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**SOME NOTES ON BRITAIN'S ATTITUDE TOWARDS
THE IONIAN PROTECTORATE**

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In the years leading up to 1815 the potential importance of the Ionian Islands, economic, military and political, had been stressed by many observers.¹ Possession of the Islands, it was claimed, would help guarantee the integrity of the Turkish provinces in Europe, and not as a check against Russian designs in the Eastern Mediterranean.²

Dominating all considerations in this area was the safety of the British Mediterranean route to India; and the fear that Egypt and the Levant would fall into hostile hands as had nearly happened with Bonaparte's Egyptian expedition in 1797-98.³ The obvious answer to such a problem was the occupation of a suitable base in the area which, in conjunction with Gibraltar and Malta, would provide Great Britain with secure communications and her fleet with a greater mobility to intervene effectively in a likely troublespot.⁴

But how far did Britain's occupation of the Ionian Islands help secure her control of the Eastern Mediterranean? A survey of the Record available evidence leads one to conclude that, however much the importance of the Ionian Islands was stressed, the only advantage they gave to Britain was of a nega-

1. See particularly the Reports in Fo 42/12,13,14. 1812/1815, Douglas to Glenelg, CO 136/88, 21 June 1838. Gardner, *The Ionian Islands in relation to Greece*, London 1859, as representative collection of views on this theme.

2. For example, *FO 42/13*, Reports by Prince Comuto, General Smith, and others, 1811. CO 136/1, Enclosures in Campbell to Bathurst, July 1813; CO 136/296, Reports by Aberdeen and Hoste, FO 95/20, Reports by George Foresti, Jan'y 1815. *BM Add MSS 36543*, Report by Richard Church, Dec 1814. W. Pasley, *Military Policy of the British Empire*, London 1811. J. Galt, *Letters from the Levant*, London 1813. G de Vaundoncourt, *Memoir on the Ionian Islands*, London 1816. These and other references re this problem are cited in A. Seymour, *A Whig-Radical in the Ionian Islands: The Administration of George Grenville, Lord Nugent*, pp. 8-9. Unpublished dissertation to be presented to Cambridge University. I wish to express my gratitude to Anthony Seymour, scholar at the Cambridge University, for his bibliographical assistance and Record indications.

3. J. Droz, *Histoire Diplomatique de 1648 à 1919*, Paris 1972, p. 214. G.S. Graham, *The Politics of Naval Supremacy*, Cambridge 1965, pp. 65,68.

4. G.D. Clayton, *Britain and the Eastern Question*, London 1971, pp. 33-35. A. Seymour, op. cit., Chap. VI, *Passim*.

tive, preventive-strategic value. What might have been of vital importance to Venice was of minor importance to Britain. Whatever hopes that might have been entertained of developing one of the Islands into a first class naval or military base never materialised.⁵ Already by the 1830s it became apparent that the Islands were merely on the periphery of British strategic interests in the Mediterranean. By the 1860s with the development of a steam-powered fleet, an increasingly cost-conscious Government, and the concomitant internal political embarrassments in the Islands, the Protectorate had become a definite liability.

Moreover, the hopes once entertained that Britain would be able to effectively influence events in Greece and the Balkans from the Islands, never really materialised.⁶ While Corfu's potential as an entrepot centre for British trade in the area was realised far too late to develop in the face of deeply entrenched Austrian and Italian interests.

To the cynical such reasoning no doubt detracts from the generosity of Britain's cession of the Ionian Islands to Greece. So indeed it might have done, although good will played a part in the decision to withdraw. After all, realism and principle make for an excellent combination in foreign policy, and doubtless accounts for the remarkable success, with the inevitable lapses, of Great Britain's subsequently dignified and orderly retreat from Empire.



Great Britain acquired the Ionian Islands reluctantly, almost with an attitude of lethargy, more to keep Russian influence in the eastern Mediterranean to a minimum than for any positive strategic significance the Islands might have had.

In 1815 their importance had rested on their proximity to Albania and Greece. But the success of the Greek war of independence, and the temporary dominance achieved by Russia over the Turks in 1833, altered the situation radically. With the establishment of an independent Greece and the crisis over Unkiar Skelesi, the strategic centres of the Eastern Question moved further east and the importance of the Ionian Islands diminished in consequence. Nugent's recommendation that Britain should annex Crete in 1833 was a tacit recognition of this fact.⁷ In the event of a crisis in Egypt, Syria, the Straits, the Islands were for strategic purposes no nearer than Malta. In 1840 at the time of the

5. Charle-Philippe De Bosset, *Parga and the Ionian Islands*, London 1821, p. 160.

6. As early as in 1813, the Colonial Office had shown an eager interest towards Ionian Islands in relation to Greece. General Campbell, then at the head of the provisional government at Zante, was instructed by Bathurst to facilitate intercourse with Greeks, although dependent upon the Porte, and thus foment a favourable sentiment amongst them towards Britain as their sincere protector. Miranda Paximadopoulos-Stavrinou, *Στοιχεία της δημοσίας ζωής στα νότια Έπτάνησα, σύμφωνα με ανέκδοτη έκθεση του στρατηγού James Campbell, 1813.* (See reference, Bathurst to Campbell, 27 Feb 1813. CO 136/300, No 2). *Ανακοίνωση στο Δ' Πανιώνιο Συνέδριο, Κέρκυρα, Σεπτέμβριος 1978.*

7. *Derby Papers 131/10*, Nugent to Stanley, 26 June 1833.

so-called Near Eastern crisis, there were serious proposals that Britain should annex either Cyprus or some convenient port on the coast of Syria or Palestine – an other recognition that Britain's most easterly possessions in the Mediterranean were not far enough east.⁸

By 1850, even the notoriously conservative military could ask whether «the political and military value of Corfu to England... is not more founded in idea than in reality».⁹ By all accounts Corfu was being far outstripped by Malta: «We have Malta for all purposes of Mediterranean offence and defence», noted one observer; «Malta is on our road to Egypt and India: Corfu is out of our road and altogether out of the line of our military, commercial and political operations».¹⁰ An illustration of, and a reason for, Corfu's minor role as compared with the more important Maltese base was its lack of naval facilities. The Island had an excellent roadstead, but no harbour, no dockyard and no commissariat establishment.¹¹ In connexion with this, a nice test of the real value the Admiralty placed on the Islands arose shortly before the cession of the Islands to Greece. The Admiralty suggested that a piece of ground in Corfu should be retained in order to serve as a coaling-station for the Royal Navy. The Colonial Office replied that Britain, never having had title to Ionian ground, had no power to arrange this, but that Greece would undoubtedly lease the necessary area if approached in the right manner. If the Admiralty were willing to pay for the lease, the Colonial Office would open negotiations. Back came a prompt reply. Their Lordships of the Admiralty did not think a coaling-station at Corfu was really necessary after all.¹² Malta's only drawback in this sense was its more westerly position, but the increasing use of steam power more than offset this.¹³

As for the claim that Corfu was the key to the Adriatic, this had never been the vital consideration for Britain that it had been for Venice. Moreover, the French occupation of 1807-1814 had not prevented Britain from dominating that sea;¹⁴ or more recently, British occupation had not hindered a French fleet moving into the Adriatic without Corfu's being aware of the fact.¹⁵

Nor did the argument of Corfu's military potential cut much ice when that question was closely examined. Only to Corfu did the strategists attach much importance, the other Islands were all to be abandoned in the event of a war.

8. Webster, *Foreign Policy of Palmerston*, II, Chapter VIII. London 1952.

9. *Co 136/168* Rept by general Buller, 16 Oct 1859. WO33/7, Rept by Lefroy and Owen on defences of Corfu, 1859.

10. Crowe, E: *The Greek and the Turk*, pp 161-162, London 1853.

11. *CO 136/172*, Minute by General Burgoyne, 30 Nov 1859. See also, Wrottesley, *Life of... Burgoyne*, Vol II, pp 401-404, Memo on the defences of Corfu, Dec 1862 for G.C. Lewis.

12. *CO 136/185*, Admiralty to Colonial Office, 18 & 27 Jan 1864.

13. Lee, *Malta 1813-1914, A study in Constitutional and Strategic Development*. Malta, 1972, chapters IV & VIII.

14. Mackesy, *The War in the Mediterranean*, passim, London, 1957.

15. *CO 136/168*, Buller's Rept, 16 Oct 1859.

But revelations throughout the Protectorate had revealed grave weaknesses in the various fortifications proposals. For nearly forty years British and Ionian money went to renovate and remodel Corfu's defences; but all competent opinion was sceptical as to the result. In 1849 Sir John Burgoyne, Inspector General of Fortifications, reported that Corfu's defences were hopelessly inadequate. The carelessness of the Engineers, conflicts between Military and civilian branches of the administration, the hasty adoption of unsatisfactory plans, all combined to ruin the value of the fortifications. Burgoyne doubted their ability to hold out for three weeks against a determined attack, and only great expenditure and a much larger garrison would remedy the situation.¹⁶

Burgoyne's report shattered the complacency which had prevailed, and his views were repeatedly confirmed. Reports by Engineers in 1853 agreed that Corfu's defences had been greatly overrated.¹⁷ A Committee sent to Corfu in 1859 were even more discouraging than Burgoyne. Despite the great expenditure, Corfu's defences were weaker than they had been in 1815.¹⁸ Indeed, by the time of Gladstone's abortive mission in 1858-1859, few military men were willing to attach any importance to the Ionian Islands.¹⁹

If the military advantages of the Protectorate were doubtful, then the political drawbacks were indisputable. Despite the tremendous advances made by Maitland (1816-1824) and Adam (1824-1832) in the area of material improvements, the Protectorate never really took root in Ionian affections. The post-reform Commissioners might look back on this period as the golden age of Ionian content, but this was an exaggeration born of their own acute discomfort²⁰. Gladstone with greater insight described it as an age of silence rather than tranquility; for the 1848-1849 reforms did not create Ionian discontent, they merely provided a platform for its free expression.²¹ This feeling had been there since 1815, but Maitland's system had effectually smothered its expression. In the usual channels through which dissatisfaction might emerge — the Assembly and a popular press — the one was carefully guarded by the government's control, and the other did not exist. While the extent to which livelihood depended on government favour, the readiness with which misbehaviour would be identified with disloyalty and the powers of punishment vested in the High Police, all

16. For an indication of how far back the weakness of the fortifications went, see A. Seymour, *A Whig-Radical in the Ionian Islands, the administration of George Grenville, Lord Nugent, op. cit.* Burgoyne's evidence was presented to a Parliamentary Committee, HC 1849, IX (449) nos 5219-5253. See also, Confidential Memos of 28 Nov 1856 & 12 July 1858, in *WO 33/5*.

17. *WO 1/501*, Rept by General Conyers & Col Tylden, Jan 1853.

18. *WO 33/7*, Lefroy & Owen, Rept on defences of Corfu, 1859.

19. Only Sir Howard Douglas it appears, attached any importance to the Islands. Memo in Douglas to Peel, 23 Dec 1858, in *Lytton DEC O/12 Papers, Herts County Record Office*, which stresses importance of retaining Islands and developing Cephalonia as a naval base.

20. *CO 136/149*, Ward to Newcastle, 31 Dec 1853.

21. *CO 883/1*, Gladstone's second Rept.

discouraged outspokenness. In this context the argument from silence to satisfaction loses much its force; and the speed with which opposition made itself felt whenever circumstances allowed is some indication of how near the surface it lay.

But discontent was only to be expected. The seeds of a more disinterested Ionian political discontent were present from the outset. After centuries of Venetian control, the French Revolutionary armies had been warmly welcomed in the Islands.

The establishment of the «Ionian Republic» had given them a brief and heady independence, and their desire for more was apparent in 1815 when the question of their political future arose. These had been dashed by Maitland in 1817, but geography and history combined to ensure that the seeds did not wither and die. Like other Greeks, the Ionians cherished the myth of the «megali idea» and the eventual reunion of the Greek race in a restored Hellenic empire. As the only Greeks to have escaped any lengthy domination by the Turks, the Ionians had already played an important part in the Hellenic cultural revival,²² and their favoured geographical position allowed them a prominent role in the Greek War of Independence despite Britain's neutrality dictated by its pro-Turkish policy.²³

Indeed the establishment of an independent Greece and the political realignment in the Levant served only to strengthen the Ionian desire to join with Greece. Still in the 1830's, the Ionian students who took part in the July Revolution in Paris, and fought together with the Italian partisans against the Austrians, when returned home, became the apostles of the liberal, national and democratic ideas that stirred Europe at that time.²⁴ Their national and social claims have nothing in common with the grievances of the old gentry whose opposition against the British, in the early years of the Protectorate, originated from its personal bitterness in consequence of the curbing of their «ari-

22. Γεωργίου Ζώρα, *Ἡ ἱστορία καὶ ἡ κοινωνικὴ καὶ πνευματικὴ κατάστασις ἐν Ἑπτανήσῳ*. (Ἀπὸ Ἑνετοκρατίας μέχρι σήμερον), *Ἑλληνικὴ Δημιουργία*, 12, τεύχος 135, Ἀθήναι 1953, p. 335. (where a rich bibliography on this subject is quoted). See also, Στράτη Δ. Σωμερίτη, *Οἱ πολιτικὲς ἰδέες στὴν Ἑπτανήσο καὶ ἡ ἐπίδρασή τους στὴν ὑπόλοιπὴ Ἑλλάδα ὕστερα ἀπὸ τὴν ἔνωση*, *Χρονικὰ Ζακύνθου*, Α', 1964, pp. 107-108.

23. Zantiots and Cephaloniots mainly took a prominent part in the Greek Revolution despite threats, property confiscations, exile and hangings, imposed by Maitland. Ἰωάννου Φιλήμονος, *Δοκίμιον ἱστορικὸν περὶ τῆς Ἑλληνικῆς Ἐπαναστάσεως*, III pp. 302-303. Σπ. Τρικούπη, *Ἱστορία τῆς Ἑλληνικῆς Ἐπαναστάσεως*, Β., pp. 286, 327 et seq. Κωνσταντίνου Λομβάρδου, *Ἀπομνημονεύματα πρὸς καταρτισμὸν τῆς περὶ ἀπελευθερώσεως τῆς Ἑπτανήσου Ἱστορίας*, Ζακύνθος 1871, p. 311 et seq., pp. 320-326. See also, Σπύρου Δ. Λουκάτου, *Ἑπτανησιακὰ σώματα κατὰ τὸν ἀγῶνα τῆς Ἑλληνικῆς Ἀνεξαρτησίας*, *Μνημοσύνη* 4 (1972-1973), Ἐν Ἀθήναις 1973, pp. 61-85.

24. Παν. Χιώτου, *Ἱστορία τοῦ Ἰονίου Κράτους, Ἀπὸ Συστάσεως Αὐτοῦ Μέχρι Ἐνώσεως*, 1815-1864, Ἐν Ζακύνθῳ 1877, p. 37-38. Michael Sakellariou, *Hellenism and 1848, The opening of an era*. 1848. London 1948. p. 388.

stocratic» privileges.²⁵ The authoritarian rule of the british Commissioners, based on the monstrous constitution of 1817²⁶ was eventually a constant source of discontent to the «liberali» Ionians. Those who did not come from the ex-venetian aristocracy of the islands, neither belonged in the anglo-ianion bureaucracy which used to monopolize the confidence of Commissioners and enjoy public offices and high salaries subsequently.²⁷ From the «liberali» emerged later the two bigger parties in the islands, the radicals (ριζοσπάστες)²⁸ and the reformers, the first being headed by the formidable personalities of Elias Zervos Iakovatos, Iossif Momferratos and Gerassimo Livadas. But until 1848, the expression of their national and democratic claims had been smothered by the strict measures of british administration.²⁹ In addition to this, failure to obtain office in the military and naval services of the protecting power, was an other factor of discotent among Ionian youth. But once reform had been granted and with a free press in operation, then Ionian Islands rapidly became, in

25. 'Ηλία Ζερβού 'Ιακωβάτου 'Η ἐπὶ τῆς 'Αγγλικῆς Προστασίας 'Επτανήσιος Πολιτεία καὶ τὰ Κόμματα, Πρακτικὰ Τρίτου Πανιωνίου Συνεδρίου, 23-29 Σεπτεμβρίου 1965, Παράρτημα, 'Επιμέλεια καὶ Προλεγόμενα, Χρῖστου Σωτ. Θεοδωράτου, 'Εν 'Αθήναις 1969, p. 43. CW. Dixon, The Colonial Administration of sir T. Maitland, London 1939, passim. BR Pearn, The Ionian Islands under the administration of sir T Maitland, unpublished M. A. thesis, London, 1924.

26. The narrow margin of freedom left to the Ionian States by the restrictions of the Treaty of Paris (Nov. 1815), was still further reduced by the Constitution, Britain introduced in 1817. This gave the british High Commissioner complete control over the legislature, the executive and the judiciary, with the right to veto any decision taken by the legislative and administrative body and uncontrolled power over the finances. The right to vote was given only to inhabitants possessing an annual income of over 365 tallira. The deputies were elected from a list drawn up by the government with the approval of the british authorities. The chamber, in its turn, elected the ministers, whose appointment had to be ratified by the High Commissioner. There was no freedom of the press until 1848. Michael Sakellariou, op. cit. p. 387. For the text of the Treaty of Paris and the Constitution of 1817 (N.B. Μάνεση:) Le Tre Costituzioni (1800,1803,1817) delle Isole Ionie, Corfu 1849. For a summary view of the principal provisions of the Constitution of 1817, 'Ανδρέα Μ. 'Ιδρωμένου, Πολιτικὴ 'Ιστορία τῆς 'Επτανήσου (1815-1864), Κέρκυρα 1935, pp. 21-24. See also, Γεωργίου Δ. Δασκαλάκη, Τὸ Συνταγματικὸν Καθεστῶς τῶν 'Ιονίων νήσων, 'Αθήναι 1964, 'Ανάτυπο, pp. 21-22.

27. G. Drakato-Papanicola, The Ionian Islands: what they have lost and suffered under the thirty-five years administration of the Lord High Commissioners sent to govern them, London, 1851, passim.

28. For a detailed development of their principles, 'Ηλία Ζερβού 'Ιακωβάτου, 'Επιστολὴ πρὸς 'Αγγήσιλον βιογραφικὴ, 'Η, βίος Σωκράτους Κουρῆ. 'Εν Κεφαλληνίᾳ 1877, pp. 25-27. Παναγιώτου Πανᾶ, Ριζοσπάσαι καὶ Βελτιώσεις ἐν 'Επτανήσῳ. 'Εν Κεφαλληνίᾳ 1880, pp. 4-5.

29. True, until that date, their claim for union with Greece had been smothered, and little note was taken by successive british governments of the Ionian Protectorate, with the exception of their inclusion in a committee on colonial defence and the memorial of Andreas Mustoxides presented to Parliament (Promemoria sulla condizione attuale delle Isole Ionie). 'Ανδρέα Μ. 'Ιδρωμένου op. cit., pp. 35 et seq. A. Seymour, Lord Nugent, op. cit. passim. J. Tumelty, Ionian Islands under British Administration, chap. IV, unpublished Ph. D thesis, Cambridge University, 1952.

Lord John Russell's words' a source of perpetual irritation, expense and annoyance.³⁰ And the years which followed Seaton's disastrous reforms produced little to warrant a revision of the words. Quite apart from the internal political embarrassments, the state of the Islands exposed Britain generally and Whig governments in particular to the charge of ignoring those national rights and principles which they were so prominent in advocating elsewhere. Russell's vigorous championing of the Italian cause in the 50's and '60's provided Ionian journalists and others with much ammunition here. One London Journal remarked that the political disadvantage of appearing to tyrannise over a most disaffected population while recommending every where else principles of freedom... has been very great.³¹

Many British politicians of the period recognised the weakness of Britain's moral position in this context. Herbert told Gladstone that «it is Lombardy all over again».³² Gladstone was inclined to agree. Lord Newcastle, the Colonial Secretary, considered that every thing connected with these wretched Islands will probably be a cause of complaint and charge of illegality and cruelty.³³ While as early as 1850 Earl Grey believed it «desirable that we should be relieved of that which is a burden to us and nothing else»;³⁴ and in 1860 he was publicly advocating cession.³⁵ Russell had been willing to give the Islands to Austria in 1848; in 1858, Corfu to Austria and the southern Islands to Greece; by 1862 all the islands to Greece³⁶. Lord Clarendon considered them to be «costly to us and of small strategic importance»³⁷. Herbert wished to «be quit of our Protectorate altogether and make these Islands... over to Greece»³⁸. Chichester Fortescue endorsed this plan: 'I heartily wish we were well rid of them'.³⁹

But there were several powerful voices who viewed such a course with extreme displeasure. Palmerston considered Corfu 'a military and naval base of the first importance', which weak and feeble Greece would be unable to hold in case of an attack.⁴⁰ Queen Victoria agreed with him.⁴¹ This consideration loomed all the larger in view of his deep distrust and dislike of King Otto regi-

30. S. Walpole, *Life of Ld J. Russell*, II, p 41, London 1890. Driault et Lhéritier, *Histoire Diplomatique de la Grèce. De 1821 à nos jours* III, Paris 1925, p. 95.

31. *The Economist*, 20 Dec 1862.

32. *BM Add MSS 44211*, to Gladstone, 28 Jan 1859.

33. *CO 136/173*, Minute on Storks' of 9 March 1861.

34. *PRO 30, Russell Papers*, 22/8, to Russell, 31 March 1850.

35. *Hansard*, CLXII, col 139.

36. Walpole, *op cit*, Gooch, *Later Correspondence of Ld J Russell*, London, 1925, passim.

37. *FO 361/1*, to Layard, 15 March 1870.

38. *BM Add Mss, 44211*, to Gladstone, 22 Oct 1858.

39. H D Wolff, *Rambling Recollections*, Vol I, pp 396 et seq. London 1908.

40. Gooch, *op cit*, p 501, to Russell, 26 Oct 1862.

41. National Register of Archives, *Palmerston Papers*, H M the Queen to Palmerston, 3 Dec 1862.

me, which he regretted having helped to install. Gladstone, although less concerned for strategic principles than for abstract theories about the 'peace of Europe' was also against cession. In 1859, for instance, declared it 'an act of criminal folly on the part of England were she to give the slightest encouragement to so crude a project', as cession of the Islands to Greece.⁴²

It is of course extremely doubtful if the mere continuance of Ionian agitation would have overcome the objections of these statesmen, backed too by the Queen, or whether those who favoured it would have pressed their case. Indeed, even allowing for Russell's irritable phrase already quoted, British Governments had far more important business to worry over than a minor Mediterranean dependency even with an unusually high number of politicians rigorously acting against the Protectorate. The same was true of the Colonial Office. The affairs of the great settlement colonies occupied too great an amount of Official business for officials ever to have taken much notice of the Ionian Islands. Why then were the Islands eventually ceded to Greece? The answer to such a question was dictated by events far removed from Ionian considerations – the revolution which deposed Otto in October 1862.

It is clear that it was this development which induced Palmerston and Gladstone to drop their objections. During the years of Otho's reign, Greece had become a battleground of rivalry among Russia, Britain and France, especially of the last two.⁴³ Britain's devotion to the preservation of the integrity of the Ottoman Empire rendered necessary that the filling of the vacant throne – after Otto's abdication – be made by a king favourably disposed towards England, willing to obey to its suggestions⁴⁴ and who would abstain from instigating revolutionary movements in Greek territories under the Turkish yoke.⁴⁵ The selection of a reliable – i.e. a «British» candidate – King for Greece would be a guarantee against this danger, and would introduce an element of much needed stability into the Balkans. «Without the condition of a good head for Greece», Gladstone wrote, «I should not like to see the Ionian Protectorate surrendered». On the other hand, were a reliable king chosen, «I shall be well pleased, for one, to be responsible for giving it up».⁴⁶ Palmerston, too, was anxious to turn the occasion to Britain's advantage by having a suitable king chosen.

The election of Prince Alfred, a younger son of Queen Victoria, was a foregone conclusion. But the English Royal family was disqualified in this sense by

42. *BM Add MSS, 44550*, to Lytton, 1 Dec 1858. cf Hansard, debates re Mission in 1859.

43. René Albrecht-Carrié, *A Diplomatic History of Europe*, London 1970, p. 109. Driault et Lhéritier, *op. cit.* pp. 4-5, 12.

44. Σ. Θ. Λάσκαρι, *Διπλωματική Ιστορία της Ελλάδος, 1821-1914*, 'Εν Ἀθήναις 1947, p. 85.

45. *Ibid.* pp. 95-96. Also, 'Ιστορία τοῦ Ἑλληνικοῦ Ἔθνους, Νεώτερος Ἑλληνισμὸς 1833-1881, ΙΓ, Ἀθήναι, 1977, p. 217.

46. *BM. Add MSS 44233*, Gladstone to Lacaita, 18 Dec 1862.

the self-denying ordinance of 1830, and by this the Queen was determined to abide. But the Prince's disqualification left Britain without a suitable candidate; a Russian or a French protégé might be chosen, and the last state of Greece be worse than the first.⁴⁷

In Palmerston's desire to diminish the attractions of the various other candidates and enhance those of the British choice, whenever one might be found, lay the origin of the move to cede the Islands. Needless to say that ceding the Ionian Islands to Greece, Palmerston fancied that Britain could obtain the sympathy and gratitude of Greeks and thus secure a paramount influence at Athens,⁴⁸ while the distrust and irritation which so often marred Anglo-Greek relations of late would be transformed.⁴⁹ Towards the end of November 1862 Palmerston urged on Russell the need for Britain to have a suitable candidate for the throne of Greece: «We might say that if our man was chosen we would give the Ionian Islands». With Russell's agreement, Palmerston pressed the matter on his other colleagues.⁵⁰ With the most determined opponent of cession now forcing the pace, the decision to offer the Islands as a "British" king's dowry was made. On December 8 1862 the Cabinet took the decision to cede the Islands.⁵¹

During the following weeks the conditional character of the offer was made very evident. The provisional Greek Government was notified that it all depended on the maintenance of constitutional monarchy in Greece, and refraining from aggression against neighbouring states.⁵² At one point Palmerston considered that «we ought to name a candidate and make his election the condition of the gift of the Ionian Islands»⁵³. But in the event the British envoy at Athens was simply instructed not to commit Britain to cede the Islands to the first successful candidate.⁵⁴ At length in March 1863 Britain secured a satisfactory choice in Prince William of Denmark, brother-in-law to the Prince of Wales, and in the same month Greece chose him as King George I of the Hellenes. The vital condition having been secured, Britain began negotiating with Greece and the signatories of the Treaty of Paris on the transfer of the Islands to Greece.⁵⁵

47. E. G. Prevelakis, *British Policy towards the change of dynasty in Greece*, op. cit. 1862-63, Athens, 1953, passim.

48. Driault et Lheritier, op. cit. p. 96, Σ. Θ. Λάσκαρι, op. cit. p. 85.

49. A. W. Ward, *Greece and the Ionian Islands 1832-64*, in *Cambridge History of British Foreign Policy*, II, 583-621, 1923. E. G. Prevelakis, op. cit.

50. *PRO 30 Russell Papers 22/14*, to Russell, 27 Nov & 4 Dec 1862.

51. Morley, *Life of Gladstone*, I Chapter X, 1903. Only one member, Lord Westbury opposed. Maxwell, *Life of Clarendon*, II, 276-277 likewise.

52. CO 136/183. Elliot's memo for the Greek Govt. Jan. 1863. See also, 'Ιστορία του Έλληνικού Έθνους op. cit., p. 217.

53. *PRO 30 Russell Papers 22/22*, to Russell, 21 Dec. 1862.

54. *FO 32/315*, to Elliot, 19 Feb 1863. About Elliot's mission see Σ. Θ. Λάσκαρι, op. cit., pp. 95-96.

55. *Ibid.* pp. 97-108. A detailed account of the preliminary negotiations and the Treaty of

It is interesting to note that the Conservative opposition, while vigorously denouncing the proposed cession, did not make it the subject of a division. Derby denounced the move in the Lords in February 1863, and Disraeli in the Commons. They argued at considerable length on the importance of the Islands to Britain, against a policy which let inconvenience or expense override this. Power was the safeguard of British wealth, said Disraeli; «a country, and especially a maritime country, must get possession of the strong places of the world». Cession would only encourage irredentism.⁵⁶ But it was rather the timing and the method employed that raised the ire of the Tories. Derby, for all his portrait of Corfu as a position of great importance, admitted that cession might well come in time, but not at the present while Greece was in turmoil. Carnarvon, too, placed emphasis on the unsuitability of the timing and the circumstances. Montague's objections were to «the suddenness and secrecy» with which the decision was made. While Lytton, who thought cession «bad for the Greeks, bad for the Islands, bad for Turkey, bad for the British Empire» was relieved to hear that the subject might be postponed. «It would have been a bad party fight for us», he told Wolff, Storks secretary at Corfu.⁵⁷

Opinion outside of Parliament accepted the cession even more quietly. Only in the *Quarterly Review*, which roundly denounced this reduction of Empire for reasons of parsimony, was any real protest made.⁵⁸ *The Westminster*, had long been an advocate of cession,⁵⁹ while the *Edinburgh Review* supported it as «a line of conduct... at once righteous and expedient».⁶⁰ *The Spectator*, after reviewing the argument on both sides, concluded that «there is nothing to justify their retention in spite of our principles, of their people and of the new revolution».⁶¹ *The United Services Journal*, echoed this,⁶² and the *Saturday Review* rejoiced over Britain «relinquishing a troublesome duty... among the few Englishmen who take any interest in the subject the greater number perhaps incline rather languidly to the surrender.»⁶³ *Blackwoods Edinburgh Magazine* maintained that a «protection maintained... over recalcitrant protégés becomes in the long run invidious. On the whole it was doubtless well to let them have their

London, see Driault et Lhéritier op. cit., pp. 95-127. Also, 'Ιστορία τοῦ Ἑλληνικοῦ Ἔθνους, op. cit., pp. 233-235. See Treaties relative to the cession of Ionian Islands, in Xenos St., East and West. A diplomatic history of the annexation of the Ionian Islands to the kingdom of Greece. London 1865, pp. 282-299.

56. Hansard, throughout 1863 for the debates re cession.

57. *Ibid*, and Wolff, *op cit*, pp 393 et seq. In this connexion it is interesting to note that Disraeli was the most consistent advocate of British retention of the Ionian Islands. The subject is constantly referred to in his novels, ie *Hennrietta Temple*, *Contarini Fleming*, etc.

58. *Quarterly Review*, CXIII, Jan 1863.

59. *Westminster Review*, XXIII, Jan 1863.

60. *Edinburgh Review*, CXVII, April 1863.

61. *Spectator*, 20 Dec 1862.

62. *United Services Journal*, Feby 1863 & Nov 1863.

63. *Saturday Review*, Aug 1863.

way». ⁶⁴ To the *North British Review* cession «reflects the greatest credit to the good sense, the generosity and the appreciation of national rights on the part of England.» ⁶⁵ As for the *Times*, it regarded cession «with feelings of hearty and unmixed satisfaction...!»

For several months the cession has been announced..., yet no alarm for the consequences has seized the English people. Though jealous of every thing that may tend to weaken the naval power of England, «the public... have heard with perfect contentment that the Islands are to be ceded». ⁶⁶

The question naturally presents itself, in view of the current arguments on the so - called «mid-Victorian separatist» theme, how far this factor influenced the affair. To judge from one test-case, the answer it would seem was not at all. An attempt by the Government to cede the useless West African dependency of the Gambia to France in 1863 caused a storm of protest in the press and Parliament. The negotiations were immediately dropped and were not raised again. The cession of the politically embarrassing Ionian Islands – which were not a colony, but a base of a certain military and naval importance – to an established though minor power, raised barely a whisper of protest. ⁶⁷

But had the 1862 revolution which deposed King Otto not occurred then it is likely that the Ionian Islands would have remained under British administration much longer. It was purely a political decision dictated by force of circumstance. Britain displayed its known realism in the affair which she would have done well to emulate in 1956. In Douglas words, the Ionian Islands were «in the anomalous condition of being a sort of middle state between a colony and a perfectly independent country, without, in some respects, enjoying the advantages of either». ⁶⁸ That the British Colonial Office did little to alleviate that situation is not a measure of indifference or hostility, but a recognition of how important the Ionian Protectorate had become gradually to Britain.

64. *Blackwoods*, XCV, May 1864.

65. *North British Review*, XXXVIII, Feb-May 1863.

66. *Times*, July & October 1863.

67. On this see, W. D. McIntyre, *The Imperial frontier in the Tropics*, London 1967. There is an interesting article by CC Eldridge. «The myth of mid-Victorian separatism,» in *Victorian Studies*, 1969. Despite the minor character of the Islands as a military and naval basis, the signatory powers of the Treaty of London (1864), comprised the injurious provision of pulling down the fortresses of Corfu, in order to secure its neutrality.

See correspondence of the Greek plenipotentiary, respecting the destruction of the fortresses and the neutrality of the Ionian Islands, in *Xenos St.. East and West*, op, cit., Driault et Lhéritier op. cit, pp. 119-121. Σ. Θ. Λάσκαρι, op. cit, p. 102.

68. CO 136/88, Douglas to Glenelg, 21 June 1838.