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VASOS MAVROVOUNIOTES. A MONTENEGRIN CHIEFTAIN ON THE THRESHOLD OF MODERNITY: FROM THE SERVICE OF THE SUBLIME PORTE TO THE SERVICE OF THE GREEK REVOLUTION AND THE KINGDOM OF GREECE

ABSTRACT: *Vasos Brajović was a Christian Slav chieftain who after having served for a time in the Ottoman army defending the Ottoman legitimacy, put himself at the service of the Greek Revolution, served with skill, energy and prudence the fledgling revolutionary modernist Greek Administration, and became one of its most important military officials. Following the end of Revolution, he remained in the liberated Greek Provinces and became a loyal – and prominent – citizen of the Kingdom of Greece, a general of the Royal Army and Royal aide, and one of the most influential political figures, being the head of a powerful patronage system. Vassos Mavrovouniotes constitutes a typical example of an Christian military group, who emerged from a turbulent and transitory period and offered his services to the Greek Revolution, and then managed to thrive into the newly established Kingdom because of its possibility to adapt himself in the new post-revolutionary reality.*

KEYWORDS: *Vasos Mavrovouniotes-Brajović, Ottoman Empire, Greek Revolution of 1821, Capodistrian era, Kingdom of Greece, Greek revolutionary armed forces, Greek Royal Army, brigandage, clientelism.*

VASOS MAVROVOUNIOTES. UN CAPITANO MONTENEGRINO SULLA SOGLIA DELLA MODERNITÀ: DAL SERVIZIO DELLA SUBLIME PORTA AL SERVIZIO DELLA RIVOLUZIONE GRECA E DEL REGNO DI GRECIA

SOMMARIO: *Vassos Brajović era un capo militare cristiano slavo che, dopo avere servito per un certo tempo nell'esercito ottomano difendendo la legittimità ottomana, si mise al servizio della Rivoluzione greca, servì con competenza, energia e prudenza la nascente amministrazione rivoluzionaria greca, e divenne uno dei suoi più importanti ufficiali militari. Al termine della Rivoluzione, rimase nelle province greche liberate e divenne un cittadino leale – ed eminente – del Regno di Grecia, un generale dell'Esercito Reale e aide reale, e una delle più influenti figure politiche come capo di un potente sistema clientelistico. Vassos Mavrovouniotes costituisce un esempio tipico di un gruppo militare cristiano, emerso da un periodo turbolento e transitorio, che offrì i suoi servizi alla Rivoluzione greca, riuscendo in seguito a prosperare nel nuovo Regno di Grecia, grazie alla sua abilità ad adattarsi alla nuova realtà post-rivoluzionaria.*

PAROLE CHIAVE: *Vasos Mavrovouniotes-Brajović, Impero Ottomano, Rivoluzione greca del 1821, Età Capodistriana, Regno di Grecia, forze armate rivoluzionarie Greche, Esercito Reale Greco, brigantaggio, clientelismo.*

Vaso Brajović or Vaso Crnogorac, known in Greek historiography as Vasos Mayrovouniotes [Βάσος Μαυροβουνιώτης: Vasos the Montenegrin] was born in 1797, in Bjelopavlići plain, in Montenegro (Crna Gora)¹.

All the historians of the Greek Revolution agree as to his Slavic ancestry, although some of them tried to endow him with Greek roots.

¹ A.N. Chrysologhes, *Vasos Mayrovouniotes: Diatrivi Anagnoshteisa en to Philologhiko Syllogho 'Byron' tin 8 Ianouariou 1876* [Vasos Mayrovouniotes: Discourse which was read in the Philological Association 'Byron' in 8th January 1876], Athens, 1876, p. 15. This

So, Christos Stassinopoulos notes, without indicating his sources, that the Brajović family descended from Epirus and had emigrated to Montenegro²; this is, of course, a completely fictitious view, which, most likely, associated with a tendency of Greek ethnocentric literature, that seeks desperately to find a Greek origin to all the figures who played a prominent role in the national Greek history³.

According to Chrysologhes, whose «Biography» is the unique source of information on the early life of the Montenegrin chieftain, Vasos was offspring «of the prominent family» – the “military” family of Brajović – and possessed military skills. To 1817, at the age of 20, Vasos along with his four brothers Rando and Spyro, Lazarus and Theodore, and other kinsmen, forced to leave Montenegro and moved to the *eyalet* of Aydin (Smyrna), in the Mediterranean coast of Asia Minor⁴. The available information does not refer to the route he followed leaving his homeland. We can assume, however, that he initially fled – like many others Montenegrin refugees – in Serbian provinces, and then moved southward through the Ottoman Macedonia and arrived in Thessaloniki; from there reached by ship to Smyrna. Equally unknown are the reasons for which Vasos left Montenegro. We know, however, that after 1814 the internal situation in Montenegro was the worst possible. The famine had brought large sections of the population into poverty, while the inability of *Vladika* [: hereditary prince-bishop] Petar I ‘Petro-

text is the unique printed source on Mayrovouniotes written in the 19th century, 29 years after his death. This is a completely precarious source, however, with several errors as to the persons and dates and largely based on oral testimonies of Mavrovouniote family members. Further, the study did not conform to any scientific standard having as main goal the vindication of the private and public activity of Vasos. Dragan Bošković notes that, according to other information, that Vasos was born in the village Mojdež in the region of Herceg Novi, in 1790. «Gr ki Junak i Heroj») [http://www.montenegrina.net/pages/pages1/istorija/cg_u_xix_vijeku/vaso_brajovic_grcki_junak.htm].

² Chr. Stassinopoulos, *Lexikon tis Ellinikis Epanastaseos* [*Lexicon of the Greek Revolution*], 3 voll., Leventià, Athens, s.a., III, p. 56.

³ A well-known example is the “Hellenization” of the Albanian Christians Souliots, who were considered as “Greeks” and “descendants of the heroes of Ancient Greece”. (Chr. Perraivos, *Historia tou Souliou kai tis Pargas* [*History of Souli and Parga*], Venice, 1815, pp. 22, 24). According to this view, even the Albanian Ali Tepedelenli Pasha of Yanina is considered as an Islamized Greek (I.P. Rangos, *Souli. Selides Historias Souliou* [*Souli. Pages of Souli History*], Athens, 1880, p. 14). In other cases, the Albanians are regarded as descendants of the Pelasgians and, therefore, they are defined as one of the ancient Greek tribes. (... *Hellenes kai Alvanoi. Ethnologhiki Meleti* [*Greeks and Albanians. An ethnological study*], Athens, s. a., p. 5) An extreme example of this ethnocentric literature is the article of George Mihas, who admits that Vaso Braj vić is a Montenegrin, but argues: «For those who have read a little extracurricular history, there is no mystery about the origin of Vasos Mayrovouniotes. Montenegro or Mali i-zi, is the cradle of the Illyrians, of this ancient Greek tribe, from which originate both Alexander the Great and Constantine the Great. Therefore, Vasos Mayrovouniotes, being of Illyrian origin, is nothing else than a true Greek». <> [<http://www.martino.gr/efhmerida/fylo14/157>].

⁴ A.N. Chrysologhes, *Vasos Mayrovouniotes* cit.

vić-Njegoš, (1782-1830) to impose order led to an intense and bloody internal strife forcing a considerable number of Montenegrins to migrate mainly to Serbian provinces, but also to Russia and to Ottoman provinces⁵. It is therefore likely that the members of Brajović family, migrated in search of better living conditions and/or because they were threatened by more powerful factions.

The province of Aydin (*Aydin eyaleti*) was in the second half of the 18th century – and especially after the Orlov Revolt in 1770 – a particularly attractive migrant destination of Christians from various Ottoman Balkan provinces. The wealth of the region, but also the tolerant administration of Karaosmanoğlu, a family that controlled since the late 17th century most of the region, facilitated the migration of a large number of Christians in the wider area. Indeed, the favourable attitude of Karaosmanoğlu towards Christians gave birth to the rumour that this family were crypto-Christians; in fact, it was a completely erroneous rumour since Karaosmanoğlu descended from Yayaköy, a purely Türkmen-Muslim village of Magnesia (Manisa), north of Smyrna⁶. This powerful *ayan* family, members of which had reached to important regional and central offices of the Ottoman administration (*mütesellim, voyvoda, muhafız, kapuçı-başı* etc.), possessed vast estates, and had augmented their wealth through a variety of business activities and as provincial tax tenants⁷.

Again, the information on Vasos life in Aydin province are few and vague. We are merely aware that he became acquainted with Nikolaos Kriezotes – another interesting military and political figure of the Greek Revolution – who, according to his biographer, after killing a Muslim (the killing of a Muslim, that is to say of a Turk, or a “turkophile” Greek *kocabaşı*, is a common scenario for several of the protagonists of the Greek revolution for which there are no reliable information for the early years of their life) left his birthplace, the island of Euboea (Negroponte) fled to Asia Minor to escape the consequences of his action; further, Vasos worked as a shepherd and foreman (*kâhya*) in the estates of Karaosmanoğlu family⁸. John Anthony Petropoulos, however, a highly

⁵ W. Denton, *Montenegro. Its People and their History*, London 1877, p. 260; G. Friley, J. Wlahovitj, *Montenegro contemporain*, Paris, 1876, p. 56; F.S. Stevenson, *A History of Montenegro*, London, s.a., pp. 177-178.

⁶ Y. Nagata, *The Role of Ayans in Regional Development during the Pre-Tanzimat Period in Turkey: A Case Study of the Karaosmanoğlu Family*, in Id. [ed.], *Studies on the Social and Economic History of the Ottoman Empire*, Akademi Kitabevi, zmir, 1995.

⁷ Y. Nagata, *The Role of Ayans* cit., *passim*.

⁸ A.N. Chrysologhes, *Vasos Mavrovouniotes* cit., pp. 15-16; Id., *Nikolaos Kriezotes: Diatrivi Anagnoshteisa en to Philologhiko Syllogho “Byron” to 1873* [Nikolaos Kriezotes: Discourse which was read in the Philological Association “Byron” in 1873], Athens, 1877, pp. 6-7; D. Kokkinos, *I Elliniki Epanastasis* [The Greek Revolution], 12 voll., Athens, s. a., V, p. 412.

reliable historian mentions that Vasos «a Montenegrin, had started out as a brigand in Asia Minor»⁹.

Three years later, in 1820, Vasos, again for unknown reasons, left Asia Minor and came to Athens. Stassinopoulos mentions that he left Aydin province, because he had committed theft. This information seems to be correct, since in Athens, he was sued by a Smyrniot Muslim, as a thief, and imprisoned by order of the local authorities¹⁰.

At that time, Sublime Porte gathered troops from various Rumelian [: Balkan] territories of the Empire against Ali Tepedelenli Paşa of Yanina, the most potent *ayan* of the Balkan provinces of the Empire who had manifested separatist tendencies. The recruitment of armed men from the provinces of eastern Central Greece undertook Pehlivan Baba Paşa, an Islamized ex-Christian of Bulgarian origin with a rich experience in suppressive operations against Christian revolts in Macedonia. Pehlivan Baba Paşa ordered the notables of the city of Athens to gather 120 men in order to join his army. One of them was the prisoner Mayrovouniotes, who exchanged his freedom by joining the sultanic army; it was a move that satisfied the local authorities which apparently preferred to meet their obligations by offering foreign convicts instead Athenian residents.

Vasos joined the army of Pehlivan Paşa with the rank of *bayrakdar* [standard bearer], «due to his enormous and impressive stature»¹¹; a rank, which in addition to physical qualifications suggests his military familiarity, since *bayrakdars* were usually men with military experience and skills¹². There is a complete lack of information concerning Vasos activity as *bayrakdar* in Pehlivan Paşa army; we do not know if he took part in battles against the troops of Ali Paşa, or if he followed the army up to Yannina. But we know that in the summer of 1821 – namely, at the same time when the military operations of the sultanic army against the forces of Ali were in full swing – Vasos makes his appearance in Euboea (eastern Central Greece) and joins the Greek revolutionary forces. This leads to the safe assumption that somewhen Vasos seems to have deserted from the Sultan's army and returned to Central Greece. Of course, his previous life and attitude does not support the view expressed later by his biographer that he left Asia Minor in order to participate in the forthcoming Greek Revolution, since we

⁹ J.A. Petropoulos, *Politics and Statecraft in the Kingdom of Greece 1833-1843*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1968, p. 33.

¹⁰ Chr. Stassinopoulos, *Lexikon tis Ellinikis Epanastaseos* cit., p. 56.

¹¹ A.N. Chrysologhes, *Vasos Mayrovouniotes* cit., p. 16.

¹² On the office of *bayrakdar*, see more, H. Bowen, entry *Bayrakdar*, in B. Lewis, V.L. Ménage, Ch. Pellat, J. Schacht [eds], *The Encyclopaedia of Islam* [New Edition], E.J. Brill, Leiden 1986, I (A-B), pp. 1134-1135.

do not have any information about his membership in the *Philiki Etaireia* [Society of Friends] – the secret organization which in 1820 had already recruited *en masse* a large number of Christian-Greek notables, scholars, clergymen and military of all the Balkan provinces.

The Greek Revolution has been a turning point in the life of the Montenegrin refugee, who without many hesitations decided to abandon the Ottoman legitimacy and put himself at the service of the Greek national struggle. In summer 1821, the former thief, convict prisoner and then «soldier of fortune»¹³ of the Ottoman army, came in Euboea at the head of an armed band of kinsmen and other Montenegrin and Serbs refugees. In the island had flocked – aside from the local *kapetanios* – a number of important *martolos* from the eastern part of Central Greece and several chieftains from Macedonia who had taken refuge in the southern Greek provinces after the suppression of the revolt in their areas.

Vasos, demonstrating a remarkable ability and insight, placed himself under the command of bishop Neophytus Metaxas, a powerful political figure in the region and representative of *Areios Paghos*, the supreme political revolutionary institution in the wider area. This move soon yielded fruits; Neophytus appointed him military commander of southern Euboea, causing the bitterness and animosity of many influential chieftains of the area¹⁴. This *prima facie* strange move, most likely was due to Neophytus policy choice who sought to prevent the placement of a powerful local chieftain or a *martolos* in command who, having footholds in the region, could challenge the primacy of the prelate in the planning of the political and military affairs. In this regard, the choice of a foreign *kapetanios*, without local footings, was clearly the most advantageous and manageable option for the politically active and ambitious Neophytus.

Since then and up to spring 1823, Vasos will fight ten battles and will demonstrate leadership skills and an unusual mettle; further, he acquired the necessary experience that will help him survive in the fierce and unregulated world of the irregular warriors of the Greek Revolution. During this time, he will leave the battlefield of Euboea only once, to take part in an adventurous pirate enterprise against the northern Aegean island of Thassos. The raid did not have any military importance; Vasos, however, managed to gather enough loot that allowed him to pay the salaries of his men, and increase the number of his *bölük*.

On April 1823, Mavrovouniotes left Euboea, having in his baggage an official document of *Areios Paghos*, which affirmed his contribution

¹³ J.A. Petropoulos, *Politics and Statecraft* cit., p. 137.

¹⁴ A. Vakalopoulos, *Istoria tou Neou Ellinismou. I Meghali Elliniki Epanastasis [History of the Modern Hellenism. The Great Greek Revolution]*, 10 voll., Thessaloniki, 1980, V, p. 772.

as a military leader and exhorts the Greek central government to provide Vasos «the proper and fair considerations»¹⁵. The favour of the central government did not take long to manifest; on April 23, 1823, Vasos after a proposal of War Ministry and the ensuing approval of the *Executive Body* (i.e., the Greek Revolutionary Government), awarded the rank of *chiliarch*¹⁶. The moves of his opponents, who through official letters tried to prevent his promotion stressing that Vasos «an insignificant Slav» during his stay on the island committed numerous murders of Christians, massive thefts and «horrendous acts of dishonesty», were unsuccessful¹⁷; on the contrary, the *Executive Body* appointed the new *chiliarch* as a commander of the revolutionary forces in Attica¹⁸.

At that time, took place two major events which caused great unease in the Greek government: the capture and destruction of Kassos and Psara (Rando, a Vasos brother, was killed defending Psara)¹⁹, two islands with a significant contribution in the nautical warfare in the Aegean. The concern was inflated due to rumours that the Ottoman fleet intended to attack against the islands of Hydra and Spetses, in order to annihilate their naval forces, since the ships of these two islands – along with Psara – constituted the revolutionary battle fleet.

The notables of Hydra, and the central government which was controlled by them, decided to recruit troops that would undertake the defence of the island in case of an Ottoman attack. The powerful *martolos* and chieftains of Central Greece, however, declined the invitation due to indifference and lack of motivation, and/or because they did not want to leave their areas, which were also threatened by Ottoman troops. On the contrary, the *chiliarch* Mayrovouniotes, like several chieftains refugees from Macedonia and other Balkan northern provinces, as well as some lesser *kapetanios* of Central Greece, eagerly accepted the proposal, aiming the favour of the government and anticipating economic benefits²⁰. Vasos gathered his men and transported them by ships to Hydra. The positive effect of this move – i.e., his align-

¹⁵ Official document, signed by the secretary of Areios Paghos, Demetrius Nikolaidis [February 5, 1823], in *Vasos Mayrovouniotes* cit., pp. 20-21.

¹⁶ Official letter of the President of the *Legislative Body* to the President of the *Executive Body*, April 18, 1823, Astros, «Archive of the Greek Palingenesia» <hence «AGP»> I (1971), pp. 142-143.

¹⁷ Letter of the Euboean notable George Kanistriatis to the President of the *Executive Body*, May 5, 1823, Tripolis, «AGP» XII (1979), p. 64.

¹⁸ Official Letter of the President of the *Legislative Body* to the President of the *Executive Body*, April 18, 1823, Astros «AGP» cit.

¹⁹ L. Koutsonikas, *Istoria tis Ellinikis Epanastaseos* [History of the Greek Revolution], 5 voll., Athens, 1864, II, p. 231; A.N. Chrysologhes, *Vasos Mayrovouniotes* cit., p. 26.

²⁰ N. Spiliades, *Apomnimonevmata. Istoria tis Ellinikis Epanastaseos* [Memoirs. History of the Greek Revolution], 3 voll., Athens, 2007, II, p. 113. <First edition>, Athens, 1851-1857; *Narrative of Vasilis Hatz Stavros*, «Vasos Mavrovouniotes Archive» <hence «VMA»> [unpublished] in «Greek Literary and Historical Archive», p. 3.

ment with the governmental block – was not slow to appear; on July 24, 1824, following a proposal of George Kountouriotis, notable of Hydra and president of the *Executive Body*, Vasos was promoted to the highest military rank of an army general²¹.

During the first months of 1824, started a heated controversy between two factions that fought for the administration of the central political power. The intransigence of both sides opened the door for a bitter armed conflict, which ended in June 1824 with the victory of Peloponnesians squires-notables over the military faction of the influential Peloponnesian general and commander-in-chief Theodore Kolokotronis. In this, mainly endo-Peloponnesian, conflict, the *martolos* and the other chieftains of Central Greece along with the notables of the islands aligned with the faction of the Peloponnesian squires, helping the latter to be imposed. The end of conflict, however, does not brought a political tranquillity, since the winners Peloponnesian squires saw themselves to swept aside by the islanders-notables who occupied most of the important governmental posts²². This led soon to a second civil war, in which this time the rival fronts were on the one hand the Governmental forces (i.e. the islanders notables/ship-owners and the military of Central Greece and other northern provinces) and, on the other hand, the *Rebels* (i.e. the Peloponnesian notables/landowners and the Peloponnesian military faction of Kolokotronis).

The civil conflicts have been a good chance for the members of a particular military group; those who did not belong to the narrow elite of the powerful *martolos* families (mainly of Central Greece), but they came from areas where the revolution was suppressed, such as the Souliots²³ and Macedonians, or they were Balkan Christians of different ethnicities, mainly Slavs, who had joined the Greek revolutionary struggle. All the above, expecting economic rewards and high military ranks, placed themselves at the service of the Government against the Peloponnesian *Rebels*. Vasos Mavrovouniotes was a prominent member of this group. As a loyal – and ambitious – praetorian, left the island of Hydra by order of the government together with Kristo Dagović (another Slav refugee from Belgrade, better known in Greek historiography as

²¹ Decision of the *Legislative Body*, July 24, 1824, «AGP» II, p. 368.

²² Sp. Trikoupes, *Istoria tis Ellinikis Epanastaseos* [*History of the Greek Revolution*], 4 voll., London, 1857, II, p. 168; A. Vakalopoulos, *Istoria tou Neou Ellinismou* cit., VI (1982), p. 761; G. Finley, *History of the Greek Revolution*, 2 voll. [William Blackwood and Sons], Edinburgh-London, II, 1861, p. 34; J. de la Gravière, *Istoria tou yper anexartiasias ton Ellinon aghonos, kyrios tou naftikou* [*History of the Struggle for Independence of the Greeks, mainly of the naval struggle*] <Greek edition, Transl. K. Rados – Or. Fr. ed.: *La station du Levant*>, Athens, 1894, p. 164.

²³ Suliots: Christians of Albanian origin from Central Epirus (region of Thesprotia), members of a mountainous military society who abandoned their homeland (Suli), persecuted by Ali Tepedelenli paşa of Yannina.

Hatzi-Christos Voulgaris)²⁴ and went to Nauplia, seat of government, to assume the leadership of the governmental forces against the *Rebels*²⁵. He fought throughout the civil war and has been one of iron arms of the *Executive Body*, contributing greatly to the final victory.

The end of the civil war found the Montenegrin chieftain, a well established and distinguished military leader of the Greek irregular revolutionary army. Now, he has at his disposal a large number of men and he can assume leadership of large military forces having under his command lesser *kapetanios*. Further, he began to comprehend the political dimension of the civil war and the role that the military could play in the political affairs of revolution. Thus, he will establish – along with Nikolaos Kriezotes, the Thessalian politician Drossos Mansolas and the influential notable of Thebes, Adam Doukas – a political faction in eastern Central Greece in which joined a significant number of politicians and military of the region and he will cooperate with the *French Party* of the Epirotian physician Ioannes Kolettes, one of the most important figures of the Greek Revolution²⁶.

The next three years, rich in events, affected both his military career and his personal life. While the civil war was not even finished, Vasos was ordered to fight, along with other military, a new threat to the revolution: the forces of Ibrahim Paşa, adopted son of *vali* [governor] of Egypt Muhammad Ali-Pasa, who in winter 1825 had landed on the coast of Methoni in southern Peloponnese.

Things did not go well for the Montenegrin general and the rest military of the revolutionary troops who found out the hard way their inability to cope the trained by French officers, regular Egyptian army. After a series of devastating defeats for the rebels, Vasos left Peloponnese and returned to eastern Central Greece with 1.500 men in order to fight the forces of the *Rumeli valesi* [: general governor of Rumelia] Mehmet Resid Kütahi Paşa, and keep free the province of Attica²⁷.

In March of next year (1826) Mayrovouniotes participated in a campaign in Lebanon and Cyprus. The idea of a Greek campaign in Lebanon was not new. Since 1824, Greeks merchants who lived there and were associated with the *emir* of Lebanon Bashir Shihab II, had come into contact with the Greek revolutionary authorities suggesting a Greek-Lebanese military alliance against the Sublime Porte. At the

²⁴ “Voulgari”, i.e. “Bulgarians”, called, generally, the Christians of Slavic origin who fought for the Greek Revolution. On the Serb chieftain Kristo Dagović see more, in P. Sporides, *O vios tou Hatzi Christos, eranistheis ek diaforon episimon martyrion, eggrafon kai gegonoton* [The life of Hatzi-Christos, extracted from various official testimonies, documents and facts], Athens, 1855.

²⁵ Narrative of Vasilis Hatzi Stavros, «VMA» cit.

²⁶ J.A. Petropoulos, *Politics and Statecraft* cit., pp. 137-138.

²⁷ A.N. Chrysologhes, *Vasos Mayrovouniotes* cit., p. 25. See also, *List of battles and campaigns of Vasos Mavrovouniotes*-Folder with loose documents, «VMA», cit.

same time Greeks from Cyprus exhorted the Greek government to send troops in the island. The critical political and military situation (owing to the civil war, the successive defeats of the Greek forces in the Peloponnese and the continuing siege of Missolonghi), however, and the highly dangerous nature of the enterprise had discouraged the Greek government which finally stopped the talks and the contacts both with emir's representatives and the Greek-Cypriots²⁸.

The idea of a military expedition to the rich coasts of Lebanon and Cyprus, however, seemed to be appealing to some irregular chieftains. Thus, general Hatz-Michales Dalianes, a wealthy ex-merchant from Epirus who had arrived the Peloponnese in 1824 and was distinguished as head of an irregular cavalry unit, came to an agreement with Vasos and general Nicholas Kriezotes, Vasos' sworn brother, in order to organize a private military expedition in Lebanon and Cyprus.

The movement of the three chieftains was made known to the government which clearly expressed its opposition and ordered them not to proceed with the implementation of their plan²⁹; the latter, however, ignored the government orders. The lure of rich booty was too big for these *kapetanios*, especially at a time when the government was unable to finance them, since it had wasted the English loan money for the repression of the *Rebels* and its political survival. Until February, more than 2,000 men had been gathered on the island of Kea, who, having caused tremendous damage to the island, boarded chartered ships from the island of Spetses, and reached the Lebanese coasts³⁰.

During his stay in Kea island, and pending his departure in Lebanon, Vasos «a man of rare masculinity and handsomeness»³¹ met Elengo (Helen), daughter of the Epirotian wealthy merchant George Ioannites, and wife of the local potentate Michael Pangalos. Mavrovouniotes fell in love with Elengo, just sixteen – and pregnant – «endowed with glowing beauty and several endearing qualities»³² and abducted her; in fact, it was an elopement.

²⁸ See in this respect, E. Protopsaltes, *Aftheretos epidromi Ellinon kata tou Livanou (1826)* [An Greek arbitrary raid against Lebanon], «Athena» LVIII (1954), pp. 243-277; Sp. D. Loukatos, *Prospatheiai Ellino-Syriakis symmahias kata ton Tourkon kata tin Ellinikin Epanastasin (1822-1828)* [Attempts for a Greek-Syrian alliance against Turks during the Greek Revolution], «Mnimosini» III (1971), pp. 328-394.

²⁹ See, Official Letter of the *Executive Body* to the notables of Hydra, Nauplia, January 27, 1826, in D. Kokkinos, *I Elliniki Epanastasis*, cit., V, pp. 294-295; Official Letter of the *Executive Body* to the *Legislative Body*, Nauplia, January 26, 1826, in E. Protopsaltes, *Aftheretos epidromi* cit., pp. 264-265.

³⁰ On the damages that caused the irregular troops in Kea, see, the official letter of the *Legislative Body* to the *Executive Body*, Nauplia, March 18, 1826, in which is enclosed a report of Michael George Pangalos, notable of Kea, «AGP» VIII, p. 451.

³¹ D. Paschales, *I Andros kata tin Epanastasin tou 1821* [Andros during the Revolution of 1821], Athens, II, p. 416.

³² *Ibid.*

Vasos, departing from Kea made a stance on the nearby island of Andros, where he left Elengo, under the protection of a friend, the local chieftain Giannoules Demetriu. After the end of the campaign in Lebanon, he returned to Andros and married the pregnant Elengo in a monastery of the island³³.

The campaign in Lebanon is not widely known and it is not recorded in the works of contemporary Greek and European historians of the Greek Revolution. A very short mention is made only in the works of Nikolaos Spiliades, Spyridon Trikoupes and the French naval officer Jurien de la Gravière; all of them agree that the whole operation was clearly aimed at pillage³⁴. Specifically they mention that the Greek forces after ravaging the surrounding countryside, clashed with the army of the emir Bashir – whom had supposedly come to help – and forced to leave the area. On their return to the Greek provinces, made a stop in Cyprus where they ransacked and plundered several coastal locations; leaving Cyprus, seized in the sea area, between the northern coast of Cyprus and the south-eastern coast of Asia Minor, an Austrian merchant ship full of valuable products and coins. Finally, full of booty, sailed in mid-March into the harbour of the Cycladic island of Syros.

This was the first time, since 1821, that Mavrovouniotes refuses to obey orders of the central government. Now, he is a mighty military man who has begun to set up its own clientelistic system in the eastern part of Central Greece and has become one of the most powerful agents of the *French Party* in the wider region. Further, ventures of this kind seem to be attractive to the adventuresome ex-soldier of fortune³⁵, Montenegrin general, as it was demonstrated by his participation in the previous raid against Thassos island (1823). After Vasos death, Chrysologhes who, as we mentioned above, had wrote two short biographical texts for both Mayrovouniotes and Kriezotes, did his best to provide an idealized scenario of the Lebanon campaign, arguing that Vasos – and the rest participants in the enterprise – had noble motives and merely aimed to spread the «wind of freedom» in all the territories of the Ottoman sultan³⁶; assuredly, this approach bears no relation to the historical truth.

The arrival of the forces of Vasos and Kriezotes in the harbour of Syros caused great unease both to the authorities and inhabitants of the island, since the presence of such unpredictable and dangerous

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ N. Spiliades, *Apomnimonevmata* cit., II, pp. 486-487; Sp. Trikoupes, *Istoria tis Ellinikis Epanastaseos* cit., vol. 3, pp. 347-348; J. de la Gravière, *Istoria tou yper anexartisias* cit., p. 186.

³⁵ J.A. Petropulos, *Politics and Statecraft* cit., p. 137.

³⁶ A.N. Chrysologhes, *Vasos Mayrovouniotes* cit., pp. 32-33; Id., *Nikolaos Kriezotes* cit., p. 29.

worriers could cause huge damages to the island – something that had occurred repeatedly in the past. So, the islanders to avoid any adverse consequences, supplied the troops with food, ammunition and money and urged them to sail to the beach *Lykoremma* (Wolf gulch) in southern Euboea in order to rescue the men of the Regular Corps of the French Philhellene colonel Charles Nicolas Fabvier, which were trapped there by land and sea Ottoman forces led by Ömer Pasa of Karystos. It seems that the two chieftains finally accepted this new and dangerous mission after the intervention of the admiral Henri de Rigny, commander of the French naval forces in Levant who spurred them to assist his compatriot, since Fabvier was a person that strengthened the French influence on Greek political affairs³⁷.

The naval squadron of Vasos and Kriezotes arrived in *Lykoremma* cove, broke the sea blockade and landed soldiers on the beach who repulsed the enemy forces and covered the embarkation of the Regular Corps. Then, they transported Fabvier's men in Andros, returned in Attica and encamped in Eleusis, a town twenty kilometres west of Athens³⁸.

It was indeed an extremely dangerous mission that rescued the Regular Corps from a wholesale destruction, which was credited to both chieftains increasing more their military prestige. Further, this action, appeased Government's displeasure to them, because of their disobedience in the case of pirate raids on Lebanon and Cyprus, as well as to their brutal behaviour towards the inhabitants of Kea and Syros³⁹.

The already bad course of the revolutionary affairs, exacerbated by the fall of Missolonghi, a city with great strategic importance and the bastion of the Revolution in western Central Greece – a fact that resulted to subjection of all the provinces of the western Central Greece (apart from a few mountainous, inaccessible areas) and the submission

³⁷ Chr. Vyzantios, *Istoria tou taktikou stratou tis Ellados, apo tis systaseos tou kata to 1821 mechri ton 1832* [History of the Greek Regular Army since its Founding in 1821 until 1832], Athens, 1837, p. 69; A. von Prokesch-Osten, *Istoria tis Epanastaseos ton Ellinon kata tou Othomanikou Kratous en etei 1821 kai tis idryseos tou Ellinikou Vasileiou* [History of the Revolution of the Greeks against the Ottoman State, in 1821 and of the establishment of the Hellenic Kingdom] <Greek edition-transl. G. Em. Antoniadēs>, Athens 1868, II, p. 48 (original German edition: *Geschichte des Abfall der Griechen vom türkischen Reich im Jahre 1821 und der Gründung des Hellenischen Königreiches*), 6 voll., Wienn 1867); N. Spiliades, *Apomnimonevmata* cit., II, p. 498; D. Kokkinos, *I Elliniki Epanastasis* cit., V, p. 304; Sp. Trikoupes, *Istoria tis Ellinikis Epanastaseos* cit., III, p. 354; A. Vakalopoulos, *Istoria tou Neou Ellinismou* cit., VI, p. 531; A.N. Chrysologhes, *Vasos Mayrovouniotes* cit., pp. 39-40.

³⁸ Ch. Vyzantios, *Istoria tou taktikou stratou* cit., p. 70; Sp. Trikoupes, *Istoria tis Ellinikis Epanastaseos* cit., p. 70; J. de la Gravière, *Istoria tou yper anexartias* cit., p. 216; N. Spiliades, *Apomnimonevmata* cit., p. 498.

³⁹ Ch. Vyzantios, *Istoria tou taktikou stratou* cit.; A. von Prokesch-Osten, *Istoria tis Epanastaseos* cit., p. 47.

to Ottoman authorities of most of the *martolos* of the wider region. Further, in Peloponnese, the activity of the Egyptian troops had restricted the free regions to the north-western area of the peninsula (Argos, Nauplia and Corinth) and the mountainous district of Mani, while in eastern Central Greece, the island of Euboea, after the unsuccessful campaign of Fabvier, was put under Ottoman occupation. Remained free, but under a constant threat of attack, the islands of Hydra and Spetses and a number of Aegean islands; further, remained free in eastern Central Greece the area of Attica – where General Yannis Gouras possessed the city and the Acropolis of Athens –, and the area of Megarida which was under the control of generals Mayrovouniotes and Kriezotes⁴⁰.

The military defeats caused developments in politics; during the proceedings of the Third National Assembly (1826), a coincidental and temporary alliance of the Peloponnesian notables (*Russian Party*) with the *French Party* of Kolettes, resulted in the supersession of the previous government of George Kountouriotis (*English Party*), and the formation of the “Administrative Commission”, a flexible centralized body which brought together both the executive and legislative powers⁴¹.

At the same time began to take place significant changes in the policy of the European Powers towards the “Greek Question”. In January 1826, England – which seemed to consent to the creation of an autonomous Greek state – had sent Stratford Canning as ambassador in Sublime Porte in order to convince the sultan to put an end to hostilities with Greek Revolutionaries⁴². The latter, *en route* to Istanbul had a meeting in Hydra with representatives of the Greek government and urged them to authorize him to negotiate the establishment of an autonomous Greek state under the suzerainty of the Sultan; indeed, in April 14, the Greek National Assembly gave its consent to the British diplomat⁴³.

Since then started an intense diplomatic struggle with Britain, on the one hand, to push the Sublime Porte in order to accept the com-

⁴⁰ A. von Prokesch-Osten, *Istoria tis Epanastaseos* cit., p. 54.

⁴¹ “Third National Assembly”, sessions of 10, 12, 14 April 1826, «AGP» III, cit., pp. 163, 164, 169, 170.

⁴² G. Finley, *History of the Greek Revolution* cit., p. 171; Sp. Trikoupes, *Istoria tis Ellinikis Epanastaseos* cit., IV, p. 3; D. Kokkinos, *I Elliniki Epanastasis* cit., 331-332; A. von Prokesch-Osten, *Istoria tis Epanastaseos* cit., pp. 57-58; N. Spiliades, *Apominonevmata* cit. p. 541; K. Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, *Istoria tis Ellados apo tis ypo ton Tourkon aloseos tis Konstantinoupoleos en etei 1454 mechri ton kath' inas chronon* [History of Greece from the conquest of Constantinople by the Turks in 1453 until our days] <Greek edition-transl. M. Paparighopoulos> part 1, Athens. 1872, p. 573 [original German edition: *Geschichte Griechenlands von der Eroberung Konstantinopels durch die Türken im Jahre 1453 bis auf unsere Tagen*, Leipzig, 1870].

⁴³ “Third National Assembly”, sessions of 10 & 14 April 1826, «AGP» cit., pp. 164, 169.

promise – i.e. the formation of an autonomous tributary Greek state – highlighting the Russian threat (Russia threatened war with the Ottoman Empire), and the Sublime Porte, on the other hand, to delay developments hoping to a complete suppression of the Greek revolution. Thus, Stratford Canning was sending secret letters to the Greeks urging them to maintain at all cost free their territories so as to strengthen his negotiating position, while the Porte rushed Kütahi and Ibrahim Paşas to complete as rapidly as possible the repression of the revolution.

The Ottoman offensive in eastern Central Greece broke out in June 1826. Kütahi Paşa, head of a large foot and horse army with strong artillery reached the northwest borders of Attica, while Ömer Paşa of Karystos invaded the region from the east and occupied strategic positions around the city of Athens⁴⁴. Besides general Gouras who had undertaken the defence of the city and the Acropolis of Athens, the only, appreciable revolutionary forces in the whole province were the troops of Mavrovouniotes and Kriezotes. The latter refused to surrender in exchange for high military posts and other material rewards and fought a series of battles against superior forces holding Attica free⁴⁵.

In late July 1826, arrived to the camp in Eleusis, the new commander-in-chief of Central Greece Georgios Karaiskakis, who, having remained in the area until October decided to entrust the command of Attica forces to Vasos and the defence of Athens to Kriezotes; himself decided to move northwest in order to liberate the subjugated provinces and control the passages through which outfitted food and ammunition the Ottoman army in Attica.

In early January 1827, the situation in eastern Central Greece was configured as follows: the Greek forces under Karaiskakis had managed to push away the Ottomans from a wide area stretching from the Gulf of Corinth, west, to the shores of the Euboean Gulf, east, thus making difficult the communication of the Ottoman army with the northern military centres in Lamia, Larissa and Trikala⁴⁶. The absence of Karaiskakis and his troops, however, had brought in an extremely difficult situation the Greeks who defended the beleaguered Acropolis of Athens. On the other hand, the only significant military force in area – the 1500 men of Vasos – was ordered by the commander-in-chief simply to defend the western Attica (Megaris) and not take any aggressive initiative, waiting the arrival of Karaiskakis.

⁴⁴ L. Koutsonikas, *Istoria tis Ellinikis Epanastaseos* cit., p. 295; D. Kokkinos, *I Elliniki Epanastasis* cit., p. 482; Sp. Trikoupes, *Istoria tis Ellinikis Epanastaseos* cit., p. 55.

⁴⁵ L. Koutsonikas, *Istoria tis Ellinikis Epanastaseos* cit., p. 298; N. Spiliades, *Apomnimonevmata* cit. pp. 73-74; Sp. Trikoupes, *Istoria tis Ellinikis Epanastaseos* cit., pp. 44, 45, 56.

⁴⁶ L. Koutsonikas, *Istoria tis Ellinikis Epanastaseos* cit., p. 323.

The government, however, disagreed with the plan of Karaiskakis, and having collected money and munitions of war from European philhellenic Comitates (in 1826 appeared a new philhellenic wave in Europe)⁴⁷ organized a new campaign against the forces of Kütahi in Attica⁴⁸. According to the new plan, the Greek forces would split into two corps; the first would approach Athens from the east while the second – and would approach Athens by sea from the south making a landing at Piraeus. Thus the first corps, which was composed of the forces of the lieutenant general Panaghiotes Notaras and the Greek origin French Colonel Konstantin-Dennis Bourbaki departed from Naulpion, crossed the Isthmus of Corinth and met with the forces of Mayrovouniotes at Eleusis (17 January 1827)⁴⁹.

On January 21 the above three commanders left Eleusis and moved northeast reaching the village Chassia (Fyli), fifteen kilometres northwest of Athens. Two days later, the Greek forces, about 3,500 men⁵⁰, moved to Kamatero, a village 10 km north of Athens. There, began to manifest a disagreement between the three commanders as to where and how, should conduct the battle with the Ottoman forces. Bourbaki insisted to place their forces on the plain, while Vasos and Notaras, counter-proposed to build bulwarks on the foothills of the mountain. The disagreement led to harsh verbal confrontation between Vasos and Bourbaki, who insisted to deploy his men in the plain accusing – albeit indirectly – Mayrovouniotes for cowardice.

The Montenegrin chieftain (although he had clear orders from the commander in chief Karaiskakis to keep the camp of Eleusis safe and not to take any offensive action as long as the latter was absent)⁵¹ embittered by the public insult, accepted the plan of the French colonel⁵². The two men made up two completely different types of sol-

⁴⁷ G.G. Gervinus, *Istoria tis Epanastaseos kai tis Anagheniseos tis Ellados* [History of the Revolution and the Regeneration of Greece] (Greek edition, transl. Ioannes Pervanoglou), 2 voll., Athens, 1865, II, pp. 245-249; J. de la Gravière, *Istoria tou yper anexartias* cit., pp. 211-219.

⁴⁸ J. de la Gravière, *Istoria tou yper anexartias* cit., p. 239.

⁴⁹ See the "Report of Panaghiotes Notaras" to the representatives of the Third National Assembly (Salamis, February 6, 1827), «AGP» cit., III, p. 313. See also Gh. Th. Kolokotronis, *Apomnimonevmata* [Memoirs], Introduction-Notes E. Protopsaltes, Athens, 1961, pp. 157-158; D. Kokkinos, *I Elliniki Epanastasis* cit., p. 592; J. de la Gravière, *Istoria tou yper anexartias* cit., p. 329; A. von Prokesch-Osten, *Istoria tis Epanastaseos* cit., p. 128.

⁵⁰ "Report of Panaghiotes Notaras", cit. pp. 313-314; J. de la Gravière, *Istoria tou yper anexartias* cit.

⁵¹ L. Koutsonikas, *Istoria tis Ellinikis Epanastaseos* cit., p. 262.

⁵² N. Kasomoules, *Apomnimonevmata tis Epanastaseos ton Ellinon, 1821-33* [Memoirs of the Revolution of the Greeks, 1821-33], Prologue E. Protopsaltes, Introduction-Comments Y. Vlahoyannis, Athens s.a., II, pp. 411, 414; Dionysius Sourmelis, *Istoria ton Athinon kata ton yper eleftherias aghona archomenis apo tis epanastaseos mechri tis*

dier. Bourbaki, a graduate of *École spéciale militaire de Fontainebleau*, member of a military elite of the imperial French army which flourished in the European battlefields fighting against the best armies of the era – such as the English, the Austrian and the Prussian armies –, regarded with contempt and mistrust the irregular warriors, as Mayrovouniotes. Convinced of the superiority of Western military art and strategy, and having a deep disdain for the armies of the “East”, which he saw as unruly hordes (the ease with which the French expeditionary corps under Bonaparte camed the Mamluks, regarded as the best cavalry force of the Levant had reinforced this view) chose to fight the forces of Kütahi Pasa in the open plain. Vasos, on the other hand, was a typical irregular chieftain, without knowledge of the modern military science but with an extensive experience in guerrilla warfare; further, he had all those necessary skills that elevate him as a leader of irregular warriors: a strong personality and authority, cautiousness, intelligence, wisdom and courage.

The common point between the two men was arrogance and a pre-modernistic sense of honour. Bourbaki, insisting on his view, in a public debate that took place in front of the “*palikaris*”, questioned the bravery of Vasos considering that his refusal to fight in the open plain was due to cowardice. Thus, the Montenegrin chieftain was forced to follow, against his will, the plan of the French officer in order to not considered himself as a coward⁵³.

The experienced chieftain was vindicated the next day. On January 27, 1827 the Greek forces were dissolved after a co-ordinated attack of the Ottoman infantry and light cavalry squadrons, which with the help of artillery disbanded the Greek lines. The force of Bourbaki was surrounded in the valley and was almost completely destroyed; he himself with a small group of French volunteers was killed on the battlefield. The forces of Vasos and Notaras suffered heavy losses and their leaders managed to escape with great difficulty.

The battle at Kamatero was not strategically important, nor influenced the general course of military affairs. Since 1821 Mayrovouniotes had participated in many, much more important battles, and had suffered several defeats; neither the losses (about 400 dead) was so high as to create a highly negative impression. The accusation of cowardice,

apokatastaseos ton pragmaton [History of Athens during the struggle for freedom starting from the revolution until the restoration], Athens, 1834, p. 193; D. Kokkinos, *I Elliniki Epanastasis* cit., p. 592; Sp. Trikoupes, *Istoria tis Ellinikis Epanastaseos* cit., p. 103; L. Koutsonikas, *Istoria tis Ellinikis Epanastaseos* cit., p. 324. See also, *Narrative of Vasilis Hatzi Stavros*-Folder with loose documents, «VMA» cit., pp. 14-15; *Narrative of Elias Kotzos*-Folder with loose documents, «VMA» cit., pp. 1-2.

⁵³ *Narrative of Elias Kotzos* cit., p. 5.

however, which was to spread to both Ottomans and Greeks rocked the prestige of Montenegrin chieftain and questioned his military skill and especially his bravery. To the accusers of Vasos, apart from his internal opponents who aimed to reduce his military prestige, and the Ottomans who wanted to exploit to their advantage the Greek defeat in Kamatero, was added also the French admiral De Rigny who seeking to highlight Bourbaki's bravery underestimated Vasos prowess⁵⁴. The same view was supported also by some contemporary European historians, like the British George Finley⁵⁵.

Most of the Greek and foreign historians, however, concede that the defeat at Kamatero resulted from the Bourbaki's ignorance on the guerrilla warfare and his contempt for the "Orientals" both opponents and friends⁵⁶.

The questioning of his hitherto indisputably bravery, caused a severe shock in Vasos, who was withdrawn and isolated the island of Salamis (Koulouri). According to the testimony of his servant: «...the chief was closed at his home [...] I found him lying with face down in a headrest that was wet from his tears...»⁵⁷ Vasos, however was a survivor; soon, he gathered, again, his men and returned to the military action. From March until the end of 1827 he fought and excelled in eight battles in Attica and Magnesia (Trikeri peninsula)⁵⁸. Thus, he managed to restore his prestige and influence which threatened to be lost after the battle at Kamatero.

⁵⁴ A.N. Chrysologhes, *Vasos Mavrovouniotes* cit., p. 62.

⁵⁵ G. Finley, *History of the Greek Revolution* cit., II, pp. 131-132: «Burbaki was brave and enthusiastic; Vasos and Notaras selfish, and without military capacity. Burbaki pushed forward rashly into the plain, and before he could take up a defensive position in the olive grove, he was attacked by Reshid Pasha in person at the head of an overwhelming force. Burbaki's men behaved well and five hundred fell with their gallant leaders. The two chiefs who ought to have supported him with two thousand men, never came into action: they and their followers fled in the most dastardly manner, abandoning all their provisions to the Turks».

⁵⁶ L.E. Richards [ed.], *Letters and Journals of Samuel Gridley Howe*, Boston-London, 1909, p. 211: «Vasos is an experienced Greek soldier and knows the "palikaris" completely, and probably did not suffer much, for he would not trust himself in the plain, where he knew they would desert him. But Bourbakis is fresh from France, full of French notions, and though born a Greek, knows them not. He talked confidently of what he would do: nothing less than taking Kiutahi alive would satisfy him – and such nonsense. He is brace, and probably ventured upon the plain; the cavalry came upon him, his men ran away, and he was killed»; See also Th. Gordon, *History of the Greek Revolution*, 2 voll., Edinburgh-London 1844, II, p. 381; G.Fr. Hertzberg, *Istoria tis Ellinikis Epanastaseos [History of the Greek Revolution]* <Greek edition, transl. Pavlos Karolidēs>, 3 voll., Athens 1916, III, p. 107. [original German title: *Geschichte der griechischen Revolution*]; Sourmelis, *Istoria ton Athinon* cit., p. 193.

⁵⁷ *Narrative of Vasilis Hatzi Stavros*-Folder with loose documents, «VMA» cit., p. 18.

⁵⁸ *List of battles and campaigns of Vasos Mavrovouniotes*-Folder with loose documents, «VMA» cit.

In January 6, 1828, the British warship *Warspite* followed by a French and a Russian ships, brought Ioannes Kapodistrias, elected by the National Assembly of Troizinia (March 1827) “Provisional Governor” of the Greek State, to the harbour of Nauplia. Count Kapodistrias, a Greek noble from the island of Corfu with great political and diplomatic experience both in the Ionian islands and in Russia (he had served as assistant foreign secretary in the Tsar’s government), had to deal with a really desperate situation. The weak central administration and the arbitrary power of local potentates in the provinces had resulted to a political and financial paralysis. Further, this lack of government had led to a war inertia and a military anarchy⁵⁹.

Kapodistrias proceeded to address this tragic situation with the establishment of a state mechanism that would have a complete control over the central administration and would limit the arbitrariness of the powerful provincial potentates. Thus, not having to rely on a particular social group, he took pains to organize an army which would have two qualities: a. combat capacity, since it had to fight for the reconquest of Central Greece, and b. loyalty, in order to become the iron arm of government against its internal opponents⁶⁰.

The new Kapodistrian army, organized into *Chilliarchies*, reduces the number of its soldiers in about eight thousand, one act which deactivated a significant number of and officers. Therefore, during the first months of 1828, many officers, mostly from Central Greece, Epirus and other northern provinces strived through political and military factions to join the relatively few – and precious – posts of the new army⁶¹.

Vasos, as an acclaimed military officer, with numerous soldiers under his command, and powerful political connections was well qualified to assume the command of a *Chilliarchy*. The available posts,

⁵⁹ *Epistolai I. A. Kapodistria* [*Letters of I. A. Kapodistria*], Athens, 1841, pp. 39, 303-304.

⁶⁰ St. Papageorgiou, *I Stratiotiki Politiki tou Kapodistria. Domi, organosi kai leitourgia tou stratou xiras tis kapodistriakis periodou* [*The Military policy of Kapodistrias. Structure, organization and function of the army of the Kapodistrian period*], Athens, 1986, pp. 37-39; Id., *The Army as an Instrument for Territorial Expansion and for Repression by the State: The Capodistrian Case*, «Journal of Hellenic Diaspora» N. 2 (1985), *passim*.

⁶¹ «General State Archives» <hence «GSA»>, “Ghenikon Frontistirion” (General Commissariat), Folder 1, April 1828; St. Papageorgiou, *I Stratiotiki Politiki* cit., pp. 51-104; N. Kasomoules, *Apomnimonevmata* cit., III, p. 19; K. Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, *Graf J. Kapodistrias*, Berlin, 1864, p. 110; A. de Gobineau, *Deux Études sur la Grèce Moderne. Capodistrias. La royauté des Hellènes*, Paris, 1905, p. 50; A. Vakalopoulos, *Ta stratevmata tou 1821. Organosi, ighesia, taktiki, ithi, psichologhia*, [The troops of 1821. Organization, leadership, tactic, mores, psychology], Salonica, 1970, p. 79; K. Vakalopoulos, *Tria anekdota istorika dokimia tou filikou G. Lassani. To stratiotikon tis Ellados* [Three unpublished historical essays of G. Lassani, member of Friendly Society. The Military of Greece], Salonica 1973, p. 153.

however, were less than those who were interested for these. Moreover, during the past years, Vasos had created many powerful enemies, who tried by all means to prevent his appointment in the new military formations. The latter sent a report to Kapodistrias through which accused Vasos as responsible for looting and pillaging against the peasants of Attica, and further as accessory before the fact «of a villainous deed» that took place publicly by a soldier in the army camp of Eleusis⁶².

The looting and bestiality were two offences, common in the wild world of irregular warriors. The pillage cover their food needs and payroll which was unable to provide them the inadequate revolutionary administration. The bestiality, again, – as homosexuality and rape – was not unknown to an exclusively masculine wild world; it was considered, however, more as a manifestation of manhood rather than a moral deviation. But not in the world of the “civilized” Kapodistrias; so these complaints caused the wrath of the westernized and devout Governor, who ordered the immediate referral of Vasos in court martial.

It was the second time, after the battle of Kamatero, that this «high-handed coarse and atrocious man»⁶³ found himself in an extremely difficult position; this time for brutal and immoral behaviour. Finally, the court martial was acquitted him of the charge, despite the fierce efforts of an opposing group of political and military officials. After his acquittal Kapodistrias appointed him as commandant of the 6th Chilliarchy, convinced by politicians and military friends of Vasos – among them the new field marshal, prince Demetrius Ypsilantes – but also because he considered that the dismissal of such a powerful, influential and capable military leader would create serious problems for his fragile government⁶⁴.

As a *Chilliarch* of the Kapodistrian army Vasos Mavrovouniotes will actively participate in the campaign for the re-conquest of Central Greece. Since late October 1828 up to the end of the hostilities (September 1829), the 6th Chilliarchy will fight eight major – and victorious – battles in eastern Central Greece, contributing significantly to the liberation of the region⁶⁵.

Kapodistrias was well aware that there were no other possibility for further territorial expansion of the emergent Greek state and that now

⁶² N. Kasomoules, *Apomnimonevmata* cit., III, pp. 53-54.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ «GSA», “Secretariat of War”, Folder 3 (April 1828); St. Papageorgiou, *I Stratiotiki politiki* cit., pp. 83-85.

⁶⁵ *List of battles and campaigns of Vasos Mavrovouniotes*-Folder with loose documents, «VMA» cit.

the battle would be given at the diplomatic field. He thereby anticipated to an internal social tranquillity and the weakening of his political opponents, and sought the creation of a new army which would be more loyal than battle-ready in order to use it – whenever he considered it necessary – for the maintenance of social peace and the defence of his government⁶⁶.

In October 18, 1829, one month after the termination of hostilities with the Ottoman Empire, Kapodistrias decides to dissolve the *Chilliarchie*s, which are replaced by smaller units, the *Light Battalions*, under the command of a Major⁶⁷. The new military regulation provided the reduction in the total number of military personnel, a move that led to the compulsory demobilization large numbers of officers and men, while most of old *Chilliarches* refused to join the new formations, considering the rank of Major as inferior to their prestige. One of them was Vasos Mayrovouniotes, who for the first time since 1821 was found out of active military service and passed, retaining the rank of *chilliar*ch in the military reserve force.

Vasos' stance towards the government was not the same throughout the Kapodistrian period. His initially friendly attitude towards the Kapodistrian regime which lasted up to the end of 1829, was followed – after his dismissal from the army – by a policy of equal distance towards the government and the opposition. After the assassination of the governor (September 27, 1831) sided with the opposition of *Constitutionalists* against the new Governor Augustine Kapodistrias. In the following civil strife, Vasos, who at that time was – along with Kriezotes – the most influential military (and political) agent in the eastern Central Greece, contributed greatly to the victory of the *Constitutionalists* and to the expulsion of Augustine Kapodistrias⁶⁸.

On January 30, 1833, the British warship *Madagascar* sailed into the port of Nauplia transporting the minor king Otto, son of King Ludwig of Bavaria, the members of Regency and the royal entourage. The Royal Navy frigate was accompanied by 24 transport vessels with 3,000 Bavarian soldiers. As George Finley notes, it was indeed a glorious day⁶⁹; of course, the reality was much less dreamy.

⁶⁶ St. Papageorgiou, *I Stratiotiki politiki* cit., pp. 203-204.

⁶⁷ See Decree No. 1410 (October 18, 1829) of the Plenipotentiary of the Central Greece Augustine Kapodistrias, in St. Papadopoulos, *I organosi tou stratou tis dytikis stereas Ellados epi Kapodistria* [*The Organization of the army of the western Central Greece, during the Capodistrian period*], «Hellenika» 18, pp. 165-168.

⁶⁸ Gh. Th. Kolokotronis, *Apomnimonevmata* cit. pp. 215-216; J.A. Petropoulos, *Politics and Statecraft* cit., p. 126; A.N. Chrysologhes, *Vasos Mayrovouniotes* cit., p. 75.

⁶⁹ G. Finley, *History of the Greek Revolution* cit., p. 292: «Enthusiasts, who thought of the poetic glories of Homer's Greece, and the historic greatness of the Greece of Thucydides, might be pardoned if they then indulged a hope that a third Greece was emerging into life, which would again occupy a brilliant position in world's annals».

Actually, the Ottonian regime followed the political model of Kapodistrias: namely, the creation of a highly centralized state which would have complete control over politics, administration and, of course, the army. The army organization assigned to the Bavarian major general Carl Wilhelm von Heideck, a Philhellene officer with significant military involvement in the Greek War of Independence. Heideck proceeded to an immediate disbanding of all regular, semi-regular and irregular military forces, and to the formation of new royal army, outside which were found thousands warriors of the revolutionary period. Thus, remained in the army only a relatively small number of irregulars officers and men who joined mostly the *Jäger* battalions, the Gendarmerie, the *Royal Phalanx* and the battalions of Border Guard⁷⁰.

The Ottonian years, however, – an extremely critical and difficult period for most of the irregular soldiers of the revolutionary and Kapodistrian years – were particularly favourable for the Montenegrin military. Vasos was among those relatively few who managed to join the royal army and thus laying the foundations for an impressive military career. To 1833, he was appointed by the Bavarian *Regency*, member of the influential “Examination Committee”, an organ that evaluated the participation and demeanour of the irregular officers during the Revolution era⁷¹. This office elevated his power and prestige, since enabled him to place a considerable number of “his own people” in the army and in other civilian posts. Next year (1834) he was appointed Colonel-Military Inspector of Attica and Boeotia⁷², and in 1836 was placed Commander of the Border Guard troops of Phthiotis province. In 1843, he was promoted to the rank of Major General and assumes the post of the Border Guard Commander of Locris province⁷³. Finally, in 1846 he appointed royal aide⁷⁴.

His military evolution, was accompanied by high honours; on 1841 king Otto named colonel Vasos Mayrovouniotes *High Commander of the Royal Order of the Saviour*⁷⁵; in 1845 France appointed him an *Officier de la Légion d’Honneur* and next year, he became *Commandeur* of the

⁷⁰ On the Ottonian army, see more in D. Maleses, *O Ellinikos stratos stin protí othoniki decaetia* [The Greek army during the first Ottonian decade], Panteion University, Athens, 1992 (unpublished PhD dissertation) *passim*; E.K. Stasinopoulos, *O stratos tis protis ekatondaetias* [The army of the first century], Athens, 1935, *passim*; St. Papageorgiou, *Apo to Ghenos sto Ethnos. I themeliosi tou Ellinikou kratous, 1821-1862* [From the Ottoman Christian Religious Community to Nation-State. The foundation of the Greek State], Athens, 2003, pp. 326-343. See also «Efimeris tis Kyverniseos» [«Journal of the Government»], Royal Decrees of February 1833, January 25, 1836, July 2, 1838, June 21, 1843.

⁷¹ Military Secretariat’s Decree (March 3, 1833, Nauplia), «VMA» cit.

⁷² Military Secretariat’s Document no. 828 (January 1, 1834, Athens), «VMA» cit.

⁷³ Military Secretariat’s Document no. 6108 (June 9, 1843, Athens), «VMA» cit.

⁷⁴ Royal Decree no. 6881 (July 9, 1846, Athens), «VMA» cit.

⁷⁵ Military Secretariat’s Document no. 2138 (January 24, 1841 Athens), «VMA» cit.

same Order⁷⁶. Finally, in 1847, the king of Bavaria awarded him with the cross of the *Commander of the Order of Civil Merit of the Bavarian Crown* (Kommandeurkreuz des Zivil-Verdienstordens der Bayerischen Krone)⁷⁷.

Vasos, as head of the Border Guard troops and as a military representative of the Ottonian legitimacy in the eastern part of Central Greece undertook three missions: the guard of the north-eastern part of the Greek borders, the restraint of brigandage that thrived throughout the region (especially after the dismissal of thousands of men and officers from the ranks of the army), the maintenance of the order in the region and the suppression of the various local revolts against the Ottonian regime⁷⁸.

During the revolution of September 3, 1843, Vasos as a loyal and avowed champion of the Ottonic regime, does not initiated into the conspiracy, in which participated leading politicians and influential military from all political parties⁷⁹. In his *Archive*, there are many letters written by politicians and military, who are trying to convince him «to remain consistent with the spirit of the nation and not to disobey the voice of the nation»⁸⁰, and strive hard to reassure the mighty military agent of eastern Central Greece that the movement was not against the king, but against the foreign members of the royal camarilla; and that the sole aim of the revolution was the establishing of a Constitution (Vasos was one of the top military leaders of the *Constitutionalists* during the civil war that followed the assassination of Kapodistrias)⁸¹. Vasos, however, even after the prevalence of the revolution threatened to move his battalions to Athens to restore the previous regime of the

⁷⁶ Ministry of the Royal House and of Interior Affairs, Document no. 1067 (March 12, 1846, Athens); Ordre Royal de la Légion d' Honneur, Document 22412 (October 11, 1845, Paris); Ordre Royal de la Légion d' Honneur, Document 23246 (April, 4, 1846, Paris), «VMA» cit.

⁷⁷ Ministry of the Royal House and of Interior Affairs, Document no. 1067 (April 12, 1846), «VMA» cit.

⁷⁸ J.A. Petropoulos, *Politics and Statecraft* cit., p. 263.

⁷⁹ On Vasos devotion towards the royal family, and the favour of the latter towards Vasos, see in V. Busche, M. Busche (eds), *Anekdotēs epistolēs tis Vasilissas Amalias ston patera tis, 1836-1853* [*Anecdote letters of the queen Amalia to her father, 1836-1853*], 2 voll., Athens, 2011, I, pp. 454, 463, 485, 543, 673, 674, 700, 722, 797, 798, 810, 863, 866, e II, pp. 21, 104, 172 178, 179, 263 265, 293, 360.

⁸⁰ Letter of Drosos Mansolas to Vasos, Athens September 3, 1843, «VMA» cit.

⁸¹ See the letters of: Andreas Londos to Vasos (September 5, 1843, Athens); Nikolaos Kasomoules to Vasos (September 6, 1843, Athens); Nikolaos Kriezotes to Vasos (September 7, 1843, Chalkida); Drosos Mansolas to Vasos, (September 9, 1843, Athens); Spyro Milios to Vasos, (September 12, 1843, Athens); Andreas Londos to Vasos (September 12, 1843, Athens); Andreas Metaxas to Vasos (September 13, 1843, Athens); Nikolaos Kriezotes to Vasos (September 14, 1843, Chalkida); Rigas Palamides and Drosos Mansolas to Vasos (September 16, 1843, Chalkida); Ioannes Kolettes to Vasos (September 28, 1843, Chalkida), «VMA» cit.

absolute monarchy⁸²; finally he was prevented by Otto himself who – as was writing to him another devoted Ottonist, the major general and royal aid Gardikiotes Grivas –, «the king does not want anything but the peacefulness and peace and camaraderie in order to be glorified the people of Greece»⁸³. Finally, after a consultation with his sworn brother Nikolaos Kriezotes, leader of the Revolution in the island of Euboea, and other close collaborators he was convinced to accept the new situation; of course, after he got all the necessary assurances that it will be not affected, at a minimum, his military career and his well-settled influence in eastern Central Greece⁸⁴.

Since 1834 the Mayrovouniotes family had settled in Athens, the new capital city of the newly founded Greek Kingdom.

As we mentioned above, the story of the Mavrovouniote household began in Kea (1826) with the fictional kidnapping of the pregnant Elengo, wife of the local potentate Michael Pangalos. By that time Vasos was living the usual life of a bachelor chieftain of the revolutionary years. The successive campaigns, battles and sieges, and the political conflicts precluded a typical family and social life. This way of life continued without any significant change after the marriage of Vasos with Elengo. The family followed necessarily, the tough programme of Vasos, moving according to the course of the war and the internal political developments from Andros to Syros, Aegina, Nauplia, Salamis, and elsewhere.

In 1834 the conditions and prospects appeared to be highly favourable for the Mayrovouniotes family. Vasos, 37 years old, is now a senior military officer, and an influential leading member of the *East Rumeliot alliance* of the *French Party*⁸⁵, endowed with prestige and recognition, with an influential clientelistic system which covered the eastern part of Central Greece, and had a considerable economical robustness that emanated from landholdings, rent revenues, usury and merchantry⁸⁶. Elengo, 24 years old, was a young, attractive woman with unusual talents and qualities, and a significant personal, movable and immovable, property. This beautiful picture is completed by four boys (Alexander, Konstantin, George and Timoleon) and one girl (Rod-

⁸² See the letter of queen Amalia to her father (June 6, 1847, Athens), in V. Busche, M. Busche (eds), *Anekdotēs epistolēs* cit., p. 263.

⁸³ Letter of Gardikiotes Grivas to Vasos, Athens September 9, 1843, «VMA» cit.

⁸⁴ J.S. Koliopoulos, *Brigands with a cause: brigandage and irredentism in modern Greece, 1821-1912*, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1987, p. 300.

⁸⁵ J.A. Petropoulos, *Politics and Statecraft* cit., p. 412.

⁸⁶ On the economic status and behaviour of the family see more, St. Papageorgiou, I. Pepelasis-Minoglou, *Times kai Agatha stin Athina tou 1834. Koinoniki symperifora kai oikonomikos orthologismos tis oikogenias Vasou Mavrovouniotei* [Prices and Goods in Athens, 1834. Social behaviour and economic rationalism of Vasos Mayrovouniotes family], Athens, 1988, pp. 76-88.

hoessa) – Elengo’s daughter from her first marriage, who was adopted by Vasos⁸⁷.

Vasos and Elengo had married for love, an extremely unusual option at that time, since the marriage usually concluded after consultation of parents without taking into account the opinion of children – especially of the females. These two persons, however, were carriers of two different mentalities and cultural backgrounds. Vasos, on the one hand, was ignorant and illiterate, with knowledge and skills completely empirical and instinctive, and with conservative social and political standards. On the other hand, Elengo, who had lived and grown up in Syros and Kea, i.e. in a more open minded island environment, she was influenced by Westernized social and cultural elements; Elengo being a daughter of a wealthy merchant family, became a literate and intelligent woman with a liberal social point of view and similar political beliefs; she was a person who, sometimes, required more than what could allow to a woman the social framework of that time⁸⁸.

The couple adapted successfully their private and public life, in the new bourgeois environment. The Mavrovouniotes family – without renouncing their old mentality and attitude, but also without completely reject the new social, economic and cultural perceptions – managed to thrive in the newly founded capital city of Athens, following a “dual” way of life, which encompassed traditional and modern elements and striving not to lose their old cultural identity due to the invasion of new ideas, but neither remain tightly closed in the traditional pre-modernistic framework. The family lived in a spacious, adequately furnished house near the royal palace, which gave to their members the opportunity to meet all the requirements for a comfortable living and other social obligations. The house had rooms for one large family and a domestic staff that consisted of maids, servants, a nanny, a cook, a janitor and a groom. In addition to the main house were auxiliary storage facilities and facilities for the housing of domestic animals and poultry (saddle horses, hounds and watchdogs, mules, donkeys, goats chickens, partridges, etc.) Vasos in his public appearances, on horseback, accompanied by an attendant and a Muslim groom, and Elengo, was accompanied by at least one maid – as befits ladies and gentlemen of high social classes since the pre-revolutionary, Ottoman period⁸⁹.

The new social reality enriched their daily, public and private, life with a series of novelties. Now, they hire for children, a French tutor and a music teacher. In the social gatherings of the family is invited la *crème de la crème* of the Ottonian society such as the royal couple, members of the royal court, ministers and other Greeks and Europeans

⁸⁷ Ivi, p. 54.

⁸⁸ Ivi, p. 55.

⁸⁹ On the house of Mavrovouniotes family see ivi, p. 56 & 114-117.

political, administrative and military officials. At these costly gatherings, now called *soirées* [!], are employed European cooks for the preparation of European specialties and European musicians; in turn, the family received similar invitations from other distinguished persons⁹⁰.

Elengo seemed to be more receptive to social innovations. While Vasos almost always wore the traditional clothing (*foustanelła*) of the chieftains of the Ottoman period (which became the uniform of the semi-regular Ottonian army), on the contrary Elengo was spending large sums on “European” clothing, footwear and other accessories (hats, dresses, shoes, handkerchiefs, perfumes etc.)⁹¹. The life of the family, however, was not extravagant and they were trying, to manage their expenses with a sparring hand – but always with dignity and generosity. Their children enjoy special care; they have at their disposal nanny, maids, private tutors, music and French teachers, and their daughter Rodhoessa was attending the prestigious Hill School, an American private school of Protestant missionaries – an institution in which studied girls of established Athenian families. Further, the children were dressed neatly and often received gifts from their parents and other relatives⁹².

The installation of the family in the city of Athens was not severed Vasos long ties with the wider region. There, in the towns and villages of eastern Central Greece was dispersed Vasos’ powerful and branchful clientelistic system, through which he gained political power and thus he negotiated from a position of strength both his military career and his social influence. Furthermore, being Commander of the Border Guard, he divides his time between Athens and Province. In the Province he maintains almost daily direct or by mail contact with his clients (military officers, public servants and magistrates, big landowners and smallholder farmers, local politicians, mayors, peasants, etc.) associated to them, with godparenthood (weddings and baptisms), resolves their various affairs on the spot or he forwards them to resolve in the central government⁹³.

Their marriage had not a happy ending since in 1839 the couple got divorced. A large number of letters of the Mayrovouniotes Archive provide us information about the divorce, which came despite the efforts of friends and relatives to avoid it⁹⁴. Elengo’s life was too freer than it

⁹⁰ Ivi, p. 57. On the consumer behaviour and the nutrition of the family see ivi, pp. 88-114.

⁹¹ On the expenses for clothing, footwear and beautification, see ivi, pp. 118-120.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ A detailed list of the members who made up the clientelistic system of Mayrovouniotes see in St. Papageorgiou, I. Pepelasis-Minoglou, *Times kai Agatha stin Athina tou 1834* cit., pp. 34-37.

⁹⁴ Letter of George Kalkos, July 2, 1839; Letters of Nikolaos Kasomoules, August, 11, 30, September 22, 1839, «VMA» cit.

could allow the conditions of her time and the conservative character of Vasos. Vasos got married for a second time in 1842 with Bilio Economou, with whom he had a daughter named Petra⁹⁵. He died five years later (June 1947) at the age of 50, of pneumonia. Queen Amalia, in letters to her father was mentioned with grief at the illness and the death of Vasos, while highlighting the importance of Vasos presence for the safety of the throne, his influence among his colleagues, and the love of people for the Montenegrin general⁹⁶.

Vasos Mayrovouniotes has been one of the most interesting and characteristic figures of the Greek Revolution. The fugitive of Montenegro and Asia Minor managed to adapt himself in the best way possible to the country that he chose as his new homeland, and to become a leading figure with high influence both in the military and in the political arena. Vasos forms part of that small group of Balkan irregular military men, who, without being member of the traditional Christian elite of professionals soldiers (*martolos*) of the Ottoman period, was managed to join himself in the new military and political elites that emerged from the Greek struggle for national independence, offering his services to the new powerful agent on the southern end of the Balkan Peninsula: the Greek revolutionary administration. Otherwise, it would be extremely doubtful to rise to prominence within the pre-revolutionary Ottoman/Christian framework, where were dominants the traditional elites of the armed *martolos* "aristocracy" and the powerful *Kocabaşis*-landowners.

Mayrovouniotes, served the Greek revolutionary government and the Ottonian regime, and those in turn favoured and endowed him with high military grades and honours, upgraded him, and enabled him to acquire an appreciable political, social and economic standing.

The Mayrovouniotes household constitutes a typical family example, of an emerging social group which managed to join, survive and thrive

⁹⁵ Document No. 12473 of the Military Secretariat-Royal Decree of September 17, 1842, «VMA» cit.

⁹⁶ «Poor Vasos is very ill. I trust my hopes to God that Heaven will keep him alive. He is a truly dedicated, loyal and dignified man of great influence, a brave man who exercises a decisive influence on the Border Guard corps. [...] Before fourteen days he was with us in an equestrian walk and now this strong man, a real giant, struggles with death». Letter of queen Amalia to her father (June 6, 1847, Athens), in V. Busche, M. Busche (eds), *Anekdotas epistoles* cit., II, p. 263. Amalia, eight days later, in another letter to her father (June 13) announced Vasos death: «Poor Vasos died. A really big loss for us. He was loyal, brave, dedicated. His emblem was "God and King". Similar losses are something very sad, especially for us, that we have yet a great need of trusted persons [...] I really mourned for this devout soul. Such a strong, well-build man, in fourteen days fell ill and died! He was a giant [...] Otto visited him, even a few hours before his death. I have never seen such a funeral; thousands followed him. The old soldiers and officers were all deeply moved. Kolettis, say, wept like a child»; and see *ivi*, pp. 60-61.

into the newly established Greek Kingdom because of its possibility to adapt himself in the new post-revolutionary reality. This successful effort kept the family in high social and economic status and after Vasos death. The second generation, his sons, followed the military profession and became generals of the second reign. Next generations, distinguished themselves in the field of military, politics and administration, but also in commercial enterprises. At the same time, the family reinforced its social and economical basis, entering into marriages with members of wealthy and prominent families⁹⁷.

⁹⁷ St. Papageorgiou, I. Pepelasis-Minoglou, *Times kai Agatha stin Athina tou 1834* cit., pp. 60-61.