

French consuls and Philhellenism in the 1820s: official positions and personal sentiments¹

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In 1821, the Greek uprising against Ottoman rule gave rise to a sympathetic movement in Europe: Philhellenism. France decided to remain neutral. Yet when trying to apply this neutrality in practice, the French consuls in the Ottoman Empire encountered several problems, such as the arrival of Philhellenic volunteer fighters. Furthermore, they were torn between their professional obligations and their personal views. In this context, how did the consuls perceive Philhellenism and the Philhellenic volunteers? To what extent were they able to express their Philhellenism or Mishellenism? This study examines consular correspondence of the period in an attempt to answer these questions.

Keywords: Greece; Ottoman Empire; French consuls; consuls of France; war of independence; Philhellenism; Philhellenes

Introduction

The example of Pierre David, France's consul general in Smyrna from 1819 to 1826, illustrates the complex situation in which French consuls found themselves when faced with the Greek insurrection and the Philhellenic movement.² On the one hand, in March 1826, he advised his government to intervene by force against Greek pirates who were harming French commerce. Admittedly, his argument was tendentious since he claimed that such military intervention against the uprising would be in the Greeks' own interests.³ On the other hand, paradoxically, in the same year, he completed two poetic works that supported

1 This work was conducted as part of the SMS LABEX, reference ANR-11-LABX-0066.

2 In the context of this article, Philhellenism is understood as being a political movement made up of the thoughts, actions and initiatives supporting Greek interests, either as part of a struggle for independence, a struggle for expansion of borders, or in physical or diplomatic conflict with another state. This political movement took different forms, since it was characterized by a combination of intellectual, artistic, and even military actions for those who left to fight alongside the Greek troops.

3 Archives du ministère des Affaires étrangères et européennes (henceforth AMAEE), Correspondance politique (henceforth CP), Turquie, vol. 244, ff. 105bis-106.

the Greek cause.⁴ This example reveals the ambiguity of Philhellenic sentiment amongst French consuls, who were torn between their professional obligations and their personal views.

By the 1820s, the French consular administration had a sophisticated organization as it had been established in the sixteenth to seventeenth centuries.⁵ French consuls made up a group of particularly professionalized administrators compared to other European consuls. They were all French citizens. Most of them had received specific training, which included instruction in law, geography, mathematics, drawing, and learning a foreign language. They were civil servants appointed by the king and were responsible for many departments, especially the Registry of Civil Records. In the Ottoman Empire, they exercised jurisdiction over the French community. Furthermore, they controlled commerce, navigation, and the implementation of sanitary and quarantine decisions. They also ensured that commercial treaties were respected. Finally, and above all, they had to protect the interests of French nationals.⁶

In addition to these activities, the consuls also acted as the eyes and ears of the king abroad. In fact, one of their missions was to inform the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the French Embassy (based in Constantinople for the Ottoman Empire and the Maghreb) not only of any problems they faced but also of everything they observed that could be of economic or political interest to France. They communicated their findings through an abundant, almost one-way correspondence to the Ministry.⁷

As civil servants, the consuls did not have much leeway; they were to obey the instructions they received without exception. Following the first signs of unrest in Greece, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs sent a circular dated 19 April 1821, by which it commanded the consuls to ‘remain uninvolved in the unrest stirring in this country’ and ‘to keep such a neutral position that, whatever ensue[d],’ they could ‘retain the authority and influence necessary to efficiently protect their nationals’.⁸ During the entire insurrection, the minister reiterated the same orders. Thus in 1823, the vice-consul at Chios received a circular identical to the one of 19 April 1821.⁹ In 1824, in order to reinforce

4 P. David, *L’Alexandréide ou la Grèce vengée, poème en vingt-quatre chants par Pierre David, officier de la légion d’honneur, chevalier de l’éperon d’or, ancien consul-général en Asie, membre de l’académie de Caen et Rome, fondateur de celle de Smyrne*, 2 vols (Paris 1827–9). P. David, *Athènes assiégée. Poème, par Sylvain Phalantée, membre de l’Académie des Arcades, associé correspondant de l’académie tibérine, l’un des fondateurs de celle de Smyrne* (Paris 1827).

5 J. Ulbert and G. Le Bouëdec (eds), *La fonction consulaire à l’époque moderne. L’Affirmation d’une institution économique et politique (1500–1700)* (Rennes 2006) and A. Mézin, *Les consuls de France au siècle des Lumières (1715–1792)* (Paris 1997).

6 J. Ulbert and L. Prijac (eds), *Consuls et services consulaires au XIX^e siècle* (Hamburg 2010).

7 These consuls’ letters or memoirs have been preserved and sorted into several collections: *Correspondance consulaire et commerciale* (henceforth CCC) and the *Correspondance politique des consuls* (henceforth CPC) in the archives of the French Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs at La Courneuve and the *Archives des postes* at Nantes.

8 AMAEE, Nantes, *Archives des postes*, Athènes 2, 4^e et 6^e chemises, ADdI and ADi3.

9 AMAEE, CCC, Scio 8, f. 26, letter of 4 May 1823, Henri Guy to the minister of Foreign Affairs.

the neutrality of French consuls in the Ottoman Empire, Beaurepaire, the chargé d'affaires at the French Embassy in Constantinople, forbade any contact between the consuls and the Greek insurgents, which the Ministry confirmed.¹⁰ Guilleminot, the new ambassador, generally endorsed this decision and specified that, if the Consulate General absolutely had to contact the insurgents, he should do so through the Navy which 'is the natural intermediary.'¹¹ Throughout the insurrection, the consuls had to interpret these orders on neutrality according to the circumstances. As the minister reminded Hugues Jean Louis Pouqueville, the French consul at Patras, they were above all asked to remain strictly out of the conflict in order to 'preserve all the impartiality and independence that is due' their office so that they could concentrate on the core of their mission: 'protecting the persons and properties that are subjects of the king.'¹²

Generally, the French consuls therefore avoided dealing with the great diplomatic questions marshalling the great powers such as Russia, France, Great Britain and Austria,¹³ even though the consuls played an important role in the practical application of French neutrality and in its evolution towards intervention. Similarly, the consuls did not get involved in the various phases of affirmation of the Greek nation or in the creation of the French Party, leaving that role to the French Navy and to the individual initiatives of Philhellenes and diplomats.¹⁴

With such explicit instructions, to what degree were the French consuls able to show their Philhellenism – or Mishellenism? How did they reconcile their professional duties with their personal opinions? How did the consuls regard the Philhellenic volunteers, whose arrival complicated their implementation of the 1821 ministerial circular? What did they think of the Philhellenic movement that was emerging in Europe?

In 1821, approximately a dozen consulates were directly affected by the Greek uprising.¹⁵ With the exception of the staff based in Crete, extant consular correspondence provides evidence regarding twenty individuals, both consuls and senior Consulate staff, who were present during the uprising. Although the sample may seem statistically small, it contains the main strands of French public opinion about Greece at the time, ranging from Philhellenism to Mishellenism.¹⁶ However, diverse as the

10 AMAEE, CCC, Smyrne 40, ff. 31–38, Pierre David to the minister, letter of 17 January 1824.

11 Ibid., f. 213bis.

12 AMAEE, CCC, Patras 4, ff. 51–51bis, letter of 14 June 1821.

13 A. Couderc, 'L'Europe et la Grèce, 1821–1830: Le Concert européen face à l'émergence d'un État-nation', *Bulletin de l'Institut Pierre Renouvin* 2015/2 (N° 42) 47–74.

14 On the creation of the Greek state and the phases of the uprising, see C. M. Woodhouse, *The Greek War of Independence: Its Historical Setting* (London 1952) and *Modern Greece: A Short History* (London 1968) (London and Boston, 1991) and D. Brewer, *The Greek War of Independence: The Struggle for Freedom from Ottoman Oppression and the Birth of the Modern Greek Nation* (New York 2001) and G. S. Koliopoulos and T. M. Veremis, *Greece: The Modern Sequel: From 1821 to the Present* (London 2002).

15 Arta, Athens, Candia, Corfu, Koroni, Chania, Larnaca, Patras, Rhodes, Thessaloniki, Chios and Smyrna.

16 A. G. Dimopoulos, *L'opinion publique française et la révolution grecque, 1821–1827* (Nancy-Saint Nicolas de Port 1962).

sentiments of French consuls regarding the Greek insurrection and Philhellenism may have been, their behaviour proved quite similar. They were all confronted with the same issues, that is to say the arrival of Philhellenic volunteer soldiers, the displeasure of Ottoman authorities, and the various problems encountered by the Philhellenic volunteers. In the heat of the action, and unsure whether they would receive any official instructions, the consuls adopted surprisingly similar solutions.¹⁷

The arrival of the Philhellenes

As early as July 1821, the consuls advised the Ministry of the arrival of the first Philhellenic fighters, which indicates how rapidly the Philhellenic movement had developed in Europe.¹⁸ Hugues Jean Louis Pouqueville, the French consul in Patras; Alexandre Julien Procope Claude Couteaux, based in Corfu; Louis François Sébastien Fauvel, in Athens; as well as Pierre Laurent Jean Baptiste Étienne David in Smyrna, all emphasized the diversity of origins among the Philhellenes: they were German, Swedish, Danish, Polish, Italian, Belgian, Swiss, and, of course, French.¹⁹ They reported on the movement's growth and the various stages of its organization. In November 1821, Pouqueville thus informed the Ministry that 'a European-style regiment was being organized in Tripolitsa.'²⁰ Many of the consuls' comments dealt with Lord Byron's arrival,²¹ Colonel Fabvier's adventures, the Philhellenic corps he organized, and the Tacticopolis (Methana) refuge he created.²² Yet what were the consequences of the arrival of these Philhellenic fighters?

According to the consuls, their arrival had an impact on the way the conflict unfolded. For instance, in March 1822, Pouqueville informed the Ministry that it was apparently a French colonel who had organized the capture of the fort at Methoni.²³ In June 1822, de Chantal, Chancellor at the Consulate at Corfu, observed 'a stronger sense of esprit de corps in all the operations' led by the Greeks, which could be explained by the presence of European officers in their ranks.²⁴ The Ottoman authorities seemed to agree. For example, in October 1822, Pierre David related what the Ottoman

17 J. Dimakis has calculated the time for transmitting information during the Greek insurrection. For information leaving Paris, it took 31–45 days to reach Constantinople, 33–52 to reach Smyrna, 23–39 for Corfu, 30–42 days for Crete and 42–55 days for Cyprus. J. Dimakis, *La guerre de l'indépendance grecque vue par la presse française périodique de 1821 à 1824* (Thessaloniki 1968) 51.

18 On Philhellenism see D. Barau, *La cause des Grecs: une histoire du mouvement philhellène, 1821–1829* (Paris 2009) and H. Mazurel, *Vertiges de la guerre. Byron, les philhellènes et le mirage grec* (Paris 2013).

19 AMAEE, CCC, Smyrne 38, f. 320, Patras 4, f. 68bis, Corfou 7, f. 105, Athènes 3, f. 133.

20 AMAEE, CCC, Patras 4, f. 215.

21 AMAEE, CCC, Corfou 8, f. 388. See R. Beaton, *Byron's War. Romantic Rebellion, Greek Revolution* (Cambridge 2013).

22 AMAEE, CCC, Larnaca 17, ff. 106–106bis. See H. Mazurel, *Désirs de guerre et rêves d'ailleurs: la croisade philhellène des volontaires occidentaux de la guerre d'indépendance grecque* (Lille 2010) 548–58.

23 AMAEE, CCC, Patras 4, f. 324.

24 AMAEE, CCC, Corfou 7, f. 281.

commander of Napoli di Romania (Nafplion) had reportedly told M. de Viella, a ship captain. The Turkish leader was said to have contemptuously described the Greek army as a cowardly 'armed rabble' and stated that he had only met with 'resistance from a small corps of Europeans called the Philhellenes', most of whom had 'died fighting'.²⁵ This perception of the Philhellenes by both the consuls and the Ottomans illustrates the way in which representations may differ from reality. Indeed, Hervé Mazurel has emphasized the Philhellenes' 'limited military effectiveness',²⁶ adding that 'in particular, they must have borne some responsibility for some of the major Greek defeats'.²⁷ In any case, what mattered to the consuls was the way the Ottomans perceived the arrival of these Philhellenic fighters. Indeed, how could they explain to the Turks that French military officers, especially senior officers, were free to come and fight the Sultan alongside the Greeks without France's neutrality being called into question?

It was an onerous task, as the consuls were well aware. On 23 November 1821, Pouqueville informed the minister that a ship carrying Philhellenes had arrived and a Philhellenic battalion had been constituted, pointing out that these new developments would 'make the position of His Majesty's agents, which is already quite difficult, even more difficult'.²⁸ From Athens, Fauvel also complained about the Philhellenes' behaviour, all the more so as 'several of them were wearing their national uniforms'. He further deplored that these 'adventurers from all nations...were compromising' French interests.²⁹ In Larnaca, Edmé Adolphe Méchain was also worried. In July 1821, he informed the Ministry that the governor was considering slaughtering all the Europeans, which he justified by accusing them of colluding with the insurgents.³⁰ The arrival of Philhellenic volunteers could only strengthen his resolve. Later, in December 1826, Pierre David was travelling back to France and stopped in Athens to meet with Omar Pasha, who was then leading the siege of the city. The Ottoman leader naturally questioned the former Consul General about a French national in Athens, Fabvier, who was leading the defence of the city: 'Why does France allow one of her subjects to wage war on us?' Pierre David tried to explain that Fabvier was 'an exile who had renounced his country, who had become Greek and who had nothing in common with France any longer' but he failed to convince Omar Pasha.³¹ In June 1827, Méchain further noted that translations from French newspapers were being circulated in Cyprus and that 'everything they [the Turks] read would fuel their fanatical hatred toward the Frankish infidels, whom they all regarded as enemies and whom they would gladly place in the same category as the *rayas*'.³² The 1828 *Hatt-i Sharif* edict showed clear indications of the

25 AMAEE, CCC, Smyrne 38, ff. 4–4bis.

26 Mazurel, *Désirs de guerre et rêves d'ailleurs*, 736.

27 *Ibid.*, 737.

28 AMAEE, CCC, Patras 4, f. 212bis.

29 AMAEE, CCC, Athènes 3, f. 133.

30 AMAEE, CCC, Larnaca 16, f. 275bis.

31 AMAEE, CP, Turquie, volume 245, f. 423bis.

32 AMAEE, CCC, Larnaca 17, f. 129bis.

Sultan's rancour against the Philhellenes. In the proclamation, the Sultan rejected any idea of Greek independence and accused the Franks of being 'the sole reason that the uprising had been prolonged'.³³

In such circumstances, the Philhellenes were an obstacle to the French consuls' difficult implementation of the 19 April 1821 circular and to their pledge of neutrality. As early as 1821 they tried to find solutions. In July of that year, Pouqueville thus called for a reduction in the numbers of passports given for travel to Greece, although the measure did not exclusively target the Philhellenes.³⁴ In September 1821, the Ministry informed him that his recommendation had been followed. In reality, however, the French government was unable to prevent the arrival of more Philhellenes and no serious measures were adopted.³⁵

Yet the consuls' attempt to prevent the arrival of Philhellenes in Greece should not be perceived as evidence of hostility against the Philhellenic movement itself, and even less so against the Greek cause. It was simply an attempt to implement the neutrality instructions they had received which did not allow them, in theory, to enter into contact with the Philhellenes on their own initiative. It is thus worth noting that they were equally opposed to the presence of French fighters alongside the Ottomans. For example, Duboucher de Saint-André, in Arta, mentioned French volunteers in the Ottoman fleet. Judging them to be troublemakers, Duboucher de Saint-André would have had them disembarked by force.³⁶ The consuls' lack of hostility towards the Philhellenes can also be seen in their responses to the problems Philhellenes encountered in Greece.

The difficulties of the Philhellenes

The consuls' desire to see an end to the influx of Philhellenes was meant not only to preserve good relations between France and the Sultan, but also to protect the Philhellenes themselves. This concern on the part of the consuls was all the more legitimate as the protection of French nationals in Ottoman territory was their responsibility. Indeed, when they arrived, the Philhellenes discovered a situation of partisan warfare for which they were not prepared. Combat was particularly violent. De Chantal wrote from Corfu that the Philhellenes were throwing themselves 'like madmen into the midst of certain exhaustion, destitution and human suffering'. Above all, if captured, their ultimate fate was to die as victims of 'the cruel and merciless Ottomans', who would inflict such torture 'that it could only be compared to the torments inflicted, in days of old, on the Holy Martyrs of the True Faith'.³⁷ After the battle of Peta, in 1822, many Philhellenes were taken prisoner³⁸ and de Chantal conveyed his outrage on a number of occasions

33 AMAEE, CCC, Smyrne 42, f. 301.

34 AMAEE, CCC, Patras 4, f. 70.

35 Barau, *La cause des Grecs*, 429–30.

36 AMAEE, CCC, Arta 4, f. 260.

37 AMAEE, CCC, Corfou 7, f. 354bis.

38 *Ibid.*, f. 368bis, f. 401.

at 'the barbaric treatment that the Turks inflicted in Larta [sic]³⁹ on the unfortunate foreign fighters allied with the insurgents'.

He further related reports that the European prisoners had been beheaded, but not before the Turks had subjected them to torture, which he could only compare to what he knew of the 'cruel treatments that the insurgent Negroes of Santo Domingo had perpetrated on the living bodies of their white victims',⁴⁰ or 'the barbarity of some savage peoples in Africa'. After the prisoners had died, the Turks reportedly asked the Greeks in Arta to 'skin all those heads, and to stuff the skin, so they could be sent following the custom to Constantinople!'⁴¹

The chief of the consulate in Corfu underlined such brutality because he wanted everything to be done to prevent it from happening again. In his view, the most efficient means would be to warn prospective Philhellenic recruits against going to Greece, 'an admonition that only the king's paternal rule can give'.⁴² De Chantal was convinced – he 'did not harbour the slightest doubt' – that the Minister of Foreign Affairs, 'moved by his sense of humanity and Christian charity', shared his wish 'for such events to be widely known, so as to preclude the blind and foolhardy zeal, or the lunacy' that led some French people to board a ship for Greece.⁴³ De Chantal seemed to have been genuinely horrified by the fate of the Philhellenes there. He mentioned the executions that followed the battle of Peta for a third time, reiterating the necessity to warn Philhellenes tempted to leave for Greece: 'Humanity can only hope that publicizing the fate awaiting foreign nationals that leave to fight in Greece will be so widespread in France that it would dissuade those who, without such warning, would hasten to certain death.'⁴⁴

De Chantal added that 'such accounts would certainly disabuse the most sincere [Philhellenes]'.⁴⁵ Nevertheless, as Pierre Echinard has observed, and contrary to the head of the Consulate's hopes, accounts from disenchanted Philhellenes such as Maurice Persat and Guillaume de Lefebvre did not sway public opinion, which was already strongly pro-Philhellene, and did not slow the stream of volunteers.⁴⁶

The repatriation of the Philhellenes

Denys Barau found that two-thirds of the Philhellenes did not die in Greece, and he identified a number of reasons for their early return. Some returned without having obtained the desired position within the Greek ranks, others because they believed they

39 He is referring to the town of Arta.

40 AMAEE, CCC, Corfou 7, f. 357.

41 *Ibid.*, f. 357bis.

42 *Ibid.*, f. 355.

43 *Ibid.*, f. 354bis.

44 *Ibid.*, f. 369.

45 *Ibid.*, f. 435bis.

46 P. Echinard, *Grecs et Philhellènes à Marseille de la Révolution française à l'indépendance de la Grèce* (Marseille 1973) 164–9. On these disenchanted Philhellenes see also Barau, *La cause des Grecs*, 647–66.

had accomplished their mission⁴⁷ or were no longer able to work under acceptable conditions. Others were disappointed with the reception they received from the Greeks. Testimonies from the French consuls, in particular those of Pierre David in Smyrna and de Chantal in Corfu, confirm Barau's analyses, which were based on documents left by the Philhellenes.

It was primarily once the Philhellenes had returned that the consuls had contact with them. In order to provide the Ministry with the most information, they questioned the Philhellenes about the situation in Greece.⁴⁸ As for the rest, the Philhellenes' return to Europe caused problems for some consuls, as 'many of them return to France in extreme poverty'.⁴⁹ De Chantal, like Pierre David, wondered if his duties included helping them 'in spite of the folly they've committed.'⁵⁰ Should the consuls repatriate them? Denys Barau's study emphasizes France's reluctance to welcome back the disappointed Philhellenes, resulting in a refusal to reimburse the related expenses that had been advanced by Pierre David. Barau also asserts that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs sought to put an end to these repatriations.⁵¹ Yet more detailed study of consular correspondence shows that this was not entirely the case, and clarifies what might have led Barau to this erroneous conclusion.

When de Chantal questioned the Ministry about the need to help the Philhellenes, he was fortunate enough to receive instructions.⁵² On 26 October 1823, he acknowledged receipt of a ministerial letter which 'corroborated [his] opinion in this regard, since it not only allowed French people in Greece to return to France, but also included a generous order to repatriate those French citizens without any resources at the government's expense'.⁵³ The case of the Corfu Consulate proves that the Ministry did not seek to prevent the return of the Philhellenes.

Nevertheless, examining the situation in Smyrna sheds light on the origin of the confusion. In Smyrna, the context was very different in that the problem was of a much greater magnitude. According to Pierre David, some one hundred Philhellenes were staying in the city.⁵⁴ Moreover, while Corfu was a territory under British control, Smyrna was located in the heart of Ottoman territory. In 1822–3, while other European consulates refused all aid to the Philhellenes there,⁵⁵ and fearing that their presence

47 Barau, *op. cit.*, 648–9.

48 For example, see AMAEE, CCC, Corfou 8, f. 327.

49 AMAEE, CCC, Corfou 8, f. 246.

50 AMAEE, CCC, Smyrne 37, ff. 152–154.

51 Barau, *La cause des Grecs*, 660.

52 Unfortunately, these instructions have not been found.

53 AMAEE, CCC, Corfou 8, f. 326bis.

54 AMAEE, CCC, Smyrne 38, f. 319bis.

55 The refusal of other European consulates was temporary. In May 1823, Pierre David informed the Ministry that the consulates of Great Britain, Sweden, Prussia, and Austria no longer allowed Philhellenes to roam the streets of Smyrna and helped them return to their home countries. AMAEE, CCC, Smyrne 38, f. 322.

would compromise the Europeans and hence the French,⁵⁶ Pierre David took on the responsibility of repatriating them all, irrespective of their nationality. Having advanced the funds for their accommodation and return voyage, David asked for reimbursement, but the Ministry refused to assume the cost of the non-French Philhellenes' travel. In addition, on 12 March 1823, the Minister informed him that in future 'he should refrain from sending French ships back to France with foreign military personnel leaving the service of the Greeks'.⁵⁷ It should be noted that this injunction applied only to the non-French Philhellenes and was due primarily to the fact that their consulates in Marseille refused to pay fees of passage. Thus, the primary reason for this rejection was not ideological but essentially economic, even though the Ministry and the Embassy did fear that too much assistance to the Philhellenes would upset the Ottomans.

Pierre David was not discouraged by this refusal. He gradually developed a further argument centred on French interests. He feared that the Ottomans, on seeing that the consulates of these unfortunate people refused to assist them, would take advantage of this and arrest them. He explained that 'the Europeans of Smyrna would be ashamed and pained to see quite a number of their peers tortured before their eyes'. Above all, the Philhellenes wore European dress, 'a style which we all wear, and we should take all possible precautions against its degradation in Turkey'.⁵⁸ Thus, in his view, it was necessary for France to take responsibility for repatriating the foreign Philhellenes abandoned by their own nations, out of a sense of humanity but also self-interest and in order to safeguard the reputation of the Europeans. Finally, he was also concerned that, in order to have enough food to eat, some would be tempted to convert to Islam. In 1824, he summarized this argument and developed it further:

The presence of these new Crusaders might become more dangerous than ever in Turkish cities. They might easily be taken for spies of the insurgents. It was precisely in order to avoid unwelcome consequences which might arouse these suspicions, both for them and for the French nationals who are established at this trading post, that I gathered all of the Philhellenes brought to me by the Navy in 1822 and 1823, and I returned them to Europe.⁵⁹

The Ministry eventually showed more sensitivity to these arguments. In the margin of David's despatch the Minister noted that 'it seems fair to reimburse these costs'.⁶⁰ David seems to have obtained at least a partial refund in 1825.⁶¹ Thus, the Ministry raised no obstacle to the repatriation of the French Philhellenes, and even facilitated it

56 AMAEE, CCC, Smyrne 37, ff. 152–154.

57 AMAEE, CCC, Smyrne 38, ff. 226–226.

58 *Ibid.*, f. 226, f. 321bis.

59 Cf. AMAEE, CCC, Smyrne 40, f. 329.

60 *Ibid.*, f. 329bis.

61 *Ibid.*, f. 424bis. The last expense account he sent in December 1824 shows that the elite Philhellenes were lodged in a hotel and that others had been placed in hospitals.

through its consuls in Smyrna and Corfu. Only the case of the non-French Philhellenes was initially – but only temporarily – a problem.

The French consuls' views of the Greek cause

The consuls' reactions to the arrival of the Philhellenes and the difficulties they encountered, including the assistance the consuls provided for their return to France, cannot be used as evidence of these consuls' personal opinions. Their actions were guided by their professional obligations. The same was true when they opened the doors of their consulates to provide shelter to the Greeks. Indeed, at the risk of their lives, Pierre David in Smyrna, Pouqueville in Patras, Cassas in Rhodes, Farr in Athens, Méchain in Larnaca, and de Bourville and Digeon in Chios protected more than 6,000 Greeks against mass demonstrations and against the Ottoman authorities. This protection was not a sign of Philhellenism, but resulted from their desire to promote an idealized image of France as well as to confirm the inviolability of consulates.⁶² In fact, several consuls that offered asylum were hostile to the Greek cause and to Philhellenism. Instead of their actions, the French consuls' opinions are revealed more by their despatches.

The hostility of certain consuls towards the Greek insurrection manifested itself in various ways. Thus, in Athens, Fauvel overtly displayed his Turcophilia, and his interest in the Greeks was limited to Antiquity.⁶³ In Syros, Jean-François Pierre Adrien Dupré⁶⁴ never missed an opportunity to criticize the Greeks⁶⁵ and to praise the Turks and the Egyptians.⁶⁶ For these two consuls, their Mishellenism was a result of their negative perceptions of the modern Greeks and positive perceptions of the Turks. The case of Méchain, consul in Larnaca, was different. The ideas he expressed are more akin to what Sophie Basch has called 'Misophilhellenism',⁶⁷ that is to say, hostility not to the Greeks and their cause, but to Philhellenism and any discourse deemed excessively positive toward the Greeks.

In November 1824, Méchain reported to the minister that 'all those who observe these pitiful people closely are forced to admit that they are very far from the beautiful Antique ideal through which they are still seen in Europe'.⁶⁸ In May 1826, frustrated by Greek piracy, he returned to this subject with even more acrimony:

... it is impossible, I believe, to keep these generous illusions of which the Greeks of today show themselves so unworthy. In truth, my Lord, if one were

62 A. Massé, 'Les consuls de France et la guerre d'indépendance grecque. Intervention, neutralité ou colonisation?', in Ulbert and Prijac (eds), *Consuls et services consulaires au XIX^e siècle*, 94–106.

63 G. Tollias, *La Médaille et la Rouille. L'image de la Grèce moderne dans la presse littéraire parisienne (1794–1815)* (Paris 1997) 112.

64 He was posted to the island from February to April 1829, after having headed the consulate in Thessaloniki.

65 AMAEE, CP, Turquie, volume 258, ff. 84, 94.

66 Ibid., f. 73bis, for example.

67 S. Basch, *Le mirage grec: La Grèce moderne devant l'opinion française (1846–1946)* (Paris 1995) 495.

68 AMAEE, CCC, Larnaca 16, f. 390bis.

held by a sense of charity, one would want the authors of the [Philhellenist] brochures to be condemned to come for just three months to live or navigate in these areas with their fortunes or the objects of their affection. But if you ask the agents of the King, the navigators, and all Catholics, they would cry out that this punishment would be too cruel.⁶⁹

This excerpt highlights the significance of Philhellenism at this time, as even Méchain, at the far reaches of the Mediterranean, was aware of Philhellenist literature. It is interesting to note how close his ideas are to those developed by Adrien Dupré in Thessaloniki. In May 1827, while he was alerting the Ministry to the problems with Greek piracy, he expressed the same desire as Méchain:

If the Philhellenes in Europe had their fortunes and their children aboard those very ships that the Greeks plunder and whose captains and crews they torture, perhaps their philanthropy and their tenderness towards them would diminish, and we would not be sending emissaries carrying money and ammunition to the aid of these sea robbers, thus providing them with the means to exercise their piracy and acts of cruelty towards Europeans.⁷⁰

These two excerpts remind us of the primacy the consuls accorded to their own first-hand knowledge from observation, in comparison with the indirect knowledge of those learned Philhellenes who had never left their study. Furthermore, the consuls focused their anger on the Philhellenes who remained in Europe, precisely because they could not forgive them for holding firm to their positions and continuing to perceive modern Greeks through the prism of their ancestors. The anger of these two consuls against the Philhellenes reveals the first signs of Misophilhellenism,⁷¹ which preceded the rise of Mishellenism, whose potential virulence could already be felt.

It should be noted that all the French consuls agreed on this critique of Philhellenism. Whether they were hostile to the Greek cause or were Philhellenes, the consuls refused to see the Philhellenes as political activists with an ideology. For example, in May 1823, Pierre David made a distinction between two categories of Philhellenes. He considered 'having seen in general, in those belonging to the distinguished classes, only a sort of enthusiasm learned from school books',⁷² and they were deceived by 'their youthful illusions'.⁷³ It is true that in 1821–2, more than 50% of the Philhellenes were under 25 years of age.⁷⁴ On the other hand, he believed that he had observed among the Philhellenes of the 'lower classes only poor artisans, petty officers and soldiers...lured

69 AMAEE, CCC, Larnaca 17, f. 86.

70 AMAEE, CP, Turquie, volume 249, f. 242bis.

71 Basch, *Le mirage grec*, 495.

72 AMAEE, CCC, Smyrne 38, f. 323.

73 *Ibid.*, f. 319bis.

74 Mazurel, *Désirs de guerre et rêves d'ailleurs*, 428.

by promises of greater comfort than at home'.⁷⁵ In Athens, Fauvel called them 'our French and German Don Quixotes', the 'white knights out to right wrongs'⁷⁶ or even 'these damn Crusaders' and 'these knights errant'.⁷⁷ For de Chantal, like for Pierre David, their actions were 'folly'.⁷⁸ However, paradoxically, for these last two, such mockery and disregard for the Philhellenist commitment was not incompatible with their own Philhellenism. Four French consuls wrote undeniably Philhellenist works: Armand Jean Baptiste Louis Marcescheau,⁷⁹ Pierre David, Pouqueville, and de Chantal. The latter three developed three variations of Philhellenism.

Pouqueville was the brother of François Charles Hugues Laurent Pouqueville, former French consul at Yannina and author of the *Histoire de la régénération de la Grèce*.⁸⁰ He was the only French consul to openly express his Philhellenist feelings to the Ministry, saying '[t]he cause that brought them to life is too beautiful'.⁸¹ His motivation, coming both from strong anti-Turkish sentiments and the idea of Christian solidarity, qualifies him among Philhellenism's conservative proponents, embodied in France by Bonald and Chateaubriand. His letters to the Ministry demonstrate a certain vehemence when discussing the Greek cause. For example, he described those who knew the Turks but still supported their legitimacy as 'evil'. He also noted that his reproach excluded 'any old Marseillais accustomed to respecting the Turks out of interest' because these 'ridiculous' individuals 'deserve[d] only pity'.⁸² As early as December 1821, he defended the idea of 'benevolent mediation' to avoid a massacre of either Greeks or Turks.⁸³ His Philhellenist commitment was so strong that he dared to criticize the decisions made by the powers meeting in Verona on 27 September 1822:

The religion of the heads of the Holy Alliance has been deceived! Vain terrors have made them abandon the cause of humanity to embrace that of an illegitimate government, enemy of God and men, and, while it is preparing celebrations in Vienna and Verona, an entire Christian people will disappear from the face of the Earth!!!⁸⁴

By speaking in this way, Pouqueville clearly overstepped the boundaries of his duties and demonstrated a form of militant Philhellenism. He took on the invective tone

75 AMAEE, CCC, Smyrne 38, f. 323.

76 AMAEE, CCC, Smyrne 37, f. 155.

77 AMAEE, CCC, Athènes 3, f. 133.

78 AMAEE, CCC, Corfou 7, f. 354bis, Smyrne 37, ff. 152–154.

79 Marcescheau was named French Consul at Arta on 22 July 1821. He obstinately refused to take up his post. Thus, he will not be discussed here although he expressed his support for the Greek cause in a work he addressed to the Ministry on 20 July 1823. AMAEE, CCC, Arta 4, ff. 343–346bis.

80 F. Ch. H. L. Pouqueville, *Histoire de la régénération de la Grèce comprenant le précis des événements depuis 1740 jusqu'en 1824*, 4 vols (Paris 1824).

81 AMAEE, CCC, Patras 4, f. 243.

82 Ibid., f. 243bis.

83 Ibid. ff. 243bis–244.

84 Ibid., ff. 362–362bis.

of Philhellenes such as Müller and Barère, the latter having accused the rulers of failing to stop ‘this river of blood’ and of being ‘indifferent and ruthless due to diplomacy’.⁸⁵ In the following years, Pouqueville continued to express his Philhellenism to the Ministry and to advocate French intervention to aid the Greeks.

De Chantal was more moderate in expressing his Philhellenism. It is true that he held a much lower rank than Pouqueville, as he was merely Chancellor at the Corfu Consulate. However, like Pouqueville, he wanted to influence the decisions of the powers gathered at Verona by providing authentic information. Thus, in December 1822, he wrote an extensive treatise.⁸⁶ To support his idea of European intervention in favour of the Greeks, Chantal focused on French interests, highlighting the economic and political benefits that France would reap from the creation of a Greek state. The nature of his arguments reveals his Philhellenist thinking. They were also based on a very negative perception of the Turks. He presented Ottoman domination as leading to an inevitable fall, and in his description, the cruel nature of the pashas is featured at length:

He then sends his mercenaries to murder you in the arms of your wife, your children, and even inside the Lord’s holy temple. If only such a profusion of killings took place in an expeditious manner so humanity would have to suffer less! But often the unfortunate victim’s death is preceded and accompanied by the most dreadful torments! – There is no kind of atrocity that the tyrant does not study and employ a few times to prolong the suffering of the victim he sends to torture, according to the degree of his hatred and sometimes also for the simple barbaric pleasure of experimenting on the patient with all possible ways to make him die in the most acute pain!⁸⁷

In contrast, the Greeks are presented as ‘an active, intelligent, and industrious people who are eager to learn and perfect themselves’.⁸⁸ He therefore considered that ‘the spark of Prometheus should come from the Hellenes and be communicated to the rest of their brothers and fellow Christians’.⁸⁹ By developing such an argument, de Chantal was undoubtedly promoting Philhellenism, although its expression is more muted than that of Pouqueville and he did not use it to question decisions made at Verona.

Pierre David showed his Philhellenism differently. Judging by the dates, he seems to be one of the pioneers of the movement. Indeed, as early as the 1800s when he was consul general in Bosnia, he began writing a poetic work, *L’Alexandréide*, in which he compares Napoleon to Alexander the Great. He wanted to convince the emperor to turn his armies to the East rather than Europe in order to revive the Greeks. Napoleon’s fall led

85 M. Bouyssy, ‘Le Mémorial des Grecs miroir du philhellénisme des années 1820’, in M. Espagne (ed.), *Philhellénismes et transferts culturels dans l’Europe du XIXe siècle*, 1–2/2005 (Paris 2005) 59.

86 AMAEE, CCC, Corfou 7, ff. 462–492.

87 Ibid., ff. 478–478bis.

88 Ibid., f. 467bis.

89 Ibid., f. 468.

him to set this work aside, although he did not renounce his Philhellenism. When he arrived in Smyrna in 1819, he became involved in a new project:

I wanted to contribute to reviving the Enlightenment in the country from which it spread over Europe. I was planning to establish an Academy whose members would include enlightened Greeks as well as Europeans. I hired a Frenchman to publish a journal which would become the publishing arm of this Academy and thus *Le Spectateur oriental* began.⁹⁰

Once again, external events disrupted the consul general's plans. With the Greek insurrection, Pierre David was forced to put his Philhellenism aside and he only resumed his Philhellenic activities once he had retired. From 1821 to 1826, as the second highest ranking representative of French diplomacy in the Ottoman Empire, he tried to apply neutrality as he was directed to do, even though the orders from the Ministry and the Embassy, with whom he was in conflict, seemed to be contradictory. The Embassy accused him of being too favourable towards the Greeks, while the Ministry criticized him for ending neutrality in favour of the Turks.⁹¹ In 1827, he anonymously published the first volume of *L'Alexandrèide ou la Grèce vengée* under the pseudonym Sylvain Phalantée.⁹² He depicted Charles X in the guise of Alexander the Great. Pierre David did not stop there. In 1827, he published *Athènes assiégée*⁹³ under the same pseudonym, with the selling price of one franc for the benefit of the Greeks. In this work, he described a meeting among the great men of Antiquity, with Socrates ending up convincing Themistocles, Pericles, Miltiades, Solon and Demosthenes to ask the Kings of Europe to intervene on behalf of the modern Greeks:

O peoples of the West, your mother in distress,
Greece appeals to you; She implores your Kings.
Fly to her rescue; there is still time,
And let the light of the setting sun renew the dawn.⁹⁴

This verse, which establishes a parallel between ancient and modern Greeks, shows that the consuls shared the same perceptions of the Greeks as their fellow Frenchmen who had remained in Europe; the consuls' writings convey the same clichés.⁹⁵ It was

90 AMAEE, Nantes, Fonds Pierre David, 1 AE 61–13, f. 599.

91 AMAEE, CCC, Smyrne 37, ff. 19–20, Ministerial directives of 9 March 1822, ff. 320–328bis, letter of 15 September 1822, Pierre David to the Ministry.

92 David, *L'Alexandrèide ou la Grèce vengée*.

93 David, *Athènes assiégée*.

94 Ibid., 298.

95 On this topic, see N. M. Athanassoglou-Kallmyer, *French Images from the Greek War of Independence, 1821–1830* (New Haven, CT and London 1989); D. Nicolaïdis, *D'une Grèce à l'autre. Représentation des Grecs modernes par la France révolutionnaire* (Paris 1992); O. Augustinos, *French Odysseys. Greece in French Travel Literature from the Renaissance to the Romantic Era* (Baltimore and London 1994); and A. Mandilara, G. Nikolaou, L. Flitouris and N. Anastassopoulos (eds), *Φιλελληνισμός, Το ενδιαφέρον για Ελλάδα και τους Έλληνες από την Επανάσταση ως σήμερα* (Athens 2015).

only in 1829, when the second volume of *L'Alexandréïde* was published, that David resolved to publish his works under his real name. His case illustrates the gap between his actions, which he sought to align with the views of the government, and his convictions, which he expressed freely only under a pseudonym and after leaving his post.

Conclusion

Studying the consular correspondence enables us to gain a better understanding of the Philhellenist movement. On one hand, the consuls' testimony provides supplementary information on the Philhellenes' arrival, their Greek experience, and their return to Europe. On the other hand, this approach sheds light on the potential confusion that can result when scholars only examine people's behaviour, without including sources that provide insight into their ideas. Thus, some of the consuls' actions which might otherwise be interpreted as Philhellenism – offering asylum in the consulates for example – turn out to be either an expression of general philanthropy or of a deliberate policy that sought to place France above the fray in order to justify intervention.

Analysing consular sources also points out the consulates' ambiguous response to Philhellenism. Although the responses differed from one consul to another, senior consular officials remained completely silent on this issue. No consul was accused of excessive Philhellenism or Turcophilia. Furthermore, the Ministry seems to have been completely passive in response to the Philhellenes' engagement, allowing the volunteers to leave for Greece and then contributing to their return to France.

This uncertainty about the French consulates' official position toward Philhellenism was only temporary. With the battle of Navarino in 1827, the situation settled and, for several decades, Philhellenism became official and institutional to such an extent that one could say that French diplomacy was based on Philhellenism. Having had a Philhellenic experience in Greece even became an asset for a consular or diplomatic career. For example, Maxime Raybaud was appointed consul in Arta in August 1831. Similarly, Theobald Piscatory was entrusted with a diplomatic mission to Greece in 1841, before being appointed Minister Plenipotentiary in Greece on 17 April 1843. He owed his political career to his engagement alongside the Greek insurgents in 1825.⁹⁶ Thus, in October 1841, the Vice-Consul in Patras, André Duclos, wrote to the Ministry that, for the success of Piscatory's mission, 'we are counting heavily on his Philhellenic feelings.'⁹⁷ The Minister himself emphasized that 'the relations that he once had with Greece' and 'the services he rendered to its cause at a time when it was still far from being won' were among the elements that guided the 'choice of the king's

96 Barau, *La cause des Grecs*, 56, 303.

97 AMAEE, CCC, Patras 5, ff. 242.

government'.⁹⁸ Philhellenic experience was now sought by the Ministry and considered an asset, as André Duclos wrote in June 1842:

... it is clear that no ambassador could, like him, mingle in the villages and talk to the people, where our best friends are. To be listened to with interest by these good people, and to inspire them with confidence, a foreigner has to be known, to have fought in their ranks for their country's independence, to have shared with them the fatigue, privation, the danger of that war. By recalling the glorious memories that are dear to them and shared with us, Mr Piscatory revived the Greeks' sympathy for France and restored the influence that it needs to have in this region.⁹⁹

After being seen as ridiculous and even dangerous, Philhellenism became a tool of diplomacy, and a position used to influence the Greek state. Officially from 1827 onwards, all consuls proclaimed themselves Philhellenes, and Philhellene discourse was systematically used to justify French interventions in the domestic and foreign policy of the Greek state. For example, in 1853 during the Crimean War, when France, Great Britain and Piedmont-Sardinia waged war against Russia to protect the Ottoman Empire, an Anglo-French expeditionary force was sent to Greece to occupy Piraeus and force Athens to remain neutral. This occupation lasted until 1857¹⁰⁰ and was presented as a friendly act, carried out in the Greeks' interest.¹⁰¹

The consuls of France posted to the Ottoman Empire expressed a diversity of opinions to the Foreign Affairs Ministry. Whether they were Philhellenes or Mishellenes, however, they obeyed their superiors and strove to implement France's official policy of neutrality. Their personal opinions did not influence their professional behaviour. Thus, the arrival of Philhellene fighters was primarily viewed as a problem to be overcome in an effort to remain officially neutral.

Translated from the French by Corinna Anderson and Cynthia Johnson

98 Guizot to Lagrenée, cited in É. Driault and M. Lhéritier, *Histoire diplomatique de la Grèce de 1821 à nos jours*, I (Paris 1925) 209.

99 AMAEE, CCC, Patras 5, ff. 247–247bis.

100 R. Clogg, *A Concise History of Greece* (Cambridge 2002) 53.

101 Driault and Lhéritier, *Histoire diplomatique de la Grèce*, 384, 391–8.