

## History: What Motivated Tsarist Russia's Participation in the Battle of Navarino (1827) against the Ottoman Empire?

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*On October 20, celebrations in honor of the 192nd anniversary of [the Battle of Navarino](#) (1827) (against the Ottoman Empire) with the participation of President P. Pavlopoulos were held in Greece. The President, in particular, [addressed](#) his speech on the importance of unity in protecting international law to the EU and Turkey. In addition, during the celebrations, he met with the Russian Ambassador to Greece Andrey Maslov.*

It is worth noting that Russia, not being an EU member, has the greatest opportunities to influence Turkey's policy towards Greece and Cyprus while the negotiations on Turkey's accession to the Union were frozen on February 20, 2019.

As it is known, the first independent Greek state in modern history – the Septinsular Republic, was established with the participation of the Russian Admiral Fyodor Ushakov (image below), later venerated as a saint in the Russian Orthodox Church.



The trust that existed between the Russians and the Greeks at that time is evidenced, for example, by the long-term [friendship](#) of Admiral Ushakov and the Greek captains Sarandinakis and Alexianos who were the best in his squadron. Thanks to his skill, captain Stamatis Sarandinakis ("Yevstafiy Pavlovich", as he was called by the Russians), a son of an archon from Monemvasia who died for the freedom of Greece, took charge of Ushakov's flagship, and aboard this ship he bravely fought against Turkey and France. At the same

time, their relationship was not limited to service and joint combat operations: Ushakov's respect and trust in his Greek friend was so great that he entrusted him with the education of his nephew Ivan, whom Stamatios personally taught the art of navigation. In 1803, the hero of the Greek Liberation War, captain Sarandinakis retired and settled in the Crimea: he grew grapes, headed the provincial court of conscience (which used to perform the same functions as ombudsmen and human rights activists nowadays), but he certainly did not forget his homeland – he bequeathed most of his fortune to charity in Greece.

It is not surprising that later it was Ushakov's figure, his role in the liberation of the Ionian Islands and the openness of the Russians to the co-religionist Greek people, as seen in the example of Stamatios Sarandinakis, that led Ioannis Kapodistrias, the future Secretary of State of the Republic, to the conviction that without reliance on Russia as the only Orthodox Empire, Greece would not be able to gain real independence from the Ottomans.

Russia definitely wanted to liberate the Orthodox Greeks from the Ottoman rule by creating an independent state. For some time Russia had neither opportunities nor resources to directly support the heroic efforts of the Pontic Greek Alexander Ypsilantis, but sympathized with him and made every effort to stop the violence against the Greek people. Thus, when the Ottoman Porte restricted the vital freedom of navigation for the Greeks and began cruel repressions, the Russian Ambassador Grigory Stroganov, with the consent of the Tsar, [repeatedly](#) met with the Grand Vizier, issued an ultimatum against the violent treatment of Orthodox Christians, and then left the country in protest and in sign of the rupture of relations.

The Russian Emperor Nicholas I, who succeeded Alexander I, was aware of the various opinions of the advisers inherited from his predecessor, and generally held the same position. Taking into account its then military capabilities, he considered impossible Russia's unilateral participation in the war with the Ottoman Empire, because it would have to fight both with the Turkish and Egyptian fleets. And the Greek people, in view of the fierce and uncompromising reaction of the Porte to the rising liberation movement, needed only victory.

To stop the atrocities against the Greek population by the Porte, in the spring of 1826, Russia and Great Britain signed the Protocol of St. Petersburg on joint actions for the settlement of the Greek War of Independence. According to this document, it was supposed to work together to the autonomy of Greece under the supreme authority of the Ottoman Empire.

In 1827, taking the St. Petersburg Protocol as a basis, representatives of Russia, Great Britain, and France concluded the Treaty of London to assist Greece and to outline its future structure. As it is known, Britain and France sought to weaken the influence of the Ottoman Empire in Europe. Therefore, assuming Russia had the same goals, they also feared that Russian influence will increase as a result of the country's participation in the war on the side of Greece. However, Russia was so willing to help the co-religionist Greece that in order to attract the necessary allies, it defiantly refused commercial benefits, which was recorded in the Treaty.

In the end, the capitulation of the Porte and the subsequent establishment of a completely independent Greek state (not autonomy) were the result of the Russo-Turkish war of 1828-1829: in September, 1829, the Russian army stood 40 km from the Sultan's Palace.

Meanwhile, in the fight between the different parties (“Russian”, subsequently “National” and constitutionalist “English” or “French” parties supported by the Phanariots) in the years of liberation war, the only respected figure who could lead the young state was Ioannis Kapodistrias, a former Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs, brilliant diplomat and humanist, one of the genius creators of the Swiss Constitution, honorary citizen of Lausanne, and a close friend of the greatest Russian poet Alexander Pushkin.

Ioannis Kapodistrias did not fear for his position and was perhaps the only one who truly cared for the welfare of the nation, while his opponents were only capable of imprisoning the heroes of the Greek Revolution. It was Kapodistrias who insisted, though unsuccessfully, that the Greek people should choose their own king at people’s assemblies. He fought international corruption that had infiltrated Greece along with the influence of other European powers. He refused his salary and gave his estate to the needs of the young Greek state. To him the British Admiral Edward Codrington, who had also taken part in the Battle of Navarino, said that England intended to look after its own interests only in Greece; but Ioannis continued to defend what mattered to the Greek people.

The case of the Ioannis Kapodistrias’ murder is still classified in the British Foreign Office. However, it is clear that when the Western liberating powers sought to force their influence upon the young independent Greece, such a faithful son as he could hardly expect any other future than to give his life for his Homeland.

No wonder the German diplomats said that Kapodistrias could not be bribed, and that elimination of him was the only way to stop him. Today, anyone can come to the place where he was murdered – the Church of Agios Spyridon in Nafplio– and make sure of it. At the same time, it’s a chance to think whether nowadays we have got politicians about whom we could say the same. And can we, looking at the figures of Kapodistrias and Ushakov, doubt the sincere love and sympathy for Greece from the Russian people?

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