It has been assumed very often that Byron’s prudent attempts to assess the situation before moving to the mainland were a rationalization of his reluctance to leave a place he found agreeable. What good he could have done by going to the seat of war a few weeks earlier I do not know, and, venturing an opinion that many must have held but few or none expressed, I think it a thousand pities that he did not remain in Cephalonia altogether and let us into the secret of what happened between Don Juan and ‘her frolic Grace—Fitz-Fulke’. He could still have exercised considerable influence merely by providing and raising money and administering the loan: in fact, he might have prevented some of the disgraceful peculations which took place after his death both in England and in Greece itself; and we should have had several more cantos of our greatest comic epic. – Doris Langley Moore.

Had Byron not been susceptible to the flattery and blandishments of Prince Alexander Mavrocordatos, he would not have crossed from Cephalonia to mainland Greece at the end of 1823, and would not have died in such stupid and miserable circumstances. But Mavrocordatos was a real politician, who knew how to manipulate people, and Byron was, for all his sophistication, an amateur and a “romantic”, wide open to manipulation. Mavrocordatos, as may be seen by the first two items here below, saw Byron coming. For his part, Byron describes Mavrocordatos as “the only Washington or Kosciusko kind of man amongst them” (this admittedly in a letter to the even more innocent Augusta).

Mavrocordatos (1791-1865) was a Phanariote – his “Princely” title was a Turkish one. He studied at Padua, and in Pisa (before Byron came) he gave Mary Shelley Greek lessons in exchange for instruction in English. He never writes to Byron in that language, though Mary assures Peacock that “he can read English perfectly well”.

P.B. Shelley appears to have felt ambivalent about Mavrocordatos (he only praises him when he’s left Pisa), despite which he dedicated Helas to him. His ambivalence may be understood when we read what Mary wrote to Claire Clairmont about her Greek tutor:

1: Lord Byron Accounts Rendered, p.390.
2: Byron to Augusta Leigh, October 12th 1823: text from NLS Ms. 43479; BLJ XI 44-7.
Prince Mauro is a man much to my taste—gentlemanly—gay learned and full of talent & enthusiasm for Greece—he gave me a Greek lesson & staid till 8 o’clock … He talked about many things as you may guess in that time—with a frankness & gentleness beyond what I have before seen in him & which was the best and a conclusive answer to what has been said of his irregular life.5

Charm seems to have been a vital factor in Mavrocordatos’ relationships with western Europeans. His spectacles, and European dress, helped. He convinces Byron that Byron’s “Westminster mind-set” is an accurate tool for the assessment of the chaos that is Greece, and Byron falls for it.

After the War of Independence Mavrocordatos was made President of the Greek Executive, but “severe tensions” between him and Theodore Colocotronis, who (as we would say), took out a contract on him, forced him into internal exile, and it is in this situation that his correspondence with Byron takes place. He made his headquarters at Missolonghi, the fortification and civil organisation of which he improved greatly.

In 1822, with no military experience, he had led the Greek forces, heavily reinforced with philhellenes from western Europe, at the battle of Peta. Impeded by Greek treachery, he lost the battle, and many of the first wave of philhellenes perished. In later years, under King Otto, he was Greek Minister of Finance, ambassador to Munich, Berlin, and London, and finally the head of government.

At Missolonghi, relations between Byron and Mavrocordatos were cool. Julius Millingen reports:

One evening while, as usual, the English gentlemen, then at Mesolonghi, were at Lord Byron’s house enjoying the never-failing charm of his society, Mavrocordato entered the room, at a moment, the conversation was most interesting. His lordship received him in a very cool manner; and answered him, with some degree of peevishness; and, notwithstanding Mavrocordato’s artful manner of introducing the business, that interested him most, he constantly turned the conversation to another subject. Annoyed to see the prince returning again and again to the charge, Lord Byron got up, and began walking up and down the room. Finding that Mavrocordato persisted in not taking the hint; he could no longer refrain his ill humour; but addressing us, in English, begun by saying: he wished that d—d botherer would regale us with his absence; that he sat there with as much obstinacy, as the Israelites, who during the earlier part of his life had often made him unpleasant visits to solicit payment, &c. Although Mavrocordato understood every word, he judged it more advisable to overlook this affront; he continued the conversation, therefore, as if he had not heard a single word; and shortly after withdrew with as smiling and agreeable a look, as when he first entered the room.

On observing to Lord Byron, that the prince had undoubtedly understood every word he had been uttering, he merely replied: “I trust he has.”6

Byron’s comparison between Mavrocordatos and the moneylenders who, in his youth, had exploited his weaknesses, says it all. But it is made too late.

It’s strange that Byron, the great foe of cant, should seem sufficiently deaf to the cant of Mavrocordatos (“une jalousie noble remplacera, sous vos yeux, leurs anciennes inimités, ils voudront se faire distinguer, et ils feront des miracles”: “Vos conseils seront écoutes comme des oracles”) to yield to his persuasion, and cross to Missolonghi. In fact it’s impossible to believe that he was so deaf, and account has to be taken of other motives which led him to Greece in the first place. His letter to his steward Lega Zambelli (February 2nd 1824) gives a brief insight into the other motives, and the disillusion, parallel to his political disillusion, which they met.

Only two of Byron’s letters to Mavrocordatos have been found.

Gamba: Gamba, Pietro. A Narrative of Lord Byron’s Last Journey to Greece, (John Murray, 1825).

Metropolitan Ignatius of Arta,7 to Byron, June 21st to July 3rd 1823:

5: Bennett, op. cit., I p.182.
6: Millingen, p.104. George Finlay, in a marginal comment in his copy of Millingen’s book now in the library of the British School at Athens, reveals that only he was with Byron and Mavrocordatos in the room when this incident occurred. He doesn’t deny that it happened. My thanks to Stephen Minta for this information.
7: In fact, ex-Metropolitan: he was a friend of Capodistrias, the Russian Foreign Minister (Clogg p.110).
La terre, que vous allez visiter, My Lord, dans ce moment, vous la trouverez encore plus dévastée de ce qu’elle était lors de votre premier voyage en Grèce, mais en revanche vous connaîtrez dans ses habitants des dignes fils de leurs ancêtres et encore plus dignes de porter le nom des fils de la Grèce. Les Grecs attendaient le moment pour faire connaître que le sang de leurs pères coulait encore dans leurs veines; et lorsque ce moment est arrivé ils nous ont fait voir que leurs exploits sont aussi sublimes, aussi nobles, aussi grands, que ceux de ces héros, qui furent conduits par les Thémistocles, les Miltiades et les Leonidas. Au milieu de ces vertus, vous trouverez, My Lord, aussi de la confusion et du désordre; mais votre bonté saura les excuser et en attribuer la cause, partie à l’ignorance, partie à cet esprit d’indépendance personnelle propre au caractère du Grec, et partie enfin à la nouveauté de leur état. Mais l’ordre dans les sociétés ne se forme que par le temps, et c’est au temps que nous devons confier l’établissement de l’ordre.

Vous aurez occasion, My Lord, de voir notre marine, qui, comme je l’espère, attirera votre attention, et parmi nos héros je dois vous recommander particulièrement le brave Marco Botsaris et ses Souliotes.

**Translation:** You will find, my Lord, that the land you are visiting is much more devastated than it was on your first voyage there; but by contrast you will find its inhabitants to be worthy sons of their ancestors, and worthy once more to be called sons of Greece. The Greeks have been awaiting the moment to show the world that the blood of their fathers flows still in their veins; and now that the moment has arrived they have shown us that that their exploits are as sublime, as noble, as great, as those of the heroes led by Themistocles, Miltiades, and Leonidas. In the midst of this greatness, my Lord, you will find confusion and disorder as well; but your goodness will know to excuse them, and to attribute their cause, partly to ignorance, partly to that spirit of independence proper to the Greek character, and partly to the novelty of their state. But order in society is only created by time, and it is to time that we must leave the creation of order. / You will have occasion, my Lord, to see our fleet, which, I hope, will attract your attention, and from amongst our heroes I must especially recommend to you Marcos Botsaris and his Souliots.

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**Metropolitan Ignatius to Mavrocordatos, July 29th 1823:**
(Source: Nora Liassis, … ‘a cult of Lord Byron’ in Captain Corelli’s Mandolin, in Marios Byron Raizis [ed.] Byron: A Poet for All Seasons, Missolonghi 2000, p.220; and Robin Fletcher, Byron in Greek Literature, at Clogg I p.229.

I recommend Lord Byron to you; he must have arrived at Zakynthos by now … Do whatever you can to please him, not so much because he can spend and really help, but more so because if he’s dissatisfied he could do more harm than you have bargained for. Let the government show every sign of a good welcome and honour to the man, because good references and good testimony from him are of essential importance.

**Byron to Mavrocordatos, from Cefalonia, October 1st 1823:**
(In Italian. Translation only from BLJ XI 36-8)

**The original is in Pietro Gamba’s hand. Mavrocordatos replies on October 21st.**

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8: Markos Botsaris (1788-1823). He was killed in battle before he and Byron could meet.
9: I have yet to discover M’s first two letters to B.
No one is surprised, certainly, that discords are awakened in a country that has undergone a revolution and only just escaped from so long and so barbarous a tyranny; but I cannot conceal my displeasure – and also the hope that I had, encouraged by the honourable examples of the past years, – that in a war in which the Greeks did not fight for Political theories, nor for Independence only, but for their very existence, they would be able to keep themselves far away from those very serious evils that always manifest themselves in all Revolutions. My fallen hope changes to dread when I think of the consequences that this discord can bring – of the advantages and of the opportunities that it can offer to those Barbarians your oppressors – to the coolness that it will produce in all those interested in your cause, that is, all friends of Enlightenment and Humanity – and to the pretexts that it might lend to the natural enemies of liberty to meddle in Greek affairs, with the collapse of all the noble hopes of the good people. In spite of every deplorable circumstance, my feeling for your cause will certainly remain uncharged – and when the opportunity presents itself to me to be really useful to your country, I will not hold myself back from doing so because of dangers or sacrifices or for any other less noble reason. Before your letters reached me I had sent two Englishmen,\(^\text{10}\) my comrades, to the Government in the Morea, from whom I am still awaiting a reply. Nothing would be dearer to me than to work with you in this cause – but I have explained the reasons to you that hold me back. And then the state of things up to now seems such, that I do not see how or what a foreigner might do that could be of benefit to Greece and to the honour of himself. Therefore, it is very likely that I may decide to remain here watching until a better opportunity is offered to me.

I wrote to the Primates of Hydra thanking them for their kind offers, and in order not to duplicate the letters, I beg you to give my respects to Signor Luriotti and Signor Tricoupi, who were so kind as to write to me by means of Signor Praidi.\(^\text{11}\) Confident that circumstances will be more favourable, and that the generous efforts of your compatriots, in which you have taken such a glorious part [will triumph] – with every most profound sentiment of esteem and respect, I declare myself Your Excellency’s most devoted servant

\[\text{[Signature excised]}\]

P.S. – From the most recent news received from the Committee, I have learned that an Artillery Brigade with experienced campaigners – with expert officers – with Congreve rockets and persons trained in using them and in constructing them – have been sent to Greece under my direction. If your deputies had arrived in England sooner, they would have arranged a loan without great difficulties, which now may be greatly augmented by the knowledge of your dissensions – and probably the Greek government’s bills of exchange might also have been accepted. Therefore, it is always of the utmost urgency to make haste. Gordon\(^\text{12}\) will not come in person but will contribute from his means to increase the funds of the Committee.

Others write me also that many officers are waiting only for a report from me to come to the aid of Greece, but in the present circumstances I would consider it a culpable trick to entice them to come – where not only does so much discord reign, but where there seems to be such a great jealousy of foreigners.\(^\text{13}\) I would be very happy, if the opportunity presented itself to me, to make your most valued acquaintance. And if it would not displease you, to write to me occasionally of whatever and however you most like, I will always consider it a favour – and I will be pleased to reply to you with the frankest sincerity that is known to me and which you so much deserve. Believe me once again, with most profound respect,

Your most devoted servant

N B

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\(^{10}\): Trelawny and Hamilton Browne had gone to Tripolitza of their own accord. They were told there that M. was “a foreigner and an enemy to the fatherland” (quoted Minta p.134). They don’t seem to have told B. this.

\(^{11}\): Giorgios Praidi or Praïdes was M.’s secretary.

\(^{12}\): Thomas Gordon, wealthy Scots philhellene, author of a History of the Greek Revolution (1832).

\(^{13}\): B. writes this before he receives the October 20th letter from Frank Abney Hastings, which underlines the Greek suspicion of all foreigners.
désir de me trouver avec vous, je vous l’ai déjà écrit, Mylord, retiré des affaires je n’aurais jamais accepté une tâche, dont je prévoyais la Grandeur et la difficulté, si je ne comptais pas sur Vous. Il est vrai que les circonstances sont telles que nous pouvons faire beaucoup; mais il est absolument nécessaire que nous agissons aussi sans perdre du temps, car nous verrons bientôt dépensée toute la somme que vous venez d’accorder aux sollicitations du Gouvernement, si nous retenons pour longtemps les bâtiments sans les employer immédiatement et de concert avec les opérations de terre, au projet de nous emparer de Lépante. M. Praïdes pourra mettre sous Vos yeux les détails de cette vérité, ménager les jours, les heures même, est un très grande avantage pour nous. Votre présence pourra faire le plus grand bien, nos troupes seront électrisées, tous les esprits seront disposés à suivre l’impulsion que vous leur donnez, ne perdons pas cette belle occasion,

À Sa Seigneurie
Le très honorable Lord Byron
etc. etc.

et Vous aurez la douce satisfaction d’avoir contribuer à l’œuvre de notre régénération.
I ne répète plus long-temps, Mylord, je n’attends que le Moment de notre jonction; le reste sera bientôt fait.

agréez de nouveau l’expression de mon respect, et de mon dévoûement.

Missolonghi A. Mavrocordatos
le 8/20 8bre 1823

Translation from Nicolson, pp.176-7, where it is dated “late December”

MY LORD,

Here is a third letter, but M. Praïdes, who arrived at the same moment exactly as Mr. Leli was to leave, is the reason for delay of the first expedition. I send him again to you with the letters which the first was instructed to bring you. All that I heard from M. Praïdes has only increased my desire that we should come together. As I have written already, I should never, in view of my retirement from public life, have accepted a task whose magnitude and difficulty I foresaw, had I not counted upon the co-operation of Your Excellency. It is true that circumstances are such as to enable us to accomplish much; but it is absolutely necessary that we should act in this way without losing time; for all the money which you have recently given in response to our solicitations will shortly be expended, if we keep the ships here for long without employing them immediately and in conjunction with operations on land on the plan of getting possession of Lepanto. M. Praïdes will place before you the details of this truth. We must play for time: every day gained, every hour, is a great advantage for us. Your presence will do the greatest good: our forces will be electrified; the enthusiasm of all will be kindled to follow the impulsion which you will give them. Do not let us lose this great opportunity, and you will have the pleasant satisfaction of having contributed to the work of our regeneration.

I shall repeat myself no longer; My Lord, I only wait for the moment when we can join forces – the rest will soon be done.

[Accept once again the expression of my respect, and my devotion.]

I am, etc.

Translation and paraphrase of parts of Mavrocordatos to Byron, from Hydra, October 21st 1823:
(Sources: George Clinton, Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the right honourable Lord Byron, 1826, p.691, and National Library, Athens, K5; my thanks to Roddy Beaton.)

Mavrocordatos answers Byron’s of October 1st.

[Mavrocordatos gives gracious thanks, says dissensions are indeed natural, and to understand theirs you have to see them up close. Byron may think M.’s withdrawal from government is an effect of dissensions or, worse, perhaps even part of their cause. The truth is the opposite:]

14: M.’s first two letters to B. are missing.
15: The plan to attack Lepanto comes to nothing when B.’s Suliotes refuse to take part.
16: B. to Hobhouse, December 27th 1823: text from NLS Ms.43440 (BLJ XI 85): P.S. Mavrocordato’s letter says that my presence will “electrify the troops” so I am going over to “electrify” the Suliotes – as George Primrose went to Holland “to teach the Dutch English” “who were fond of it to distraction”.

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I shall repeat myself no longer; My Lord, I only wait for the moment when we can join forces – the rest will soon be done.

[Accept once again the expression of my respect, and my devotion.]

I am, etc.
“… je ne me suis retiré que pour faire cesser les dissensions, en préférant de laisser agir ceux qui se trouvent à la tête du gouvernement d’une manière, qui n’est sans doute nullement d’accord avec mon opinion … si le gouvernement s’est encore trouvé divisé entre lui-même, ce n’est pas ma faute: il ne faut pas du reste croire que si le gouvernement est divisé, la Nation l’est aussi…”

[I did not retire to make the dissensions cease, preferring to allow those who find themselves at the head of the government to act in a which is in no way in agreement with my opinion17 … if the government still finds itself divided internally, I am not to blame: it must not be believed that because the government is divided, the nation is as well …”]

“… je ne puis pas être tout-à-fait d’accord avec vous lorsque vous croyez qu’il vaudrait mieux que vous restiez en observation. Je ne nous consillerais jamais d’avoir l’air seulement d’embrasser des intérêts d’un parti; mais tout le monde sait, et personne n’en est plus assuré que moi, que vous êtes venu avec l’intention ferme de secourir la Grèce; cette Grèce est déjà devant vous, sous vos yeux; vous pouvez voir du premier coup d’œil, quel est le côté menacé, que Missolonghi est bloqué par mer, et cerné par terre; qu’il manque de provisions, qu’il va tomber entre les mains de Turcs, que ceux-ci n’auront aucune difficulté de pénétrer après cela en Morée, et envahir une partie de ses provinces les plus fertiles… Porter du secour à cet endroit, le sauver, sauver par conséquent la Grèce toute entière, est-ce se déclarer pour un parti? Je ne le crois pas…”

[“I cannot agree with you when you say that your best plan is to remain in observation. I will never advise you to run the risk of appearing to embrace the interests of a party; but all the world knows, and no one better than myself, that you are come here with the firm intention of succouring Greece: – this Greece is now before you, before your eyes; you may see at the first glance which is the part in danger, – that Missolonghi is blockaded by land and sea, that it is destitute of provisions, and on the point of falling into the hands of the Turks, who afterwards will have no difficulty in penetrating into the Morea and seizing upon its most fertile provinces, [[from whence it will be hard, nay, impossible, to dislodge them.]] To carry succour to this place, to save it, is to save Greece itself. Is this declaring for a party? I don’t think so …”]

“Si le gouvernement est divisé, c’est une raison de plus pour que vous soyez guidé par vous même à faire le plus de bien que vous pourrez. Mr Brown m’a paru persuadé de cette vérité, il est d’ailleurs resté assez du temps près du gouvernement pour être à même de vous donner des informations exactes sur tout ce qui pourrait être digne de votre attention.”

[“If the government is divided, it is one more reason why you should be your own guide in doing the best that you can. Mr Browne seemed to be persuaded of this truth, and moreover he was near to the government long enough to be able to give you precise information on everything worthy of your attention”.]

M. agrees about there being too many foreign volunteers, let’s hope for better: day when “on pourra inviter les bons amis sans se compromettre.” [“We shall be able to invite good friends without being compromised”.

In a P.S. written on the 25th, he learns with great displeasure that the mission is only now about to depart. It will pass Byron on its way. Browne will explain the delay.

17: M. “retired” from the “Government” because Colocotronis had threatened to drive him from it, tied to the back of an ass.
[“Is it not rather to do that which the feelings of honour and humanity dictate to us all? Influenced by these and other reasons, I never know when to leave off inviting you to come to the succour of Missolonghi.”] M. reinforces his plea for “vos secours en faveur de Missolonghi”.

**Byron to Mavrocoratos, December 2nd 1823:**
(In Pietro Gamba’s hand, signed by Byron; source: translation only from BLJ XI 71-2)

**Mavrocordatos answers on December 13th (next item).**

Byron to Mavrocordatos, December 2nd 1823:
(Most Excellent Prince—Colonel Stanhope, the son of Major-General Harrington, etc. etc. etc., will present this letter of mine to Your Highness. He has come from London in 50 days after having visited all of the Greek committees in Germany—charged by our committee to work together with me for the liberation of Greece. I believe that his name, or his mission, will be enough to recommend him to Your Highness, without the need of any other recommendation from a foreigner, even though he may be someone who respects and admires—together with all of Europe—the courage, the talents, and above all, the probity of Prince Mavrocordato—

It pains me exceedingly to hear that the internal dissensions of Greece still continue—and at a time when she could triumph everywhere, as she has triumphed in some places.

Greece now faces these three courses—to win her liberty, to become a Colony of the sovereigns of Europe, or to become a Turkish province.—Now she can choose one of the three—but civil war cannot lead to anything but the last two. If she envies the fate of Wallachia or of the Crimea she can obtain it tomorrow; if that of Italy, the day after tomorrow. But if Greece wants to become forever free, true, and Independent she had better decide now, or never again will she have the chance, never again.

Believe me with the utmost esteem and respect.

N B P[eer] of E[ngland]

P.S.—Your highness already knows that I have tried to satisfy the requests of your Government as much as I could. I wish that this fleet, which we have waited for so long in vain, had arrived—and above all that Your Highness, either on board the fleet on a public mission, or in any other way, had come or would now come to these parts. Believe me again

Your devoted Servant

N B P[eer] of E[ngland]

**Mavrocordatos to Byron, from Missolonghi, December 1st / 13th 1823:**
(Source: text of main letter from National Historical Museum, Athens, 15,769; Ms. of P.S. from scribal copy, NLS Ms.43159; provisional translation from Nicolson, pp.175-6)

**Mavrocordatos writes his P.S. on receipt of the above item.**

My Lord.

Après bien de retards occasionnés par des circonstances imprévues, et, de mauvaisement sur tout, par la contrariété de vent, je suis enfin arrivé au lieu ma destination. Mon retard a fait beaucoup de mal en ce que les ennemis consternés pour les nouvelles de la défaite de leur flotte, et de la dispersion de leur armée dans la Grèce orientale, prévoient l’arrivée prochain d’une force navale Grèque dans ces passages, et la difficulté d’une retraite si nous faisons un débarquement sur leur dernier, se sont précipitemment retirés pour les frontières de la Grèce occidentale. Le Pacha de Scondra, aprè un séjour de deux journées dans les environs de Prévésa, a continué sa marche rétrograde pour reconduire ses troupes chez lui. Omer-Pacha seul avec un corps de 1500 <Albaniés> Albanais reste dans cette ville. Arta est dépourvue de troupes Lepante et Patràs ont une garrison mécontente et mutinée, parqu’elle n’a reçu sa solde depuis quatorze mois: toutes ces circonstances nous permettent d’espérer une heureuse issue de nos entreprises, si nous pouvons maintenir

1:2

pour quelque temps notre flotille dont la coopération est absolument nécessaire à l’exécution de nos projets. Ce n’est pas vous flatter, Mylord, que de vous assurer qu[е] j’aurais hésité d’accepter une tâche aussi grande si je ne fondais mes espérances sur votre coopération: le gouvernement aussi n’a compté que sur elle, aussi que Vous verrez dans la lettre du Senat que j’ai l’honneur de Vous transmettre ci-jointe. en arrivant ici j’ai également trouvé tous les esprits tellement disposés et si persuadés de cette vérité que vous serez reçu comme un Sauveur; soyez persuadé, Mylord, qu’il ne dépende que de vous

18: His name was Omer Vrionis.
d’assurer le sort de la Grèce; Lepante et Patras cernés par terre et par mer, ne tardent pas de capituler, et, maîtres de ces deux places, nous pouvons former des projets pour l’occupation de la Thessalie.

J’ai donné ordre à un des meilleurs vaisseaux de notre escadre de se mettre à la voile pour Céphalonie, en lui défendant, par précaution, d’entrer dans le port. M. Léli qui est en même temps expédié sur une autre bateau, sera porteur de ma lettre; s’il obtient l’honneur de vous[v]oir il pourra vous informer plus amplement de l’état des choses, aussi que de l’utilité, de la nécessité même de votre présence: Si vous vous rendez à nos veux,

1:3 aux veux du Sénat et de toute la Grèce, le capitaine du beick attendra vos ordres quant à moi, heureux de pouvoir coopérer avec votre Seigneurie à l’accomplissement de l’indépendance de ma Patrie je n’attends que le moment de notre jonction, et je vous prie d’agréer l’assurance réitérée de mon respect, et de la plus haute considération, avec laquelle j’ai l’honneur d’être

Mylord,19

Missolonghi
1 / 13 Xbre 1823 de Votre Seigneurie
[Le très humble et très
Obéissant Serviteur
A. Mavrocordatos &c. &c.]

P.S.
Au moment même que j’allais expédier ma lettre je reçois pat l’arrivée de M. le Colonel Stanhope
Votre lettre obligeante du 2 de ce mois. Son Contient et l’assurance de M. le Colonel raniment mes espérances de plus en plus.

Vos observations Sur la Grèce sont dictées par la sagesse qui caractérise vos jugemens. oui, Mylord, le moment actuel doit décider du sort de la Grèce, si j’ai jamais fait mon devoir, je redoublerai d’activité et de zèle en me trouvant à Côté de vous. Les [ ] me [ ] très bien désposés ici, et j’espère que nous aurons peu à craindre de la Communication des dissentions qui règnent dans le Péloponèse, celles-ci même ne pourrons que terminer bientôt, tout dépend du succès de nos entreprises. je tâche de réunir le Corps des Suliotes, qui nous sera très nécessaires, et de faire cesser toute médisintelligence entre les Capitaines d’ici. une jalousie noble remplacera, sous vos yeux, leurs anciennes inimités, ils voudront se faire distinguer, et ils feront des miracles. Vous trouverez ci-jointe une lettre de M. le Colonel Stanhope, qui mérite sous tous les rapports vos éloges, et dont je m’estime heureux d’avoir fait la connaissance. agréez de nouveau, Mylord, l’assurance de mon respect.

le 2/14 Xbre17. A.M.

Translation: My lord/ After several delays occasioned by unforeseeable circumstances, and, most unhappily, by contrary winds, I am at last arrived at my destination. My lateness has done much harm, in as much as the enemies, astounded by the news of the defeat of their fleet, and of the dispersal of their army in eastern Greece, foresee the immediate arrival of a Greek naval force in these waters, and the difficulty of a retreat if we make an assault on their rear, have retreated rapidly to the frontiers of western Greece. The Pacha of Scondra, after a two-day stay near Prevesa, has continued his retreat in order to take his troops home. Only Omer Pacha, with a troop of 1,500 Albanians, is left in that town. Arta is empty of troops, Lepanto and Patras have discontented and mutinous garrisons, because they have not been paid for fourteen months: all these circumstances allow us to expect a happy outcome for our enterprises, if we can for a time maintain our fleet, the co-operation of which is absolutely necessary in the execution of our projects. I do not flatter you, my Lord, if I assure you that I would have hesitated to accept so great a task if I did not found my hopes on your co-operation. The government too has relied on it exclusively, as you will see in the letter from the Senate which I have the honour to transmit to you, enclosed. On my arrival here I found everyone equally disposed, and so persuaded of this truth that you will be received like a Saviour. Be assured, my Lord, that on you alone depends the fate of Greece. Lepanto and Patras, cut off by land and by sea, will not be slow in surrendering, and with these two locations we can form plans for the occupation of Thessaly.

I have given orders to one of the best vessels in our fleet to get under sail for Cephalonia, ordering it, by way of precaution, not to enter the port. Monsieur Léli, who has at the same time been dispatched

19: The original letter is not signed; the scribal copy is.
in another vessel, will be the bearer of my letter; if he has the honour of seeing you, he will be able to inform you more fully of the state of things, as also of the usefulness, the necessity even, of your presence here. If you agree to our wishes, to the wishes of the Senate and of all Greece, the captain of the barque awaits your orders. As for me, happy to have the opportunity of co-operating with your lordship in the liberation of my homeland, I await only the moment of our meeting, and I beg you to accept the repeated assurance of my respect and of the highest estimation with which I have the honour to be, My lord, [NO SIGNATURE]. Missolonghi, 1st / 13th December 1823 / To your lordship.

Mavrocordatos P.S.
(Source: Ms. from scribal copy, NLS Ms.43159; provisional translation from Nicolson, pp.175-6)

P.S. – At the very moment when I was about to send off my letter I have received, owing to the arrival of Colonel Stanhope, your kind letter of the 2nd inst. Its contents and the assurance which Colonel Stanhope has given me have kindled my hopes to an even greater degree.

Your observations on Greece are dictated by that good sense which characterises your judgment. Yes, My Lord, the present moment will decide the fate of Greece. If ever I have done my duty, I shall redouble my activity and my zeal when I find you beside me. Opinion here is very well disposed, and I hope that we shall have little to fear from the contagion of the dissensions which rule the situation in the Peloponnese: I feel assured even that these dissensions will shortly terminate; everything depends on the success of our plans. I am trying to collect the Souliot corps, which will be very necessary to us, and to put a stop to all misunderstandings between the chiefs here. A noble spirit of emulation will, under the eyes of a man like you, take the place of their former rivalries: they will wish to distinguish themselves; they will accomplish miracles. You will find enclosed a letter from Colonel Stanhope, who deserves in every respect the praise you have bestowed on him, and whose acquaintance I feel happy to have made. Again accept, My Lord, the assurance of my respect.

A. M.

Mavrocordatos to Byron, from Missolonghi, December 5th / 17th 1823:
(Source of text: NLS Ms.43519)

My Lord,

Les vents contraires ont empeché le départ du bateau, ce qui m’a afflige beaucoup, [c’est] parce que le temps presse, et que je compte sur le Somme que Vous avez eu la bonté de prêter pour le maintien de la force navale.

M. le D’ Millingen m’a assuré que Vous vouliez noliser un bâtiment, je ne sais pas per conséquent si le bâtiment que j’ai envoyé Vous servira. M. Léli aura aussi l’honneur d’informer Votre Seigneurie des raisons qui me feront peut-être désirer de choisir une partie de nos batimens pour rester ici et de les licencier les autres, et j’espère que vous approuverez mon intention.

En tous cas nous avons absolument besoin de profiter du temps, My Lord, et je ne vois rien de plus nécessaire que Votre présence ici. Veuillez bien Vous rendre à nos vœux et agréer de nouveau l’assurance de mon estime, et de la plus haute considération, avec lesquelles j’ai l’honneur d’être,

My Lord,

Missolonghi

le 5 / 17 xb°. 1823

Vote dévoté Serviteur

A. Mavrocordato

Translation: My Lord, / Contrary winds prevented the ship’s departure, which grieves me much, [this is] because the time presses, and I am counting on the sum that you had the goodness to pay for the maintenance of the naval force. / Mr Dr. Millingen assured me that you want to charter a building / boat,20 but I do not know if the building / boat I sent you will serve. Mr. Léli will also have the honour to inform Your Lordship of the reasons why I will perhaps decide to choose one of our ships to stay here and charter another, and I hope you will approve of my intention. / At all events we definitely need to take advantage of the time, My Lord, and I see nothing more necessary than your presence here. Please yield to our desires and accept again the assurance of my esteem, and the highest regard, with which I have the honour to be, My Lord, Your devoted Servant A. Mavrocordato / Missolonghi 5/17 December 1823

Mavrocordatos to Byron, from Missolonghi, December 29th 1823:
(Source: Ms. not found; text from Gamba, p.295)

20: Mavrocordatos may confuse “bâtiment” (building) with “bâteau” (boat). A building cannot be “envoyé” (sent).
De Missolonghi, ce 29 Decemb. 1823.

C’est avec le plus grand chagrin que j’ai vu de retour le bâtiment que j’ai cru devoir mettre à votre disposition ……. Je prends donc le parti de faire une double expédition aujourd’hui d’une barque Ionienne, qui portera mes lettres dans le port, et du bâtiment de l’amiral Bottazi, qui restera à la voile sous Metaxata pour vous attendre a son bord.

Je n’ai pas besoin de vous dire, mi Lord, combien il me tard de vous voir arriver; a quel point votre présence est désirée de tout le monde, et quelle direction avantageuse elle donnera à toutes les affaires. Vos conseils seront écoutés comme des oracles; et nous ne perdrons par le temps le plus précieux de nos opérations contre l’ennemi.

Translation: Missolonghi, this 29th of December 1823. / It is with the greatest distress that I saw the boat returning which I had hoped to place at your disposal … I have therefore today to make a double expedition, in an Ionian vessel which will take my letters into port, and in the boat of Admiral Bottazi, which will remain under sail off Metaxata, waiting for you to board her. / I need not tell you, my Lord, how I long to see you arrive; how much your presence is desired by all, and what an advantageous direction it will give to all our affairs. Your advice will be listened to like oracles; and we shall not lose the most precious days in our operations against the enemy.

Mavrocordatostos to Byron, late December 1823 / early January 1824:
(Source: Ms. not found; provisional translation from Nicolson, p.186)

MY LORD,

I have already replied to your kind letter of yesterday21 by the hands of Liverius, my secretary, whom I sent to you by sea, telling you that I had also sent you, immediately after the arrival of your letter to Colonel Stanhope dated from Scrophes, M. Praïdes with three ships, of which one was flat-bottomed, and for the purpose of looking for you at Petala. I have every reason to suppose that M. Praïdes will have gone as far as Dragomestri if he has learnt of your departure for that place. I hope also that M. Liverius, with my answer and the orders to the military authorities of Xeromeros, will arrive on one of our ships before this present letter. I repeat again, my Lord, that you will have much to suffer if you decide to come by land, whereas your voyage by sea on the small boats offers no danger. I am pleased to hope that you will be here before this letter reaches you. As regards Count Gamba, I have every hope that he will shortly be released, with the boat and all his belongings, in view of the fact that such a capture can never be good or be admitted by the British authorities.

I have the honour, etc.,
A. MAVROCORDATO.

1824: Now clearly exceeding the London Greek Committee’s remit, Byron proceeds to Messolonghi. After an adventurous sea journey, punctuated by the Turkish blockade and by storms, he comes ashore on January 5th. Wearing full military uniform for the landing, he receives a hero’s welcome. He puts himself at the head of five hundred supposedly Suliote soldiers, whose expenses he pays, and prepares for what he hopes will be his first military operation, the capture of Lepanto. On January 22nd he writes On This Day I Complete My Thirty-Sixth Year. On February 5th William Parry, the fire master, arrives in Messolonghi with his specialist mechanics, but the plan to attack Lepanto has to be abandoned due to the “Suliote” troops’ refusal to “attack stone walls” – and they turn out not to be Suliotes anyway. Byron remains occupied with administrative decision-making and is awaiting instructions from the Greek government. Starting in February, his health gradually declines: on the 15th he has an epileptic fit. Early in April, he goes for a ride in the rain, and collapses with a severe fever. He dies on April 19th, 1824.

Mavrocordatos to Byron, January 9th / 17th 1824:
(Source: text from photofacsimile, 1973 Byron Journal, No.1, p.27)

Within two weeks of Byron’s arrival, Mavrocordatos is asking him for money.

Mylord,

Pour terminer aujourd’hui l’affaire des Souliotes, j’ai absolument besoin de trois mille Tallario. Vous m’aviez dit que si le besoin l’égige vous me remettriez toute la Somme de l’emprunt quoique

21: This letter from B. to M. is missing.
vous n’ayez pas pu l’avoir encore toute entière de Zante. Le besoin, comme vous savez, est urgent, et les ayant persuadé de recevoir une partie de leur solde passée, je crois nécessaire de les satisfaire le plutôt possible. Si vous avez donc la bonté de me faire avoir cette somme aujourd’hui, en attendant qu’elle arrive de Zante, Vous obligerez infiniment Votre dévoué ami et Serviteur

A Mavrocordato

Le 9 / 17 Janvier 1824
Missolonghi

À Sa Seigneurie
Le très hon. Lord Byron &c &c.

Translation: My lord / In order to settle today the matter of the Souliotes, I absolutely must have three thousand Tallaris. You told me that if the need arises you would send the whole amount of the loan, even though you will not have been able to receive it all from Zante. The need is, as you know, urgent, and having persuaded them to accept part of their back pay, I think it necessary to satisfy them as soon as possible. If therefore you had the goodness to forward that sum to me today, while awaiting its arrival from Zante, you would infinitely oblige your devoted friend and servant / A Mavrocordato / January 1 / 17 1824 / To his Lordship / The Rt. Hon. Lord Byron &c &c

Byron to Mavrocordatos, from Missolonghi, January 16th 1824:


Byron answers the previous item. The Souliotes require ten times more money than Mavrocordatos has requested.

Gen.º 16 1824.

1.
Prima che si potrebbe realizzare nelle Isole Ionie i migliori Cambiali sopra Londra o Genova – si vorrebbe almeno due mesi – si voleva tanto tempo per passati – e poco mancava che non si dovrebbe spedire a Malta – i degni Ionii non avendo o non volendo rendere loro contante se non all’usura.

2.
In meno di quel tempo, avremmo una riposta da Londra per mezzo dei deputati ed allora i 20 o 30 mila talari sarebbero superflui; – se i deputati non riescono, io farò tutto nell’ mio potere per soddisfare alla richiesta del’ Governo della Morea. –

3.
L’impegno che io ho preso per mantenere il corpo de i Sulioti &c. (senza cercare alcun rimborso) conterà appresso poco 20 mila talari – e mi pare che nelle circostanze attuali – questa è la maniera più utile per sollevare il’ Governo di un peso di Soldati – che non avendo paese sono naturalmente diffidenti e difficili di tenere in freno finché sanno ciò che hanno {da} aspettare dal’ Governo. – – –

4.
Io aspetto delle lettere particolari d’ Inghilterra – sopra i miei affari privati – ed allora saprò {dire} precisamente ciò che posso – o non posso fare coi miei {propri} mezzi dentro questo anno corrente – nel’ fratempo io non mancherò alla mia parola – in ciò che ho già promesso.

N. B.

P. S. 5.
Se pertanto il Principe ed il Governo [Io] credono necessario – possiamo spedire un’ agente in Cephalonia per trattare in nome mio & [in] quello del’ Governo Greco
It would take at least two months before the best exchange rates for London and Genoa could be obtained. It took a long time in past months. We were almost obliged to send them to Malta, since the Ionian gentlemen were either unable or unwilling to lend cash except at usurious rates.

We shall have had an answer from London, via the deputies, in less time than that, and then the twenty or thirty thousand talari would be superfluous. If the deputies do not succeed, I shall do everything in my power to satisfy the request of the government of the Morea.

The commitment I have made to maintain the Suliot corps, &c. (without seeking any reimbursement) will cost just under twenty thousand talari, and it seems to me that in the present circumstances this is the most useful way to relieve the government from the burden of soldiers who, having no home country, are naturally suspicious and hard to keep under control as long as they know what they should expect from the government.

I expect some special letters from England on my private affairs, and then I shall be able to say precisely what I can and cannot do with my own resources during the current year. Meanwhile I shall not go back on the promise I have made already.

N. B.

P. S. 5. Therefore, if the Prince and the Government believe it necessary, we could dispatch an agent to Cephalonia to deal in my name and in the name of the Greek Government the amount requested by the Legislative Body.

(Recipient’s note): Written response of Lord Byron to Mavrocordatos on the question of the loan for the Legislative [Body].

Byron on the Present State of Greece, January 26th 1824:
(Source: text from National Historical Museum, Athens, 19437: LJ VI 411, and CMP 193-4, where it is dated February 26th and where the Ms. is recorded as no longer extant)

J" 26th 1824.

The present State of Greece is perhaps different from what has been represented both by friends and enemies. – The foreigners in Greece have with few exceptions never been in the Country before – and of those exceptions still fewer have visited these regions before the revolution. – Those who have will be rather surprized that the disorganization is not still greater – although <for> [in] any other country – it would appear unbounded. – The Greeks have been downright Slaves for four centuries – and there is no tyrant like a Slave. – The Delegate of a Despot is still a bondsman – and men whose fathers fathers farther than they can reckon were absolute vilains without property even of their {own} persons – still more if they were in fetters, – – or in many instances may seem only to have exchanged the chains of the prison for the freedom of the Jailor. – This is a sad truth – but we feel that it is one. – We are not here to flatter – but to <help> {aid} – as far as in our power – to a better order of things – and whether of the Greeks – or to the Greeks – let the truth be spoken. –

The Number of pamphlets which have been published in Europe on the subject {of the Greek contest} has of course been sufficient. – We have not been in the way of seeing many {of these} – and those we have seen were not much to the purpose – The narratives of travellers military and civil – may not be less numerous – – Without entering into their merits or demerits it is more essential to advert to the
persons or rather to the circumstances which have produced them – One thing it is essential to remark – viz – that hitherto no stranger has succeeded in Greece – either in doing much for the Nation, or for himself. – French – Germans – Italians – English – Poles – men of all nations – ages – and conditions – military and naval – rich and poor – good and evil – speculative and practical – merchants – officers – Jews22 – Generals – German Barons [and Bankers] – English Gentlemen – [and Adventurers] and surely some men of talent and good intention among them – have in the course of the last three years run the Gauntlet of Greece – and of the Survivors of fever – famine – [fatigue] and the Sword – the greater part of those who have not gone back in disgust – remain in misery. – Perhaps they would complain less

of penury in a climate – where neither friends nor foes are encumbered with wealth – but some of them and not without justice may remonstrate against neglect – for in <all> [most] occasions where opportunity has permitted it has been allowed by the Greeks themselves that the strangers have done their duty. –

[1:4 is blank.]

February 5th 1824: William Parry and his artificers arrive.

Byron to Lega Zambelli, February 2nd 1824
B.L.Add.Mss.46878 f.22; translated at Lord Byron Accounts Rendered 403–4; not in BLJ. The absence of this letter from BLJ is strange, given that Accounts Rendered was published by John Murray in 1974, and the relevant volume of BLJ – the eleventh – was published in 1981.

F.º 2. 1824
1. Il Thè non e bevanda Greca – dunque il Signor Luca può bever {dell} Caffè in vece – o aqua – o niente –
2. La paga del’ detto Luca sarà {di} cinque tallari <[ ]> per mese pagati come gli altri di casa. – Egli mangiàr sarà cu<lo> Sulioti – o dove vuole. – – –
3. Il tenente di Drako può mangiare coi i miei di casa – altri no – senza almeno chio <sio> sé sà prima. – [swirl]

[Tea is not a Greek drink; so Signor Luca can drink coffee instead – or water – or nothing. / The pay of the said Luca shall be five tallari per month, paid as with the other domestics. He will eat with the Suliotes – or wherever he wants. / The lieutenant of Drako may eat with the servants, but no-one else, unless I know in advance.]

Note at page bottom, in Fletcher’s hand: “Directions to his <xxxxx> {Lord Byrons} servants as to their eating and drinking whom he kept short as he did himself.”

Byron and Leicester Stanhope to Mavrocordatos, from Missolonghi, February 5th 1824:
(In an unknown hand, signed by Byron and Stanhope; source: translation only from BLJ XI 105–6)

Missolonghi, February 5, 1824

Prince,—We have the honour of informing you that the Greek Committee of England has sent a complete laboratory to Greece, with all the necessary craftsmen, which is now being established in Missolonghi. The Committee by this measure, as in all others, hopes to advance the knowledge, and thereby the liberty, of Greece.

This laboratory is capable of preparing and manufacturing all war materials for land as well as for maritime service. It can construct ships of every type, cast cannons, mortars, bullets, and Shrapnel bombs, construct [artillery] carriers of every sort, make powder, Congreve rockets, and every sort of incendiary fire.

22: LJ and CMP read “tars”.
The Director, or fire master, can give instructions for the use of artillery, for throwing bombs and rockets, and for the whole craft of producing every material of war. This laboratory can be considered not only a useful source for all the needs of war, but also a model and a school.

Having made a sketch of the character of this equipment, we wish to inform you that all of this is only for the public benefit. Therefore we beg you to point out to us at once, in what way this factory might be of service to you. We also would like to know which articles you consider necessary to prepare for the expedition that is about to take place. And in awaiting your prompt reply, we declare ourselves with the utmost esteem, Your Excellency’s

Most devoted Servants
NOEL BYRON
LEICESTER STANHOPE

February 15th 1824: Byron dismisses his “Suliotes”, and has a serious seizure.

Mavrocordatos to Byron, April 5th 1824:
(Source: Ms. not found; text from Gamba, p.242)

My Lord,

Constantine Volpiotti, who is now a guest in the house of your landlord, is strongly suspected of high treason. Not being willing to permit any of the town guard to enter a house not inhabited by you, I pray you to order him under charge of your own guards to the outward gate, where the police will be in readiness to receive him. The Signor Praidi will inform you more minutely of the business.

Believe me
Your most devoted
A. MAVROCORDATO.

Mavrocordatos to Byron, from Missolonghi, April 8th 1824:
(Source: Ms. not found; text from Gamba, pp.246-7)

Cariascachi was suspected of being a spy, perhaps for Colocotronis.

My Lord,

I set out yesterday, in spite of the bad weather, to obviate the disagreeable consequences which might ensue from the affair of Cariascachi; and I had the satisfaction of arriving in time. The accompanying proclamation will inform you of the turn which this treason has taken. The examination will commence at three o’clock this evening. I shall do everything that is possible to prevent a disturbance. This is the reason why I shall continue to remain here until tomorrow.

A. MAVROCORDATO.

April 19th, 1824: death of Byron.

Mavrocordatos to Augusta Leigh, from Missolonghi, May 1st 1824:
(Source: text from B.L.Add.Mss.31037 ff.45-6)

Mavrocordatos asks that some of Byron’s remains be allowed to stay in Greece. Missolonghi was allowed the lungs.

Madame

Les sensations douloureuses qu’affectent mon ame oprimée, ne me permettent pas des expressions de condoléance. Votre perte est une perte européenne, une perte générale; mais surtout une perte immense et irréparable pour la Grèce, pour la patrie adoptive de celui qui l’a secourue dans les moments les plus critiques, qui l’a soulagée dans sa dernière détresse, qui en fut proclamé le bienfaiteur. Si notre situation actuelle ne nous permet pas de faire tout ce qui est dû à la memoire de ce grand homme, notre cœur en sent bien le besoin, et les larmes que nous versons sont une pleure des sentiments, qui y sont profondément gravis.

Mais si le deuil en général, si les

23: The equipment is never used, and most of Parry’s assistants go home in fear and disgust.
25: Volpiotti, B.’s landlord’s father-in-law, was indeed arrested. He had been conspiring not with the Turks but with a rival Greek faction; see next item.
larmes abondent dans les yeux de tous les Grecs, les habitants de cette ville témoins occulaires des vertus et des bienfaits du grande homme, qu’ils comptaient déjà avec orgueil au nombre de leurs concitoyens, sentent et sentiront pour toujours, beaucoup plus que tous les autres l’immensité de leur perte. La privation du corps de leur bienfaiteur, est après sa mort une second malheur pour eux, et ils imploront la permission de retenir une partie des restes de leur concitoyen – tel est le but de ce lettre ci-inclus adressée à la noble fille du défunt, à que ces restes inestimables appartient de droit. Vous ne m’accuserez pas de témérité, Madame, si je prends la liberté de demander votre

intercession en leur faveur; vous partagez trop les nobles et généreux sentimens de votre père pour rejeter une prière si générale, si justifiée par les sentimens mêmes, que la provoquent.

Veuillez bien agréer l’expression du plus profond respect, avec le quel j’ai l’honneur d’être, Madame

Votre très humble et très
Obéissant serviteur
A.Mavrocordatos

**Translation:** Missolonghi, May 1st 1824 / Madame / The grievous feelings which afflict my oppressed heart allow me no words of consolation. Your loss is a European loss, a general loss; but above all an immense and irreparable loss for Greece, for the adoptive country of him who has succoured in her most critical moments, who has relieved her in her final agony, who has been proclaimed her benefactor. If our present situation does not permit us to do everything that is due to the memory of this great man, our hearts feel the need of it, and the tears we shed are a cry of feelings, which they render still more grave. / But if the grief is general, if the tears abound in the eyes of all Greeks, the inhabitants of this town, ocular witnesses to the virtues and benefactions of the great man, whom they count already among the number of their citizens, feel, and will always feel, much more than anyone else, the immensity of their loss. To be deprived of the body of their benefactor, is, after his death, a second unhappiness for them, and they beg permission to keep a part of the remains of their fellow-citizen – that is the point of the enclosed letter, addressed to the noble daughter of the departed, to whom part of his remains belong by right. You will not accuse me me of boldness, Madame, if I take the liberty of asking for your intercession in their favour; you share too many of your father’s noble and generous sentiments to reject so general a prayer, so justified, even, by the feelings which provoke it. / Please accept the expression of the most profound respect, with which I have the honour to be, Madame, your most humble and obedient servant / A. Mavrocordatos.