

HISTORICAL PROFILES / Greece

Preparing for the revolution

In 1814 – an important date for the Greek nation – in Odessa (Russia) three Greeks, Emmanouil Xanthos, Nikolaos Skoufas and Athanasios Tsakalof found a secret organisation under the name of Filiki Etaireia (Friendly Society). The purpose of this organisation is to prepare the Greek population for the War of Independence against the Ottoman Empire. Initially acceptance of this effort is limited to Greeks living abroad. Alexandros Ypsilantis, a prince of the Danubian Principalities and a senior officer of the Imperial Russian cavalry, takes leadership of the organisation and begins the struggle from the Danubian Hegemonies in order to provoke a general rebellion.



Membership card of the Filiki Etaireia (Friendly Society), the secret organization founded in 1814 in Odessa



Portrait of Rhigas Pheraios, the foremost figure of the Greek Enlightenment, endeavoured to underpin the revolt of the Greeks by bringing about its intellectual and spiritual awakening



Flag with Greece Represented as the Goddess Athena and the inscription # ΕΛΕΥΘΕΡΙΑ # ΘΑΝΑΤΟΣ (Either Freedom or Death)
19th century

The emerging Greek state

For the first time, during the Vienna Conference in 1815, European leaders were faced the Greek Issue. Conte Ioannis Kapodistrias, with the approval of the Tsar, submits a question about the liberation of the Greeks from Ottoman rule. Twelve years later the same man becomes the first Governor of the newly established Greek State. In 1832, Othon (Otto), the son of King Ludwig of Bavaria becomes the King of Greece, with Athens declared the capital of the Greek State. In 1864, the Ionian Islands transfer from Great Britain to Greece. A turbulent political period ensues, one dominated by the modernising efforts of the politician Charilaos Trikoupis, but his attempts for expansion and organisation of the state are held back by the state's bankruptcy in 1895 and by the Greek defeat during the Greek–Turkish War of 1897.



Ioannis Capodistrias (1776–1831). The first Governor of Greece
19th century

Defining borders

At the beginning of the 20th century, Greece managed through the victorious Balkan Wars of 1912–13, to double its territory and unite Greeks that remained under Ottoman rule. The Treaty of Sèvres, signed after the end of the World War I, fulfilled the wish of the Greek Prime Minister Eleftherios Venizelos for a country spread over two continents. However, in 1922, the “Asia Minor catastrophe” ended his vision for the creation of a “Great Greece”: around 1.5 million Greeks, uprooted from their homes in Asia Minor (Anatolia), became

refugees after the signing of the Lausanne Treaty. The Greek State had little choice but to request help from abroad and, with great effort, did its best to incorporate the tens of thousands of people that had arrived from the other side of the Aegean Sea.



Eleftherios Venizelos (1864–1936). Prime Minister of Greece
1913



Map of Greece in 1920 that includes the Asia Minor coast
1920