



Kapodistrias and the Making of Modern Europe and Modern Greece

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In 1998, Theodoros Pangalos, Greece's Foreign Minister attended an EU Conference of otherwise little note in Brussels. He was half asleep during the sessions until the then President of the Dutch Parliament rose to speak about the common European heritage. The Dutchman proclaimed that a common cultural history united Europe: beginning with feudalism, followed by the Renaissance, the Reformation, the Counter-reformation, the Enlightenment and the French Revolution. This history differentiated Europeans from non-Europeans, a category which the unctuous Dutchman obviously deemed unworthy of membership.

Pangalos suddenly came awake and leaped to his feet to state, in his normal colorful fashion, that the Dutchman had just insulted Greece. Greece had indeed lived through feudalism. It had come to Greece in the form of the Fourth Crusade, the sacking of Constantinople, and the dismembering of the country that virtually depopulated Greece.

Pangalos apparently went on to eviscerate the Dutchman. He described the Renaissance as created by Greek scholars who fled the Turkish conquest. As for the Reformation and Counter Reformation; those were internal civil wars of the Papacy. No one seems to have memorialized Pangalos' comments on the Enlightenment and the French Revolution as his Greek diplomats cringed and mostly tried to quiet him down.

Pangalos' ranting was more or less on point and, in fact, historically quite accurate. But the EU officials present, locked into the notion that Western civilization (quite narrowly defined) provided the gold standard for the world to try to emulate while the history and culture of others rated only academic interest made fun of Pangalos to the other Greeks present. In their eyes he only reinforced the view that Greece was an interloper who should never have been allowed to sit at the European

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table. Unfortunately, I am told that the Greek diplomats present at the conference only reinforced that arrogance by apologizing for their Minister.

One great man, one of the greatest diplomats of any century, would have understood Pangalos and would have fully agreed. Greece had indeed missed those seminal Western events. The four centuries of Ottoman night had effectively frozen Greek political and cultural thought in the late Middle Ages. A dynamic people had their hands full maintaining their physical and cultural survival. That great man would have probably made his case more effectively had he been in Pangalos' place but, unfortunately, he had died one hundred and fifty years earlier.

Outside Switzerland and Greece, few remember Ioannis Kapodistrias. The Swiss honor him as the creator of their constitutional structure. Greeks have romanticized him but have only recently acknowledged his failed attempt to create a strong and, above all, functional Greek state. Kapodistrias combined skills, experience and wisdom in one person a consummate and effective diplomat. . . . He midwived three independent countries, challenged and defeated some of the most powerful leaders of his time by force of personality and diplomatic dexterity, and died trying to put his own country on the road to success. The tragic assassination of Ioannis Kapodistrias, medical doctor, governor, political leader, law giver and above all diplomat probably has more to do with the parlous condition of modern Greece than any other single event.

We should not be surprised that Kapodistrias hailed from that one small part of Greece that had indeed lived through the several eras exalted by our Dutch friend: the Seven Islands of the Ionian Sea. Seven centuries of mostly Venetian colonialism had insulated the islands from the mind-deadening Ottoman experience. The Ionian islanders participated, as a subjected people, in those eras that define Western European culture. Perhaps "participate" does not fully describe their experience. The "Septanesians" (the "Seven Islanders" of the Ionian Sea) were at once beneficiaries and victims of those events. Many of their citizens studied in Italy and further afield. Their merchant marine continued to sail after the Turks shut down the rest of Greece. To this day, the physical environment that differentiated Venetian-controlled Greece from the areas under Turkish occupation is still visible. Barren scrub covers much of the mainland landscape opposite Lefkada in what we once called Roumeli. As you cross the ferry-bridge to Lefkada, you find yourself in a verdant densely forested landscape. If for no other reason, the Venetians deserve our gratitude for this as well as a continuity of literacy and urban life. On the darker side, the Venetians milked the islands for their oil and wine and other products, reduced the islanders to serfdom on their own land, and imposed a hereditary aristocracy, part-Italian and part-homegrown, to misgovern and oppress the rest of the population.

Ioannis Kapodistrias was born in 1776 (the year America declared its independence) to a distinguished Corfiote family in Kerkyra. His father Antonios Maria Kapodistrias (Αντώνιος Μαρία Καποδίστριας) was a nobleman, as well as a distinguished artist and a not-too-corrupt politician named His ancestors came to Kerkyra from Istria—now part of Croatia—when Venice acquired Kerkyra and the other Ionian Islands as part of the booty from the Crusader dismembering of the Byzantine Empire in 1204. For reasons not recorded, the family converted to Orthodoxy from Catholicism early on. Perhaps like the Tocco family that ruled Lefkas and Ithaki, the family discovered that oppression was better endured if the feudal landlord shared your religion. Nevertheless, the family prospered and its name was inscribed in the Libro d’Oro, the list of Corfiote nobility in 1679.

Ioannis Kapodistrias studied medicine, philosophy and law at the University of Padua, the second oldest university in Italy. In terms of his education, Ioannis Kapodistrias was a Victorian man long before the term was invented. He returned to Kerkyra in 1797 at the age of 21, a period of great turmoil, to begin his practice of medicine. Napoleon had defeated Venice in 1795 and France had occupied the Ionian Islands setting up a so-called “republican” regime that aimed at displacing the native aristocrats. A joint Russo-Turkish force drove out the French in 1799. The Russians forced the Ottomans to accept the creation of an independent state named the Septinsular State (Eptanesios Politia) ruled by the old nobility. Kapodistrias became one of two Ministers ruling the new republic in place of his father whose health prevented him from accepting the office. Thus, at the age of 25, Kapodistrias became de facto head of the new state. By sheer force of personality combined with great personal energy, courage and brilliance, Kapodistrias, made himself both successful and popular. He faced down several local revolts without bloodshed and persuaded the Islands’ populations to remain united and disciplined to avoid foreign intervention. With peaceful determination, Kapodistrias established the authority of his government in all the seven islands. After elections for a new Senate, Kapodistrias was unanimously appointed as Chief Minister of State and drafter and secured approval of a less feudal and more liberal and democratic constitution. He also organized the Ionian public sector, putting particular emphasis on education and established the credibility of the new state in the Mediterranean. There are some reports that indicate that the Greek forces accompanying the American marines in the war against the Barbary Pirates were actually a battery of field artillery from the newly organized Army of the Septinsular Republic. He also found time while governing to act as chief medical director of the military hospital and establish the National Medical Association, an important scientific and social progress organization in Kerkyra.

Unfortunately, the tide of war changed back in favor of Napoleon. In 1807 the French re-occupied the islands and dissolved the Septinsular Republic. Fortunately for Kapodistrias, he had gained the attention and admiration of a Russian diplomat of Zakynthian origin, who took Kapodistrias to Russia and helped him get into the Imperial Russian diplomatic service.

In 1809 Kapodistrias entered the personal service of Tsar Alexander I. The Tsar sent him on his first important mission, in November 1813, as unofficial Russian Ambassador to Switzerland with instructions to disentangle Switzerland from French dominance while preventing Austria from taking over. He accomplished this task with dexterity, cleverness and no small amount of subterfuge. The Swiss people today regard him as one of the founders of Swiss unity, independence and neutrality. In addition, he personally played an important role in drafting a new constitution for Switzerland that enshrined a federal structure made up of nineteen autonomous cantons. Finally, he secured a Great Power guarantee for Switzerland's status at the Congress of Vienna which ended the Napoleonic Wars in 1815.

Despite serving an Imperial master who ruled his vast country with an iron fist, Kapodistrias designed a liberal republican federal constitution for Switzerland. He understood that effective government must be based upon the characteristics and conditions of the country for which it is designed. In Switzerland he succeeded dramatically, accommodating the conservative but republican preferences of a population separated into numerous mountain valleys.

By now he was acting as Russia's representative at the Congress. Challenging the paramount influence of the Austrian minister, Prince Metternich, Kapodistrias secured the unity of defeated France, albeit under the restored Bourbon kings. His brilliant diplomatic successes convinced Tsar Alexander I to name him joint Foreign Minister of Russia.

In the process he incurred the deep enmity of Prince Metternich because he pushed Russian policy towards advocating a more liberal European political system and resisted Austrian attempts at European dominance. This so infuriated Metternich that he wrote to a friend: "Kapodistrias is not a bad man, but honestly speaking he is a complete and thorough fool, a perfect miracle of wrong-headedness...He lives in a world to which our minds are often transported by a bad nightmare."

Metternich spent the next several years trying to destroy Kapodistrias whose ideas threatened Metternich's vision of a rigid despotic Concert of Europe. Metternich was a master of insinuation and he attempted to actively undermine Kapodistrias by rumors and innuendo because he viewed him as the only man capable of counterbalancing Metternich's own influence on the Russian court. Ultimately,

Kapodistrias resigned his position as Foreign Minister after the outbreak of the Greek revolution but retained influence in the Russian court, an influence that slowly liberalized Russian attitudes towards Europe in the next two decades.

Kapodistrias went into private medical and legal practice in Geneva, which had granted him citizenship for his services to the establishment of the modern Swiss state. However, he stayed keenly interested in the cause of his native country Greece and in particular the state of affairs in the Seven Islands. In 1815, the British had expelled the French and established a “protectorate” over the islands. The British ruled, typically colonial, through a few local noble puppets who provoked real grievances and frequent bloody revolts by the islanders, especially in Cephalonia and Lefkada. In 1819 Kapodistrias went to London to discuss the islanders' grievances but the British government gave him the cold shoulder because they saw him as an agent of the Tsar.

Kapodistrias retired to Geneva and worked hard supporting the Greek revolution as a member of the *Filiki Etairia*. He never stopped trying to get the Tsar's support for the Greek revolution against the Turks and finally succeeded after Ibrahim Pasha, Turkey's Egyptian ally, invaded Greece with an Army officered by exiled Napoleonic officers. In 1827, the newly formed Greek National Assembly surprised Kapodistrias, the most illustrious Greek-born politician in Europe, by electing him as the first head of state of newly liberated Greece, with the title of Kyvernetes (Κυβερνήτης – Governor). He returned to Greece landing in Nafplion in 1827 to take up his duties. He had, while living in Geneva, drawn up very precise plans for how the new Greece was to be governed.

Kapodistrias was singularly well suited for the job. He was a product of three civilizations, Greek, Western European and Russian. He understood that governing systems had to be appropriate to the environment of the governed. He had already designed a governing system that has made Switzerland the politically most placid and boring country in Europe. Now he was challenged to do the same for Greece.

I believe that Kapodistrias, as Greek, European, and Russian knew full well what made Greeks unique and different from western Europeans. I believe he clearly had in mind the establishment of a modern Hellenic state based on indigenous principles ~~and~~ without copying foreign models. He was a man of knowledge and understanding far beyond his peers, informed by his almost ecumenical experience and not locked into traditional patterns. How else could he, the servant of the Russian autocrat and a scion of European nobility, have designed a federal republican government for Switzerland?

In truth, Kapodistrias left little written record of what he thought so we must turn to informed analysis and some speculation based on what he tried to do. He action

indicates that he was informed by a view of a Greek world with the following characteristics:

1. A Common Cooperative Decentralized *Politia*
2. The Integration of Religion and the *Politia*
3. A Society Divided Horizontally, Not Vertically
4. Farmer-Merchants, Not Peasants
5. Military Service as identity and Citizenship

A Common Cooperative Decentralized Politia:

Europeans look at Athens as the paradigm of the ancient Greek state and cannot get their minds around the idea that Athens was only one of many Greek states united by bonds of tribe, language and religion and capable of acting in concert. A Greek *politia* has existed since the earliest historical records. The Trojan War was the first literary and historical example of a single polity consisting of scores of semi-independent political units united in a massive military effort to achieve a common objective, not the rescue of Helen but controlling the Hellespont, vital to the trade of the day.

The Trojan War must not be regarded as some mythical adventure conjured up by the troubadours with Homer as their editor. Egyptian temple records note that the “islands in the north” were in turmoil and that refugees fled to Egypt and Palestine immediately after that turmoil. Hittite records indicate that a Hittite vassal city, whose name sounds very much like Ilion, sent repeated pleas for help against a siege being conducted by an invasion force whose Hittite name could be pronounced Achaeans led by a King whose name sounded very much like Agamemnon. Greek city-states did regard themselves as part of a single polity in 1187 BC and many times again in later wars against the Persians and other foreign foes. Their unity was not perfect but it worked.

The next great Greek period, Byzantium, also followed a pattern. Although a single empire, its internal organization provided for immense local autonomy in municipal governance and even in military matters. The Emperor in Constantinople was the War Leader and the Law Giver responsible in effect for the conduct of national security, the courts and the currency. The armed forces consisted both of professional Imperial troops, the *tagmata*, and the individual defense forces of each town and province, the *themata*. The *themata*, locally recruited and armed, took combat doctrine from the central system but were formidable forces in their own. As an example, the same crusaders who sacked Constantinople in 1204 had previously attempted to take Kerkyra and had been soundly defeated by the local forces fighting alone. Each province ran its own affairs and managed its own guilds for trade, manufacture and agriculture. The system continued to function, however imperfectly, during Ottoman times. The Ottoman Sultans rented individual provinces to governors who then tried to

collect enough taxes to make a profit. Each subject province worked out its own deal. One of the most successful, Chios, had an inordinately well designed system of internal government—the *demogerontes*—which was more or less democratically elected and which had bargained the Ottoman Governors into granting a degree of self-government that the island never achieved even after becoming part of modern Greece.

A Society Divided Horizontally Not Vertically

Western Europe is different than Greece. Early on in my career I learned that the Adriatic and Ionian Seas separate us much more than one would think. West of the Adriatic, society divides itself horizontally by class. In Greece and further east, loyalties are vertical, divided by locality in Greece and by tribe in the Arab world.

The European nobility and royalty saw themselves as a single class, unified by blood and not by language or geography. A Polish aristocrat identified with a French aristocrat and not with the Polish peasants. Polish peasants, French peasants, and Prussian peasants had long since learned to knuckle under to whatever feudal lord occupied the local castle. The idea that the local lord owed his peasants any favors other than his own self-interest was alien to his mind.

A class system based on blood ties and interrelationships also forms the basis for the concept of hereditary monarchy. In the West, culture legitimizes hereditary monarchy. Even revolutionary republicans who overthrow monarchs fear the return of their offspring. A culture that accepts hereditary monarchy means that kings move easily and comfortably from one nation's throne to another nation's throne. The current Queen of England descends from the Dutch kings; the current Spanish royal family is a branch of the French Bourbons. .

Classical Greek society never regarded heredity as giving legitimacy to the claim to rule. Throughout our history, Greeks have believed that kings or rulers by any name had to earn their power either as war leaders or lawgivers. In fact, some scholars have interpreted the *Iliad* as indicating that the nobles could question the legitimacy of the heir to the throne as in the case of Telemachos. During most of Byzantine history, the Senate, although appointed, had to confirm the Emperor. Rulers, of course, will do whatever possible to ensure that their sons would inherit power but that does not confer legitimacy.

We must ask why do Greeks, whether in Greece or the diaspora, often begin a conversation by asking, "Where are you from?" The "from" is not where you might happen to live today but where your ancestors came from, even if attenuated. How else to explain the fact the proliferation of local societies: the "*topika somatia*?" I belong to the Hiotiko *somatio*, my wife dragged me into the Laconian society and we have just kicked

off the “Ionian Society” after several failed efforts to get critical mass for a “*lefkaditiko somatio*.” This makes Greeks unique. If you take the Irish-Americans, perhaps the only other hyphenated group that still maintains the same emotional feelings about “the old country,” they may hail from County, or Donegal or Kilkenny, but they don’t associate those areas with their Irishness. I have no idea but I imagine there are a thousand times more people descending from County Cork than from Lefkada in this area but they don’t even try to make their *somatia* below the national level. They belong only to the St. Patrick’s Society. In the Greek shipping world, a Hioti ship-owner employees Hiotes first and then looks outside. The same takes place in Andros and most everywhere else.

Most European states have been highly centralized since they arose out of the swamp of the Middle Ages. In France, the king broke the power of the feudal aristocracy by moving them all to Paris and appointing governors in each department; a system that continues today.

The Integration of Religion and the *Politia*:

Greeks, unlike Western Europe, since time immemorial, integrated religion into the fabric of their national identity and their political life. The *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* are as much religious texts as they are political and military. Dr. Joan Breton Connelly, a distinguished archeologist and classical scholar has offered a “Greek” interpretation of the Parthenon’s frieze. Connelly argues that the frieze in fact celebrated a mythical tale of human sacrifice. That may come as a surprise to those who have projected an idealized, post-Enlightenment version of democracy on to the Parthenon—a version mirroring our current preference for the primacy of individual rights and of reason over belief. Connelly argues the Parthenon’s frieze broadcast a much different message to the battle-hardened citizens of ancient Athens: Democracy, she writes, is “no mere political arrangement but ultimately a spiritual one.” For Dr. Connelly, the polis and the gods are deeply intertwined. Inter-polis relationships throughout pre-Christian Greece centered around religious institutions such as the Delian League. The constant references to the Oracle at Delphi and the sacred observation of the Olympic truce were all a symbiotic and synergistic relationship between religion and state.

For Greeks, religion identifies and unifies. Ancient Greek religion unified but allowed for local variation. Greek Orthodox Christianity unified and identified but allows for local variation, such as the local saints. We made Christianity look like our ancient religion.

For Greeks religion is not a separate part of our political lives. Rather it is closely integrated but as an arm of the *politia*, not as a separate entity. In the Parthenon, formal religion served the Athenian state. In larger Greece, the temple at Delos, the Oracle at Delphi all served the needs of the Greek *politia*. The Greek Orthodox Church served the

interests of the Byzantine Empire and not of the Church. Emperors hired and fired patriarchs. Emperors convened Ecumenical Councils, not Patriarchs. The Empress Theodora restored the icons, not the Church hierarchy. The Church provided the social safety net and the educational system of the Empire and served as arm of its foreign policy. Examples include missionary work in Russia and eastern Europe. That the Church does not play that role today, I believe, in part, because Mavromichalis murdered Kapodistrias.

Western Europe had no such experience. Western European history begins with the fall of the Rome and the barbarian Invasions. The Roman Empire decisively eliminated all important vestiges of pre-Roman polities. After Rome fell a single transnational, highly centralized religious institution, whose philosophical roots lay in the political and legal legacy of the later Roman Empire, imposed itself across the whole of Europe. The Roman Catholic Church never pretended to be a Church of the people of Europe, let alone the Church of any particular ethnic or linguistic group. It is no accident that the Roman Church banned married priests. It had to maintain a posture of being above the laity, not part of it. The Church monopolized learning via an alien language used as internal jargon by the clergy and used a multiplicity of religious punishments as tools to keep secular government under heel. Western Europeans may have belonged to the Church; they never felt the Church belonged to them. “Η Εκκλησία είναι δια τον άνθρωπον και όχι ο άνθρωπος δια την εκκλησίαν” is a Greek concept not a Latin one.

Farmer-Merchants Not Peasants

Greek uniqueness can also be found in ancient patterns of economic life that continued until quite recently. Greek villagers were never peasants in the economic sense of the word. Peasants, the pattern throughout most of western Europe, are agriculturalists who families and communities produce almost everything they need to survive. Usually they traded only a small surplus at local markets and little of what they made traveled very far. From the dawn of Greek history, the Greek agriculturalist has been a “truck farmer” which Merriam’s defines as “a horticultural practice of growing one or more vegetable crops on a large scale for shipment to distant markets.” Greek peasants owned their land.

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Military Service as identity and Citizenship

Unlike western Europe, Greek society has since its historical record began, always conflated the rights of citizenship with universal (male) military service. Every ancient polis without exception required males to complete their military service before they could achieve any of their rights as citizens. Sparta took it to an extreme, as usual, insisting that young men could not marry and have citizen children until they had served until age thirty in the army. In Sparta’s decline, the state offered citizenship to helots who successfully completed military service. Even in autocratic Byzantium, military service guaranteed families in the lower economic classes free possession of their land and a guarantee against foreclosure by creditors. As noted, above the very effective Byzantine *themata*, the local forces depended on the compulsory service of landowners, large and small. The decline of the Byzantine state’s power tracks neatly with the substitution of mercenaries for citizen-soldiers. Even today, with Greece’s soft western-oriented society, the general populace supported Prime Minister Samaras’ refusal to accede to the demands by the EU troika to abolish compulsory military service and depend on all-volunteer professional forces as is slowly becoming the norm in the rest of the EU.

Feudalism in western Europe grew out of a systematic monopoly of military power reserved for the nobility. The peasantry served very short stints, up to forty days, received little in the way of training and equipment, and general died in outrageously disproportionate numbers. The European nobility preferred to hire nobly led mercenary

companies if they needed reinforcement or continuity. In fact, compulsory military service did not become the standard in Europe until the French Revolution mobilized an entire country. The Cold War and fear of the Soviets forced retention of a system of compulsory military service. Its end has seen fast-growing transition to small professional forces throughout western Europe. The US, firmly rooted in western European culture, has transitioned to a small professional force supplemented by a larger force of mercenaries, euphemistically referred to as “contractors.”

Returning to Ioannis Kapodistrias, he assumed office as Governor of Greece and, with his customary energy and determination, set about the wholesale reorganization of the new Greek state. His first act was to create new armed forces. The rebellion had been conducted by the armed bands of the guerrilla leaders (the *καπεταναίοι*), more warlords than real leaders, who were primarily from Mani and Roumeli and the naval privateers led by the merchant families of Hydra, Spetsai and Psara. These were, in reality, private militias rather than true armed forces. Having defeated the Ottomans Turks in the early stages of the Greek Revolution, the *καπεταναίοι* turned on each other and started a civil war. The *καπεταναίοι* even jailed the one competent professional Greek military leader, Kolokotronis, while the privateers at sea all went home. When the Sultan enlisted the aid of his Egyptian vassal, Mohammed Ali, to suppress the Revolution, the forces of the *καπεταναίοι* proved worse than useless. The French-trained Egyptian army under Ibrahim Pasha scattered the undisciplined Greek militias at every encounter, even when the Greeks outnumbered them. The privateers fared somewhat better, surviving naval engagements but not being able to prevent the movements of the Turco-Egyptian fleet. Kapodistrias, largely with Russian assistance, formed a small regular army and navy that was able to meet the Egyptians in the field on more even terms and reconquer territory lost by the warlords.

After the end of the Revolution, the *καπεταναίοι* immediately challenged his rule on land and sea. The new, very small regular Greek army forces easily overwhelmed the warlords in Nafplion, the new capital, by taking the fortress of Bouri that dominated the harbor. The regular army, largely officered by Russians or Greeks from the Russian army, also defeated an attempt by Petrobey Mavromihalis to overthrow the newly appointed governor of Laconia. The Island of Hydra then ordered Admiral Miaoulis to challenge the new government, which was attempting to take over tax collection from individual island administration. Kapodistrias sent a Russian-led flotilla to blockade Miaoulis in Poros. With Miaoulis unable to break out of the blockade, Poros and Miaoulis surrendered. However, demonstrating the difference between a patriotic leader and a warlord, Miaoulis blew up his ships, including the most capable ship under Greek control, the American-built frigate *Hellas*, a gift from New England Phil-Hellenes. This loss crippled the new Greek navy for a decade.

Kapodistrias established the first modern quarantine system in Greece, which brought epidemics like typhoid fever, cholera and dysentery under control for the first time in centuries. He negotiated with the Great Powers and the Ottoman Empire the independence and borders of the Greek state and signed the peace treaty that ended the War of Independence. He created the first modern Greek currency, the phoenix, and set up a national bank. In an effort to raise the living standards of the population, he introduced the cultivation of the potato into Greece.

Many of us know the story that Kapodistrias tried to hand out potatoes to anyone interested but a suspicious population proved reluctant to accept the offer. One historian, Elaine Themopoulos tells the story: "The legend continues, that he then ordered that the whole shipment of potatoes be unloaded on public display on the docks of Nafplion, and placed it under guard to make the people believe that they were valuable. Soon, people would gather to look at the guarded potatoes and some started to steal them. The guards had been ordered in advance to turn a blind eye to such behavior, and soon the potatoes had all been 'stolen' and Kapodistrias' plan to introduce them to Greece had succeeded."

Kapodistrias also began an internal reorganization of the Greek state. Although the literature is sparse and often inconsistent it appears that Kapodistrias planned to make the various traditional areas of Greece (Laconia, Arcadia, etc.) into quasi-autonomous "cantons" along the lines of what he had established in Switzerland. He began by appointing his own prefects in these regions, displacing the local warlords who had taken over since the Revolution. This led to the revolt by Mavromichalis as mentioned above, and its immediate suppression.

Finally, Kapodistrias took the bold step of challenging the *καπεταναίοι*, chiefly the independent Maniates, but also the Roumeliotes and the rich and influential merchant families of Hydra, Spetses and Psara. As noted above the Hydriotes collected customs fees for most of Greece but refused to hand it over to the Kapodistrias government, leading to the naval action at Poros. He also refused to convene a National Assembly until his reforms were in place. He took his boldest and riskiest step by instituting a land reform project, breaking up the large estates and returning them to the villagers who actually farmed them. These large estates were controlled by the *καπεταναίοι* who had taken over properties (*tsiflikia*) abandoned by the fleeing Turkish landlords. The *tsiflikia* were cultivated by Greek villagers who were, in fact, little more than serfs. In some cases, the Turkish landlords actually turned over their land to the local wealthy Greeks in hopes that they would get it back if they crushed the revolution. In 1831, Kapodistrias ordered the imprisonment of Petrobey Mavromichalis the Bey of Mani, one of the wildest and most rebellious parts of Greece. This was a mortal offence to the Mavromichalis family, and on October 9, 1831 Kapodistrias was assassinated by

Petrobey's brother Constantinos and his son Georgios on the steps of the church of St. Spyridon in Nafplion.

Avgustinos Kapodistrias, his younger brother, succeeded Ioannis Kapodistrias as Governor. Avgustinos ruled only for six months of chaos. The *καπεταναίοι* reasserted power with the support of various foreign powers. They accepted the foreign appointment of a King of Greece selected from the royal house of Europe (Bavaria) most affected by mental illness and set about the establishment of a highly centralized Greek polity that they could loot at their leisure. The author reserves that discussion for another time but strongly believes that the current problems of Greece are rooted in Mavromichalis murdering Kapodistrias.

Kapodistrias' written records leave us little information of his political philosophy, but his actions speak loudly. His experience as an Ionian Islander, a Greek with an Italian education and his history as a Russian diplomat gave him an understanding that Greeks had the unique national heritage of being the Mother Culture of Europe (Western and Eastern) and of the Eastern Mediterranean (Christian and Muslim).

Ioannis Kapodistrias can with justice be considered the most brilliant and accomplished Greek leader during the Revolution. But more than a brilliant Greek, he was perhaps one of the most brilliant men of his generation. He also was probably unique in his generation in understanding his country, western Europe, and eastern Europe better than any of his contemporaries and perhaps better than any of us today.

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