessa this summer, won't you make a detour to Kishinev? I would acquaint you with the heroes of Sculeni and Secu, fellow-champions of Georgakis, and with a Greek girl whom Byron kissed."³⁷ Pushkin liked to listen to her singing the passionate, mournful oriental songs, accompanying herself on the guitar. Calypso was tall and slim, with a hawk-like nose,³⁸ but this did not seem to lessen the attraction of what Pushkin described in his poem as "the shining and visionary eyes," or her "immodest little foot." He went so far as to declare that she was "born to inflame the visionary minds of the poets," and asked her whether Byron did not draw her image when drawing "his immutable ideal in heavenly dreams." Pushkin felt as though he was communing with the famous poet. To him Byron and the Greek girl symbolized one and the same creature: Byron stood for the heroic and noble cause of freedom; Calypso embodied the ideal of beauty. To this Greek girl he dedicated a large number of drawings, notes, and the poem *To a Greek Girl*:³⁹

36. *Sochineniia*, I, 164, 581.

37. Letter to P.A. Vyazemsky, April 5, 1823, *Sochineniia*, IX, 64; *Letters*, p. 111.

38. See *Russkii Arkhiv*, IV (1866), 1187-1188, 1246; F.F. Vigel, *Zapiski* (Moscow, 1891), VI, 154.

39. *Sochineniia*, I, 191-193, 584. Pushkin wrote the poem "Inostranke" [*The Foreigner*],

You were born to inflame
The visionary minds of the poets;
To fascinate them; to make them anxious,
And gracious and gentle in their greetings,
With your oriental and unique voice,
With your shining and visionary eyes
And the immodest and little foot.
O, you were born for soft retreat,
For passion's ecstasy divine:
Then, tell me, when in his heavenly dreams
The poet of Leila would reveal
His own immutable ideal,
Was it not you he etched in steel?
Was it not in the distant land
Under the sacred sky of Greece
Where the inspired and brave poet
Have met or dreamed of you with passion
And kept deeply in his heart
Your unforgettable image?
It was perhaps the happy lyre
With which the poet allured you,
And in your proud bosom aroused
That involuntary passion.
When he embraced you.
But no, no, my dear! The jealous dream
I don't want to feed its flames;
For long was happiness strange to me;
The very name gives me new delight,
But secret sadness of despite
I fear; all that's dear, false may be.⁴⁰

Another phase of the revolt in the Principalities which captured Pushkin's attention were the military events, and particularly the battles of Sculeni and Secu. The first took place on June 29, 1821, shortly after the defeat of the Hetairists at Dragaşani where the corps of the "Sacred Battalion" perished

certainly addressed to Calypso. In the original there is the inscription "Gr.," which could only mean "Grechanke," that is, Greek girl. Cf. *Sochineniia*, I, 199, 585.

40. *Ibid.*

to the last and not a man survived Ypsilantis' lofty plan. The few hundred Hetairists who escaped the massacre, managed to retreat into the stronghold of Sculeni, on the banks of the Pruth river, near the Russian border. On the eve of the battle, Pushkin remarked, Prince George Kantakouzinos, who acted as lieutenant general of the army after Ypsilantis' flight to Austria, crossed the Pruth and asked permission of the Russian authorities to enter their territory. He told his fellow officers who accompanied him that it was hopeless to further oppose the Turks and asked them to remain on the Russian territory. The detachment was left without a leader, but the Hetairists George Kirjalis, Andreas Sophianos, [?] Kondogonis (Kantagoni),⁴¹ and others stood in no need whatever of a leader.⁴² The proud Hetairists disobeyed Kantakouzinos' orders, and called him coward, even traitor, for, while they would be saved in Russia, the soldiers who remained behind them would certainly be massacred by the advancing Turkish troops. The officers decided to defend the case to the end. They did not wish to abandon the battlefield without fighting, for, they believed, there was always a chance of victory for brave men.⁴³

The small detachment of seven hundred men—Greeks, Bulgarians, Serbians, Albanians, and every kind of riff-raff, Pushkin wrote, with no military art, retreated in sight of fifteen thousand Turkish cavalry.⁴⁴ On June 29, the Turkish army marched on Sculeni. The defenders inflicted heavy losses on the enemy and held their positions. The Russians, who watched the duel from across the bank of the Pruth, declared that the Greeks behaved like veteran troops.⁴⁵ But when the cavalry swept across the field, the defense line of the Hetairists broke. They counterattacked swiftly, but constantly falling before the fire of the Turks.

The battle of Sculeni, Pushkin remarked, did not seem to have been described by anybody in all it affecting reality and grandeur. It was, indeed, a fierce and bloody encounter. Men slashed each other with yataghans and sabres. Most of the Hetairists perished in the fighting and only few survived the massacre. Kirjalis was wounded and, by permission of the Russian em-

41. In his memoirs Liprandi remarked that the name Kondogonis became Kantagoni in Pushkin's writings, and so with Iordaki Olymbioti instead of Georgakis Olymbios (or Olymbiotis), and Saphianos instead of Sophianos. See *Russkii Arkhiv*, IV (1866), 1396-1397.

42. "Kirjali," *Sochineniia*, V, 263. Cf. *Russkii Arkhiv*, IV (1866), 1393-1408.

43. Finlay, *op. cit.*, VI, 135.

44. The actual number of the Turkish army was two thousand infantry and four thousand cavalry. Pushkin's estimation was inaccurate, owing probably to information he obtained from the participants in the battle.

45. Finlay, *op. cit.*, VI, 136.

peror, entered the Russian territory. Only Sophianos and Kondogonis remained on the Turkish bank of the Pruth to assure the safety passage of the remaining troops across the river. Sophianos was killed as soon as the Turks stormed upon him. Kondogonis, Pushkin wrote, "a very stout man, was wounded in the stomach by a lance. With one hand he raised his sword, with the other he seized the enemy's lance, thrust it deep into himself, and in this manner he was able to reach his murderer with his sword, when both fell together. All was over. The Turks remained victorious."⁴⁶ The defeat of the Hetairists at Sculeni heralded the end of the revolt in Moldavia.

The other military event, which Pushkin recorded in several of his writings, was the battle at the monastery of Secu. He planned to write on this event a poem entitled *The Poem of the Hetairists (Iordaki)* [*Georgakis Olymbios*] ("Poema o geteristakh [Iordaki]"), but he never finished it.⁴⁷ From the draft of the poem he left, however, it is easy to see what he intended to write.⁴⁸ The hero of the poem was Georgakis Olympios, or as Pushkin called him, Iordaki Olymbioti.⁴⁹ He did not choose Georgakis at random. Among the Hetairist leaders in the Principalities, he was perhaps the most noble figure, a man of courage, determination and wholly devoted to the cause of Greece's liberation. Georgakis participated in the Serbian revolt under Karageorge and later went to Rumania and Bessarabia. He became a member of the Hetairia, and at the outbreak of the revolt in the Principalities, Ypsilantis appointed him military commander in Wallachia.⁵⁰ Shortly after the battle of Dragaşani and Ypsilantis' flight to Austria, Georgakis gathered a number of determined soldiers; decided to go to Moldavia and from there to Russia. Once in Russia, he was certain of finding means to proceed to Greece where

46. "Kirjali," *Sochineniia*, V, 264-265. See also the *The Poems, Prose and Plays of Alexander Pushkin*, ed. Avrahm Yarmolinsky (New York, 1936), pp. 590-598. Cf. Finlay, *op. cit.*, VI, 135-136.

47. *Sochineniia*, III, 391. Cf. Ismailov, *op. cit.*, III, 339-348.

48. *Ibid.* The draft and the first stanza of the poem read: "Two Arnauts attempt to assassinate Alexander Ypsilantis. Georgakis kills them. In the morning he reveals to the Arnauts about Ypsilantis' flight. Georgakis takes over the command of the army and goes to the mountains, constantly pursued by the Turks. Secu.

In the plains, on the mountains and forests
The night sets on quietly;
And under the dark canopy of the skies
Ypsilantis is slumbering...

49. *Russkii Arkhiv*, IV (1866), 1396-1397.

50. "Note sur la révolution d'Ipsylanti," *Sochineniia*, VII, 187-188; Finlay, *op. cit.*, VI, 122; *Russkii Arkhiv*, IV (1866), 1397-1399.

he knew the war of independence could alone be fought.⁵¹ Georgakis was assisted by an equally brave captain, the Macedonian John Pharmakis, who had under his command about two hundred soldiers. The troops of the Hetairists marched north but were finally surrounded by the Turkish army in the monastery of Secu. The Turks offered terms of capitulation to Georgakis, but he rejected them. With a few *palikaria* (young fighters) he occupied the belfry of the monastery to defend it from the attacks of the enemy. The Turks, however, approached the entrance of the belfry, and while they tried to storm it, Georgakis set fire on the powder-chest. Georgakis and all but one of his soldiers perished in the flames.⁵² Pharmakis, who still defended the main building of the monastery, was soon overrun. On October 4, the monastery, with his last defenders, fell into the hands of the Turks. Pharmakis was captured and sent to Constantinople where he was tortured and beheaded.⁵³

This was, in short, the story which Pushkin wished to reproduce in his poem of the Hetairists, which he left unfinished. However, he took up the theme in some of his writings where he described certain episodes of the last heroic resistance of Georgakis and his followers.⁵⁴

The defeat of the Hetairists at Secu terminated the revolt in the Principalities. The Turkish army recaptured Wallachia and Moldavia and swept them clear of insurrectionary bands. The remnants of the revolt scattered all over Bessarabia. "They could be seen," Pushkin wrote, "in the coffee-houses, with long pipes in their mouths, sipping ground coffee out of small cups. Their figured jackets and red pointed slippers were already beginning to wear out, but their tufted skull-caps were still worn on the side of the head, and yataghans and pistols still protruded from their broad sashes. Nobody complained of them. It was impossible to imagine that these poor, peaceably disposed men, were the notorious klephts of Moldavia, the companions of the ferocious Kirjalis, and that he himself was among them..."⁵⁵

51. *Russkii Arkhiv*, IV (1866), 1399. About two hundred Greeks, who had taken refuge in Odessa to escape the massacre in Moldavia and Wallachia, obtained permission from the Russian government to return to Greece via Brody in Hungary. When the Austrian government refused their passage through Hungarian territory, they secured passports for Germany and France, with Marseilles as the port for embarkation for Greece. Yet only a handful of them survived the misery and fatigue of the journey to reach the final destination. See *The Slavonic and East European Review*, XIV, No. 41 (January, 1936), 646.

52. "Note sur la révolution d'Ipsylanti," *Sochineniia*, VII, 188. Cf. John Philemon, Δοκίμιον ἱστορικὸν περὶ τῆς Ἑλληνικῆς Ἐπανάστασεως [*Historical Essay concerning the Greek Revolution*] (Athens, 1859), II, 208.

53. *Ibid.*, 188; Finlay, *op. cit.*, 137.

54. *Sochineniia*, V, 263-269; VII, 187-188.

55. "Kirjali," *Sochineniia*, V, 265; Yarmolinsky, *op. cit.*, p. 593.

IV

The failure of the revolt in the Danubian Principalities and the initial setbacks of the revolution in the mainland of Greece, had adverse effects on the European Philhellenes. Many of them became disillusioned and began questioning whether the Greeks were capable of gaining their freedom. Pushkin, among them, who was witness to the defeat of the Hetairists in the Principalities, became skeptical and disappointed with the Greeks, and gradually lost faith in a victorious outcome of the war.

This period of Pushkin's disillusionment and skepticism coincided also with a change in his own political outlook. At the beginning of his poetical career he hailed the revolutions in Europe, but gradually began abandoning his liberal inclinations. Thus, from about 1823, a change was evident in his political poetry, a new note of skepticism was heard, skepticism both with respect to the successful outcome of any revolutionary movement and with respect to the genuine determination of the peoples to achieve freedom. His skepticism was, undoubtedly, motivated, in large measure, by the failure of the revolutions in Spain, Italy and the Principalities. The defeat of the revolutionaries failed to satisfy the hopes and aspirations of the liberals and romanticists. Pushkin himself was disappointed with the revolutions and the revolutionaries. He was certainly impressed by the sudden upsurge of the masses, yet the revolts of the twenties did exclude a change of attitude toward them. While studying the history of Russia and the works of European historians, he concluded that the development and growth of a nation rested upon the stability and continuity of constructive forces which he now wanted to see working in harmony with the democratic liberal-progressive ideas. Unwilling to confuse democracy with the masses, that is, with the equalizing tendency, he rejected revolution in so far as it often involves such a tendency. He rejected it because he recognized that equalizing could never lead to genuine freedom but only to anarchy, or else, to tyrannies from below. Freedom, used and abused, was bound to degenerate into its own parody. The question was: were the masses ready for freedom, and if so, were they prepared to sacrifice their personal interests and appetites? Pushkin's personal experience with the professional revolutionaries during his stay in Kishinev and Odessa, failed to convince him that the masses were capable of enjoying the "gifts of freedom." Nor he could expect much hope from the abortive revolts in Spain and Italy.⁵⁶ Disappointed with the revolt in the Principalities, Pushkin paid farewell to

56. Janko Lavrin, *Pushkin and Russian Literature* (New York, 1948), pp. 43-44, n. 1, 45-47.

his "liberalistic delirium." "A few days ago," he wrote to a friend, "I wrote an imitation of a fable of the moderate democrat Jesus Christ." The parable of that "moderate democrat" was the poem *The Sower of Freedom in the Wilderness* ("Izyde seiatel seiati semena svoia"), in which Pushkin wrote, among others:

Graze on in peace, you peoples, graze!
The call of honor will not awaken you.
Do flocks desire the gifts of freedom?
They should be slain and shorn;
Their heritage had been down through the ages
A yoke with rattles and a whip.⁵⁷

There was a certain cleavage between liberal theory and practice in Pushkin's poem. What could one believe in? Whom could one believe? Was it fair on the part of Pushkin to judge the revolutionary efforts of his age by the meager results achieved under the blight of the Holy Alliance, or by "new Leonidas" of the rear whom he had watched in the streets of Kishinev and Odessa? The truth is that he began to differentiate more and more between freedom and revolution. Politically, he vacillated from youthful radicalism and revolutionarism to the acceptance of monarchy in the late twenties, but toward the end of his life he resumed his bitter attacks on autocracy, and always remained a liberal, an enemy of despotism and a lover of freedom. But in the welter of defeat of the revolutions in the 1820's he became disgusted with everyone and everything. He was indignant with Russia for not supporting the Greeks, and with the Greeks for not deserving support. He was disappointed with the Hetairists who, in his words, were not even able to sustain the first attack of the "worthless Turkish musketry;" he was angry with the officers, whom he considered worse than the soldiers. "We have seen the new Leonidas in the streets of Odessa and Kishinev," he wrote. "We are personally acquainted with a number of them; we attest of their complete worthlessness; they have not the slightest idea of military art, no concept of honor, no enthusiasm; they will endure anything, even blows of a cane, with composure worthy of Themistocles... This is just why I become indignant when I see these poor wretches invested with the sacred office of defenders of liberty."⁵⁸

He expressed himself even more strongly in a letter he addressed to his friend, Prince Vyazemsky, two months after Byron's death:

57. *Sochineniia*, II, 16, 663-664.

58. Letter to Davydov, June 1823 or July 1824, *Sochineniia*, IX, 108-109; *Letters*, p. 167.

The idea of glorifying Byron's death is not in my power—Greece defiled it for me. About the fate of the Greeks one is permitted to reason, just as of the fate of my brothers the Negroes—one may wish both groups freedom from unendurable slavery. But it is unforgivable puerility that all enlightened European peoples should be raving about Greece. The Jesuits have talked our heads off about Themistocles and Pericles, and we have come to imagine that a nasty people made up of bandits and shopkeepers, are their legitimate descendants and heirs of their school-fame. You will say that I have changed my opinion. If you would come to us in Odessa to look at the fellow countrymen of Miltiades, you would agree with me. And take a look at what Byron himself wrote several years ago in the notes to *Childe Harold*—where he alludes to the opinion of Fauvel, the French consul in Smyrna, if I remember correctly.⁵⁹

But how could one explain Pushkin's disillusionment with the Greeks? Why did he become contemptuous of them? There were various reasons for his skeptical attitude toward the Greeks and the Greek revolt. His disillusionment with the Greeks was not only due to the Byronic melancholic mood, but also to the course which the Greek Revolution followed itself. The Greek war of independence was not a glorious march to victory from its outset. Before the final victory, it experienced a series of military, political and moral crises that shook the faith of the Philhellenes. The initial successes of the revolution were coupled with failures and defeats which, if they did not change the course of the war itself, certainly affected the Greek cause.

Pushkin's confidence in the Greek arms was further undermined by the military setbacks of the revolution and lack of unity among the Greeks themselves. The Greek war of independence was not a national crusade which all the Greeks participated in it. Even those Greeks who did take up the arms, fought not only the Turks, but also among themselves. There were sectional

59. Letter to Vyazemsky, June 24, 1824, *Sochineniia*, IX, 102-103; *Letters*, p. 161. Pushkin was doubly mistaken: Fauvel was the French consul in Athens, not in Smyrna. In his notes to *Childe Harold*, Canto II, Byron referred to Fauvel's unfavorable opinion about the Greeks, but he attributed the causes for the undesirable qualities of the Greeks to their long period of slavery under Ottoman rule. Byron wrote: "Mr. Fauvel, the French Council, who has passed thirty years principally at Athens, has frequently declared in my hearing that the Greeks do not deserve to be emancipated; reasoning on the ground of their 'national and individual depravity!' while he forgot that such depravity is to be attributed to causes which can only be removed by the measures he reprobates." See *The Works of Lord Byron*, ed. Ernest H. Coleridge and Rawland E. Prothero (13 vols.; London, 1898-1904), II, 190.

and geographical differences among the Peloponnesians, the Roumeliotes and the islanders; there were ideological differences between the cosmopolitan Phanariotes and the klepht chieftains, between the high prelates and the village clergy; there was class antagonism which separated wealthy shipowners from unemployed sailors and primates from poor peasants;⁶⁰ there were dissensions and disagreements among the Greeks themselves that brought them almost to the verge of their own catastrophe. Under such circumstances, war and civil strife, stratagems and intrigues, glory and plunder mingled together producing chaos and confusion, culminating in a civil war.

These adverse results of the war posed a dilemma not only for Pushkin but even for the most ardent supporters of the Greek cause. Lord Byron, perhaps the noblest of the Philhellenes, was so appalled by the dissensions and quarrels among the Greeks that his first wish, he said, was "to bring the Greeks together to agree among themselves."⁶¹

This chaotic situation, intensified by civil strife and dissensions in the Greek camp, disillusioned many Philhellenes who began to question whether Greece would ever be capable of achieving independence. Byron himself wrote emphatically to Mavrocordatos:

I am very uneasy at hearing that the dissensions of Greece still continue, and at a moment when she might triumph over everything in general, as she has already triumphed in part. Greece is, at present, placed between three measures: either to reconquer her liberty, to become a dependence of the sovereigns of Europe, or to return to a Turkish province. She had the choice only of these three alternatives. Civil war is but a road which leads to the two latter. If she is desirous of the fate of Wallachia, she may obtain it to-morrow; if of that of Italy, the day after; but if she wishes to become truly Greece free and independent, she must resolve to-day, or she would never again have the opportunity.⁶²

The question of unity of the revolutionary forces was undoubtedly of vital importance if the revolution was to survive the vicissitudes of internal strife. It was dissension, among other reasons, that brought the tragic end of the revolt in Wallachia and Moldavia. It was disagreements and intrigues that menaced the very existence of the revolution in the Peloponnesus before the still mighty Ottoman Empire.

60. L.S. Stavrianos, *The Balkans since 1453* (New York, 1959), p. 284.

61. Byron to Signor[Demetrios] Parruca, March 11, 1824, *Works of Byron*, XIII, 350 n. 1.

62. Letter to Davydov, June 1823 or July 1824, *Sochineniia*, IX, 108; *Letters*, p. 166.

Yet the pattern of Greek politics of this period was too complicated for the Philhellenes to comprehend it. Certainly, there were dissensions and disagreements, but they were not more vicious than human weakness gives rise to in a period of upheavals in nation's history for its rebirth. Pushkin, like Byron and many Philhellenes, did not realize that disagreements, dissensions and quarrels were endemic to Greek character and passion. Pushkin still watched the development of events with romantic idealism. Seeking to interpret the Greek resurgence in terms of classical Greece, Pushkin considered the modern Greeks not equal to their ancestors. A dreamer of the past glory of Greece, he did not quite understand the importance of Greece's decisive effort to free herself from foreign rule. He did not sense the great historical moment of a people striving, amidst overwhelming odds, for its regeneration. Pushkin, like many Philhellenes, did not realize that the tune and conditions of 1821 were quite different from those of the classical Greece. The diplomatic and political atmosphere of the time made it difficult for the Greeks to live up to the expectations of the Philhellenes and Pushkin as well. He remained skeptical, yet he never lost faith that Greece would, at the end of the contest, emerge victorious over her oriental rulers.

Pushkin's disillusionment and skepticism with the Greeks, however, cannot, in any way, be considered a repudiation of the national cause of Greece. His contempt with the "compatriots of Miltiades and Themistocles," did not actually reflect his attitude toward all the Greeks and the Greek Revolution as a whole. Pushkin wrote primarily on the revolt in the Rumanian Principalities and most of his views concerned that particular event. The Greek Revolution and the main battles for the liberation of Greece took place in Peloponnesus and Continental Greece, the native land of the Greeks. He was discontented with those Greeks he had met in Odessa and Kishinev, people who, in his words, were "self-centered, incomprehending, light-minded, ignorant, and stubborn." When some of his letters and bitter remarks about the Greeks reached his friends in St. Petersburg and Moscow, they, being liberals and sympathetic to the Greek cause, considered themselves offended by Pushkin's comments. He was, in turn, infuriated to find out that his friends accused him of taking an inimical attitude toward Greece. Defending himself against their charges, he promptly replied that he was not whatsoever an enemy of the Greek cause. "With astonishment," he wrote, "I hear that you consider me an enemy of the liberation of Greece and an advocate of Turkish slavery. Apparently my words have been strangely misinterpreted to you. But whatever you may have been told, you ought not to have believed that my heart would ever feel ill-will for the noble efforts of a people in the process of being reborn...

Among the Europeans the Greeks have many more harmful advocates than reasonable friends. Nothing has yet been so much *of a people* as the Greek affair."⁶³

In another letter he raised his voice and wrote characteristically: "Je ne suis ni un barbare ni un apôtre de l'Alcoran; la cause de la Grèce m'intéresse vivement."⁶⁴

Pushkin's eager interest for the cause of Greece, for those who fought to achieve freedom so precious to him, remained unaltered. When liberty came to "the lands of the heroes and gods," and Greece's independence was finally recognized, he hailed the event enthusiastically. What brought about a successful end to the war of Greek independence were two important historical events: the battle of Navarino and the Russo-Turkish war of 1828-1829. The battle of Navarino was a timely victory in the diplomatic struggle of the 1820's. "It was fought," in the words of a British historian, "for a cause in which many of the peoples of the Allied countries believed – inspired by Byron, Schiller, Pushkin, and Victor Hugo – but their governments did not."⁶⁵ The Russo-Turkish war, on the other hand, ended with the conclusion of the Treaty of Adrianople which, according to its provisions, compelled the sultan to recognize the frontiers of the Greek state, established by the Great Powers, and acknowledged its independence.

Pushkin participated in the Russo-Turkish war in the Caucasus front. The Russian army, under the able command of General Dibitch, marched into the Balkans and forced the sultan to sue for peace at Adrianople. In the Caucasus, the Turkish army was overwhelmingly defeated in the city of Arzum (the Byzantine Theodosopolis). These victories of the Russian army prompted Pushkin to write the poem *Once again We Are Crowned with Glory* ("Opiat uvenchany my slavoï"), in which he considered the peace of Adrianople and the defeat of the Turks in Arzum two important events that decided the future of the Ottoman Empire in the Balkan peninsula, in general, and the fate of Greece, in particular.⁶⁶ For eight years, he wrote later, the thoughts of the whole enlightened world were focusing on the Greek struggle. But the cause

63. *Ibid.*, 107-108; *Letters*, p. 166.

64. *Ibid.*, 107-108; *Letters*, p. 166.

65. C.M. Woodhouse, *The Battle of Navarino* (London, 1965), p. 180.

66. *Sochineniia*, II, 583, 769. The first stanza of the poem read:

Once more we are crowned with glory;
Once more the conceited enemy was defeated.
This was decided in the bloody battle of Arzum
And proclaimed in the peace of Adrianople.

of Greece, Pushkin believed, was finally decided at the peace of Adrianople. Russia's apportionment in the recognition of Greece's independence was decisive. "Greece was reborn," he wrote. "The mighty help of the North [Russia], gave back her independence and originality."⁶⁷

The recognition of Greece's independence inspired Pushkin to write the poem *Arise, o Greece, Arise!* ("Vosstan, o Gretsia, vosstan"),⁶⁸ dedicated to the "youthful liberty" which returned to the "land of the heroes and gods." The poem had no title but only three asterisks, perhaps because the title would have been too revolutionary and the censorship of Nicholas I would have banned it from publication. It was written in the tone and style of Rhigas' war song Δεύτε παῖδες τῶν Ἑλλήνων ("Sons of Greece, Arise!"), which N.I. Gnedich had translated into Russian.⁶⁹ Here is the poem in free translation:

Arise, o Greece, Arise!
 Not in vain you strained all your forces,
 Not in vain had been violently shaken
 Olympus, Pindus, and Thermopylae.

 Under the peaks of their ancient sky
 The youthful liberty appeared,
 And on the grave of Pericles;
 And the sacred marbles of Athens.

 Land of the heroes and gods
 Break forever the chains of slavery
 While singing the inspired songs
 Of Tyrtaeus, Byron, and Rhigas! ⁷⁰

67. "A.N. Muraviev's Book *Journey to the Holy Lands*," *Sochineniia*, VI, 376, 568. Finlay, *op. cit.*, VII, 53, agreed that the peace of Adrianople was "a severe rebuke to the irresolute policy of the British cabinet, and both France and England felt humiliated by the subordinate position in which Russia had placed them with reference to the final settlement of the Greek question. The sultan became obsequious to Russia, and Greece extremely grateful."

68. *Sochineniia*, II, 584. The poem was written on the back sheet of the poem "Once again We Are Crowned with Glory." Some critics believe that the two poems form one unity; their separate theme, and construction, however, exclude any similarity. See *Sochineniia*, II, 769-770.

69. N.I. Gnedich, a noted poet and translator of Homer's *The Iliad* into Russian, published in 1825 the *Folk Songs of the Modern Greeks* ("Prostonarodnye pesni nyneshnykh grekov"), with a preface, notes and the originals. Pushkin commented on Gnedich's translation: "Your Greek songs are charming and are a *tour de force*." See Letter to Gnedich, February 1825, *Sochineniia*, IX, 137, 442; *Letters*, p. 204. Cf. Byron's translation into English of Rhigas' war song in *Works of Byron*, III, 20-21.

70. *Sochineniia*, II, 584.

The poem was Pushkin's last tribute to Greece; it was a farewell song, an epilogue to the successful end of the Greek struggle; it was a hymn to Greece that "magnificent, classical, poetic Greece; Greece, where everything breathes of mythology and heroism." ⁷¹

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71. Letter to L.S. Pushkin, September 4, 1822, *Sochineniia*, IX, 47; *Letters*, p. 99.