

THE GREEK REVOLUTION:

ALI PASHA'S LAST GAMBLE

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The Greek revolution broke out because the Ottomans mistakenly decided to humble the one man — Ali Pasha, known as the Lion of Yanina — who could have prevented it. To the Greeks he had appeared for over thirty years as an unassailable colossus. It was not merely a matter of political control over the greater portion of their homeland, of overwhelming military force, or of the enormous riches at his disposal. Even more important was his lifelong experience in governing Greeks, Albanians and Turks, which had given him a penetrating insight into the hopes and aspirations of every class of his subjects, a precise knowledge of their strengths and weaknesses, and an uncanny ability to derive maximum advantage from pitting one against the other whenever he felt his position threatened. His destruction of seemingly impregnable Souli in 1803 and his ruthless suppression of the rebellion of 1808 were events indelibly marked in the memory of most Greeks. Not one of the numerous leaders in the Greek war of independence who later published memoirs has argued that an uprising could have been successful if Ali Pasha had been opposed to it. Trikoupes, one of the first to attempt a scholarly history of the revolution, wrote:

If, at this time, the Porte had deigned to employ the services of Ali Pasha, the Greek revolution would have been smothered in its infancy, because Ali had such fame, such influence, such power, such personal knowledge of both men and places, his name spread such terror over the whole of Greece, that all would have submitted, had he but moved.¹

But the Porte failed to call on Ali Pasha. Quite the contrary, Sultan Mahmud II, an arrogant and stubborn ruler, whose consuming ambition

1. Spyridon Trikoupes, *Ἱστορία τῆς Ἑλληνικῆς Ἐπανάστασεως* [*History of the Greek Revolution*] 2d ed. (London, 1860), vol. I, 167. Ottoman historians are of the same opinion: see *Tarih-i Cevdet* [*Cevdet's History*] (Istanbul, 1309 A. H.), vol. XII, 35.

was to reassert the absolute power of the sultanate, saw fit to challenge the redoubtable Albanian vizier. His decision was to have catastrophic consequences for the empire. It led ultimately to a disastrous foreign war, during which the sound of Russian cannon was to reverberate in Constantinople itself, and it saw a subject people gain full independence, an example for others to try and emulate.²

If Ali Pasha thwarted the national aims of the Greeks, it is no less true that he was seen by Sultan Mahmud as the greatest obstacle to his resumption of direct rule over the Balkan provinces. In this irony lay the crux of the issue. Scholars have been lavish with their praise for Mahmud's manifold reforms, among which the elimination of the provincial notables — the notorious *ayans* and *derebeys* — ranks as high as that of the destruction of the Janissaries in 1826. But it is usually overlooked that, in the case of Ali Pasha of Yannina, precipitate zeal for reform cost the empire dearly. In 1819-1820 Sultan Mahmud clearly misread the priorities. Falling prey to political speculation and something less than disinterested advice from his all-powerful court favorite Halet Efendi,³ the sultan gave free rein to his autocratic inclinations. By his obstinacy he would convert Ali Pasha from an antagonist into a formidable champion of the Greek cause.

Ali Pasha's true role in the outbreak and early course of the Greek revolution has never been fully explored. To be sure, historians have drawn attention to those actions and policies of his which benefited the Greeks, but, in general, these are considered to have been of peripheral importance. Thus Aravantinos, in what still remains the standard biography of the pasha,⁴ speaks of his "unintentional" contributions to the Greek cause. It is conceded by this writer, for example, that most of the military and political leaders among the Greeks in the war of indepen-

2. On the capital importance of modern Greek nationalism in this regard, see Elie Kedourie's remarks in *Nationalism in Asia and Africa* (New York, 1970), 37-48.

The repercussions of the Greek revolution were felt even in the Arab provinces of the Ottoman empire: see Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age: 1798-1939* (London, 1962), 61-62.

3. There is also still no full-length study on this controversial figure who was Sultan Mahmud's principal advisor at this time. For a typically hostile Ottoman interpretation of Halet's ascendancy over the Sultan, see Abdurrahman Şeref, *Tarih Musahabeleri [Historical Conversations]* (Istanbul, 1339 A. H.), 27-38. A summary of Halet's career in English and a short bibliography are available in E. Kuran, "Halet Efendi," *Encyclopaedia of Islam, New Edition*, III, 90-91.

4. Spyridon P. Aravantinos, *Ἱστορία Ἀλῆ Πασᾶ τοῦ Τεπελενλῆ [History of Ali Pasha of Tepelen]* (Athens, 1895).

dence were trained in the pasha's service. Aravantinos also stresses the value of the diversion created by Ali Pasha's spirited resistance to the Ottomans in Yannina for nearly two years which enabled the Greeks in the Peloponnese to rise successfully. But these views, which are shared by most historians of the Greek revolution, tend to ignore the causal connection between events in northern Greece and those in the Peloponnese. The reasons for this oversight should not be attributed solely to the excessively nationalist approach of most Greek historians and the philhellenism of western writers but also to some serious factual errors in the contemporary accounts of the early chronology of the revolution. It is the intention of this paper to show that the general revolt of the Greeks in the spring of 1821 was directly and intimately tied to what happened in Epirus during the previous winter.

Although he had on occasion flirted with the idea, Ali Pasha had never seriously set out to establish an independent Greco-Albanian kingdom. He was content with a *de facto* state (under the nominal sovereignty of the sultan), which he considered a personal adjunct to be exploited for his own and his family's benefit. Still less did he care about the freedom of the Greeks. But when he realized in late 1819 and early 1820 that it was Ottoman policy to reduce him at all costs, he immediately appealed to the Greeks for support. He had been informed of the existence of the Philike Hetaireia by at least 1818 and he now thought to turn it to his own use. Besides, by posing as the friend of the Greeks he he could hope to gain the assistance of Russia.

Of course, from the pasha's point of view, reliance on Russia and the Greeks would come only as a last resort. The consequences of Russian military intervention or of general revolution were far too unpredictable for his liking. Inevitably, his own position as ruler of Greece was sure to be challenged in the process. For these reasons he much preferred a compromise peace with the Porte arranged by either Austria or Britain, to both of which powers he had also turned by this juncture.⁵ Nor did he neglect to approach the Porte directly and inform them of the Hetaireia's existence and the Greek plan for revolution.⁶ But all these efforts to

5. On Ali Pasha's proposals to the Austrians, see "Translation of a Report from Consul [Zannini] at Patras," 29 April 1820, filed as insert in Lützwow to Metternich, 3 June 1820, Türkei VI, 8 Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv (hereafter: HHS), Vienna. For a brief account of his negotiations with the British, see John W. Baggally, *Ali Pasha and Great Britain* (Oxford, 1938), 76-81.

6. Meyer to Maitland, 19 May 1820, Colonial Office (hereafter: CO) 136/435, Public Record Office (hereafter: PRO), London. For the precise terms Ali Pasha pro-

placate the sultan proved fruitless, and Ali — a man who had but one passion, power — would rather turn to Russia and the Greeks in one last desperate gamble, bringing the whole imperial edifice tumbling down, than submit to his enemies in Constantinople.

Throughout February and March of 1820, Ali Pasha was in continual communication with the Russian consulate in Patras and, in April, Ioannes Paparregopoulos, the "dragoman" (translator) of the consulate, who was well known to Ali as an Hetairist, met him in Prevesa. Their relationship, crucial to a correct understanding of the circumstances leading to the outbreak of the Greek revolution, has never been adequately studied; yet it would hardly be an exaggeration to state that it was in the secret councils of these two men that the nature and timing of the revolution of 1821 was first shaped. At the Prevesa meeting, Ali Pasha informed Paparregopoulos that, although he was still trying to reach a compromise agreement with the Porte through the lavish use of bribes, he was, nevertheless, determined to defend himself if the Ottomans persisted in their efforts to reduce him. In this connection, he would be willing to raise his subjects in revolt against the sultan and assist Russia in conquering the whole of European Turkey. In return, Russia was to recognize him as an autonomous ruler owing allegiance to the tsar. He requested that Paparregopoulos go immediately to St. Petersburg to lay these proposals before the Russians.⁷

Paparregopoulos accepted and — speaking more as a member of the Philike Hetaireia than as a Russian envoy — held out high hopes for the success of his mission. He particularly urged the pasha to encourage the *kapitanioi* of the *armatoloi* and prominent Greek religious leaders and primates to come to his defense, arguing that if Ali could keep the Ottomans at bay for any length of time with the assistance of Greek forces, not only would the Russians almost certainly become involved in the con-

posed to the Porte, see Docs. 21034L, 21056, 21026, Hatt-i Hümayun Tasnifi [Hatt-i Hümayun Collection] (hereafter: HHT), Başbakanlık Arşivi [Prime Minister's Archives] (hereafter: BBA), Istanbul. A similar document has been published in modern Turkish in the addendum to Ali Kemali Aksüt's translation of G. Remerand's, *Ali de Tébelen*, entitled *Tepedelenli Ali Paşa* (Istanbul, 1939), 293-295.

7. See G. L. Arsh, *Albaniia i Epir o Kontse XVIII - nachale XIXo*. [Albania and Epirus at the End of the Eighteenth and the Beginning of the Nineteenth Centuries] (Moscow, 1963), 315-316; and the "Paparregopoulos Memorandum" in Ioannes Philemon, *Δοκίμιον ιστορικόν περί τῆς Ἑλληνικῆς Ἐπαναστάσεως* [Historical Treatise on the Greek Revolution] (Athens, 1859), II, 413-415.

flict but, in any event, the mass of Greeks throughout the empire would rise in revolt.⁸

It was clear to both men that, because of the inevitable delay resulting from the long journey, the political and military preparations, and the coming of winter, the earliest they could hope for a Russian declaration of war and a general uprising of the Greeks would be the following spring. That Paparregopoulos sought to enhance the chances of a successful Greek revolution by having Ali Pasha create a diversion against the Ottomans is evident, and has been discussed at great length by most historians.⁹ What is rarely noted, however, is that from the pasha's vantage point it was the Greek revolution that would provide the diversion. At this time, since Ali was already at odds with the sultan, he needed the Greeks more than they needed him.

Before leaving for Russia, Paparregopoulos spent about a month attempting to convince the various *kapitanioi* of the *armatoloi* to stand by Ali Pasha in the conflict that was about to ensue with the Ottomans.¹⁰ His motives are clear. Although he himself thought that a war between Ali Pasha and the Porte was a perfect opportunity for the Greeks to rise he could not at this early stage singlehandedly assume the awesome responsibility of encouraging general revolution. That is why he would go to Russia to seek the advice of the mysterious *Arche* (supreme authority) of the Philike Hetaireia. In the meantime, however, the *armatoloi* of Rumely, trained in the use of arms and able to give a good account of themselves, should not hesitate to throw in their lot immediately and unreservedly with the pasha. With the *armatoloi* supporting Ali against the Ottomans, the artful Albanian would be unlikely to reach an accommodation with the sultan, and — if approval of his plans by Russia and the *arche* was forthcoming — when the general revolution broke out the following spring, the Greeks were sure to gain from having so powerful an ally already committed to battle on their side.

The idea of cooperating with Ali Pasha was not new to the Greeks.

8. "Paparregopoulos Memorandum," 413-415. See Salso Kanellos Delegiannes, *Ἀπομνημονεύματα* [Memoirs], XVI, 96-98 in series entitled *Ἀπομνημονεύματα τῶν Ἀγωνιστῶν τοῦ '21* [Memoirs of the Fighters of '21], ed. Emmanuel G. Protopsaltes, 20 vols. (Athens, 1956-1959).

9. See, for example, Ioannes Philemon's introductory remarks in Germanos of Old Patras, *Ἀπομνημονεύματα* [Memoirs], in [Memoirs of the Fighters of '21], *op. cit.*, III, 23.

10. See Paparregopoulos' own letter (no date, but obviously written in late 1820) in Philemon, *Δοκίμιον Ἐπαναστάσεως*, I, 229.

There had always been some in the top councils of the Hetaireia who had been thinking of converting the pasha to Christianity and starting the revolution under his direction.¹¹ Moreover, his policy of excluding Turks from all positions of authority and relying exclusively on Greeks and Albanians had led many of his own Greek advisors and military commanders to believe that he might be won over to the idea of becoming the monarch of an independent Greco-Albanian state. As for Ali Pasha, he now took energetic measures to render himself popular with the Greeks. Taxes were reduced, debts cancelled, and no more corvées required of Christian villagers. Veli Pasha, Ali's second son, informed Odysseus Androutsos, the most renowned *kapitanios* in Rumely, that "he would throw off his turban and put on a Russian hat," and then sent him on a secret mission to the leading Hetairists in the Peloponnese to convince them that his father had truly committed himself to the cause of Greek independence.¹² As a further inducement to the Greeks to join forces with him, an extraordinary series of public assemblies was held between April and June 1820, attended by all the most important *kapitanioi*, primates, and Orthodox prelates of Rumely. Addressing them as a monarch would a parliament rather than as a despot his subjects, Ali spoke of liberty for Greece and of "restoring the Empire of the Romans." Even more imaginative was his announced intention of granting a "constitution" to all his subjects, and one of his agents was sent to Corfu to procure just such a document.¹³

It was at this time that the pasha's advisors and confidants — Alexios Noutsos, Manthos Oikonomou, Ioannes Logothetes, Tsolakoglou, Androutsos (as well as the Bishop Ignatios from Pisa in Italy) — urged him to convert to Christianity, arguing that this would bind the Greeks more solidly to his cause. In May, the British consul in Epirus reported that "if all measures of a more regular nature should fail, the baptism of a great personage in this once Christian country is talked of ... Mahomet

11. See D. Ainian, *Άπαντα [The Collected Works]*, ed. G. Valetas (Athens, 1962), 16; Ioannes Philemon, *Δοκίμιον ιστορικόν περί της Φιλικής Ἑταιρείας [Historical Treatise on the Philike Hetaireia]* (Nauplion, 1834), 206-207.

12. For Veli Pasha's negotiations with the Hetairists, see: Thomas Gordon, *History of the Greek Revolution*, 2d ed. (Edinburgh, 1844), I, 180, and Takes Kandeloros, "'Ανδρουτσος Ὀδυσσεύς," *Μεγάλη Ἑλληνική Ἐγκυκλοπαίδεια [Great Greek Encyclopedia]*, IV, 666.

13. "Translation of a Report of Consul [Zannini] in Patras," 20 May 1820, filed as insert in Lützwow to Metternich, 10 July 1820, Türkei VI, 8, HHS; Arsh, *Albania*, 321-333.

never had to deal perhaps with a set of greater free-thinkers."¹⁴ Letters that Ali addressed to the Greeks requesting recruits for his armies were addressed "My brother Christians" and concluded: "Consider me as one of your own."¹⁵

In fact, beginning in April, there were rumors throughout the European portions of the empire that the Greeks were about to rise en masse behind Ali, who was to regain for them "the empire of Constantine." From Epirus came news that Ali's activities pointed to *revolutionary* movements in his empire: "Here [he is] doing everything to court the Greeks, and to engage them in a common cause. The emancipation of these Provinces by a declaration of their independence is discussed with much freedom and earnestness."¹⁶

Ali's dealing with the Greeks were, quite naturally, considered as proof of fundamental disloyalty at the Porte; and at the end of August, after a half-year of extensive military preparations, Ottoman land and sea forces converged on Epirus. The Greek *kapitanioi* were ready at this time to fight under Ali (as they had been advised to do by Papparregopoulos) in order to prepare the way for general revolution. It was only because of the last minute wavering of the Peloponnesian Hetairists — Vlassopoulos, the Russian consul at Patras, the Bishop Germanos, the primate Andreas Lontos, and others — who sent messengers to Rumely warning them of Ali's well-known duplicity, that the *kapitanioi* were dissuaded from this course of action.¹⁷ Ironically, while the *kapitanioi* refused, in the end, to support Ali because they felt the pasha had not wholeheartedly espoused the Greek cause, the Muslim Albanians, who had always formed the backbone of his army, were quick to betray him for having gone too far in that direction to suit their own interests. Deserted by the bulk of his army, from the beginning of September Ali lay besieged with only 3,000 men in his Yannina fortress.¹⁸ For the moment, at least, Papparregopoulos' advice remained unheeded.

14. Meyer to Hankey, 22 May 1820, CO 136/425, PRO.

15. A copy of this letter together with a French translation is preserved in H. Pouqueville to Pasquier, 9 July 1820, Correspondance Consulaire, Patras III, Archives des Affaires Étrangères (hereafter: AE), Paris.

16. Lützow to Metternich, 3 June 1820, Türkei VI, 8, HHS; Meyer to Hankey, 22 May 1820, CO 136/425, PRO.

17. Germanos, *Απομνημονεύματα*, 79.

18. The reliable contemporary *Ιστορία τῆς πολιορκίας τῶν Ἰωαννίνων* [*History of the Siege of Yannina*], ed. A. N. Papakostas (reprint from *Νέος Κουβαράς* II [1962]), 29, estimates the number of the pasha's troops in Yannina at 3000. But Ottoman military reports put it at only 1500: Yanya mutasarrifi sabık Tepedelenli Ali Paşa

When Paparregopoulos was returning from Russia after having informed the Hetairists there of Ali's proposals, he was more than a little shocked at the turn of events. He wrote to Ypsilantes from Constantinople in September: "I cannot understand how this God-granted opportunity has eluded us," and complained that had the Greeks "adhered to the plan I gave them [Ali] would not have fallen so quickly."¹⁹ Gregorios Dikaïos (Papaphlessas), another of the leading figures of the Hetaireia, similarly advised Ypsilantes that, because of the defection of the *kapitanioi* to the Ottomans "now, another plan is needed."²⁰

But Ali's position was not as desperate as it seemed to the Hetairists. The superior artillery of his formidable fortress complex was easily holding off his enemies,²¹ and with the coming of winter, the Ottoman armies began melting away until by the end of the year there were less than 10,000 men surrounding Yannina. Of the seven Ottoman commanders besieging Ali, five were corrupted by his gold and entered into secret agreement with him. As a consequence of this breakdown in Ottoman discipline, Epirus, which was said to be in an "exhausted state"²² as early as mid-October because of the unbridled rapacity of the Ottoman soldiery, was subjected to even greater depredations in the following months. Greek eyewitnesses spoke of "troops raiding cities, townships, and villages without the slightest restraint and stealing the last morsel of food from the mouths of the poor Greek" until "all the lands of Rumely and specially Yannina, Arta, and all those places [near there] were utterly devastated." The French consult at Corfu was appalled at the uncontrolled killing and plundering of the Ottoman, whom he likened to a "group of vampires." Meyer, the British consul at Prevesa, reported in mid-December that the "situation had become intolerable to the people" who were "ready to rise en masse the moment they [saw] a favorable occasion."²³

maddesine dair... [Regarding the Affair of the former Governor of Yannina, *Tepedelenli Ali Pasha*...] *Ayniyat Defterleri*, No. 610, 3-4, 22, BBA.

19. Letters of Paparregopoulos to Ypsilantes dated 10 September 1820 and [September] 1820, in Philemon, *Δοκίμιον Ἐπαναστάσεως*, I, 217, 229.

20. Dikaïos to Ypsilantes, 1 September 1820, in *ibid.*, 216.

21. Ali Pasha is referred to as *topcu* (gunner) in the Ottoman sources; see *Tarih-i Cevdet* XII, 35.

22. Meyer to Castlereagh, 15 October 1820, Foreign Office (hereafter: FO), 78/96, PRO.

23. For the quotations, see "Ἱστορικά ἐπανορθώματα" ["Historical Corrections"], ed. G. Kremos, in *Πατριάρχης VII* (1883), 975; *Στρατηγῶν Μακρυγιάννη Ἀπομνημονεύματα* [*Memoirs of General Makrygiannes*], ed. G. Vlachogiannes, 2d ed. (Athens, 1947),

Had the Ottomans purposely set out to raise allies for Ali, they could scarcely have acted as efficaciously. The Russian ambassador at the Porte described the Greeks as longing to be under Ali Pasha's rule once again,²⁴ and, of course, Ali himself had never given up his hopes for a revolution in the spring. In an extraordinarily revealing letter to his Greek brother-in-law, the *kapitanios* Georgios Kitzos, written on 28/9 August 1820, he had counseled courage and perseverance, "for by March the earth will bring forth new flowers."²⁵ Along these same lines, the French consul at Patras, who passed through Epirus in December, reported that "for a long time" Ali had been announcing "the great event," exhorting his men to remain loyal "until the coming March," at which time he was sure to receive the aid of a "Great Power." In the same month, Meyer wrote of "a plot of an extensive nature" that Ali had been preparing for some time, which was "now said to be nearly ripe for execution."²⁶

Ali's appeals were, of course, addressed primarily to the *kapitanioi* of the Greek contingents in the Ottoman army. In addition, however, to the detachments of *armatoloi* already in the mainland, there were also numerous *klephts* and mountain tribesmen such as the Souliotes who had crossed over from the Ionian islands to Epirus at Ottoman invitation. There had been over 3,000 of these fighting men in the islands, men who had been forced to flee from Ali's dominions as he had gradually extended his rule over Rumely. While in exile, they had served under the banner of whichever power held the islands, but the British had disbanded their regiments at the end of the Napoleonic wars. Unable any longer to make their living as soldiers, they were a destitute and bitter group which longed for some radical change in their political situation that would enable them to return to their homeland.²⁷ Kapodistrias, a native Corfiote serving as Russian foreign minister, who knew most of the exiled chieftains from visiting the island in 1819, was extremely concerned about their plight and suspected that the British on the islands and Ali Pasha

I, 116; Chantal to Pasquier, 21 November 1820, Correspondance Consulaire, Corfou VI, AE; Meyer to Maitland, 13 December 1820, FO 78/96.

24. Arsh, *Albania*, 326.

25. This remarkable letter was published in A. Phrantzes, *Ἐπιτομή τῆς ἱστορίας τῆς ἀναγεννήσεως τῆς Ἑλλάδος* [*Abridgement of the History of Regenerated Greece*] (Athens, 1839), I, 54-55.

26. H. Pouqueville to Foreign Minister, 24 March 1821, Correspondance Consulaire, Patras III, AE; Meyer to Maitland, 13 December 1820, FO 78/96, PRO.

27. "Zapiska, Grafa Ioanna Kapodistria o ego sluzhebnoi deiatel'nosti" ["Memorandum on the Public Service of John Kapodistrias"] *Sbornik Russkago istoricheskago obshchestva* [*Collection of the Russian Historical Society*] III (1868), 239-241.

on the mainland were acting in concert to destroy what we might call the "military" Greeks. When both Ali Pasha and the Ottomans had requested their assistance in the summer of 1820, it was Kapodistrias who had encouraged them to take advantage of this opportunity to regain their ancestral villages. In fact, though certainly no revolutionary himself, he was so emphatic on that point he let it be known to Ypsilantes, who had been chosen the leader of the Hetaireia, that he endorsed the right of the "military" Greeks — "those Greeks who bear arms" — to defend themselves against whatever foe attacked them, "as they have done for centuries."²⁸ But the sanctioning of even limited rebellion by the foreign minister of the world's leading Orthodox power — made known to the chieftains by his two brothers in Corfu — could not but have serious repercussions in the months ahead. On several occasions in the past, these heroic mountain warriors had formed the shock-troops of peasant rebellion and consequently they had a powerful hold over the minds of the vast majority of the Greek people. It was not realistic to assume that the people would remain uninvolved while the military Greeks did battle with the Ottomans.

Not surprisingly, the warlike and independent Souliotes, who like the other Greeks had been repeatedly mistreated by the Ottomans and who were especially close to the Kapodistrias brothers, were the first to rebel against the sultan (on 7/19 December) and ally themselves with Ali Pasha. They undoubtedly knew of the Hetaireia (as did everybody else by this time) but their purpose in revolting was most probably of a local nature: to regain the barren villages they had been forced to abandon seventeen years before. The Souliotes' love for their *patrida* was thus expressed by one of their chieftains:

Now, with the help of God, even if Sultan Mahmud with all the resources of his kingdom should march against us, we want for nothing... In truth...now that we hold [Souli] we feel as if we are immortal.²⁹

The news of the rising of the most famous and heroic among the Greeks could not fail but spread like wildfire through the land. Kasomoules, a contemporary memoirist, recalls that "the trumpet sounded from the north in the month of December and all Greeks, even in the most remote

28. *Ibid.*, 257.

29. *Ἱστορικὸν ἀρχεῖον Ἀλεξάνδρου Μαυροκορδάτου* [*Historical Archive of Alexander Maurokordatos*], ed. E. G. Protopsaltis, (Athens, 1965), vol. V, part I, 29-30 in series entitled *Μνημεῖα τῆς Ἑλληνικῆς Ἱστορίας* [*Monuments of Greek History*].

places, were inspired by its call." "If ever the cry of liberty is heard in Greece," wrote the French consul in Patras, "it will come from the mountains of Epirus! According to all indications the moment has arrived."³⁰ Soon there were other Greek fighting men from the Ottoman camp and neighboring mountain tribesmen joined with the Souliotes. In January even the Muslim Albanians, who had enjoyed a privileged position during Ali's rule, and resented Ottoman oppression as much as the Greeks, signed a formal pact with the Souliotes.

By early 1821 there were 2 - 3,000 mountaineers — ideal material for a guerilla movement — battling the Ottomans in Epirus and, by mid-January, the Ottoman army was said to be in a "critical situation."³¹ In the same month the *kapitanioi* of the *armatoloi* in Rumely — Androutsos, Tsongas, Varnakiotes, Stournares, Makres, Karaiskakes, Katsikogianes, and Panourgias — gathered together at Levkas in a seldom-noted meeting, that must, however, rival the more famous assembly of the primates and clergy of the Peloponnese at Vostitsa, and agreed to join in the uprising. Elias Mavromichales, the son of the bey of Mani, represented the Peloponnese at the Levkas meeting;³² and a short while later, Theodoros Kolokotronis and other *klepht* chieftains landed in the Peloponnese to prepare the peninsula for revolution.

All of these developments occurred largely independently of the guidance of both the "central" committee of the Philike Hetaireia in Constantinople and Ypsilantes in southern Russia. Both were so far removed from the scene of these activities and movements that they did little more than react to the intelligence reaching them. The local committees and scattered agents of the Philike Hetaireia, for instance, had no common plan and had been given no specific instructions other than to await the arrival of Ypsilantes in the Peloponnese at some undetermined time when the revolution was to begin. In fact, the astonishing progress of Greek arms in Epirus and the solidarity between the *kapitanioi* there and Ali

30. N. Kasomoules, *Ἐνθυμήματα στρατιωτικὰ τῆς Ἐπαναστάσεως τῶν Ἑλλήνων 1821-1833* [*Military Reminiscences of the Revolution of the Greeks 1821-1833*], ed. G. Vlachogiannes, (Athens, 1939), I, 124. H. Pouqueville to Foreign Minister, 5 January 1821, Correspondance Consulaire, Patras III, AE.

31. St. André to Foreign Minister, 13 January 1821, Correspondance Consulaire, Arta IV, AE.

32. On the meeting of the *kapitanioi* in Levkas, see Ioannes Zampelios, "Τὰ Λευκαδικὰ ἐπὶ τῆς Ἑλληνικῆς Ἐπαναστάσεως" ["The Events in Levkas during the Greek Revolution"], *Ἀρμονία* III (1902), 78-84. On Ali Pasha's instructions to Androutsos in Levkas, see 48908B, HHT, BBA.

Pasha seems to have taken the top Hetairists in the Ottoman capital and Russia by surprise. "There is no better way, or place, or time," wrote Sekeres to Ypsilantes, "for the accomplishment of our designs,"³³ and there is little doubt that events in Epirus played a decisive role in prompting Ypsilantes to move precipitately into the Danubian Principalities on 22/6 March.

Nor was there any direct connection between Ypsilantes' abortive invasion of the Principalities and the rising in the Peloponnese in the spring of 1821. Simply because the one preceded the other in time does not mean there was a cause-and-effect relationship between the two as is so often asserted. The news of Ypsilantes' venture did not reach Greece proper until some time later and cannot, therefore, be used as an explanation for what happened in the Peloponnese. This misinterpretation has served to obscure the importance of the winter rebellion in Epirus. But it is only by taking into consideration developments in northern Greece that the circumstances surrounding the revolution of 1821 can be clarified.

By March 1821 the Ottomans were belatedly making frantic efforts "to prevent the general spirit of revolution from spreading,"³⁴ but it was far too late. "The situation, brothers," wrote one Hetairist, "has gathered such momentum that it is impossible to stop it; it is true, it is certain... Ali in Yannina has raised four [flags with] crosses on his fortress. The trumpet sounds, come let us move."³⁵ On 11/23 March, Ali was informed by his agents that all was going according to plan: "The *Romioi* vow that they are inseparable from us in life and death...we await the *kapitanioi* and their men momentarily for the affair that has been communicated to you many times."³⁶ Makrygiannes, who visited the Russian consulate in Patras — the most important center of Hetairist activities — in late March, informs us that the Greek conspirators "wanted [Ali] to be victorious so he could liberate them."³⁷ Papaphlessas, still awaiting Ypsilantes' arrival in the Peloponnese, now warned the Hetairist leaders

33. I. A. Meletopoulos, ed. *Ἡ Φιλικὴ Ἐταιρεία: Ἀρχεῖον Σεκέρη* [*The Philike Hetaireia: The Sekeres Archive*] (Athens, 1967), 92.

34. Meyer to Castlereagh, 15 March 1821, FO 78/103, PRO; 38276, 38276B, 38276C, HHT, BBA.

35. *Ἀρχεῖα Λαζάρου καὶ Γεωργίου Κουντουριώτου: 1821-1832* [*Archives of Lazaros and George Kountouriotis: 1821-1832*], ed. A. Lignos, (Athens, 1920), I, 2.

36. Doc. No. 352, *Πολιορκία Ἰωαννίνων (1820-1821)* [*The Siege of Yannina (1820-1821)*], *Archeion Ale Pasa* [*The Archive of Ali Pasha*], Gennadeios Library, Athens.

37. *Μακρυγιάννη Ἀπομνημονεύματα*, I, 117.

that he could no longer delay matters: if Ypsilantes could not come, was it not possible to send someone else in his place? ³⁸

The people of the Peloponnese — Greeks and Turks alike — had been following the unfolding drama in Epirus with passionate interest. The feeling grew that revolution was inevitable. Toward the end of March, despite the hesitation of the primates and high clergy, tension became pronounced. All it took was the killing of a few Turks to convince them to shut themselves up in their fortresses and towers. Emboldened, the mass of the Greek population rose in arms. By the beginning of April, insurrection was general in the peninsula and was fast spreading to other parts of Greece.

So Ali Pasha's gamble had finally paid off. Although he cared not a bit for Greek independence, his efforts to gain their support against the Ottomans and engineer a general revolution in the spring of 1821 played a significant role in the central event of modern Greek history. As for the Greeks, though there were not a few who looked to Ali as their future leader, the majority distrusted and feared him, seeing in him only a convenient and temporary ally. But then, one need not walk hand in hand when travelling the same road.

38. Dikaios to Xanthos, 22 February 1821, in Philemon, *Δοκίμιον 'Επανάστασεως*, III, 400-401.