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PREPARING THE GREEK REVOLUTION IN ODESSA IN THE 1820s:
TASTES, MARKETS AND POLITICAL LIBERALISM

Evrydiki Sifneos

ABSTRACT: The article highlights the port-city space of Odessa during the first three decades of its foundation as an important hub of commercial activity, maritime trade and political liberalism in southern Russia. It emphasizes the role of multiple markets based on imported and local trade goods and describes the different ethnicities involved in foreign trade, focusing on merchants of Greek origin, their participation in the *Philiki Etaireia* and their degree of involvement in its organizational mechanisms. I attempt to read the *Philiki Etaireia*'s development and its influence on the Eastern Question and Russian-Ottoman relations in light of the general political fermentation that was taking part in the Russian Empire, mainly through the creation of secret societies within the Russian army. I believe that the Russian authorities, being involved in the general mobility and movement of ideas, influenced by the Western experiences of the Russian military, had to deal primarily with major political issues that left aside, at least at a regional level, movements of the same character that concerned the Greeks. In this positive political climate the "commercial outlook" of the Greek revolutionaries gave them the necessary coverage to act and move relatively freely.

*Introduction*¹

Anticipating the opening of the free port and town of Odessa, the British consul, James Yeames, wrote to Joseph Planta, the undersecretary of the Department of British Foreign Affairs, that after the considerable delay due to preparatory works that should have been completed by the town committee and the governor-

¹ This article was first presented at the 2013 Convention of the Association for Slavic, East-European and Eurasian Studies, held in Boston, MA, 21-24 November 2013, in the session "Commercial Revolution in the Northern Black Sea Coast in the 19th Century: Markets and Politics" organized by Professor Gelina Harlaftis. Its research has been co-financed by the European Union (European Social Fund – ESF) and Greek national funds through the Operational Programme "Education and Lifelong Learning" of the National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF) – Research Funding Programme: THALES, Investing in knowledge society through the European Social Fund. The broader research on Odessa and its ethno-religious groups, part of which is the subject of this article, has been primarily financed by the School of Historical Studies of the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton, of which I was a member during the period September-December 2012, benefitting from an Elizabeth and D. Richardson Dilworth grant. Historiographical note: All studies on Odessa

general's severe reprimand to the local authorities, the port was expected to open in 1819, and considerable property, mainly of British traders, was ready for importation.² British merchants were mostly used to working with trade support policies and needed institutional regulation in order to venture their trading capital in foreign countries.³ Their French counterparts had already penetrated Odessa's market after the appointment of the Duc de Richelieu as the city's governor (1803-1814), and as Charles Sicard reiterated they had come to Odessa, based on personal esteem and faith in Richelieu's measures to develop the town's commercial activity and port infrastructure.⁴ With them came Italians, basically from Naples. Odessa had gained a reputation as a newborn port from the moment the Neapolitan Joseph de Ribas undertook, as the town's administrator, the first initiative to implement Catherine the Great's instructions for attracting a larger population and immigrants to the town and its suburbs. Before the French and the Neapolitans, during the first years of the establishment of the city (1794-1810), many Greek merchants and seafarers settled, as the lists of the foreign magistracy confirm. In 1799, from the 62 individuals who were claiming to have permission to register in the town's merchant guilds, there were 53 Greeks, 5 Poles, 2 Moldavians, 1 Albanian and 1 Jew.⁵

in the imperial period cannot ignore the seminal works of Professor Patricia Herlihy. I therefore refer to her substantial works as the basis of my study: *Odessa: A History, 1794-1914*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986; "Greek Merchants in Odessa in the Nineteenth Century", in Ihor Sevcenko and Frank E. Sysyn (eds), *Eucharisterion: Essays Presented to Omeljan Pritsak on his Sixtieth Birthday by his Colleagues and Students*, 2 vols, Cambridge, MA, 1979, Vol. I, pp. 399-420; "The Greek Community in Odessa, 1861-1917", *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* VII/2 (1989), pp. 235-251; "Russian Grain and the Port of Livorno, 1794-1865", *Journal of European Economic History* 5 (1976), pp. 79-80; "Odessa: Staple Trade and Urbanization in New Russia", *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*, n.s., 21/2 (1973), pp. 184-195; and Oleg Gubar and P. Herlihy, "The Persuasive Power of the Odessa Myth", Ukrainian Research Institute, Harvard University (accessible online: <http://www.2odessa.com/wiki>).

² Public Record Office, London, Foreign Office, 65/118, letter of the British consul James Yeames to Joseph Planta, His Majesty's undersecretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs, 24/2 July 1819.

³ W. Kirchner, "Western Businessmen in Russia: Practices and Problems", *Business History Review* 38/3 (1964), pp. 315-327.

⁴ Bibliothèque Victor Cousin, Paris, Fond Richelieu, *Notice sur onze années de la vie de Richelieu à Odessa par Ch. Sicard*, Odessa 1827.

⁵ Derzhavnyi arkhiv Odes'koi Oblasti [State Archives of Odessa Region; hereafter DAOO], Fond 59, opis 1a, delo 156, Report of the foreign magistracy of Odessa to Novorossiiskaia Kazennaia Palata, December 1799. All non-Greek merchants petitioned to enter the third guild. Two Greeks had sufficient capital to register in the first guild and seven in the second.

Odessa was not simply a city of many foreigners; it was a city of foreigners. The unusual fact that they constituted a substantial majority at the beginnings of its foundation, quite literally imported from abroad, consolidated Odessa's reputation as a non-Russian city. Its administrators during the first decades of its existence were also foreigners, albeit in the service of the Russian crown: the Neopolitan Joseph de Ribas, and the Frenchmen the Duc de Richelieu and Count Louis Alexandre Andrault de Langeron. In Odessa the great instigator for the implementation of free port status was its governor, the Duc de Richelieu. In many letters addressed to Tsar Alexander I, he described the experience of foreign free trade sea-ports and explicitly stressed Smyrna's role as a centre of a flourishing transit trade.⁶ Richelieu's plan was to detour part of Smyrna's Anatolian trade via Trabzon–Odessa to Brody and Central Europe. Although Russia followed protectionist policies, import and export duties on Odessa's port were gradually relaxed beginning in 1810 and formal free port status was enforced from 1819 to 1857. Acknowledging the importance of merchants in the modernizing process that would lead to the city's commercial boom, Richelieu, as Sicard recounted, was in close contact with them. He knew them personally regardless of their nationality, visited their businesses and informed himself on their sector of commerce, their expectations and needs.⁷ The relationship between the governor and the merchant body was at odds with ruling practices, since merchants as a social category (estate – *soslovie*) were not perceived as agents of change in the still-enserfed society.⁸

Markets in the Newborn Port-city

Markets were the heart of the city's economic life, places of exchange designed by city planners to bring together buyers and sellers. They were regulated and overseen by the civic authorities, who allocated the public spaces, type of goods and working hours and certified the traders who could sell products in each. In order to operate successfully markets needed the entrepreneurial skills of merchants and the purchasing capacity of the population. Capital and marketing know-how were essential, as was the urban population's ability to acquire material possessions.

⁶ Bibliothèque Victor Cousin, Fond Richelieu, Correspondance, Le Duc de Richelieu à l'Empereur Alexandre sur la Nouvelle Russie, 1814.

⁷ *Notice sur onze années de la vie de Richelieu*.

⁸ On the estate division of Russian society, see Gregory Freeze, "The Soslovie (Estate) Paradigm and Russian Social History", *The American Historical Review* 91/1 (February 1986), pp. 1-36; on the particular problems of Western businessmen in Russia, see Kirchner, "Western Businessmen in Russia".

Two markets were designed during the first decade the city was under construction. The Old Bazaar, in the inner city, specialized in local foodstuffs and artisanal artefacts, and the Greek Market, nearer to the port, was devoted to imported products. Its Greek merchants were provisioned by sailing vessels from the Mediterranean via the Black Sea, while the Old Bazaar received goods by cart from the city's outskirts or the immediate hinterland. Connected by a wide avenue with planting in its centre (esplanade), the Alexandrovskii Prospect, the two markets were on the same commercial axis that originated at the port and ended at Bolshaya Arnaoutskaia (see map 1). Besides the open market square, both included the buildings on the four sides of their perimeters and associated infrastructure, including warehouses, and inns and taverns that served clients and visitors. Dealers in the same trades clustered in streets or rows of buildings, in permanent stores or temporary outlets.

Oleg Gubar, who has written extensively on Odessa's markets, provides us with a noteworthy description of the original layout and use of the shops in the Greek Market.⁹ As he recounted, they were located in four distinct blocks of buildings, one on each side of the square formed by its perimeter, and were built between 1803 and 1810. A group of importers, primarily Greek, including Yanopoulos¹⁰ from Mytilene, Marazlis from Philipoupoli,¹¹ Inglesis and Metaxas from the Ionian Islands, Papahadzis¹² and Groza, owned grocery stores in the 4th block; Amvrosios,¹³ several shops in the 2nd block; and Paleologos,

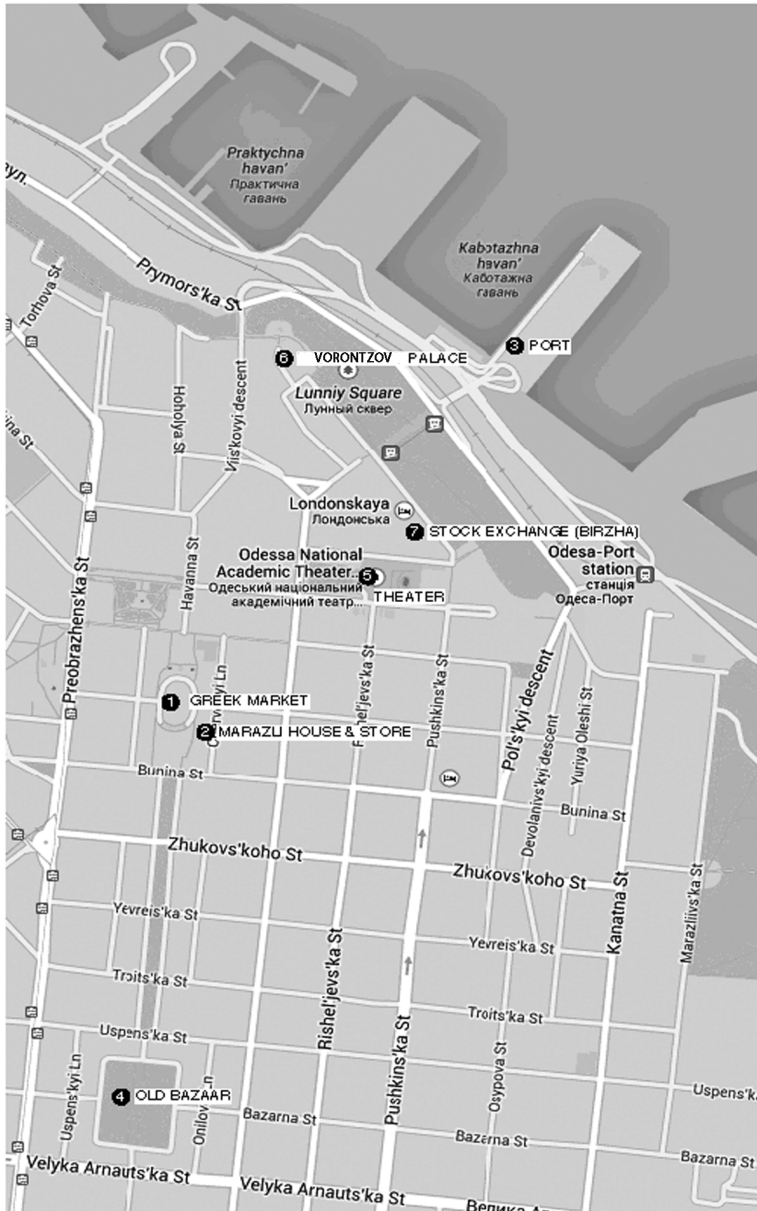
⁹ Author interview with Oleg Gubar in Odessa, June 2011.

¹⁰ Anton I. Yanopoulos (1789 – c. 1850) was a Turkish subject and in 1830 he accepted Russian citizenship. In 1828 he was a third guild merchant.

¹¹ Gregorios I. Marazlis (1770-1853) was a merchant of the first guild from 1816. He began his commercial career from Cherson. In 1803 he was established in Odessa and worked as a grain exporter. He was among the supporters and organizers of the free port. From 1818 to 1821 he served as a member of the commercial court. He was a founding member of the first insurance company, which supported Greek merchants and granted them credit. At the end of the 1830s he abandoned commercial affairs and in 1837 he was granted the title of Hereditary Honorary Citizen. He was married to Zoe Theodoridis, daughter of the merchant Theodore Theodoridis.

¹² Kyriakos Papahadzis was a first guild merchant in 1814. DAOO, Fond 4, opis 1a, delo 229, List of merchants who declared their capital in 1814 (Spisok o kuptsakhobjavivshishkapitalyna, 1814).

¹³ Ioannis (Ivan) A. Amvrosios (1770-1852) was a third guild merchant in 1799, second guild in 1800 onwards and first guild in 1804. He was at the head of Odessa's *duma* (municipal administration), 1806-1809 and 1821-1824. He founded in 1814 the Greek Insurance Company with partners Ilias Manesis and S. Ksidias. In 1838 he was awarded the title of Hereditary Honorary Citizen.



Map 1. Plan of the Bulvarnii quarter of Odessa indicating the Greek market and its proximity to the port.

Velissarios, Manesis¹⁴ and Paterakis, shops in the 1st block.¹⁵ Interspersed among them were a few Russian merchants, Kamarev, Milovanov (Bulgarian), Kislov and Filogorov. According to the building plan of Francesco Frappoli,¹⁶ each block consisted of 20 two-storey units with the shops and display areas on the ground floor and residences above. Most had an interior double-height court or atrium where foodstuffs could be stored temporarily in bulk or horses and carts could be parked (see plan 1). Commercial court records attest to the merchants' demands for additional space. The resulting chaotic congestion of people, merchandise and incompatible activities was a hindrance to trade and increased the risk of fire, but had the unanticipated benefit of facilitating the secret meetings of the Greek clandestine organization, the Philiki Etaireia (the Society of Friends, described below), by making effective police surveillance nearly impossible.

Markets have been described as the location where supply and demand intersect.¹⁷ Yet, from the early Middle Ages on, their purpose was not exclusively economic. Markets were primary public spaces where sociability and state power were inextricably connected, the sites of public announcements, not to mention general police oversight.¹⁸ Permanent markets operated at the expense of traditional fairs, which, as Casson and Lee suggested, were established in order to bring high-value commodities to areas where consumerism was slow.¹⁹ As it happened in Odessa, with the addition of the New Bazaar, the proliferation of markets in the urban environment diminished the number and frequency of fairs.

¹⁴ Ilias A. Manesis was a second guild merchant (1815-1827) and became a first guild merchant during the decade 1827-1837. After 1837 he fell to the rank of third guild for two years and in 1839 he was inscribed again in the second guild. He died in 1843.

¹⁵ V. V. Morozan, *Delovaya Zhizn na yuge Rossii v XIX-nachale XX veka*, St Petersburg: D. Boulanin, 2014, pp. 449 ff.

¹⁶ Francesco Frappoli (1770-1817) was an architect from Naples whose projects were implemented during Richelieu's governance in the central part of the city. He designed the Theatre Square, the Greek church of St Trinity at 55 Ekateriniska Street and the plan of the Greek market with its two-storey houses with columns on the ground floor; Valentin Piliavskii, *Zodchie Odessi. Istoriko-arkitekturnie ocherki*, Odessa: Optimum, 2010, pp. 17-18.

¹⁷ Mark Casson and John S. Lee, "The Origin and Development of Markets: A Business History Perspective", *Business History Review* 85 (Spring 2011), pp. 9-37.

¹⁸ James Masschaele, "The Public Space of the Marketplace in Medieval England", *Speculum* 77/2 (April 2002), pp. 383-421.

¹⁹ Casson and Lee, "The Origin and Development of Markets".

Profile of the Merchant-entrepreneurs Involved in Foreign Trade and their Specializations

As a result of the trading policies of the Russian Empire in the first half of the nineteenth century, Russian merchants were restricted to domestic trade, while international trade was left mostly to foreigners who had access to commercial and maritime networks throughout the Mediterranean and on the Atlantic seaboard. The latter were distinguished by their ample resources and commercial know-how. Foreign merchants in Odessa could either opt for Russian citizenship and enrol in the graded domestic guild system based on the amount of their declared capital or maintain their original citizenship and enrol in the first guild, the only one open to foreigners. They were also ideally suited for satisfying the consumer demands of the foreign communities that had settled in Odessa and responded to the needs and customs of first-generation immigrants, who constituted an important part of the city's population.

The import trade in the northern ports of Russia was dominated by the British and Germans and in the southern ones by Mediterraneans and the British once again.²⁰ In contrast to Western *laissez-faire*, Russian trade was heavily controlled and patronized by the state.²¹ The first entrepreneurs to appear on the domestic scene were aristocrats who had acquired exclusive state-granted concessions for the production or trade of liquor, woollens and metals. From the point of view of the entrepreneur, Kirchner claimed that the monopolistic practices originating in the Russian government during the eighteenth century left little breathing room for merchants and restricted initiative. As a consequence, they were reluctant to take risks in Russia if not backed by state support.²² In contrast, Mediterranean merchants were in an advantageous position to engage in trade with Odessa due to geographical proximity, familiarity with the networks of Mediterranean foodstuff producers, and collaboration with the sea-faring

²⁰ Erik Amburger, "Der fremde Unternehmer in Russland bis zur Oktober Revolution im Jahre 1917", *Tradition. Zeitschrift für Firmengeschichte und Unternehmerbiographie* 4 (1957), pp. 337-355. For the import trade in the port of Taganrog, see Evrydiki Sifneos and Gelina Harlaftis, "Entrepreneurship at the Russian Frontier of International Trade: The Greek Merchant Community/Paroikia of Taganrog in the Sea of Azov, 1780s-1830s", in Victor N. Zakharov, Gelina Harlaftis and Olga Katsiardi-Hering (eds), *Merchant Colonies in the Early Modern Period*, London: Pickering and Chatto, 2012, pp. 157-179; Victor N. Zakharov, "Foreign Merchant Communities in Eighteenth Century Russia", in *ibid.*, pp. 103-125.

²¹ William Blackwell, *The Beginnings of Russian Industrialization, 1800-1860*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968, p. 25.

²² Kirchner, "Western Businessmen in Russia".

people of the region, usually from their own homeland, who could guarantee the safe transport of goods and often owned the very means of transportation. In the case of the Greeks, their familiarity with the procedures that regulated trade and maritime enterprises in the Ottoman Empire was very advantageous in dealing with similar regulations imposed by Russia, particularly in the early years.²³ Knowledge of foreign languages and a sure grasp of institutional regulations (laws and duties, custom house rules and quarantine procedures), not to mention a long history of trading with the coastal towns of the Black and Azov seas before these territories were conquered by the Russians, gave the Greeks a prodigious edge over their competition.

Import trade in Odessa may be systematically categorized as follows:²⁴

1. Foodstuffs: fresh and dried fruits, olive oil
2. Products of colonial trade: coffee, sugar, tobacco, cigars, pepper, cinnamon, mastic, vanilla
3. Fuel: coal, wood for burning
4. Luxury goods: wines, champagne, porter, beers, pearls, coral, tortoiseshell, perfume, cork stoppers
5. Construction materials: wood, lead, steel powder, oil for paint, bricks, tiles, stones
6. Housewares: crockery, porcelain, carpets, textiles, pottery, cutlery
7. Plants and seeds.

British firms²⁵ imported coal from Liverpool (Lander & Yeames) and Newcastle (E. Moberly & Co.), porter from Liverpool (Walther & Co.) and London (Fred. Cortazzi), colonial goods (coffee, sugar), potatoes and cheese (Lander & Yeames), manufactured products (cotton thread) from London, wood and carpets from the Persian trade (J. H. Atwood & Co.), beer, lead, steel in powder form and white iron (E. Moberly & Co.). French firms²⁶ imported wines

²³ Gelina Harlaftis, "The Role of the Greeks in the Black Sea Trade, 1830-1900", in L. R. Fischer and H. W. Nordvik (eds), *Shipping and Trade, 1750-1950: Essays in International Maritime Economic History*, Pontefract: Lofthouse, 1990, pp. 63-95; *id.*, *A History of Greek-owned Shipping: The Making of an International Tramp Fleet, 1830 to the Present Day*, London: Routledge, 1996; Vassilis Kardasis, *Diaspora Merchants in the Black Sea: The Greeks in Southern Russia, 1775-1861*, Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2001; Evrydiki Sifneos, "Merchant Enterprises and Strategies in the Sea of Azov Ports", *International Journal of Maritime History* 22/ 1 (June 2010), pp. 259-268.

²⁴ *Journal d'Odessa*, elaborated data from the weekly arrivals and departures of ships in Odessa's port for the year 1824.

²⁵ The categories of firms according to their ethnic origin are also elaborated from *ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*

(Sicard & Co.), perfumes (Philibert & Co.), construction materials (Rey Revilliod & Cie), champagne (F. J. Raynaud, A. Collin and B. Langlois), olive oil and carob (Philibert & Co.), wine, cotton and roof tiles (Haggia Frères & Cie). All imported goods came from Marseille. The French had exclusive import rights for plants and seeds for Odessa's boulevards, public gardens and private summer houses by the sea. More acclimated to Odessa's environment were plants originating in Constantinople, such as oleanders and laurels, which were particularly resistant to humidity and salt from the sea. Italian firms²⁷ were either Neapolitan or enterprises from the North Italian ports of Genoa and Livorno. Sarato & Verani, the most prestigious firm of all, imported white wine from Marseille, household objects from Trieste, sardines and salted fish from Constantinople, fresh fruits and coffee from Chios, bottle corks from Liège, cheese and ordinary porcelain from Marseilles. Their mansion, built in the classical style between 1824 and 1826 at 4 Primorskii Boulevard, still remains in the first row of houses overlooking the port. Pietro Sartorio Figlio imported coffee and sugar from Trieste, almonds from Livorno, olive oil from Genoa, and oranges from Messina; Niccolò Corsi brought rope, iron and copper from Sevastopol, flowers from Constantinople, beer from Trieste and red cotton thread from Marseille; Giovanni Almali, tobacco and saffron from Constantinople, pearls from Marseilles, incense from Trieste, carob, Muscat wine and red raisins from Samos; Elia Trabotti, pepper, sugar and coffee from Trieste.

Serbian firms,²⁸ which by 1824 represented the second largest group of importers after the Greeks, carried commodities from Livorno and Trieste in Northern Italy mainly on Austrian brigs piloted by Ragusan [Dalmatian] captains. The free state of Ragusa (today's Dubrovnik), whose strong seafaring tradition rivalled that of Venice, was annexed along with other Adriatic maritime republics to the Hapsburg Empire in 1813; it is not surprising therefore that the skills of Ragusan captains and crews were exploited by the Austrians to transport commodities from Trieste and other Italian ports to Odessa. The disruption of Mediterranean maritime trade during the Greek War of Independence (1821-1830) offered Dalmatian captains a prime opportunity to seize a share of the Greek seafaring business towards Russian coasts. Giovanni Risnich imported lemons, oranges, wine and olive oil from Messina and tobacco, cotton, coffee and raisins from Trieste; Giorgio Collich, oranges and bitter oranges from Messina, marble, alabaster, jams and pickles from Trieste and dates from Zante; Philippo Lucich focused on ordinary porcelain from Marseilles, slate and stone gravestones, toys, soaps, corks for wine bottles, salted fish and cheese from Holland and Switzerland.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*

Greeks²⁹ imported fresh and dried fruits from the Archipelago and Constantinople, olive oil and tobacco. Dimitrios Dumas brought carob, olive oil, tobacco and lemon juice from Samos; Alexandros Mavros, coffee, olive oil and tobacco from Constantinople; Constantin Artinos, tobacco, Moldavian wine, and walnuts; Basil Yanopoulos, almonds, coffee and mastic from Chios, and incense and dates from Constantinople; Alexander Kumbaris, salted fish, dates and the various currencies of the Ottoman Empire from Constantinople; Gregorios Marazlis, coffee, halva and Ottoman currencies from Constantinople, wood from the Black Sea, and olives, jars, soap bars, olive oil, oranges and pomegranates from Genoa; Constantin Pappudov, dates, carob, incense, tobacco and red raisins from Constantinople and Syros; Rodocanachi Figli & Cie, sugar from London, white cotton thread from Constantinople, and coral from Livorno; Krionas Papa Nicola tobacco for his workshop, rose oil, raisins, almonds and empty barrels from Constantinople and Syros; Antonios Economos, Moldavian wine; Buba Frères, red cotton thread from Marseilles, and sponges, books and clothing from Constantinople; Grigorios Rossolimos, wine from Galatz.

Very popular as imports, corks *de liège* were indispensable for wine cellars and the bottling of beer, wines, liqueurs and beverages that arrived in barrels and were sold in bottles. Equally in demand were smoking accessories, long cherry-sticks from Tiflis for smoking *à la turque* and mouth-pieces made of amber and ornamented with enamel or gold. The traveller Moore described how, in most of the houses he visited, the water pipes were ranged against the wall, in the same way as cues are placed in billiard rooms. After dinner it was common to offer coffee, liqueurs and pipes. The wine shop at 32 Politseiska in the house of Matfei Petrovich Milovanov in the 4th block of the Greek Market was typical of its kind in the 1840s: it sold all sorts of wines together with paints, vegetables and playing cards, which were at the time a state monopoly.³⁰

The Profile of the Merchant-sea Captain

There were many ways of penetrating Odessa's market, but one of the most popular was that of the captain-merchant enterprise, most frequently seen among the Greeks, Slavs, Italians and the British. It was based on a close collaboration between captains and resident merchants, usually from the same place of origin. The enterprise would begin as a partnership between

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ Oleg Gubar, "Dom na Politseiskoi", *Almanakh* 20 (2005), pp. 66-75 (accessible online: http://www.odessitclub.org/publications/almanac/alm_20/alm_20_329-333.pdf, accessed 10 April 2012).

a merchant or supercargo and a captain who were willing to take risks in new markets and share profits. If the enterprise was successful and the gains stable, the cooperation would evolve by splitting the jointly held business into separate entities. The merchant would attempt to gain temporary resident status and, ultimately, the right to reside and do business in Odessa on a permanent basis. Having succeeded in this, he maintained his collaborations with the captains from his homeland. He would meet them at the port, inform them when new grain consignments were available, entrust them with the transport of his merchandise, commercial and personal correspondence, cash and bills of exchange. *Ad hoc* collaboration in the purchase and, ultimately, sale of grain at ports of their choice were permanent features of the merchant-seafarer enterprise.³¹

Greek firms had a performance advantage over Russian and other foreign competitors. They possessed the know-how for organizing and establishing trade in territories that lacked infrastructure.³² Russia's state paternalism, the blurring between the roles of state officials and monopoly holders, and merchant privileges and exemptions did not, as they did for their Western European competitors, present insurmountable obstacles to the penetration of the Russian market. This, and geographic proximity, constituted important advantages. The use of Constantinople as port of origin for business ventures in Russia's southern ports and the early acquisition (long before their competitors) of the right to access the Black and Azov seas flying the Ottoman or Russian flag allowed them to gain a privileged position.³³ The port records for arrivals and departures of Greek ships in Odessa in 1824, during the Greek War of Independence, highlights that most Greek captains, in order to enter the Black Sea, employed British ships from the Ionian Islands, which were under British protection, and made use of British or Russian flags as a flag of convenience, thereby assuring uninterrupted passage through the Straits into the Black Sea.³⁴

³¹ Harlaftis, *A History of Greek-owned Shipping*, Chap. 5, pp. 147-181.

³² Evrydiki Sifneos, "Diaspora Entrepreneurship Revisited: Greek Merchants and Firms in the Southern Russian Ports", *Enterprises et Histoire* 63 (juin 2011), pp. 40-52.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ G. Harlaftis and K. Papakonstantinou (eds), *Ναυτιλία των Ελλήνων, 1700-1821. Ο αιώνας της ακμής πριν από την επανάσταση* [History of Greek shipping, 1700-1821: The heyday before the Greek Revolution], Athens: Kedros and Ionian University, 2013, pp. 127-144, 145-206; Panayiotis Kapetanakis, *Η ποντοπόρος εμπορική ναυτιλία των Επτανήσων την εποχή της βρετανικής κατοχής και προστασίας και η κεφαλληνιακή υπεροχή (1809/15-1864): Στόλος και λιμάνια, εμπορεύματα και διαδρομές, ναυτότοποι και ναυτικοί, επιχειρηματικότητα και δίκτυα, κοινωνία και πλοιοκτητικές ελίτ* [The Deep-sea going merchant fleet of the Ionian

Until the Crimean War, moreover, Greek businesses were import-export, a distinct and profitable advantage over Western European concerns, which exported exclusively. A small group of Chiot merchants (Ralli, Rodocanachi), who had settled in the city with sufficient capital and formed large-scale mercantile enterprises, shifted their business mainly to exports and invested in their own means of transport.³⁵ Combining trade and shipping under one roof reduced transaction costs and was very competitive. Merchant ship-owners acquired two types of vessels, those of small capacity (barges) to transport grain from the river estuaries to Odessa and sailing ships of bigger tonnage for the open seas. As Eastern Orthodox Christians, Greek merchants also took advantage of religious affinity in acquiring grain from their co-religionists in the countryside during the first half of the nineteenth century. Also, and among other things, this allowed them to supply the vast Russian market with the non-edible olive oil needed for lighting church lamps.³⁶

The Greek Market and its Residential Surroundings

Grecheskaia Ulitsa (Greek Street) was the first parallel south of Odessa's best-known pedestrian street and a popular destination for ambling promenades, Deribasovskaia. The members of the Greek community of the city traditionally built their houses here, many of which can still be seen lining the sidewalks on both sides of the street. Grecheskaia Ulitsa terminated at the Greek Market, in the centre of which an unusual oval building was constructed in 1840. Named, not coincidentally, Afina (Athens), it continues to serve to this day as one of the city's indoor markets and is, in effect, a prototype mall (see fig. 1).

Islands during the British conquest and protection and Cephalonian prominence (1809/15-1864): Fleets and ports, cargoes and sea routes, maritime centres and seamen, and networks, society and ship-owning élites], unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Ionian University, Corfu, 2010, pp. 66, 264-265. See also the newspaper *Journal d'Odessa* for the year 1824, with weekly reports of arrivals and departures of vessels.

³⁵ Stanley Chapman, *Merchant Enterprise in Britain: From the Industrial Revolution to World War I*, Cambridge 1992, pp. 202-205; I. Pepelasis Minoglou, "The Greek Merchant House of the Russian Black Sea: A Nineteenth-century Example of a Trader's Coalition", *International Journal of Maritime History* X/1 (1998), pp. 61-104; Harlaftis, *A History of Greek-owned Shipping*, Chap. 2, pp. 38-70; *id.*, "Mapping the Greek Maritime Diaspora from the Early Eighteenth to the Late Nineteenth Centuries", in I. Baghdiantz McCabe, G. Harlaftis and I. Pepelasis Minoglou (eds), *Diaspora Entrepreneurial Networks: Four Centuries of History*, Oxford: Berg, 2005, pp. 147-169; Sifneos, "Diaspora Entrepreneurship Revisited".

³⁶ Evrydiki Sifneos, "Mobility, Risk and Adaptability of the Diaspora Merchants: The Case of the *Sifneo Frères* Family Firm in Taganrog (Russia), Istanbul and Piraeus, 1850-1940", *The Historical Review / La Revue Historique* VII (2010), pp. 239-252.



Fig. 1. The entrance of the Afina mall, former oval building of the Greek market in Odessa.
Photo: Vassilis Colonas.

Small two-storey houses in the Balkan style have been preserved on the side streets that intersect with Grecheskaia Ulitsa. On Krasni Pereulok (Red Lane or Cloth Lane) at numbers 16, 18 and 20, three of these have been combined to house today the Hellenic Foundation for Culture. The original interiors have been preserved in the middle of the three, which was the grocery store and residence of the merchant Gregorios Marazlis. Members of the Philiki Etaireia, the secret fraternity founded in 1814 by Greek merchants to promote the liberation of the Greeks from the Turkish dominion and to plan the Greek War of Independence of 1821, met here.³⁷

³⁷ Theophilus C. Prousis, *Russian Society and the Greek Revolution*, DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1994; George Frangos, "The Philiki Etaireia: A Premature National Coalition", in Richard Clogg (ed.), *The Struggle for Greek Independence: Essays to Mark the 150th Anniversary of the Greek War of Independence*, London: Macmillan, 1973, pp. 87-103; Grigori Arsh, *Η Φιλική Εταιρεία στη Ρωσία. Ο απελευθερωτικός αγώνας του ελληνικού λαού στις αρχές του 19ου αι. και οι ελληνορωσικές σχέσεις* [The Society of Friends in Russia: The war for the liberation of the Greek people at the beginning of the nineteenth century and Greek-Russian relations], Athens: Papatotiriou, 2011; Ioannis K. Philimon, *Δοκίμιον ιστορικών περι τής Έλληνικής Έπαναστάσεως* [Historical essay on the Greek Revolution], 4 vols, Athens 1859-1861; Sakellarios Sakellariou, *Φιλική Εταιρεία* [The Society of Friends], Odessa 1909; I. A. Meletopoulos, *Η Φιλική Εταιρεία. Αρχείον Π. Σέκερη* [The Society of Friends: P. Sekeris archive], Athens 1967.

The historical building serves as a reminder of the importance of commerce as a conveyor of revolutionary ideas in the Greek immigrant community. Indeed, the merchants' contacts among Russian administrative and military personnel and their broad business networks were crucial facilitators for the transportation of materials and exchange of information and ideas essential for successfully pursuing the cause of Greece's independence.

In sum, I would argue that the rise of a consumer society went hand in hand with the penetration of new tastes, habits and ideas. In the 1820s Odessa was a city of great opportunity, an eastern El Dorado, the destination for adventurers and up-and-coming entrepreneurs. It was in this environment that Greek merchants, who were exposed by their frequent voyages to the ideas of the Greek enlightenment and to the suffering realities of their homeland under Ottoman domination, founded in the city the secret Philiki Etaireia.

Imagining Greece's Independence in Odessa's Greek Market

In the following part of my article, I attempt to read the Philiki Etaireia's development and its influence on the Eastern Question and Russian-Ottoman relations in the light of the general political fermentation that was taking part in the Russian Empire, mainly through the creation of secret societies within the Russian army. I believe that the general mobility and movement of ideas influenced by the Western experiences of the Russian military who had been stationed in Europe during and after the Patriotic War of 1812 were major issues that left aside, at least at a regional level, movements of the same character that concerned the Greeks.

In the microcosm of Odessa's Greek market, political agitation was taking place, not among military officials who founded societies, but among merchants. The Philiki Etaireia was established by merchants of the Greek diaspora in 1814. It was the driving force and soul of the Greek Revolution, the prime source for the organizational structure and ideological framework of the war until it was disbanded in 1821. Out of a membership of 1093, 53.7% were merchants.³⁸ Among its members were 113 merchants recruited in Odessa in the manner of the Carbonari and Freemasons (oaths, initiation rituals, lodges, secrecy).³⁹ Odessa was one of the principal centres of support for Alexander Ypsilantis' uprising in the Danubian Principalities in February

³⁸ Frangos, "The Philiki Etaireia", pp. 87-103; Philimon published 692 members in *Δοκίμιον ιστορικόν*, Vol. I, pp. 389-416; Sekeris listed 520 members in Meletopoulos, *Η Φιλική Εταιρεία*, pp. 98-165; V. G. Mexas published 541 names in his *Οι Φιλικοί* [The Etaireists], Athens 1937.

³⁹ Frangos, "The Philiki Etaireia".

1821. Odessa sent money, arms and combatants to support the rebels in this region. The Society planned to launch simultaneous revolts in the Principalities, Constantinople and the Peloponnese. Ypsilantis was a high-ranking officer of the Russian cavalry who had participated in the Napoleonic Wars and was injured in the Battle of Dresden, where he lost his right hand. Of Greek descent and an enthusiastic advocate of the Greek insurrection against the Turks, he accepted the leadership of the Society of Friends in the early months of 1820. This appointment was crucial for the Greek movement, in that it bolstered the myth of Russian support and placed at the head of the Society a military man of action and proven heroism and capabilities. Ypsilantis increased the organization's prestige among Russian officers and his military colleagues. The Decembrists Lieutenant-Colonel Pavel Pestel, Major-General Mikhail G. Orlov and other officials expressed admiration for Ypsilantis' cause.⁴⁰ Pestel wrote to General P. D. Kiselev that Ypsilantis' revolt was worthy of the highest respect,⁴¹ and the latter expressed himself in a letter to General A. A. Zakrevski on 1 March 1821 in the following manner: "Ypsilantis has left his name to posterity. Greeks reading his proclamation have rushed with joy to his banner. God help him in this sacred cause, and Russia too, I might add."⁴² These officers' parallel involvement in the Union of Welfare's branches at Kishinev and Tulchin created a convenient climate for the Society of Friends' own activities in Kishinev. Ypsilantis requested permission for a leave of absence from Russian service for health reasons and made his plans as the leader of the Philiki Etaireia. After visiting Moscow and Kiev he arrived in Odessa in August 1820. On the basis of his social standing he enjoyed the hospitality of a retired general, George Cantacuzinos, who later followed him in the Moldavian expedition, with the aim of meeting Greek merchants. The presence in Odessa of the leader of the Philiki Etaireia was the catalyst that unified old guard and new members and introduced the Society to the merchants of the city and military men from Greece, many of whom became members. Despite Ypsilantis' successes and gaining some material support for his military plans,⁴³ monetary donations failed to meet expectations. In September 1820 he left Odessa, where the atmosphere had become explosive, recruitment of volunteers increased daily, and rumours

⁴⁰ Prousis, *Russian Society and the Greek Revolution*, pp. 49-50.

⁴¹ Patrick O'Meara, *The Decembrist Pavel Pestel: Russia's First Republican*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003, p. 49, letter of P. Pestel to P. D. Kiselev, 3/15 March 1821.

⁴² Prousis, *Russian Society and the Greek Revolution*, p. 42.

⁴³ Sakellariou, *Φιλική Εταιρεία*, p. 66.

regarding Greek organizational activity for Kishinev were rampant.⁴⁴ On 22 February Ypsilantis crossed the Pruth River into Moldavian territory and began mustering his forces.

Tsar Alexander I was informed about the Greek insurgency and Ypsilantis' drive at the Leibach (now Ljubljana, Slovenia) Congress of the Holy Alliance. He immediately condemned the revolt and dismissed Ypsilantis from Russian service.⁴⁵ Through the Russian consul in Iasi he severely questioned the motives of Odessa's Governor-General Count de Langeron regarding his ongoing correspondence with Ypsilantis, in particular his receipt of Ypsilantis' confidential letter of 26 February 1821 announcing the insurrection and requesting that de Langeron not raise obstacles to the movement of Greek troops in the direction of the Moldavian border.⁴⁶ The governor-general was ordered to explain himself in regard to his issuing passports to individuals moving from or via Odessa to the Moldavian border in the months previous to March 1821.⁴⁷ De Langeron replied to the foreign secretary that the individuals in question were merchants, most of them Ottoman subjects, who had asked to visit Moldavia for business reasons and that their intercepted letters referred exclusively to commercial affairs.⁴⁸ After Ypsilantis' revolt was quelled by Turkish troops at Dragasani in Bessarabia and refugees from both the Principalities and Constantinople fled to Odessa, Russia showed signs of shifting policy. Turkish reprisals and the assassination by order of the sultan of the Greek Patriarch Gregorios V in Constantinople on Easter Sunday 1821 had a powerful impact on Russian public opinion, which exerted pressure on imperial foreign policy. On 17 July Russia delivered a strongly worded message to the Porte. The ultimatum, prepared by Ioannis Kapodistrias, reiterated Russia's right to act as protector of its persecuted co-religionists and to evacuate refugees, and demanded that the sultan withdraw from the Principalities and restore damaged Orthodox

⁴⁴ Historical and Ethnological Society of Greece, *Αρχείο Εμμανουήλ Ξάνθου* [The Emmanuel Xanthos Archive], Vol. II, Athens 2000, letter of A. Ypsilantis from Odessa to Xanthos in Bucharest, no. 1820/85, 9 September 1820, p. 165.

⁴⁵ Prousis, *Russian Society and the Greek Revolution*, pp. 27-28.

⁴⁶ Архив внешней политики Россииской Империи [Archive of Foreign Policy of the Russian Empire; hereafter AVPRI], Moscow, Fond Kantseliariia 1821, opis 468, delo 5939, letter of Ypsilantis to Langeron, 21 February 1821, # 25, annex # 3566, quoted from George F. Jewsbury, "The Greek Question: The View from Odessa, 1815-1822", *Cahiers du Monde Russe* 40/4 (octobre-décembre 1999), pp. 751-762, here at p. 755.

⁴⁷ AVPRI, Fond Kantseliariia, opis 468, delo 5940, letter 3301, Nesselrode to Langeron, 14/26 April 1821.

⁴⁸ AVPRI, Fond Kantseliariia, opis 468, delo 5939, letter 3566, Langeron to Nesselrode, 24 April/6 May 1821 and 28 April/10 May 1821, letter 3574.

churches. Upon receiving no answer from the Ottoman authorities by the stipulated deadline, the Russian ambassador in Constantinople broke relations with the Porte and left for Odessa on 27 July 1821.

History of the Philiki Etaireia

The Philiki Etaireia was conceived by second-rate Greek merchants, clerks at Greek commercial houses and traders who struggled to stay above water. Nikolaos Skoufas, a fervent and enthusiastic advocate of Greek liberation, was a craftsman from Kompoti (near Arta on mainland Greece). He began his career as a hat maker and was drawn to Odessa in 1813 by business opportunities. Emmanuel Xanthos, from the Aegean island of Patmos, had studied at the religious school there. He was involved in commercial ventures between Smyrna and Trieste and arrived in Odessa in 1810. In 1812 he was a partner in the purchase of a quantity of olive oil from the island of Lefkas (Ionian Sea), where he was initiated into a Masonic lodge. He returned to Odessa in the autumn of 1813. Athanasios Tsakalov, from Ioannina in Epirus, was a shipping agent and clerk. His father was a fur merchant in Moscow. He had been in Paris in 1813 and was a member of the Greek Language Hostel, an association aiming to promote enlightenment among Greeks. As Grigori Arsh described it, after the foundation of the Philiki Etaireia in June 1814 its members set off in different directions.⁴⁹ Skoufas and Tsakalov went to Moscow in the hope of persuading the wealthy Greek merchants there to join the cause, while Xanthos went to Constantinople, where he worked as a clerk for the Greek merchant Lemonis Paleologos. They corresponded by letters written in secret code. By 1816 Skoufas had returned to Odessa and was living in the residence of the merchant Athanasios Sekeris; both Sekeris and his clerk Panayiotis Anagnostopoulos were members of the Society. Between 1818 and 1820 the nexus of the Society's activities gradually shifted to Constantinople, where many new members were recruited from the local Greek population and from those who passed through on their way to or from subjugated Greece.⁵⁰

As part of an attempt to raise the Philiki Etaireia's profile, it was agreed that a personality of much higher profile than those of its founders should

⁴⁹ G. L. Arsh and G. M. Piatigorski, "Ορισμένα ζητήματα της ιστορίας της Φιλικής Εταιρίας υπό το φως νέων στοιχείων των Σοβιετικών αρχείων" [On some issues concerning the history of the Philiki Etaireia in the light of new evidence from the Soviet Archives], in Arsh, *Η Φιλική Εταιρεία στη Ρωσία*, pp. 487-513.

⁵⁰ Jewsbury, "The Greek Question".

be recruited to head the organization formally. With this goal in mind, Xanthos was sent to Moscow and St Petersburg in an attempt to convince the most prominent Greek of the Russian Empire, the foreign minister Count Kapodistrias, to accept the post. On his refusal, Xanthos contacted Ypsilantis, who eagerly accepted the offer and briefly energized the movement as described above. While Ypsilantis' failed operation was a severe setback, his role as a galvanizing figure for the future of the ultimately successful struggle for Greek independence cannot be underestimated and as such a great deal of the credit must go to the Philiki Etaireia, the mercantile networks that supported it (with Odessa figuring prominently) and its humble founders.

Following the defeat in Moldavia in June of 1821 and the refugee crisis that ensued, a new board of directors was elected and the name of the Society was changed from Society of Friends (Philiki Etaireia) to the Philanthropic Society. Top-ranked merchants from the Greek Market and the Free Bazaar were elected to head it, including Ioannis Amvrosios, Gregorios Marazlis, Ilias Manesis, Alexandros Mavros and Alexander Kumbaris.⁵¹ Despite a severe economic downturn during 1821, they donated important sums of money to support the new Society's goals. They worked with Russian institutions and the Holy Synod in order to collect funds from sympathetic Russians and manage its distribution to needy refugee families. Seven thousand refugees had passed the Moldavian border by the end of April 1821 and totalled 40,000 by September.⁵²

In addition these merchants continued to support the Greek Revolution in the Peloponnese with munitions and foodstuffs. In December of 1821, however, a private message from Governor-General de Langeron, who, until then, had tacitly permitted the survival of the Society by approving its change of name, informed the members of the tsar's desire to dissolve all secret societies and ordered them to obey Alexander's ukase to this effect.⁵³ After the abolition of the Society in December 1821, its members worked for the Russian authorities in the refugee relief campaign. Dimitrios Inglesis,

⁵¹ Sakellariou, *Φιλική Εταιρεία*, p. 23; Prousis, *Russian Society and the Greek Revolution*, p. 68.

⁵² Prousis, *Russian Society and the Greek Revolution*, p. 57.

⁵³ DAOO, 18, 5, 16, no. 3662, letter of the town head of Odessa to the head of the commercial court implementing the tsar's decision (1 August 1822) to shut down all secret societies, as well as the masonic lodges, 20 September 1822. The Society was already informed from the end of 1821 about the governor's will to shut it down. See the letter of the Society to P. Saravinos, K. Tsiropoulos and M. Magoulas in Taganrog announcing Langeron's order to liquidate the Society, 26 December 1821. Quoted in Sakellariou, *Φιλική Εταιρεία*, p. 269-270.

head of the city council in 1820, was appointed treasurer of the Odessa Relief Committee and sent reports documenting donors, sums, types of assistance and allocation of aid twice a year to Minister of Internal Affairs and Public Education Alexander Golitsyn. While at the head of Odessa's municipality, Inglesis had kept contact with the insurrectionists in Moldavia and as early as March 1821 had sent 20,000 kurus to Ypsilantis at the Foxani camp for assistance.⁵⁴ His correspondence with Loukas Valsamakis, who had joined, together with a group of Cephalonians, Ypsilantis' forces reveals that Inglesis had elaborated a plan for arming commercial vessels and turning them into battleships in order to patrol the Black Sea coast and prevent Turkish reinforcements by sea.⁵⁵

The aspirations of the Philiki Etaireia for a broader Balkan uprising against Turkish domination were initially embraced by the Balkan merchants who resided in Odessa and the Principalities. Although originating from the Bulgarian, Serbian and Romanian territories of the Ottoman Empire, many were reported in the Russian archives as "Greeks" because the use of Greek as a common language in trade among the Orthodox Balkan merchants⁵⁶ confused Russian authorities. In the early years following the foundation of Odessa, Bulgarian and Serbian traders belonged to and were administrated by the "Greek magistracy".⁵⁷ Using the land trade routes through the Balkans and the frontier city of Nezhin, they relocated to Odessa when the new port established itself as an important trading outlet for the southern Russian region. Vasil Aprilov, the Palaouzov Brothers and Moustakov were among the most prominent.⁵⁸ They shared common trading backgrounds with their Greek counterparts and the enlightened desire to promote education among their compatriots. Bulgarian and Greek merchants in the Balkans and Vienna not only financed the publication of books in Greek but also

⁵⁴ DAOO, 268.1.1., letter of thanks to Dimitrios Inglesis from Alexander Ypsilantis at Foxani, 11 March 1821.

⁵⁵ DAOO, 268.1.1., letter of Loukas Valsamakis from Kishinev to Dimitrios Inglesis in Odessa on the issue of the fleet. In the same letter he announces that he will send him revolutionary pamphlets via their messenger, 5 March 1821.

⁵⁶ Traian Stoianovich, "The Conquering Balkan Orthodox Merchant", *The Journal of Economic History* 20/2 (June 1960), pp. 234-313.

⁵⁷ See the list of members of the Greek magistracy, 1799, DAOO, Fond 59, opis 1a, delo 156.

⁵⁸ Oliver Schulz, "Port-cities, Diaspora Communities and Emerging Nationalism in the Ottoman Empire: Balkan Merchants in Odessa and their Network in the Early Nineteenth-century", in Adrian Jarvis and Robert Lee (eds), *Trade, Migration and Urban Networks in Port Cities, c. 1640-1940*, London: International Maritime Economic History Association, 2008, pp. 127-148.

contributed to their dissemination as subscribers.⁵⁹ In Odessa, Balkan merchants donated money for the Greek Commercial Gymnasium, an institution for basic commercial education, whose classes were held mostly in Greek. Vasil Aprilov, Odessa's most prominent Bulgarian merchant, who dealt in Moldavian wines,⁶⁰ was a member of the Philiki Etaireia before 1821. Aside from substantial financial contributions, he also offered the use of his shop, next to his vodka factory, to equip volunteers, many of whom were Bulgarian, preparing to join Ypsilantis' forces.⁶¹ According to Nikolai Todorov, these were mostly refugees who had sought shelter in Bessarabian cities during the Russo-Turkish War of 1806-1812, Bulgarian soldiers who fought for the Russians in the same conflict or natives of Bulgarian territories of the Ottoman Empire. In July 1821, Russian officials counted 132 Bulgarians among the 1002 military survivors of the Ypsilantis insurrection gathered at a retention camp in Orgiev.⁶²

Ypsilantis' revolt in Bessarabia failed to address effectively local social issues, specifically the agrarian population's interests, and focused exclusively on the uprising of the Balkan people against Turkish rule. After its defeat and the banning of the Philiki Etaireia, the Bulgarian merchants emancipated themselves from what they had come to consider Greek tutelage and pursued their own national goals by promoting school funding and a Bulgarian literary renaissance.

Facilitating Factors for Political Fermentation

The activities of Russian and other secret societies in the 1820s and their propagation in the south of the empire were facilitated by a series of factors directly related to the size of the empire and the inability of the central government to control or supervise it efficiently. The administrative and military apparatus were both divided along regional lines that allowed relative autonomy in governance and decision-making. After the Patriotic War of 1812 the army was reorganized into two territories, one based in Mogilev, Belarus, and the other in Tulchin, Podolia, from which army corps, divisions and

⁵⁹ Nadia Danova, "L'idée des 'nôtres' et des 'autres' dans les milieux de la diaspora bulgare au XIXe siècle", *Études Balkaniques* XLVII/4 (2011), pp. 57-75.

⁶⁰ The journal *Odesski Vestnik* reported Aprilov as an importer of Moldavian wines in 1824; *Odesski Vestnik*, no. 103, 20 December 1824.

⁶¹ Nikolai Todorov, *Η βαλκανική διάσταση της Επανάστασης του '21* [Balkan dimensions of the Revolution of '21], Athens: Gutenberg, 1990, p. 112.

⁶² *Ibid.*, pp. 191-294; DAOO, 1.249, 40, no. 3465, list of members of Ypsilantis' defeated army retained at Orgiev, Kishinev, 14 July 1821.

regiments received orders. The administration of territories distant from the capital proved to be very difficult. Moreover, after the creation of ministries in 1802, conflicts of authority emerged between the appointed regional representatives of the central government and the local governors-general.⁶³ Fragmentation and the creation of regional centres of power ensued and impeded faithful compliance to imperial guidelines.

The specific factors that abetted the emergence of secret societies in the southern territories can be categorized as follows:

Distance from the capital: The emergence of revolutionary activity was facilitated by the geographical distance of 2000 km, via Kiev and Moscow, between St Petersburg and Odessa. Regular mail required two to three months to be delivered, and consequently imperial orders, decrees and ukases were necessarily applied in retrospect. In the case of the Society of Friends and major clandestine societies operating in the south, the ukase that banned all conspiratorial organizations was delivered in August 1822, 18 months after the Greek uprising in Moldavia and 15 months after the Moscow congress of the Union of Salvation secret society.

Relative autonomy of the governors-general in local administration: After the 1812 War, governors-general were appointed in the provinces.⁶⁴ They were imperial representatives at a regional level, responsible for both military security and civilian administration. The governor-general of Novorossiia (New Russia), Count de Langeron, was obliged to administer a vast territory; the paucity of means of transportation and the difficult climate obliged him to be absent from Odessa, the capital of the territory, frequently and for long periods of time. His predecessor, the Duc de Richelieu, required three months to travel through Crimea in order to compile an extensive report on the empire's southern territories for the tsar. Moreover, the military and administrative duties of the governor-general were overwhelming and could not be attended to satisfactorily. This sense of ineffectiveness was amply conveyed in Count de Langeron's "Réflexions sur la nécessité de concentrer l'administration", which he submitted in 1827 to the tsar; in it he proposed a division of Novorossiia whereby Odessa and Kherson would form one *guberniia* and Ekaterinoslav and the Crimea another.⁶⁵

⁶³ John P. LeDonne, "Administrative Regionalization in the Russian Empire, 1802-1806", *Cahiers du Monde Russe* 43/1 (janvier-mars 2002), pp. 5-34.

⁶⁴ *Id.*, "Russian Governors General, 1775-1825: Territorial or Functional Administration?", *Cahiers du Monde Russe* 41/2 (janvier-mars 2001), pp. 5-30.

⁶⁵ LeDonne, "Administrative Regionalization", p. 26.

Relative facility of travel: In the 1820s movement from one place to another was hindered only for fiscal reasons. The imperial state wanted to ensure that its subjects would not leave their places of registration, temporarily or permanently, unless they had met their tax obligations and were debt-free.⁶⁶ Russian citizens required a guarantor in order to be issued a travel passport. They would apply to wealthy or first guild merchants who would guarantee the eventual payment of debts to the authorities.

Existence of major secret societies: The imperial authorities were primarily interested in detecting the existence of secret societies that included army officers, government bureaucrats and the nobility and to observe their members' movements, the circulation of subversive texts and their expansion through recruitment. Alexander was primarily concerned with the existence of secret societies among "his" people, military and administrative personnel. The Greek secret society was a minor issue concerning mostly foreigners, primarily Ottoman or Greek subjects. It became an annoyance to the tsar from the moment it compromised Russia's foreign policy, especially in relation to its partners in the Holy Alliance. Moreover, the tsar was concerned that the appearance of interfering in the internal affairs of the Ottoman Empire in support of rebels would destabilize his own government and provoke a ban on Russian shipping through the Straits. As declared in the ukase prohibiting secret societies,⁶⁷ the tsar's main concern was to assure that his military and administrative apparatus in the periphery was immune to subversive movements.

The repercussions against the Greek insurgents following the suppression of the Ypsilantis revolt made the Russian philhellenic movement stronger. We must not underestimate the importance of the attitude of particular individuals who held prominent government posts in the south and sympathized with the Greek cause. Among them were the governor-general of Novorossia, Count de Langeron, the military vice-regent of Bessarabia, Ivan N. Inzov, Major-General Mikhail F. Orlov, the diplomats Alexandre Stourdza and Ioannis Kapodistrias, and army generals P. D. Kiselev, A. A. Zakrevski and A. P. Ermolov. Prousis identified them as members of a pro-war party that supported a Russian military intervention against the Porte and expected the tsar to approve it during the summer of 1821.⁶⁸ In reality however, Russian foreign policy's foremost priority was the bolstering of the established order, including the territorial integrity of

⁶⁶ Richard Pipes, *Russia under the Old Regime*, New York: Macmillan, ²1992, p. 314.

⁶⁷ DAOO, Fond 18, opis 5, delo 16. See note 53.

⁶⁸ Prousis, *Russian Society and the Greek Revolution*, p. 42.

the Ottoman Empire; aid and support for Russia's Orthodox co-religionists in Greece was a secondary concern.

De Langeron, like many others in Russian service was a French aristocrat who had fled his country during its revolution. He maintained correspondence with the Duc de Richelieu after the latter returned to France to assume the post of prime minister (1815-1818 and 1820-1821). Before the Ypsilantis uprising, de Langeron maintained good relations with the Greek merchants of Odessa. They made his working plan to transform Odessa's port into a gateway for the export of Russian grain to Europe possible, and he, therefore, facilitated their ventures and their access to the hinterland and other port-cities. He often relied on their economic support and appointed merchants as heads of the city council. His relationship with Dimitrios Inglesis, a prominent Greek merchant, head of the council (1819-1820) and member of various municipal committees, reveals that they shared common views on the evolution of Odessa's commerce and the measures to be taken to promote it. Inglesis, although not an official member of the Society of Friends until 1821 supported the Ypsilantis revolt by covertly sending money and munitions, as the correspondence between them testifies (letter of 25 March 1821).⁶⁹ De Langeron was equally positive regarding, and friendly with, Ypsilantis, who had gained respect among the Russian officer corps as the tsar's military aide-de-camp. The two men met when Ypsilantis visited Odessa in the summer of 1820 and engaged in discussions on topics of common interest and on Ypsilantis' political thoughts on the Greek cause. His "benign neglect", as it was qualified by Prousis, towards the movements of the Greek insurgents in Odessa and Bessarabia gave the Greek organization breathing room at a very critical moment in its history.⁷⁰

Russian society's acknowledged philhellenism and the general inclination of Russian policy in favour of the Orthodox Greeks, as formally delineated in the 1774 Treaty of Kuchuk Kainardji, were in flagrant contrast with the repressive measures of the Holy Alliance. Jewsbury and Prousis have argued that de Langeron was unaware of the latest shifts in Russian foreign policy and continued to work in accordance with the policy of defending Russia's Greek co-religionists. They also argued that the presence of Ypsilantis, the tsar's former aide-de-camp, as head of the Society gave the impression that its ideas were supported by the upper echelons of Russia's military and

⁶⁹ Theophilus C. Prousis, "Dimitrios S. Inglezes: Greek Merchant and City Leader of Odessa", *History Faculty Publications*, Paper 6 (1991) (accessible online: http://digitalcommons.unf.edu/ahis_facpub/6).

⁷⁰ Prousis, *Russian Society and the Greek Revolution*, p. 43.

civilian administration.⁷¹ Ypsilantis' letter to de Langeron insinuated that the tsar was aware of the uprising, underlined the secrecy of the communication and pleaded for the governor to facilitate Greeks wanting to join him without compromising Russia's foreign policy.⁷² De Langeron, on his side, continued to issue passports for Bessarabia, allowing 300 individuals to cross the border between February and April 1821.⁷³

It seems very probable that the tsar's frequent and extended absences abroad in Europe, as well as his major role in European politics, were detrimental to keeping provincial governors up to date on Russia's shifting foreign policy. Poor communication with the south impeded the quick receipt of diplomatic correspondence. News from Leibach, in today's Slovenia, had to go via the Russian ambassador in Constantinople and then on a four- to six-day sea journey to Odessa. Strict quarantine measures on all passengers, regardless of rank, increased the travel time from Odessa to St Petersburg to more than 20 days. The Russian ambassador, Baron Gregori Stroganoff, left Constantinople on 27 July 1821 after the expiration of Alexander's ultimatum to the sultan and arrived in Odessa on 2 August; he was released from quarantine 30 days later and departed for St Petersburg on 1 September.⁷⁴ Gaps in intelligence were apparent on all sides. De Langeron was not informed in a timely manner about the latest agreements among the members of the Holy Alliance and, inversely, the tsar was first made aware of the existence within his army of secret societies with political aims as late as 1821, several years after they were established.⁷⁵ The practical hindrances in communication and de Langeron's potentially flimsy excuse regarding the suspicious movement of foreign merchants towards the Moldavian border in 1821 convinced the authorities that he was innocent of the tsar's well-founded suspicion of complicity in Ypsilantis' revolt. In fact, Tsar Nicholas I's 1825 invitation to de Langeron to take part in the investigation of the Decembrist Uprising was a certain affirmation of his status as a loyal subject of the Russian Crown.⁷⁶

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 44, and Jewsbury, "The Greek Question".

⁷² Arsh, *Η Φιλική Εταιρεία*, p. 421. It quotes Ypsilantis' letter to Count de Langeron of 26 February/10 March 1821.

⁷³ Todorov, *Η βαλκανική διάσταση της Επανάστασης του '21*, p. 115.

⁷⁴ Jewsbury, "The Greek Question".

⁷⁵ Marie-Pierre Rey, *Alexander I: The Tsar who Defeated Napoleon*, DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2012, p. 143.

⁷⁶ Jewsbury, "The Greek Question".

Another high-ranking military official who rendered indirect assistance to the Etairists was the military commander of Bessarabia, I. M. Inzov. Both he and his staff were aware of Greeks crossing the Bessarabian border and of the logistical preparations for the uprising in Kishinev. He maintained close ties with the officers of the southern Society, M. F. Orlov among them, who assisted Ypsilantis in finding housing and logistical support. He had previously approved the appointment of Greek merchants from Kishinev to key administrative posts responsible for access across the Pruth River border (quarantines, document control, etc.), thus creating a protective bubble of secrecy that enabled, for instance, the critical meeting at the quarantine in Izmail on 1 October 1820, a crucial gathering of a great number of the Society's members, who came from Constantinople, the Peloponnese and elsewhere in mainland Greece and the Principalities, and which was devoted to deciding on the strategy for the insurgency.⁷⁷

The Commercial Outlook of the Greek Society of Friends

Unlike other conspiratorial groups operating in the southern provinces, the Greek secret society had a fundamental advantage that camouflaged it and made detection of its activities nearly impossible. The overlapping of its operations with the methods of those of the everyday business of international trade, such as frequent correspondence within and beyond the borders, letters transported not by official post but by private means (ship crews or merchants), great mobility among the principals and agents of the commercial concerns, and the habitual transportation of money and letters of credit were alibis that seamlessly camouflaged the Society's activities and structure. The matter, of course, of use of a foreign language provided yet another barrier to inspection and surveillance by local authorities. Reading and deciphering letters handwritten in Greek, mostly by uneducated people, required time and expertise. As Emmanuel Xanthos' archive shows, most of the letters addressed to him from Odessa in the 1820s were signed simply with merchants' initials, a very common practice for repetitive correspondence among people who knew each other but which also obscured the identity of the sender to the uninitiated. The letters provided news about "our commerce" in the Mediterranean foodstuffs that were popular in Russia, which was coded terminology for the progress of the Philiki Etaireia's organization and affairs

⁷⁷ On the meeting, see I. K. Mazarakis-Ainian "Η Φιλική Εταιρεία. Γεγονότα του 1820" [The Society of Friends: The events of 1820], in *Αρχείο Εμμανουήλ Ξάνθου*, Vol. II, Athens 2000, pp. xxi-xxiii.

in general. The terms “our friend” or “friend” were part of the merchants’ vocabulary whenever they did not want to name clients, partners, creditors or a major merchant, often of a different ethnicity. The same terms were used to designate comrades and members of the Society. “He did not want to appear as our friend but they exposed themselves,” wrote Stamatis Kumbaris to Emmanuel Xanthos, criticizing the behaviour of two Odessa merchants who had recently become members of the *Etaireia*.⁷⁸

The encrypted messages used by the Society often referred to “our commerce” for “our Society”, to “receive money in advance” or “down payment for our olive oil” for initiation into the Society, and to “receive money for our purchases” for member contributions. “Our trade [which meant our Society] has been revealed to everybody,”⁷⁹ Kumbaris warned Xanthos in the autumn of 1820. “In regard to our trade, it has been divulged and everybody knows about our partnership, we suffer from not being silent [...] notify the Good One that our goals are known here”, deciphered as “our secret society and its members have been discovered [...] Ypsilantis must be warned that our purpose is known.” In September 1820, Ypsilantis also wrote to Xanthos, “I am leaving for Kishinev. After six days they have started to talk a lot and it is no good, speed is necessary.”⁸⁰ “Send me the passport as quickly as possible,”⁸¹ urged Dimitrios Themelis to Xanthos (in order to be able to join Ypsilantis at any time). The issuance of passports was crucial for their travel in and out of Russia and for the propagation of the Philiki *Etaireia*’s message under pretext of settling business debts. It has been pointed out that prominent merchants were unwilling to participate in subversive organizations.⁸² Yet, a closer look at surnames and their relation to mercantile houses reveals a more complex pattern of involvement. Merchants who worked overtly for the Philiki *Etaireia* were not businessmen of the highest rank but, typically, their clerks or minor partners. Emmanuel Xanthos was employed at the trading company of

⁷⁸ *Αρχείο Εμμανουήλ Ξάνθου*, Vol. I, letter of Stamatis Kumbaris from Odessa to Xanthos at Renni, no. 1819/25, 29 May 1819, p. 79.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, Vol. II, letter of Stamatis Kumbaris from Odessa to Xanthos in Kishinev, no. 1820/119, 17 November 1820, p. 220.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, Vol. II, letter of A. Ypsilantis from Odessa to Xanthos in Bucharest, no. 1820/85, 9 September 1820, p. 165.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, Vol. II, letter of Dimitrios Themelis from Galatz, no. 1820/103, 21 October 1820, pp. 192-193.

⁸² Prousis, *Russian Society and the Greek Revolution*, pp. 19-20. On the reluctant attitude of the wealthy Greek merchants of Moscow towards the *Etairist* members, see Arsh, *Η Φιλική Εταιρία*, p. 241; Jewsbury, “The Greek Question”.

Vassilios Xenis, a merchant featured in the 1813 list of members of the first guild of the city who had paid their taxes to the municipality, according to the quantity of grain they had exported.⁸³ Panagiotis Anagnostopoulos, another prominent member of the Society, was an employee of Athanasios Sekeris. Nikolaos Spiliadis (1785-1867), secretary of the Greek State in 1829 and under the authority of Ioannis Kapodistrias, worked as a clerk in the Mavros and Paleologos trading firms in both Odessa and Constantinople: the clerk and his bosses all became members of the Philiki Etaireia.⁸⁴ In fact, several Greek family firms with branches in Odessa and Constantinople were involved in the secret society. The Kumbaris, Sekeris, Mavros and Paleologos firms constituted the principal commercial nodes of the Greek secret society in both cities. Of such firms, those with three partners were preferred for recruitment, since usually a third brother, less involved in the company's business, could be counted on to devote himself to the Philiki Etaireia while providing access to the family firm's assets and networks. This is evident in the case of the brothers Kumbaris and Sekeris. Stamatis Kumbaris, who was the key person in the Philiki Etaireia's Odessa branch in the 1820s introduced Ypsilantis to important merchants such as Alexander Mavros, Alexander Kumbaris, Gregorios Marazlis, and Theodore Serafinos when the former visited Odessa in the 1820s. As Sakellarios Sakellariou recounted, these magnates were personally invited to dinner with Ypsilantis at a *houtor* (a farm with a villa) on the outskirts of the city and were informed about the existence of the Society and its leader. Under the cover of the prominent Kumbaris firm, Stamatis Kumbaris was able to exchange a 500 pound sterling bank note sent to him by Ypsilantis for the purchase of the first shipment of munitions.⁸⁵ The Company of Greek Insurers donated a sum of 2500 roubles to Ypsilantis.

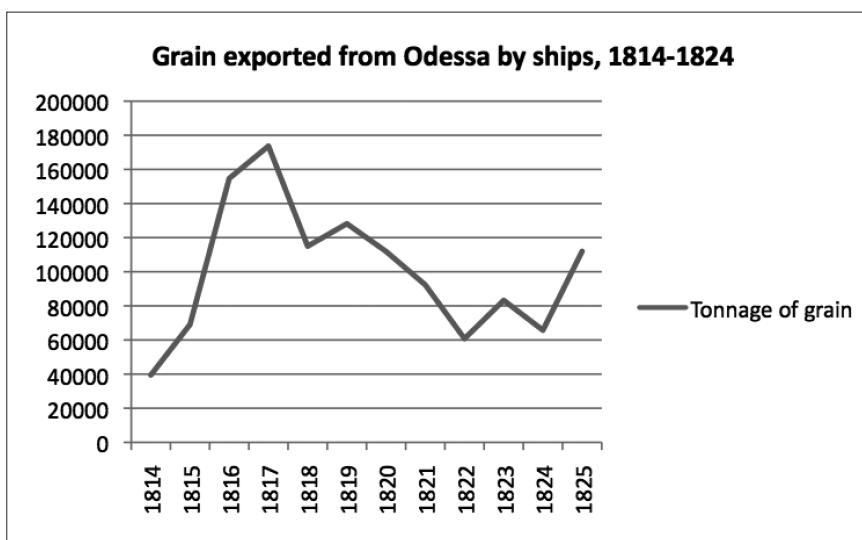
However, business was slow in 1819-1820, and the merchants were financially strapped. As Chart 1 shows, the grain exported by ships from Odessa's port had dropped after 1817 and would continue to shrink until 1822.

⁸³ DAOO, Fond 4, opis 1a, delo 204, list of first guild merchants compiled by the town magistrate, 11 June 1813.

⁸⁴ See his contribution to the literature on the Revolution and the Greek War of Independence, Nikolaos Spiliadis, *Απομνημονεύματα, ήτοι Ιστορία της Επανάστασεως των Ελλήνων* [Reminiscences, or History of the Revolution of the Greeks], ed. Panagiotis F. Hristopoulos, 3 vols, Athens 1851-1857.

⁸⁵ The money was changed and resent by a personal agent from Kumbaris to Xanthos at Kishinev; *Αρχείο Εμμανουήλ Ξάνθου*, Vol. II, G. D. Stamatis Kumbaris from Odessa to Xanthos in Kishinev, 10 August 1820, p. 147.

Chart 1



Source: Elaborated data from P. Kapetanakis' unpublished postdoctoral research, "The British and their Ionian Subjects in the Port-cities and Grain Markets of the Black Sea and the Danube: Penetration, Settlement, Integration (Late Eighteenth to Mid-nineteenth Centuries)", 2012-2015.

The year 1820, which was a crucial year for collecting money for the Philiki Etaireia in order to prepare the Ypsilantis insurgency and for buying munitions, was a bad year for trade during which exports fell from 128,166 to 111,902 tons of grain exported.⁸⁶ Moreover, a comparison of the total turnover of renowned merchants in 1817 and 1821, both those involved in the Greek insurgency and those just making use of the maritime lane of the Mediterranean and the Aegean Sea, demonstrated a reduction in their commercial affairs. Indicatively, Dimitrios Dumas lost 46.5% of the value of his import-export transactions, while the wealthy merchants Dimitrios Inglesis, Grigorios Marazlis, Vassilios Xenis, Athanasios Sekeris and Lemonis Paleologos did not appear on the merchants' list of 1821.⁸⁷ Antonios Tsounis wrote to Xanthos that he was unable to send money, "because the losses I have suffered from our wheat have drained any

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ Gosydarstvvennaia vneshniaia torgovlia 1817 goda, v raznykh ee vidakh, St Petersburg 1818, table XI, pp. 118-123; Gosydarstvvennaia vneshniaia torgovlia 1821 goda, v raznykh ee vidakh, St Petersburg 1822, table XI, pp. 122-129.

intention. I hope that in a short period of time I will participate in a new venture and then I will undertake to meet any of our trading friends.”⁸⁸

Entrepreneurs knew that the grain trade could not yield profits in recession years and that the only source that could do so was tax farming of the liquor trade. Therefore, it was recommended that members of the Philiki Etaireia in Bessarabia should devote themselves to it. Another scheme for raising funds was an elaborate proposal of the Moscow merchants Antonios Komitzopoulos and Nikolaos Patzimadis involving the establishment of a public corporation by the name of Φιλόμουσος και Φιλάνθρωπος Γραικική Εμπορική Εταιρεία [Greek Commercial Society of Friends of the Muses and People], whose shareholders would be Russian and foreign philhellenes. The official activities of the company would include ship-building, printing presses, book publishing and the foundation of schools, while its covert objective would be the raising of funds for the liberation of the nation.⁸⁹

In the last months of 1820 and the beginning of 1821 a great number of Greek merchants in Odessa became members of the Etaireia.⁹⁰ All of them were prominent first and second guild merchants. G. M. Piatigorsky, who wrote the biographies of 16 of them, estimated that approximately 20% of Odessa’s male Greek population were members of the Etaireia.⁹¹ Among them we may discern powerful merchants of the grain trade and Odessa’s import-export businesses (Theodore Rodocanachis, Constantin F. Papudov, Alexandros Mavros, Gregorios Marazlis, Theodore Serafinos, Ilias Manesis, Ioannis Amvrosios, Dimitrios Inglesis, M. N. Petrokokkinos, Krionas Papa Nicola, Mattheos Mavrocordatos, Ioannis Skaramangas). Governor-General de Langeron, in a reply to Nesselrode on 14 May 1821, named the leaders of the Society and indicated that Ioannis Amvrosios was at the head of the Odessa branch.⁹²

Following Ypsilantis’ defeat and imprisonment and the resulting change of the Philiki Etaireia’s focus from revolution to philanthropic support of Greek refugees (combatants and non-combatants alike) fleeing the Principalities to Odessa, big name merchants became more openly involved.

⁸⁸ *Αρχείο Εμμανουήλ Ξάνθου*, Vol. I, letter of A. Tsounis from Odessa to Xanthos to Kishinev, 19 July 1819, p. 103.

⁸⁹ Philimon, *Δοκίμιον ιστορικόν*, Vol. I, Chap. 1, pp. 27-28.

⁹⁰ Sakellariou, *Φιλική Εταιρεία*, p. 70.

⁹¹ G. M. Piatigorsky, “De l’histoire de l’activité de la Philiki Etéria à Odessa dans les années 1814-1821. Les données récentes des archives soviétiques sur les biographies des Éteristes d’Odessa”, in *Troisième Colloque. Les relations entre les peuples de l’URSS et les Grecs, fin du siècle XVIII, début du XXe siècle*, Thessaloniki: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1992, p. 138.

⁹² *Ibid.*, pp. 115-137.

They devoted themselves to this task, cooperated with Russian authorities, and supported the work of various committees. As mentioned previously, they also expedited the issuing of passports by providing guarantees for their agents and revolutionaries who required access to insurrection-torn territories. The merchant Vayanos Paleologos, a member of the board of the Society in 1821, helped Ottoman and Greek subjects in obtaining passports for the Russian interior and Constantinople.⁹³ It seems that the Society's most active members on Russian soil were Ottoman subjects who could move more freely and were not impeded by oaths of allegiance to the tsar. The fine balance between multiple loyalties, Russian homeland, Ottoman citizenship and Greek revolutionary aspirations required "craft and mimicry" and was a salient characteristic of pre-national identity.

Gregorios I. Marazlis, the father of Odessa's municipal leader Gregorios G. Marazlis, headed the Odessa branch of the Society in its second, "philanthropic", phase (June 1821- December 1821). His bustling establishment at Krasni Pereulok was a centre for the Society's activities, which were camouflaged by the busy coming and going of carts and loading and unloading of merchandise. Clients could find olive oil and olives, mastic and carob, halva, oranges, pomegranates, coffee, and wood for fireplaces. Suppliers from the port and various others dallied on the upper floor, drank tea, smoked in the Turkish style and discussed the Society's relief aid to Greek refugees. The central role of hospitality in the Society's philanthropic work is illustrated by Sakellariou when he pointed out that in October 1821 Marazlis hosted the Orthodox clergyman Gregorios, Metropolitan of Eirinoupoleos and Vatopedi, "as usual". During the course of the visit, Gregorios was selected to represent the Society in the Russian capital in an effort to collect donations for its philanthropic aims.⁹⁴

Anatole Mazour characterized the Decembrist Uprising of 1825 as the first Russian Revolution.⁹⁵ The political liberalism that pressed for limits on absolute power in Russia and throughout Europe and the uprisings for national self-determination in the Balkans challenged the legitimacy and territorial integrity of the established states that the Holy Alliance struggled

⁹³ Paleologos participated in the meeting of the Society's board at Marazlis' shop on 3 October 1821, together with Ilias Manesis, Ioannis Amvrosios, Kyriakos Kubaris and Mikhail Nastos. See Sakellariou, *Φιλική Εταιρεία*, p. 16. In March 1824 Paleologos was reported by the Russian police as a warrantor for the issuing of passports of 15 Ottoman and Greek subjects who asked permission to travel to Constantinople, Moldavia, Nikolaiev and the Crimea. See *Journal d'Odessa* 27-33 (March 1824).

⁹⁴ Sakellariou, *Φιλική Εταιρεία*, pp. 25-27.

⁹⁵ Anatole Mazour, *The First Russian Revolution, 1825*, Berkeley 1937.

to maintain. The broader picture of the interconnected uprisings in the Balkans of the 1820s stresses the significance of merchants not only as agents of economic integration and development of backward areas, but as channels for an intellectual renaissance that fermented enlightened principals and encouraged political liberalism and reform. The isolation of the southern provinces from the imperial centre, poor means of communication and transportation, and the dispersion on many fronts of several conspiratorial societies created an ideal environment for the Philiki Etaireia's expansion and organization. Time proved to be on the Greek revolutionaries' side. The philhellenic disposition of Russian society and the Society's links with the pro-war party in Russian diplomatic and military circles enabled the successful relief campaign for the first victims of the uprising and added pressure for a new direction in Russo-Ottoman relations that favoured the Greek insurgents in the years from 1822 to 1829 and led to the decisive defeat of the Turkish fleet by the three Great Powers at the naval battle of Navarino on 20 October 1827.

To summarize, the development of the import trade in the years from 1810 to 1830 and the decisive role of the Greeks as importers of basic Mediterranean foodstuffs shaped the tastes of the Odessa population and created a market for imported consumer goods for everyday use. As a locus of exchange and sociability, the Greek Market served simultaneously as a refuge of revolutionary aspirations and activity. The Greek merchants, owners of shops, embraced these ideas *vis-à-vis* the fate of their subordinated homeland. Their official commercial outlook masked their clandestine organizational movements, while the tolerance/indifference of the local authorities, and the parallel actions of major secret societies in the region's army, spared attention from being paid to the movements of the Greek merchant-revolutionaries in Odessa.