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IOANNIS KOLETTIS. THE VLACH FROM THE RULING ELITE OF GREECE

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ABSTRACT. *Ioannis Kolettis. The Vlach from the ruling elite of Greece.*

The article is aimed to show how Ioannis Kolettis, the first Vlach to become Prime Minister of the Greek kingdom. The Vlach people, despite being a stateless ethnic minority in southeastern Europe, have traditionally been deeply involved in every part of the social life in the countries they inhabited. In Greece, more than in any other country, the influence of certain prominent Vlachs has been felt since the foundation of the modern Greek state. Ioannis Kolettis, who served as Prime Minister of Greece from 1844 to 1847, is a striking example of the above thesis. I. Kolettis left a lasting impression on Greek internal and foreign affairs. Despite his non-Greek but Vlach origins, I. Kolettis is credited for conceiving the Great Idea, which became the core of Greek foreign policy and dominated Greek domestic politics for over half a century.

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More than a century has passed since the British diplomat Sir Charles Eliot wrote one of the most creative and certainly one of the most accurate descriptions of the Vlach people:

They remind one of those ingenious pictures in which an animal or a human face is concealed so as not to be obvious on first inspection, though when once seen it appears to be the principal feature of the drawing. In the same way, one may live and travel in the Balkan lands without seeing or hearing anything of the Vlachs, until one's eyes are opened. Then one runs the risk of going to the opposite extreme, and thinking... that most of the inhabitants of Macedonia are Vlachs in disguise.¹

¹ Odysseus, Turkey in Europe, London 1900, pp. 409–410.

Fast forward into the 21st century Balkans and Sir Eliot's beautiful depiction does not lose a bit of its accuracy. Nowadays even a well-trained eye will struggle to recognize the numerous Vlachs among the bulk of the Romanian population in southern Romania, or among the peoples inhabiting central and northern Greece, while the historically-rooted development of camouflaging skills makes it an impossible task for the outsider to differentiate the Vlach from his ethnic Macedonian, Albanian or Serbian compatriot. Being a stateless ethnic minority that behaves like a majority,² the Vlachs remain the concealed human face in the picture. But when "one's eyes are opened", the hidden face will appear in each and every part of social life in southeast Europe. The perceptive observer will find the Vlachs in music, in art, in sports, and in industry. They will be found in folklore and in science, in tradition and modernity, in history schoolbooks and in contemporary politics, in religion, and even in a national anthem.³ With eyes wide open, one can indeed see them in every field of social life in every Balkan state, but nowhere was the role of the Vlachs as big as it was in the culture and politics of one particular state – Greece.⁴

Most travelogue writers who visited the Balkans in the 19th and 20th centuries noted that a significant component of those who declared themselves Greek were actually of Vlach origin. Indeed, before the various propaganda and nationalist movements exploded onto the Balkan scene, the Vlachs lived in spiritual unity with the Greeks. The paucity and the dispersal of the Vlachs facilitated the process of Hellenization, so a significant chunk of the Vlach population spoke Greek and attended religious ceremonies in Greek to the point that many Vlachs were inspired by Greek culture more than the Greeks themselves. The rationale behind this solidarity with the Greeks is much more complex to be attributed solely to the geographical proximity of the Greek lands and the wealth of the Greek culture. The rich cultural heritage of the Byzantine civilization, the more privileged position of the Greeks in the Ottoman Empire, the common struggle against the Ottoman army during the Greek War of Independence, the absence of Vlach educational institutions, as well as the strong religious influence of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople played a vital role in this process

² See: T. Kahl, *The Ethnicity of the Aromanians after 1990: the identity of a minority that Behaves like a majority*, „Ethnologia Balkanica, Journal for Southeast European Anthropology” 2002, vol. 6, p. 145–169.

³ Pitu Guli, a Vlach revolutionary from Ottoman Macedonia, is mentioned in the national anthem of the Republic of Macedonia.

⁴ The role of the Vlachs in the history of Greece, represented in their numerous patrons, national heroes, politicians, intellectuals and clergy is of great importance for their identity as a part of the modern Greek people. Especially their numbers among Greek benefactors is often emphasised by politicians and historians. Vlachs are to be found among the independence fighters Rhigas Feraios, Georgakis Olympios, Theodoros and Alexis Grivas; they were some of the best known maecenas, Baron Georgios Sinas, Simon Sinas, Nikolaos Stournaris, Georgios Stavrou, Georgios Averof, Konstantinos Zappas; and were also among the important politicians, like Ioannis Kolettis, Spyridon Lambros, Evangelos Averof Tositsas etc. (See: Thede Kahl, *Aromanians in Greece. Minority or Vlach-Speaking Greeks, Minorities in Greece-Historical Issues and New Perspectives*, “Jahrbücher für Geschichte und Kultur Südosteuropas” 2003, vol. 5, p. 212–213).

of Hellenization of the Vlachs. However, various practical reasons contributed to this Hellenization and were just as effective as the above-mentioned factors. Large groups of Vlachs earned their living as settled or itinerant traders, merchants, craftsmen and industrialists. Their everyday jobs pushed them towards the eastern Mediterranean ports where the Greek language was the *Lingua Franca* of the region. In fact, without being fluent in Greek, trading with Greece, Egypt or anywhere in the eastern Mediterranean was practically impossible. Thus, the Vlach urban class and the rich and prominent Vlachs made a significant contribution to the creation of this dual identity of the Vlachs, or, in some cases, their complete assimilation.⁵

For centuries, the Vlachs have lived with and integrated with their Greek neighbors, and they have emerged by their own efforts as a valuable component of modern Greek history and modern Greek identity. Being vigorous supporters of the Hellenic idea, the majority of these Vlachs living within the Greek borders developed a sense of belonging to the Greek, or at least to the modern Greek nation.⁶ Furthermore, some Vlachs managed to climb up to the top of the political hierarchy in Greece and shaped Greek politics. In his study on the Vlachs, Nikolaos Mertzos, a Vlach himself, writes about the importance of the Vlachs in every field of Greek society, as well as their importance for the history of modern Greece.⁷ According to Mertzos, a certain number of prominent Greek politicians had Vlach origins, and among them he highlights the Prime Ministers Ioannis Kolettis, Spyridon Lambros and Field Marshall Alexandros Papagos, but also the first female minister in Greece, Lina Tsaldari.⁸

Ioannis Kolettis, the first Vlach to become Prime Minister of Greece, was born circa 1784 in Syrrako,⁹ a village in Epirus with a predominantly Vlach population. He finished elementary school in Syrrako and Kalarites, and gymnasium in Ioannina, before leaving for Pisa in Italy to study medicine.

On his return from Pisa he settled in Ioannina, where he worked as a doctor on Ali Pasha of Tepelena's court. There he became close friends with Ali's son Muqtar Pasha. His stay in Ioannina helped to shape his political views. It was there that he entered *Filiki Eteria*, a secret organization founded in 1814 in Odessa, whose purpose

⁵ Н. Минов, *Влашкото прашање и романската пропаганда во Македонија (1860–1903)*, Скопје 2013, p. 119–120. Indeed, the explanation for the Hellenization of the Vlachs fits more or less the case with the Southern Slavs in Bulgaria and Ottoman Macedonia, who were not Hellenized. But unlike the Vlachs, whose urban elite paved the way for Hellenization, the Southern Slavs were in vast majority a rural, agricultural and illiterate population. Moreover, once these Slavs started attending schools in numbers in the last decades of the 19th century, those schools were Bulgarian, and they operated under the jurisdiction of the Bulgarian Exarchate.

⁶ A. I. Koukoudis, *The Vlachs, Metropolis and Diaspora*, Thessaloniki 2003, p. 31–33. Koukoudis mentions the words of certain Kostas Ziogas, a Vlach from Perithori, who told him: *Look, lad, the Greki (Christians whose mother tongue is one of the Greek dialects) aren't more Greek than we are. We may be Vlachs, they may be Greki, but all together we make up the Greeks.*

⁷ Н. И. Мердзос, *Аромани-Власи*, Тесалоники 2010.

⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 38.

⁹ Γ. Γ. Μπενέκου, *Κολέτης – ο πατέρας των πολιτικών μας ηθών*, Αθήνα 1961, p. 25.

was to overthrow the Ottoman rule in all the territories inhabited by Greeks, and to establish an independent Greek state.¹⁰

On 17 March 1821, the inhabitants of the Mani Peninsula in the southern Peloponnese declared war on the Ottomans. Eight days later, the Greek revolution was officially declared and by the end of the month the Peloponnese was in open revolt against the Turks. Ioannis Kolettis wasted no time in joining the revolution, and took part in the battles against the Ottoman forces. In the course of the revolution he became the leader of the coalition of Rumeliot captains, and during the civil war between the rebel factions he became one of the most influential figures in Greek revolutionary circles.

During the Greek revolution, I. Kolettis showed that he knew how to make his long tenure in the national executive body serve personal ends.¹¹ Petropoulos wrote that I. Kolettis, although a civilian himself, had become an advocate for the chieftain's interests, which were the key of the political power.¹² He never forgot their usefulness in accomplishing his political ambition.

Finlay wrote that with patience and silence, he profited from the blunders of his colleagues, always, himself, doing and saying as little as possible.¹³ His way of political activity was crowned with success. I. Kolettis became a more influential politician during the war for Greek independence than Ypsilantis, Mavrocordatos, Kondouriotis and Zaimis.¹⁴

During the early days of the Greek state, I. Kolettis collaborated with the underage king of Greece and the Bavarian regency. He was one of the signatories of the Constitution of the Church of Greece,¹⁵ which was not yet recognized by the Patriarchate of Constantinople. The decision to declare the Church of Greece as autocephalous roiled Greek politics for decades and split the deeply conservative Greek society in two.

In April 1833, soon after the Bavarian Prince Otto was elected king of Greece, I. Kolettis became Minister of the Navy and Minister of Defense. Later he became Chairman of the Council of Ministers,¹⁶ though not a Prime Minister, because, as his biographer Giannis Benekos notes, the title Prime Minister did not exist in Greece.¹⁷ When he was Chairman of the Council of Ministers, I. Kolettis had to deal with an uprising in Arcadia.

¹⁰ J. Blancard, *Coletti*, Montpellier 1885, p. 9.

¹¹ J. A. Petropoulos, *Politics and statecraft in the Kingdom of Greece 1833–1843*, Princeton 1968, p. 93.

¹² *Ibidem*, p. 93–94.

¹³ G. Finlay, *The history of Greek revolution 2*, Edinburgh and London 1861, p. 32.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*.

¹⁵ For the text of the declaration see: F. Strong, *Greece as a kingdom or a statistical description of that country from that arrival of king Otho in 1833 down to the present time*, London 1842, p. 352–356.

¹⁶ „Εφημερίς της Κυβερνήσεως του Βασιλείου της Ελλάδος” 1834, no 20, p. 159.

¹⁷ Γ. Γ. Μπενέκου, *Κωλέτης...*, p. 201.

However, his character and ambition for political power and influence did not comply with the ideas of the Bavarian rulers of Greece. In 1835 king Otto reached adulthood. He wanted to strengthen his personal powers, for which he relied on the advices of Josef Ludwig von Armansperg, a member of the former Regency Council, who replaced I. Kolettis as Chairman of the Council of Ministers. This Bavarian counselor could not stand I. Kolettis's presence near Otto, so he endeavored to distance his rival from the king. However, this required consent from king Otto to remove Kolettis from Greece. In 1835 he was sent to Paris as a diplomatic representative of his country. Despite his removal from the Greek political scene, I. Kolettis did not terminate contacts with his friends and supporters. He maintained a stable correspondence with his friends in Greece, managing to retain some control over his political group.¹⁸

Throughout his diplomatic mission in Paris, I. Kolettis established very close and friendly relations with the French diplomat and minister for foreign affairs of France, Guizot. According to the French diplomat, Kolettis lived very modestly in Paris, supporting the interest of his country.¹⁹ Guizot considered him a man of trust.

While he was on a diplomatic mission in France, the political situation in Greece deteriorated. Its climax culminated with the so-called revolution of 3 September, although it was classic *coup d'état*, when the military units left their barracks with the demand for Greece to become a constitutional monarchy. The *coup d'état* launched on 3 September 1843 came as a consequence of the great dissatisfaction prevailing amongst the Greeks from the Bavarian ruling with Greece. Bavarians dominated in the political life in Greece. The monarch and his advisers ruled in an autocratic manner. The German language was used in administration alongside with the Greek. The Greek officials were only the head of the departments within the Council of secretaries.²⁰ The Church was forced to cut itself off from the Constantinople Patriarchate. According to Stavrianos, the most serious error of the Bavarians and king Otto, himself, was in treating the Greeks as though they were unfit to participate in their own government.²¹ In such a state of affairs, the revolt of the Greeks was unavoidable.

In October 1843, I. Kolettis returned to Athens. He was hailed by several thousands of his supporters. After his arrival in the Greek capital, he met with the French diplomatic representative in Athens, Piscatory, who advised him to be cautious in his contacts with the British ambassador in Athens, Edmund Lyons.²² This advice was not illogical bearing in mind the interest of France in Greece. I. Kolettis, as the leader of the so-called French party in Greece, was a trusted man in Paris.

Soon after his return to Greece, Kolettis held a meeting with the leaders of the English party and the Russian party, Mavrokordatos and Metaxas. During the meet-

¹⁸ J. A. Petropoulos, *Politics and statecraft in Kingdom of Greece 1833–1843*, p. 415.

¹⁹ M. Guizot, *France under Louis – Philippe. From 1841 to 1847*, London 1865, p. 246.

²⁰ L. Stavrianos, *The Balkans since 1453*, London 2000 p. 293.

²¹ *Ibidem*.

²² M. Guizot, *France under Louis-Philippe...*, p. 273.

ing there was no disagreement among the political leaders in Greece.²³ I. Kolettis and Mavrokordatos, despite their mutual mistrust which originated from the time of the Greek independence war, started to collaborate.²⁴ The influence of the British and the French ambassadors in Athens in their cooperation had been apparent.

On 20 November 1843, for the first time in modern Greek history, the new Parliament started the debates about the first Greek constitution. At the parliamentary session on 26 November 1843, its members elected a commission of 21 members to write a Constitution.²⁵ The preparations for the constitution were effectively in the hands of the leaders of the three parties: Mavrokordatos of the “English” party, I. Kolettis of the “French” party, and Metaxas of the “Russian” party.²⁶ At the end of December 1843, the appointed committee presented a draft text of the constitution to the Parliament.²⁷ The work of the Parliament to discuss the draft constitution started on 3 January 1844. Woodhouse noted that the leaders of the three political groups in Greece were born outside the geographical limits of the kingdom.²⁸ It was to be expected that they should sympathize with the demands of the non-native Greeks during the discussions in the Greek Parliament.

In January 1844, during the debates on the draft text of the Constitution, a serious discussion was raised in the Parliament about the rights of the native and non-native Greeks. The conflict between them was essentially a power struggle. The non-natives (*heterochtones*) held the highest ranks in public administration, while the native Greeks (*autochtones*) struggled to secure a place in civil service.²⁹ There was considerable public feeling that those Greeks who had arrived in the kingdom from the other parts of the Balkans after the war for Independence war should be banned from holding public office and should even be excluded from the right to have Greek citizenship.³⁰ Young students who had graduated from Athens University strongly opposed the rights of the so-called non-native Greeks to occupy public office.³¹ The non-natives insisted that the War for independence concerned the entire Greek race in the Kingdom of Greece and in the Ottoman Empire, thus they deserved political rights in the independent Greek state. The arguments of the native Greeks were quite the opposite. They insisted on the limitation of the geographical area of the war, meaning the

²³ Ibidem, p. 274.

²⁴ D. McLean, *The Greek revolution and the Anglo-French entente 1843–4*, „The English Historical Review” 1981, vol. 96, no 378, p. 120.

²⁵ T. E. Ευαγγελίδου, *Ιστορία του Όθωνος βασιλείως της Ελλάδος 1832–1862*, Αθήνα 1894, p. 230.

²⁶ C. M. Woodhouse, *Diplomatic development. Nineteenth and twentieth century*, in: *Greece in transition*, ed. J. T. A. Koumoulides, London 1977, p. 99.

²⁷ T. E. Ευαγγελίδου, *Ιστορία του Όθωνος...*, p. 230–231.

²⁸ C. M. Woodhouse, *Diplomatic development...*, p. 99.

²⁹ I. Michailidis, *The formation of Greek citizenship (19th century)*, in: *Citizenship in historical perspective*, eds. S. G. Ellis, G. Hálfánarson, A. K. Isaacs, Pisa 2006, p. 157.

³⁰ P. Mackridge, *Language and national identity in Greece 1776–1976*, Oxford 2009, p. 175.

³¹ Ioannis Kolettis: *Of this Great idea*, in: *Discourses of collective identity in Central and Southeast Europe (1770–1945). National romanticism. The formation of national movements*, eds. B. Trencsenyi, M. Kopeček, Budapest 2007, vol. 2, p. 246.

specific region in the southernmost part of the Balkan Peninsula in which only those who lived within its borders had any political rights.³²

I. Kolettis was *heterochton* (non-native) himself and vigorously supported the cause of those who were not born within the borders of the Kingdom of Greece. He firmly believed that Greeks were not only the inhabitants of the Kingdom of Greece, but also those who lived outside the borders of the tiny independent Greece.³³ On 14 January 1844, he delivered his speech in the Greek Parliament. In his speech, among other things, Kolettis said:

Greece is the center of Europe; positioned thus, and having to its right the East, and to its left the West, it has been destined, on the one hand, by falling, to enlighten the West, and, on the other, by being reborn, to enlighten the East. The former was accomplished by our forefathers, while the latter has been assigned to us; it is in the spirit of this oath and of this 'Great Idea' that I have always seen the plenipotentiaries of the nation assemble in order to decide no longer the fate of Greece, but of the Hellenic race... The Kingdom of Greece is not Greece. It constitutes only one part, the smallest and feeblest. The name Hellenes describes not only those who live in this kingdom, but also those who live in Ioannina, in Thessaloniki, in Serres, in Adrianople, in Constantinople, in Trebizond, in Crete, in Samos and in any territory associated with the Hellenic history and the Hellenic race... There are two cores of Hellenism: Athens, the capital of the Hellenic kingdom and The City (Constantinople), the vision and hope of all Hellenes....³⁴

I. Kolettis's speech in the Greek Parliament was not an accidental promotion of the Great Idea and the desire for territorial expansion of Greece at the expense of the Ottoman Empire. I. Kolettis, as many influential Greek politicians and intellectuals at that time, was not satisfied with the border line of the Kingdom of Greece that had been drawn out by the Great Powers. In his conversation as Greek ambassador in Paris with Guizot, Kolettis said: *From the frontier of my liberated country I see in my country, still enslaved the place where I left the tomb of my father.*³⁵ A few years earlier, when he was called upon by the Council for his opinion in regards to choosing the capital of the Kingdom of Greece, he answered – Constantinople.³⁶ It is interesting to note here that in 1834 I. Kolettis argued against making Athens the capital of the Kingdom of Greece, considering Constantinople to be the center of the Greek world.³⁷

Regardless of his nationalistic speech in the Greek Parliament, the Constitution largely justified the positions of the native-born Greeks. Michailidis writes that with the decisions of the Parliament several dozen non-native Greeks were dismissed from

³² I. Michailidis, *The formation of Greek citizenship...*, p. 157.

³³ R. Clogg, *A concise history of Greece*, Cambridge 2002, p. 47.

³⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 247–248.

³⁵ M. Guizot, *France under Louis-Philipp...*, p. 244.

³⁶ J. H. Skene, *The spirit of change in Southern Europe*, „Colburn's new monthly magazine" 1849, no 345, p. 45.

³⁷ N. Doumanis, *A History of Greece*, Basingstoke 2010, p. 180.

their posts.³⁸ However, an exception was made for I. Kolettis and a few other non-native Greeks.³⁹

Once the text of the Constitution was prepared, it was given to the king of Greece on 18 February 1844. It was widely expected that Otto would sign the text and grant the Constitution, however the king was not satisfied by certain parts of it. At a meeting attended by the monarch and all the political leaders of Greece, Kolettis impetuously told the Greek sovereign that he had seen many kings without a throne, but never a throne without a king.⁴⁰ Otto was infuriated by this comment, but he nevertheless signed the first constitution of the Greek kingdom, which now became a constitutional monarchy. These words by Kolettis addressed to the Greek monarch did not have any negative consequences in their future communication. Quite the contrary, the leader of the so-called French Party remained one of the greatest supporters of the monarch, which would soon become clear.

I. Kolettis was not pleased with the development of the political course in Greece even before the promulgation of the new Constitution. In his letter to Desages, the director of political affairs of the French ministry for foreign affairs, Kolettis stressed that he was concerned about the future of the new political system in Greece. He complained about Mavrocordatos's inability to cope with Metaxas. In his letter to his French friend, I. Kolettis outlined his opinion about the formation of the government:

*The ministry, therefore, must be strong to accomplish successfully the heavy task which will be imposed on it. As to myself I am far from dreading such a burden; but I desire to bear it nobly. I wish to have all possible chance to success. To succeed, I must be seconded by men who will be devoted to me. If the administration is not of my mind, success is impossible...I believe I am capable of saving it, but I must have the requisite means. I am therefore determined not to depart from the line of conduct.*⁴¹

In other words, he was not prepared to support any government which would not work as he thought it should. I. Kolettis did not exclude the possibility of supporting Mavrocordatos as Prime Minister, but it was indispensable to have his own ministers in such a government.⁴² As he said, I. Kolettis supported the formation of a government with Mavrocordatos as Prime Minister. This support did not mean that Kolettis had given up, in the future, to become the head of the Greek government. It must be said that the pressure of the French ambassador in Athens, Piscatory, on I. Kolettis to support the formation of a government with Mavrocordatos as Prime Minister yielded results.

³⁸ I. Michailidis, *The formation of Greek citizenship...*, p. 157.

³⁹ P. Mackridge, *Language and national identity in Greece...*, p. 176.

⁴⁰ Γ. Γ. Μπενέκου, *Κωλέτης...*, p. 252.

⁴¹ M. Guizot, *France under Louis-Philippe...*, p. 286–287.

⁴² *Ibidem*.

Mavrocordatos' government lasted only four months. I. Kolettis and Metaxas aligned themselves and thus caused his fall.⁴³ Mavrocordatos had made a great mistake; he had permitted his political opponents to accuse him of centralizing all the power under his control, using illegal means to obtain the power.⁴⁴ He was accused by his rivals of deception in the election in June 1844, which had taken place at the University in Athens. Mavrocordatos was elected by the professors at the University as a Member of Parliament, although he was not a professor himself. His election into a Member of the Parliament resulted in a vast wave of discontent and criticism in the country. I. Kolettis, as Finlay informs us, found no difficulty in persuading the professors about the illegal nature of Mavrocordatos' election.⁴⁵ Mavrocordatos' election was declared void and a new election took place. The leader of the "English" party was not alone in creating problems and fraud during the lengthy elections in 1844. His minister of justice, Londos, issued a secret order to the gendarmes at Patras to utilize every means in their power to obtain a majority of votes in his favor.⁴⁶ However, his order was made public by some of those with whom he had communicated. The general indignation was so great that Londos had to resign. This was a great chance for I. Kolettis to topple Mavrocordatos' government.

The Greek king Otto immediately appointed I. Kolettis to form a new Government. I. Kolettis became Prime Minister on 6 August 1844. His support and sympathy for king Otto was no secret to the Greek politicians and public opinion. Immediately after Kolettis had been proclaimed Prime Minister with a Royal decree, he issued a Proclamation to the Greeks, stating his desire to improve the situation in the country. In addition to this, there is a thread of gratitude to the king which can be detected in the Proclamation.⁴⁷

At the beginning of his rule in Greece, I. Kolettis enjoyed the support of Metaxas and his "Russian" party. This support was very important to the leader of the "French" party because he did not have majority in the Greek parliament without the votes of the supporters of Metaxas. Metaxas was in charge of the Ministries of Navy and Economy, while Prime Minister I. Kolettis reserved the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Internal Affairs, and Ecclesiastical Affairs for himself.⁴⁸ I. Kolettis became a more dominant figure than Metaxas in the Greek government. Step by step, he succeeded in diminishing the influence of the leader of the "Russian" party. At the end of 1844, the French ambassador in Athens, Piscatory, commented that the "Russian" par-

⁴³ D. McLean, *The Greek revolution and the Anglo-French entente...*, p. 121.

⁴⁴ G. Finlay, *A History of Greece from its conquest by the Romans to the present time*, Oxford 1877, vol. 7, p. 190.

⁴⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 189.

⁴⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 192.

⁴⁷ „Εφημερίς της Κυβερνήσεως του Βασιλείου της Ελλάδος” 1834, no 27, p. 36.

⁴⁸ J. V. Kofas, *International and domestic politics in Greece during the Crimean War*, Chicago 1979, p. 13. http://ecommons.luc.edu/luc_diss/1818 [Access: 09.07.2017]. In our article we use the PhD thesis of Kofas who published the book with the same title in 1980.

ty was disintegrating under the sun of Kolettis.⁴⁹ Metaxas was not able to cope with the strengthening of I. Kolettis's power. Therefore, on 26 July 1845, he resigned from his posts in the Greek government. At first glance, one might have expected that his resignation would provoke the fall of Kolettis's government, but the Prime Minister had great support from the King. Thus, in his letter to Metternich, King Otto expressed great satisfaction with I. Kolettis and his achievements.⁵⁰ The royal support secured his unchallenged government in power, whose main desire was to stay in power.⁵¹ On the other hand, Kolettis was a strong and persistent person. His faction occupied only 22 of the 127 members in the House of Commons.⁵² Through lavish use of gifts, bribes and intimidation, he managed the new Greek Parliament. His government opposed Mavrocordatos' party majority in the Senate. In order to strengthen his position in the Parliament, he advised the King to appoint 15 new senators to get majority in the Senate. Kolettis succeeded in utilizing King Otto's authority in order to enhance his influence in the Parliament. Gallant wrote that I. Kolettis was able to form working alliances with both the western modernizers and the traditional power brokers, while becoming closely tied to neither.⁵³

Kolettis avoided putting forward serious changes in the economic and social fields so as not to harm vested interests, and at the same time he rotated government positions to trusted friends and would-be friends, offering them promises of favors.⁵⁴ His foes had not been excluded from his way of governing in Greece. Patronage became a main mechanism for Kolettis to remain in power.⁵⁵ As Minister of Educational and Religious Affairs, he offered employment to certain unemployed *heterochtons* at the newly-founded University of Athens.⁵⁶ His government introduced control over the employment at the University. The nomination and replacement of professors were within the prerogatives of the Ministry of Education. Kolettis used this arbitrary power, dismissing seven professors with a ministerial decree, and replaced them with others, friendly to the government.⁵⁷ Here we would like to underline that the founder of modern Greek historiography, Konstantinos Paparrigopoulos, a non-native Greek by origin, was dismissed from his office after the promulgation of the Constitution in 1844. Paparrigopoulos firmly supported Kolettis's policy. Earning his trust, Paparrigopoulos found a job as a professor of History in the secondary school

⁴⁹ Ibidem, p. 14.

⁵⁰ Ibidem, p. 16.

⁵¹ Ibidem.

⁵² T. W. Gallant, *Modern Greece*, London 2001, p. 41.

⁵³ Ibidem.

⁵⁴ J. S. Koliopoulos, T. Veremis, *Modern Greece. A History since 1821*, Chichester 2009, p. 37.

⁵⁵ A. Batalas, *Send a thief to catch a thief. State building and the employment of irregular military formations in mid-nineteenth century Greece*, in: *Irregular armed forces and their role in politics and state formation*, eds. D. E. Davis, A. W. Pereira, Cambridge 2003, p. 165.

⁵⁶ S. Petmezias, *From privileged outcast to power players: the "Romantic" redefinition of the Hellenic nation in the mid-nineteenth century*, in: *The Making of Modern Greece: Nationalism, romanticism and the uses of the past (1797–1896)*, eds. R. Beaton, D. Ricks, Ashgate 2009, p. 125.

⁵⁷ Ibidem.

of Athens in 1846.⁵⁸ The Greek historian never forgot Kolettis's help. In the foreword of the second volume of his *History of the Greek Nation*, Paparrigopoulos referred to the role of Kolettis on the appearance of the Great Idea.⁵⁹

Greece, like all the other Balkan states in the past, as well as today, is famous for its clientelistic politics. Many people visited Kolettis's house, and they all left it with certain promises.⁶⁰ Furthermore, Kolettis was notorious for receiving bribery – *rūšvet* (ρουσφετη), a household tradition in the region. Georgios Filaretos calls him the founder of the *rūšvet* school.⁶¹ In all likelihood, it was the easiest way to rule without major turbulence.

By the end of 1845, Kolettis moved toward creating a new territorial administrative division of the Greek state. With a governmental decree, the only independent Christian state in the Balkans was divided into 10 counties and 49 districts.⁶² Being an experienced politician, Kolettis probably deemed the new territorial division of Greece as a shortcut to implementing his intentions.

Kolettis was a member of the Archaeological Society in Athens, and its president from 1844 up to his death in 1847.⁶³ However, during his presidency in the Society, he had not shown particular interest in improving its activities. The Society began to decline, and the number of its subscribers to diminish.⁶⁴ On the other hand, Kolettis paved the way for the opening of foreign cultural and educational institutions in modern Greece. In 1846 the French School was founded in Athens (*Ecole Francaise d'Athenes*). It was the first foreign cultural institution in the country. The founding of this institution came as a result of the cooperation between Kolettis and the French ambassador in Athens, Piscatory.⁶⁵

Panhellenic propaganda flourished during Kolettis' rule (1844/47). In schools, as well as in the University of Athens, the Greek youth was taught about the “inseparable link” between Ancient Greece, Byzantium, and modern Greece. The hitherto neglected Byzantine studies found their way into the Athens University classrooms,⁶⁶ while, at the same time, Byzantium was looked upon as a stark contrast to the arch enemy – the Ottoman Empire. In the name of education, the Greek statesmen called the more emi-

⁵⁸ M. Karasarinis, *Spectres of the past: a comparative study of the role of historiography and cultural memory in the development of nationalism in modern Scotland and Greece*, PhD thesis, University of Glasgow 2001, p. 52.

⁵⁹ E. Skopetea, “Uzor – kraljevina 'I velika ideja, Beograd 2005, p. 196–197.

⁶⁰ Γ. Γ. Μπενέκου, *Κωλέτης...*, p. 271–272.

⁶¹ *Ibidem*, p. 276.

⁶² *Εφημερίς της κυβερνήσεως*, αρ. 32, p. 36–38

⁶³ Π. Καββαδία, *Ιστορία της Αρχαιολογικής Εταιρείας: από της εν έτει 1837 ιδρύσεως αυτής μέχρι του 1900*, Αθήνα 1900, p. 6.

⁶⁴ T. Reinach, *Greece rediscovered by the Greeks*, in: *Greece in evolution*, ed. G.F. Abbott, New York 1910, p. 281.

⁶⁵ T. N. Bohotis, *Archaeology and politics. The Greek-German Olympia excavations treaty, 1869–1875*, in: *Ancient monuments and modern identities. A critical history of Archaeology in 19th and 20th century Greece*, eds. S. Voutsaki, P. Cartledge, Routledge, London and New York 2017, p. 127.

⁶⁶ G. Arnakis, *Byzantium and Greece*, „Balkan Studies” 1963, vol. V, no 4/2, p. 386–388.

representatives of the Ottoman Greek intelligentsia to come to Athens and assist in the preparation of better educational programs, as well as to teach at the University of Athens. Therefore, Alexandros Mavrocordatos convinced G.G. Papadopoulos, a teacher from Thessaloniki, to put together an elaborate project for an educational institution designed for the children of Christians outside Greece.⁶⁷ In 1845 Kolettis sent a letter to Andreas Moustoxydis, a historian and philologist from Corfu, inviting him to teach at the University of Athens. This call sent the right message about the activities of the Greek educational institutions. The Athenian press published the letter. Once more, Kolettis highlighted his opinion that Greece was called upon to enlighten the East by spreading education to the needy, hence prepare political unification with assistance from the University of Athens.⁶⁸ Indeed, the appeal sent to the Ottoman citizens to come to Athens and help in the educational process opened the door for Greek education in the Ottoman Empire as a means of spreading the Greek influence.

The issue of the Greek independent church was dominant in some of the discussions in the Greek Parliament. In December 1843, the Holy Synod of the Greek Church drew up a plan for an ecclesiastical statutory law in which it was stipulated that the Church of Greece was inseparably related to the Constantinople Patriarchate, while remaining independent at the level of self-governance.⁶⁹ It is important to mention here that the King was referred as protector and defender of the church, but not as head, as he had been denoted in the Organic Law of 1833. As Prime Minister, Kolettis formed a commission to study the problems of the Greek Orthodox Church, with the task to make recommendations to the government. Once these recommendations were received, Kolettis submitted legislation to the national assembly symbolizing some minor changes in the Church constitution of 1833.⁷⁰ Stamatopoulos, writing about these problems, noted that Kolettis did not implement the lines indicated by Article 2 of the Greek constitution at the legislative level.⁷¹ Taking into account that Kolettis, himself, was a signatory of the declaration for the independence of the Greek Church in 1833, his behavior on the Church question was not surprising.

The *Megali* (Great) Idea became an official doctrine throughout Kolettis's rule, as Roumen Daskalov emphasized, although the Greek Prime Minister worked to consolidate the monarchy in Greece, and the position of King Otto.⁷²

The Ottoman authorities deeply mistrusted Kolettis as a Greek Prime Minister, and a politician as well. Relations between the two countries continued to be strained,

⁶⁷ H. Данова, *Националният въпрос в гръцките политически програми през XIX век*, София 1980, p. 159.

⁶⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 160.

⁶⁹ D. Stamatopoulos, *The Orthodox church of Greece*, in: *Orthodox Christianity and nationalism in nineteenth century Southeastern Europe*, ed. L. N. Leustean, Fordham 2014, p. 43.

⁷⁰ C. Frazee, *Church and state in Greece*, in: *Greece in Transition*, ed. J. A. Koumoulides, London 1977, p. 135.

⁷¹ D. Stamatopoulos, *The Orthodox church of Greece...*, p. 44.

⁷² R. Daskalov, *Bulgarian-Greek dis/entanglements*, in: *Entangled Histories in the Balkans*, eds. R. Daskalov, T. Marinov, Leiden-Boston 2013, vol. 1, p. 201.

throughout his governing with Greece, despite Kolettis's attempts to show that he was still pursuing moderate policies.⁷³ Kolettis was quite aware of the concerns of the French and the British ambassadors in Athens regarding the relations Greece had with the Ottoman Empire. In his conversation with Piscatory, Kolettis underlined that it was his obligation to dissipate such apprehensions. However, he did not conceal his opinion about the future Greek territorial expansion at the expense of the Ottoman Empire. Despite defining himself as a partisan of the *status quo*, and an opponent to any invasion and armed propaganda against the northern neighbor, the Greek Prime Minister remarked that the time would come *when the force of events alone will do what we could not do now without a general overthrow, which would perhaps entirely sweep away the Kingdom of Greece*.⁷⁴ In order to follow the activities of various conspiratorial associations, the Ottomans intensified the activities of their intelligence service all over Greece. The prudence of the Ottoman authorities was well-grounded, because several immigrant groups from various Ottoman-ruled Balkan territories were operating in Athens at that time.⁷⁵ Indisputably, the activities of these groups caught the Ottoman's attention. Radu, the Ottoman representative in Athens, was aware of three conspiracies, the first of which was organized by the numerous captains from Epirus, Thessaly, and Macedonia. Radu mentions the names of 53 captains who could potentially endanger Ottoman interests.⁷⁶ These chieftains intended to penetrate into the Ottoman border areas, but Radu, with bribes and monthly wages, successfully managed to convince them to stay put. Furthermore, the Ottoman representative managed to plant his own informers among the conspirators, and he was well aware of every move made by the captains. The mastermind of the second plot was Ioannis Kolettis, whose collaborators included the Minister of War, Kitsos Tzavelas, Mansolas, General Mamouris, and others.⁷⁷ The conspirators set themselves up unattainable goals, given the political and the economic strength of the Greek kingdom. The main idea behind the plot was to provoke riots in Epirus, Thessaly, and Macedonia, mayhem in Constantinople, followed by an occupation of the said regions. The plan also foresaw the possibility of winning over the Slavic populations from the Balkans, in order to jointly fight the Ottomans and to speed up the process of conquering the lands claimed by Greece. The third plot was prepared by the Balkan Slavs in Athens, centered around the Thrace-Bulgarian-Serbian Society, or the Macedonian Society.⁷⁸

⁷³ His attempts to pursue moderate policies in the relations with the Ottoman Empire were perhaps a result of the continuous warnings arriving from Paris that France will not sacrifice itself for Greece (C. Дамянов, *Френската политика на Балканите 1829–1853*, София 1977, p. 190–191).

⁷⁴ M. Guizot, *France under Louis-Philippe...*, p. 299.

⁷⁵ V. Stojančević, *Problemi saradnje balkanskih naroda I nacionalnooslobodilačkim pokretima u Turskoj u prvoj polovini XIX veka*, „Jugoslavenski Istorijski Časopis” 1969, no. 4, p. 60.

⁷⁶ Н. Шћеровић, *Врење и завере против турске четрдесетих година XIX века*, „Историјски записи“ 1955, vol. 11, no 2, p. 132.

⁷⁷ Ibidem, p. 133.

⁷⁸ D. Djordjevic, *Revolutions Nationales des Peuples Balkaniques 1804–1914*, Beograd 1961, p. 77.

None of the three conspiracies yielded positive results due to the lack of basic conditions for their fulfillment. However, the Ottoman authorities in the border areas took precautionary measures in order to protect their territorial integrity. Thus, based on the collected intelligence data, the Ottomans sent fresh troops to the garrison in Larissa, intending to fight off any Greek attempt to enter Ottoman territory.⁷⁹

The activities of the secret organizations and the brigands were not without reason. One of the elements which would threaten Kolettis's government were the captains and their armed retainers. He allowed them free reign in the frontier zone with the Ottoman Empire *in which they exercised their talents and, no less useful for the stability of his regime, they were used to project such forays into the irredenta as proof of the government's devotion to the vision of liberating the unredeemed brethren across the frontier.*⁸⁰ Kolettis succeeded in directing brigand activities towards the Ottoman Empire by harnessing brigandage more effectively than hitherto to irredentism.⁸¹ According to Koliopoulos, in this way the Greek Prime Minister satisfied a potentially dangerous social element without burdening state finances, while creating the impression that Greek national aspirations were not being abandoned.⁸² But there was another reason for tolerating the brigand's activities by Kolettis's government. The brigands and the irregulars were used as tools for political intimidation.⁸³

As a result of the incessant activities of the brigands along the border and on Ottoman territory, Greek–Ottoman relations were permanently strained. It was a question of time when the relations between Athens and Constantinople would provoke a crisis endangering regional stability and peace. In January 1847, Dimitrios Tzamis Caratassos, a high officer in the Greek army and a participant in the Greek revolution, applied for an Ottoman visa, intending to visit Constantinople (Istanbul). His application for an Ottoman visa produced a great crisis in the relations between the two neighboring countries. The Ottoman ambassador in Athens refused to issue a visa for Caratassos. His refusal was not without grounds. In 1841 Caratassos had joined a band of rebels and robbers who had plundered and caused problems in Thessaly. The Ottoman military forces destroyed his band, inducing Caratassos to escape in Greece. Later, he became a very close friend and supporter of Kolettis, who helped him attain high military rank and be appointed as one of King's Otto *aides-de camp*. Regardless of his high position in Greek society, the Ottoman government did not forget his past activities.

The Ottoman refusal to grant Caratassos a visa caused a serious diplomatic crisis between Greece and the Ottoman Empire. Caratassos informed Kolettis about his

⁷⁹ *Британски документи за историјата на македонскиот народ*, Скопје 1977, vol. 2, p. 189 (Blunt to Stratford Canning, Thessaloniki, 28.03.1845).

⁸⁰ J. S. Koliopoulos, T. Veremis, *Modern Greece. A History since 1821...*, p. 37.

⁸¹ A. Batalas, *Send a thief to catch a thief...*, p. 166.

⁸² J. S. Koliopoulos, *Brigand with a cause. Brigandage and irredentism in Modern Greece (1821–1913)*, Oxford 1987, p. 11.

⁸³ *Ibidem*, p. 165.

meeting with Komenou bey, secretary in the Ottoman Embassy in Athens.⁸⁴ This was a great opportunity for Kolettis to publicly show his apprehension about the rights of Greek citizens violated by Ottoman behavior. He informed King Otto about the Caratassos affair. The King's reaction to this affair was more than furious and reckless. During the court ball, which was held a few days later, the Greek King approached the Ottoman ambassador and spoke to him in a loud tone, which was very offensive for the Ottoman diplomat who demonstratively left the Royal palace. The following day Musouros went to the Greek government. He demanded an explanation from Kolettis about the King's words. The Ottoman government insisted that King Otto should issue Mousouros a public apology.⁸⁵ Kolettis rejected the Ottoman demands. As a result of the Greek rejection, the Porte decided to withdraw its diplomatic representative from Athens.

The crisis between Athens and Constantinople caused a great deal of concern among the Great Powers, although they were divided in their support to the parties involved in this dispute. Thus, France sided with the Greek position, whilst Great Britain demonstrated sympathy and support to the Ottoman government. The ambassadors attempted to ease the relations between Greece and the Ottoman Empire in order to avoid further deterioration of the tense situation. King Otto also made an effort to prevent a further decline in the relations of his country with its mighty neighbor. He sent a personal letter to the Sultan, where he expressed his desire to settle the dispute. The Sultan gave a very evasive answer to this letter. Simultaneously, the Ottoman Minister for Foreign Affairs sent a letter to the representatives of the Great Powers in Athens with a demand, as a precondition to Mousouros's reappearance at his post, that Kolettis should pay him a visit and express his regret concerning the unpleasant affair. In case of refusal, the Ottoman government would break all diplomatic relations with Greece.⁸⁶ The Ottoman demand was completely unacceptable for Kolettis. He knew very well that his regret to the Ottoman ambassador in Athens would diminish his position in Greece. Thus, Kolettis rejected the Ottoman proposal. His refusal to go to the Ottoman Embassy and to apologize to Mousouros provoked an immediate break in diplomatic relations between Greece and the Ottoman Empire.⁸⁷ Furthermore, the Ottoman government resolved to limit the rights of the Greek subjects and to exclude them from trade guilds. The Ottoman ports were closed for Greek vessels, as well. Such Ottoman measures, without a doubt, severely harmed the Greek economic interests.

The Austrian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Metternich, decided to become an arbiter in the Greek–Ottoman dispute. He suggested that Kolettis write a letter in which he would express his regret concerning the origin of the dispute.⁸⁸ The French diplo-

⁸⁴ J. V. Kofas, *International and domestic politics in Greece...*, p. 28.

⁸⁵ E. Michelsen, *Ottoman Empire and its resources*, London 1853, p. 105.

⁸⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 107–108.

⁸⁷ J. V. Kofas, *International and domestic politics in Greece...*, p. 30.

⁸⁸ E. Michelsen, *Ottoman Empire and its resources...*, p. 110.

macy, astounded by the ferocity of the Mousouros affair, and, above all, of the dynamic of British involvement against the Greek Prime Minister, decided to make the whole tense situation less perilous. The French Minister of Foreign Affairs, Guizot, despite his unwillingness to sacrifice French interests in Greece, suggested to Athens that Kolettis should resign from his post, at least temporarily.⁸⁹ Guizot's advice to Kolettis was not accepted by the Greek Prime Minister. He was aware that his refusal to step down from the post would not meet any French reprisals. On the other hand, the Greek Prime Minister was aware of the consequences from the Ottoman measures against the Greek subjects and their economic interests. He saw the danger of his government becoming unpopular in the country. Therefore, he urged the King to attempt to accept more reconciliatory behavior with the Ottomans.⁹⁰ The relations between the two countries started to improve, but he did not see the arrival of the Ottoman ambassador in Athens due to his death.

As a leader of the pro-French political group in Greece, Kolettis manifested profound mistrust of Great Britain and its representative in Athens. He believed that Great Britain wished to organize his country as an English Greece, governed by an English ambassador.⁹¹ Taking into account his political orientation towards France, the behavior of the British diplomacy on the Greek internal and external position was expected. The British Prime Minister, Lord Palmerston, described Kolettis as the new Ali Pasha, i.e. a troublemaker in the region.⁹²

The British diplomacy, once it had determined that the Greek government was antagonistic to its interests in the region, invented all the possible ways to embarrass Kolettis and to topple him from the Prime Ministerial post.⁹³ One of the ways by which Great Britain asserted pressure to Greece was with a demand on the Greek government to pay the interest on the loan of 1832.⁹⁴ Kolettis had inherited an empty treasury, and an obligation to pay 6,3 million *drachma* to the Protecting Powers. But, Kolettis refused to fulfill the Greek obligation. The British politicians were furious, and criticized Greece for not making its payments.⁹⁵ The British critics were not directed to the Greek state which was financially unable to realize its obligations. The target of the British critics was Kolettis himself, because of his profound connections with France. The British government started to denunciate Kolettis for corruption and dictatorial rule in Greece. Palmerston, in his letter to Prince Albert, revealed that the British government had nothing against the Greek people, but only

⁸⁹ J. T. Malakasis, *The diplomatic position of Kolettis vis a vis France and England. A brief analysis of the factors involved in the foreign policy of the first Greek constitutional ministry*, „Δωδώνη” 1975, no 4, p. 402.

⁹⁰ G. Finlay, *A History of Greece...*, p. 202.

⁹¹ M. Guizot, *France under Louis-Philippe...*, p. 300.

⁹² Д. Јовановски, *Грчката балканска политика и Македонија 1830–1881*, Скопје 2005, p. 33.

⁹³ J. T. Malakasis, *The diplomatic position of Kolettis vis a vis France and England...*, p. 402.

⁹⁴ J. V. Kofas, *International and domestic politics in Greece...*, p. 34.

⁹⁵ *Ibidem*.

against Kolettis.⁹⁶ All the endeavors of Palmerston to topple Kolettis and his government were fruitless.

The strained relations with the Ottomans produced serious economic implications on Greek trade. It was a chance for Kolettis's political opponents to build up their position in Greece. But, Kolettis was far from being politically naïve. He used the influence of King Otto to cope with the mounting opposition. The King and Kolettis dismissed the Parliament and called for new elections. The Greek Prime Minister used all possible means, legal and illegal, which he disposed to gain great political victory in order to control the Parliament. In the 1847 elections, Kolettis won a major victory, winning 5/6 of the votes. The opposition was humiliated. However, there was evidence that the elections in the non-urban areas had been accompanied by violence and falsification of the voters' will.⁹⁷ Despite this tremendous electoral result, Kolettis did not get the chance to reap the benefits of his victory. As a consequence of his long struggle with cancer, he died on 31 August 1847.

SUMMARY:

The Vlach people, despite being a stateless ethnic minority in southeastern Europe, have traditionally been deeply involved in every part of the social life in the countries they inhabited. In Greece, more than in any other country, the influence of certain prominent Vlachs has been felt since the foundation of the modern Greek state. Ioannis Kolettis, who served as Prime Minister of Greece from 1844 to 1847, is a striking example of the above thesis. Kolettis left a lasting impression on Greek internal and foreign affairs. Despite his non-Greek but Vlach origins, Kolettis is credited for conceiving the Great Idea, which became the core of Greek foreign policy and dominated Greek domestic politics for over half a century.

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⁹⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 36.

⁹⁷ Γ. Γ. Μπενέκου, Κωλέτης..., p. 311–312.

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