

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-07597-8 - Narrative of a Second Visit to Greece: Including Facts Connected with the Last Days of Lord Byron, Extracts from Correspondence, Official Documents, Etc.

Edward Blaquiere

Excerpt

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# NARRATIVE,

*&c.*

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## PART I.

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## NARRATIVE,

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As there is scarcely any incident, however minute, connected with a Revolution, destined most probably to influence the future fate of a large portion of the globe, which can be altogether uninteresting to the European public, it may be proper, before alluding to the naval and military events of the fourth campaign, to give some account of the circumstances which led to my detention at Zante, instead of immediately proceeding to the seat of the Provisional Government, as I fully intended on reaching that Island.

While the friends of Greece associated in England, were making every effort to awaken sympathy in favour of the cause, and promote subscriptions throughout the country, the comparative want of success which attended their

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frequent appeals to the public, convinced them, that the only effectual mode of aiding the patriots, was by negotiating a loan which should enable the government to organize a good system of internal polity, and assume the offensive on a scale commensurate with the exigencies of the confederation. It having been shown that the resources of Greece were such as to justify the proposed measure; the arrival of Deputies in London was followed by the long wished for negotiation. Those who are conversant with such matters, assert that the Greek Loan was obtained on very advantageous terms. It may, at all events, be justly regarded as giving rise to a new epoch in the cause; for nothing could more clearly demonstrate the confidence of British capitalists as to the future triumph of the Greeks, while it was justly considered as a virtual acknowledgment of their independence.

Deeply impressed as I had all along been with the claims of Greece, and the importance to the whole civilized world of supporting her unexampled struggle, it is needless to say with what heartfelt satisfaction I hailed the accomplishment of a Greek Loan, or how readily I accepted the proposal of those friends who suggested the propriety of my accompanying the first instalment to the Morea. This being shipped on board a vessel taken up for the occasion, I embarked on the 31st of March, and reached Zante on the 24th of April, after the unusually short passage of

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## COMMISSIONERS.

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nineteen days from Spithead, where we were obliged to take shelter during a strong westerly gale, soon after our departure from the Thames.

While filled with exultation at the prospect of immediately giving new life and vigour to the operations of the war, a combination the most distressing and untoward, rendered it impossible to transfer any part of the money to the Provisional Government. Some accounts being received in England after the loan was negotiated, and by which it appeared that the military faction had obtained a temporary triumph over the people and their representatives, measures of precaution were taken to prevent the funds from falling into improper hands. These consisted in the nomination of three Commissioners\*, who were to meet in Greece, and after examining the state of affairs, to decide as to the time and mode of transferring the loan to the government: although, as it unhappily turned out, this part of the arrangement was liable to various inconveniences, the most unfortunate decision of all, was that of sending the money to one of the Ionian Islands. It was consigned to Mr. Samuel Barff, a highly respectable English merchant of Zante, and M. Logotheti, a native of the island, to be

\* The Commissioners were:—Lord Byron, Mr. Gordon, of Cairness, and Lazzaro Conduriotti, of Hydra. Colonel Leicester Stanhope was to act for Mr. Gordon, until the latter could proceed to Greece.

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retained by them until they received an order for its delivery from the Commissioners.

Although it was natural to expect that some difficulties would arise as to the transfer, I was far from anticipating what actually occurred; my fears were however completely lulled, when I reflected that if even the money was not given up directly, the credit and authority of Lord Byron would obviate every difficulty. Indeed, the fact of my having been among the first to urge the lamented author of *Childe Harold* to hasten his projected visit to Greece, and considering myself as his harbinger, made me most anxious to second his generous intentions, and I had therefore determined to pass over to Messolunghi, on the very day of my arrival at Zante.\* Having

\* Since the above was written, Count Gamba, his Lordship's companion and friend, has put forth his journal, which is entitled to every credit, and a very unaffected detail of Lord Byron's visit to Greece.

As the Count has alluded to the part I took in pressing his departure, and states that his Lordship waited till the middle of July, for the further information I promised to send from the Morea, it may be proper to state, that I addressed a long letter to his Lordship immediately after my arrival at Tripolitza, in the early part of May. This was followed by another, in which I suggested that, in consequence of my intending to return to England by way of Italy, it would perhaps be as well for his Lordship to defer his intended journey until I had an opportunity of communicating personally with him on the state of affairs, and the best mode of accomplishing his plans in favour of Greece.

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anchored there late at night, we had no communication with the shore until the following morning. On our being visited by the pratique master, my first question was, whether Lord Byron was well, and if he still continued at Messolonghi? “His Lordship is dead,” was the reply. I will not attempt to describe the shock occasioned by this ominous and unexpected announcement. I rushed back to the cabin, and remained for some moments without the power of reflection. To have heard that the greatest benefactor of Greece had been thus snatched away, just as his life was of such incalculable importance to her cause, and when I anticipated the satisfaction of seeing him in a few hours, was a blow for which I felt totally unprepared. But severe as it was, I confess I did not, at the time, foresee half the irreparable mischief of which it was destined to become the source.

My plans being thus completely deranged, I had no alternative but that of disembarking at Zante, there to await replies to the expresses which were instantly dispatched to the Provisional Government, Prince Mavrocordato, and Colonel Stanhope. It was during this interval, that I ascertained the following particulars relative to the state of affairs in the Morea.

From the facts stated in my account of the former stages of the revolution, and more especially those connected with the seditious movements of the refractory chiefs during my visit to Tripo-

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litza, in 1823, it might be readily imagined there was no probability of their encouraging the establishment of a regular Government, while the resources of the Executive were insufficient to enable it to organize a permanent military force, independent of those irregular bands which had hitherto looked for support to the captains. Accordingly, Colocotroni and Mavromichalis, prompted by the influence of Delijiannopulo, Primate of Caritena, and aided by the counsels of Metaxa, an adventurer from Cefalonia, having determined to place themselves at the head of affairs, formed a party which enabled them to transfer the legislative assembly from Tripolitza to Salamis. Although this was done under the plea of its being in a better situation for superintending the operations of the third campaign with greater vigour, it had no other object than that of dissolving the Government formed at Astros, and driving Mavrocordato, the declared opponent of their schemes, from his situation of Secretary General. Perceiving that all his efforts to restrain their violence and ambition, proved abortive, the Prince was induced to accept the presidency of the legislative body to which he was unanimously elected early in July: aware, however, of the motives which suggested the transfer to Salamis, and convinced that there was a design to impede all his endeavours in favour of the Nation, without his having the power to prevent its execution, he determined to retire to Hydra, where his influence might be



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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

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most usefully exerted in urging the sailing of the fleet, which had now become of the utmost importance. Zaimis, Primate of Calavrita, and a member of the Executive, also excused himself from proceeding to Salamis, alleging that his presence was necessary before Patrass, to the blockade of which place, General Yatrako was to proceed with a corps of three thousand men, while another under Colocotroni, should occupy the passes between the Isthmus of Corinth and Livadia.

The legislative body proceeded to their new destination early in July, and were soon after followed by Mavromichalis, Colocotroni, Sotiri Carolambi, and Metaxa, as members of the Executive. The deliberations had only been carried on for a few days, under the Bishop of Bresthene, as vice president, when it was plainly perceived that the military chiefs merely wanted to make the representatives of the people the blind instruments of their ignorance and caprice. This state of things soon led to an open breach, which ended in a determination on the part of the former, to throw off the mask at once, and establish a government of absolute force, without any regard to the law of Epidaurus, confirmed as it was by the national will at Astros. Thus shackled in their patriotic labours, it was resolved that the Executive should be left to itself, while the members of the legislative assembly transferred its sittings to Cranidi, a village of the Morea, in the

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vicinity of Hydra and Spezzia. On reaching Hydra, and conferring with the Primates of that island, Mavrocordato found them highly indignant at the conduct of the refractory chiefs of the Peloponnesus, and ready to support the legislative assembly in maintaining the constitution, and carrying on the war. Having extended his enquiries, it appeared that the sentiments of the Hydriotes were warmly participated in by the whole population of the Archipelago. The utmost cordiality being thus established between the legislative body and the islands, the naval operations were conducted with as much spirit as at any former period of the contest. Besides, the fleet of observation sent to cruise off the Dardanelles, and on the coast of Asia Minor, a squadron was placed at the disposal of Mavrocordato, who repaired to Messolonghi, in obedience to the repeated applications of the leading inhabitants there, to assume the government of western Greece. Although a great part of the troops who had been sent to the blockade of Patrass, were forced to disperse, owing to the severity of the season and an epidemic disease that carried off numbers; those who remained, prevented the Turkish garrison from leaving the walls. A large division had been dispatched to Negropont, under Odysseus, who invested Carysto, the key of that important point, when a Turkish squadron, taking advantage of the ab-