

JOHN D. PAPPAS



**LORD BYRON'S
PERILOUS SAILING TO MESSOLONGHI
IN THE GREEK WAR OF INDEPENDENCE**



The Battle of Christmas during the first siege of Messolonghi (1822).
[Artwork by the French painter **Alphonse de Neuville** (1835-1885).]

Lord Byron in Albanian [Souliot] Dress,
at the age of 25, after his graduation from
the **University of Cambridge** (1809) and his
subsequent tour of Ottoman Greece (1809-1811).
[Oil painting on canvas (1813) by **Thomas Phillips**
(1770-1845), *National Gallery of Greece.*]



Lord Byron's Perilous Sailing to Messolonghi in the Greek War of Independence

*A remarkable episode in Byron's Odyssey in Greece
200 years ago*

John D. Pappas

1. Greece charms Byron

In February 1823, Lord Byron, then aged 35, turned his thoughts to Greece. At the time, his friend **Sir John Hobhouse**, MP, 1st Baron Broughton, informed him about the establishment of the *London Philhellenic Committee* by influential Englishmen, some of whom were also Byron's friends. At the same time, news reports from the battlefield of *the Greek War of Independence* resonated throughout Europe, portraying a sublime spectacle of a nation awakening in the light of freedom—a spectacle that captivated the attention and kindled the imagination of the romantic English poet. Notably, the Turks had then¹ been compelled to abandon their first siege of Messolonghi (October 25 to December 31, 1822); the siege had evolved into a calamitous defeat for the Turks and a great victory for the Greeks. Positioned in the southeastern corner of Europe, Messolonghi began to emerge then as a European symbol of Greek and Christian resistance against Asiatic Ottoman rule.

In the midst of high expectations for the regeneration of Greece, **Edward Blaquière**, captain (ret.) of the British Royal Navy, initiated efforts then, from March 1823, to engage Byron actively in the Greek

¹ It usually took about 6-7 weeks then for a message to be sent from Greece to London.

cause. Before long, the *London Philhellenic Committee*, appointed Byron as *High Commissioner* (“principal agent”) of the 5-member committee² tasked with overseeing, on the spot, the efficient disbursement of Greece’s first international bond loan,³ slated to be issued early the following year (1824) on the London Stock Exchange. That loan aimed to fund the Hellenic Fleet and a Greek expeditionary force against the Ottomans.

2. Byron approaches Greece

To that end, Lord Byron and his entourage set sail on the brig *Hercules* from Genoa of Italy, on July 16, 1823, to the island of

² For the liquidation of Greece’s first international bond loan, so-called *the first Independence Loan*, the loan agreement provided for unanimous consent of **Lord Byron**, British Colonel **Leicester Stanhope**, the leading shipowner of the Greek island of Hydra **Lazaros Kountouriotis**, and two bankers in the Ionian island of Zakynthos, who would initially receive the loan money: **Caesar Logothetis**, a Greek, and **Samuel Barff**, a philhellene Englishman of Jewish descent.

³ Funded by Lord Byron in November 1823, representatives of the Greek government (**Andreas Louriotis**, **Ioannis Orlandos**, and **Ioannis Zaimis**) had traveled from Greece to London, where later, on February 21, 1824, they signed the loan agreement for Greece's first international bond loan. That loan was obtained through the issue of Greek bonds on the London Stock Exchange by **Loughnan, Son & O'Brien**, agent firm for the Greek loan, of which the trustees were **Joseph Hume** and **Edward Ellice**. The loan had nominal value £800,000, real value £472,000 (59%), interest rate 5% and repayment term 36 years. An amount of £124,000 was deducted from the real value of the loan, i.e., two-year interest £80,000, amortization £16,000, and agency fees £28,000. Consequently, the amount of £348,000 was cleared to the Greek government. Of this amount, the Greek government immediately allocated £11,900 for the purchase of munitions in England, £5,045 for the expenses of the Greek delegation, £9,274 for insurance premiums and the cost of transporting the money to Greece, while £23,065 was credited to the account of the Greek Government in London. The balance, £298,726, was transferred by sea to the Ionian island of Zakynthos, to the bank of (Greek) **Logothetis** and (Anglo-Jewish) **Barff**, from where it was liquidated to the Greek Government.

Kefallenia or Cephalonia,⁴ where he arrived on August 3, 1823. Cephalonia is the largest of the Ionian islands (called *Heptanese* or “seven islands”), a protectorate of Great Britain at the time, off the west coast of Ottoman Greece. Byron’s intention was to move to Messolonghi, about 40 miles east of Cephalonia, in order to advance the Greek cause of independence.

However, Byron stayed in Cephalonia, in the village of *Metaxata*, for almost five months, until December 28, 1823. There he found himself “besieged” by agents of rival Greek factions, each vying to recruit him for their respective own causes. Despite the persistent efforts of these factions, Byron continuously sought to appease their civil passions before moving to Messolonghi. He succinctly expressed the challenge of his mission to unify them into a cohesive fighting force against the Ottomans in the following manner:

“I come not here, to join a faction, but a nation; and to act with honest men—not speculators or peculators, as the Greeks daily call each other. I must be circumspect.”

In mid-December 1823, Byron received letters with favorable news from the *London Philhellenic Committee*: The preparatory work for

⁴ In addition to Captain Scott, his First Mate and his crew, those boarding the brig *Hercules*, that transported Byron from Genoa to Cephalonia, included the following 15 members of Byron’s entourage:

- **Count Pietro Gamba** (brother of Byron’s mistress Teresa Guiccioli)
- **Edward John Trelawny** (British philhellene, friend of poets Shelley and Byron)
- **Dr. Francesco Bruno** (a recently graduated Italian physician)
- **Prince Constantine Skilitzy** (a relative of Alexandros Mavrocordatos)
- **Captain George Vitali** (Venetian, with holdings in *Zante* or *Zakynthos*)
- **James Hamilton Browne** (a Scottish philhellene)
- **Benjamin Lewis** (Trelawny’s American Negro groom)
- **William Fletcher** (Byron’s valet)
- **Legg Zambelli** (a defrocked priest, Byron’s Maestro di Casa)
- **Giovanni Baltista “Tita” Falcieri** (Byron’s gondolier)
- **Vincenzo Papi** (Byron’s coachman)
- Four unnamed servants

the issuance of Greece's first international bond loan had been finalized, even before the representatives (**A. Louriotis**, **I. Orlandos**, and **I. Zaimis**) of the Greek Government⁵ had arrived in London. The success of the bond issue was widely anticipated, given the prevailing enthusiasm, or even the speculative frenzy, in favor of Greece in the London capital market at the time.

At the same time, the news from the Greek-Turkish front opposite Cephalonia was notably positive: The Turks, led by **Ismail Pasha Pliasa of Skydra** and **Omer Bryonis**, had lifted the siege of the small town of *Anatoliko* or *Aetoliko* (October 5 – November 30, 1823) in the lagoon of Messolonghi. They withdrew in defeat, after their relentless but ultimately ineffective bombardment of *Aetoliko* with 2,000 artillery shells. The Ottoman campaign had resulted in the loss of 2,000 Turks in the second half of 1823.

Accordingly, Byron considered it both opportune and imperative for him to advance then to the frontline, to Messolonghi.

3. Byron pursued by the Turkish Fleet

Alexandros Mavrokordatos, head of the first Greek Government (January 15, 1822 – April 25, 1823) and political primate of Messolonghi at that time, dispatched the brig *Leonidas*, a two-masted armed sailing ship, to the port of Argostoli in Cephalonia, with the aim of boarding Byron and his entourage and transporting them to Messolonghi. However Byron chose to charter two Cephalonian ships himself for this purpose.

Subsequently, the brig *Leonidas* returned to Messolonghi without Byron, leading to a perilous misunderstanding: The Greeks mistakenly thought that Byron no longer required their assistance *at all* in sailing

⁵ The Greeks proclaimed their independence from the Ottoman Empire on January 1, 1822. Shortly thereafter, on January 15, 1822, they elected their inaugural *national* (central) government, which they formally named as *Provisional Administration of Greece* (Προσωρινή Διοίκησης της Ελλάδος).

For £4000. Sterl.^y Cephalonia 12 Nov^r 1823 K. 105
 Thirty days Sight, pay to this ^{my} second
 of Exchange, first & Third unpaid, to Giovanni
 in Orlando Esq^r or order, the sum of four
 thousand pounds Sterling, which place to
 my debit as per advice. 000,058
 To Mess^{rs} Hanson & Co
 London. Noel Byron

Lord Byron's check for £4,000, dated 12 November 1823,
for financing the Greek Fleet in the Greek War of Independence.



Sir John Cam Hobhouse, MP,
1st Baron Broughton (1786-1869).

[Drawing by **A. Wivell** (1833); steel engraving by **J. Hopwood** (1834).]



Count Peter Gamba (1801-1828),
Italian Philhellene and Byrons' right hand
in the latter's expedition in Greece (1823-1824).



Alexandros Mavrokordatos, head of the
first Greek Government (Jan 15, 1822 – Apr 25, 1823).

[Lithography by **Karl Krazeisen** (1794–1878).]



Leicester Fitzgerald Charles Stanhope,
5th Earl of Harrington (1784-1862). 1830s.

[Sketch of unknown artist. **University of Oxford**.]

to Messolonghi. On the other hand, Byron assumed that he and his companions would embark on the journey to Messolonghi aboard the Cephalonian ships *under the protection* of the Greek fleet: He expected Greek warships to be patrolling the entrance of the Gulf of Corinth, between Messolonghi and *Cape Araxos*, in the following days *and* nights, in order to prevent the exit of the Turkish warships, which *seemed* to be docked at *Nafpaktos* at the time.

So Byron sailed south, from *Argostoli* to the nearby Ionian island of *Zante* or *Zakynthos* on 28 December 1823, where he withdrew 33,000 Spanish dollars (£6,600) from his bank account. The purpose of the withdrawal was to enable him to fulfill his commitment to extend a personal loan of £4,000 (equivalent to 20,000 Spanish dollars or 200,000 Ottoman piastre) to the Greek Government upon his arrival in Messolonghi. The funds were intended primarily to refit the Greek fleet for war operations in that region at the time.

Soon after, at sunset on December 29, 6 p.m., the two ships embarked from the port of *Zakynthos* and swiftly sailed northeast with a favorable wind towards Messolonghi, which is about 50 miles from *Zakynthos* in a straight line. Byron was on board a *mistiko*, a relatively large and still fast two-masted sailing coaster, carrying 25,000 Spanish dollars (£5,000), while his close associate **Count Peter Gamba** (Conte Pietro Gamba) was aboard a *bombard*, a relatively slow cargo ship, carrying 8,000 Spanish dollars (£1,600).

However, as the two ships neared the shallow waters in front of the lagoon of Messolonghi, two hours before dawn on the following day, December 30, at 3 a.m., they encountered a Turkish frigate, that suddenly emerged from the darkness.

To make matters worse, the commander of the Turkish frigate was **Bey Zacharias**, a Turkicized Greek, hailing from the Ionian island of *Corfu*. He had been the captain of the Ottoman flagship that was destroyed in Chios the previous year (June 19, 1822) by **Konstantinos Kanaris**, a Greek hero of the Greek War of Independence. Bey Zacharias harbored a personal vendetta against the Greeks, aiming to

exact revenge for his perceived failure to safeguard the Ottoman Fleet's flagship during that incident. Such a revenge, of equivalent strategic importance, at the expense of Greece this time, might well be the capture and exemplary execution of Lord Byron, or the dispatch of Byron as chained captive to the *Sublime Porte*, i.e. the central government of the Ottoman Empire in Istanbul.

Nevertheless, Byron's ship successfully evaded capture in that incident, due to the speed of Byron's vessel, coupled with a momentary hesitation on the part of the Turkish commander, who mistakenly perceived Byron's ship as a fireship. Seeking refuge, Byron's ship navigated to the southwest tip of Aetolia, specifically the *Scrofa* rocks at the mouth of the *Achelous River*, where the Turkish frigate could not approach due to shallow waters. The following day, Byron's ship sailed north to the islet of *Petalas* and eventually further north to the Gulf of *Dragomestri* (*Astakos* today) in *Acarmania*.

On the contrary, the second ship, carrying Count Gamba, was captured by the Turkish frigate at sunrise, 6:30 a.m., December 30, right in front of the lagoon of Messolonghi, and was subsequently forced to sail to Patras under the threat and in the shadow of the Turkish frigate's cannons.

The imminent peril faced by Byron and his crew became quite evident right after the capture of Gamba and his team. As **Spyros Valsamakis**, captain of the captured ship, boarded the Turkish frigate as ordered by the Turks, **Bey Zacharias** “welcomed” him with a drawn sword and encircled him with armed Turkish sailors. At that moment, Valsamakis distinctly heard a terrifying order: “*Behead him and sink the ship.*”

In a twist of fate though, Bey Zacharias recognized in his almost-victim the very man who had once saved his life: Many years before, Valsamakis had rescued Bey Zacharias, his brother and eight other sailors, who were shipwrecked in the Black Sea in a storm. Valsamakis had taken them on board his Greek ship, risking his own life in the process. Consequently, as gratitude was a virtue of the

Turks, Bey Zacharias decided to spare Valsamakis' life and bring the captives (Gamba and his crew) to Patras for interrogation for the time being.

Still for Byron the danger was not over: His ship attempted to sail back from *Astakos* south to Messolonghi, but in vain: The ship encountered a storm and for three days and nights (January 1-4, 1824) struggled to stay afloat against big waves, as if some Homeric deity of Greek Mythology had cursed the ship.

4. "Where the devil is the Greek Fleet gone?"

Byron maintained his composure, even in the face of increasing desperation. Demonstrative of his phlegmatic temperament and innate bravery, is the letter he sent urgently by land from the *Scrofa* peninsula to his friend, comrade and co-Commissioner British Colonel **Leicester Fitzgerald Charles Stanhope**, 5th Earl of Harrington—who had already been in Messolonghi as of December 12, 1823—soon after the loss of one of the two ships:

"Scrofer (or some such name),
on board a Cephaloniote *Mistico*,
December 31, 1823.

My dear Stanhope,

We are just arrived here, that is, *part* of my people and I, with *some* things, &c. [...], but Gamba, and my horses, negro, steward, and the press, and all the committee things, also some eight thousand dollars of mine—but never mind, we have more left, do you understand?—are taken by the Turkish frigates, and my party and myself, in another boat, have had a narrow escape last night [being close under their stern and hailed, but we would not answer, and bore away], as well as this morning. [...]

...You had better send my friend **George Drake** (Draco), and a body of **Suliot**es, to escort us by land or by the canals, with all convenient speed.

Gamba and our bombard are taken into Patras, I suppose; and we must take a turn at the Turks to get them out: but **where the devil is the fleet gone?** —the Greek, I mean; leaving us to get in without the least intimation to take heed that the Moslems were out again.

Make my respects to Mavrocordato, and say, that I am here at his disposal. [...] We are all very well.

Noel Byron”

Evidently, Byron faced significant peril in his endeavor to sail to Messolonghi, finding himself in a precarious situation: He had entered a war zone without even a rudimentary protection from the Greek fleet. If the Ottomans captured him, there would be no assurance or guarantee that he would not face immediate execution (as nearly happened to Captain Valsamakis of Gamba’s captured ship) or that he would not be impaled alive (as tragically happened to philhellenes in *Arta* and *Preveza* in 1822), before the British Government could intervene to save the English lord.

There was also the possibility that Byron might take his own life shortly before facing arrest, as he explicitly stated in the aforementioned letter to Stanhope. In his words, “**I would sooner cut myself in pieces than have [me] taken out by those barbarians.**”

Indeed, the danger was more significant than Byron realized. As Gamba’s ship was forced into the port of *Patras* under the looming threat of the Turkish frigate, Gamba saw the other 14 warships of the Turkish flotilla. Those ships had apparently sailed from Nafpaktos to provide reinforcement for the frigate, should it engage the Greek fleet. This suggests a well-coordinated naval operation orchestrated by the Turks, one that “coincidentally” occurred on the very night, December

29-30, when Byron's two ships were approaching Messolonghi. It appears that Lord Byron's voyage from Zakynthos to Messolonghi had been betrayed.

As evidenced from his letter above, Byron was unaware of the actual reason for the complete absence of the Greek fleet when he set sail for Messolonghi. Had the English lord been somehow informed about the whereabouts of the Greek fleet at that time—i.e., in his own words, about “*where the devil is the [Greek] fleet gone*”—he likely would have changed course and return to *Argostoli*, delaying indefinitely his arrival in war-torn Greece.

5. A Greek booty that could have destroyed Greece.

In fact, the absence of the Greek fleet was a side effect of a Greek success in naval warfare a few days before. Specifically, with funding from Byron (£4,000) and Greek shipowner **Lazaros Kountouriotis** (£2,000), a Greek flotilla of 14 ships—nine from the island of *Hydra* and five from the island of *Spetses*—sailed to Messolonghi as of November 30, 1823. Upon sighting the Greek ships, the Turkish flotilla of 15 warships that had blockaded Messolonghi fled to the port of *Nafpaktos*. Mavrokordatos was on board the Greek flotilla and landed at Messolonghi, where he was received honorably as a highly-esteemed statesman.

However, as the Hydraic squadron approached Messolonghi, it encountered a Turkish corvette sailing from *Preveza* to *Patras*. On board the Turkish warship was the nephew of **Yusuf Pasha of Patras**. The corvette was transporting a substantial amount of money, 500,000 Ottoman piastre, equivalent to £10,000, intended for the payment of 16 months' arrears of wages to the Turkish soldiers stationed at *Patras*, *Rio*, *Antirrio* and *Nafpaktos*. The Hydraic squadron pursued the Turkish corvette, which attempted to escape under cannon fire, ultimately grounding heavily damaged at Ithaca. The Turkish sailors went ashore to save themselves and their treasure. The Hydriotes

violated English neutrality and disembarked on land too, in order to pursue and primarily plunder the Turks: The experienced Hydriot sailors had suspected that the corvette was carrying valuable cargo, because the resistance it put up against the Greek ships, its desperate maneuvers, and its stubborn refusal to surrender, were all unusual.

In any case, the Hydriotes adamantly refused to share the spoils or engage in any discussion about the incident with the Spetsiotes, despite being on a joint national mission. Moreover the Hydraic ships abruptly departed from Messolonghi after a few days, citing various pretexts, and sailed to their base in Hydra, before Byron embarked for Messolonghi. Their apparent motive was to secure the captured booty. As a consequence, the unilateral self-reduction of the Greek fleet at Messolonghi, from 14 ships (combined from Hydra and Spetses), to only 5 ships (from Spetses alone), emboldened the Turks to resume patrolling the entrance of the Corinthian Gulf.

In essence, the money captured off Ithaca became an “apple of discord”, i.e. a source of contention and conflict, between the Hydriotes and the Spetsiotes, leading to perilous consequences: the disarray of the Greek fleet in Messolonghi and the inadequate (or rather non-existent) safeguarding of Byron's journey to Messolonghi. In summary, the military success of the Hydriotes in Ithaca had the potential to result in a national disaster for the Greeks, had Byron lost his life during that particular voyage to Messolonghi.

Economically speaking, the actions of the Hydriotes indicated that they placed a lower value on Lord Byron's life compared to the £10,000 in booty they obtained, despite the fact that the Greeks themselves had anticipated his contribution to be nearly £350,000—the real value of the *first Independence Loan*. Behaving like *pirates* rather than conscientious sailors of a *national* fleet at that time, the Hydriotes showcased a **narrow-mindedness**, i.e. imbecility driven by self-interest and provincialism, reflecting a broader issue affecting the Greeks in their struggle for national independence.

6. We've lost Byron!

When Stanhope received Byron's letter on New Year's Day 1824, he hurriedly handed it to Mavrokordatos—given that the letter was apparently intended to be read by the latter too—and he likely conveyed a sense of urgency and anguish, as if he were saying to Mavrokordatos: “We've lost Byron!”

Upon reading its contents, Mavrokordatos nearly had a stroke: Lord Byron's life and the *first Loan of Independence* were both at stake! If the Turks were to capture, mistreat, or even execute the English lord, the realization of that loan would likely become unattainable, because such a tragic turn in Byron's fate—especially when the Greek Fleet appeared incapable of safeguarding the *High Commissioner* of the loan—would demonstrate to British investors the high risk of lending money to Greece. Consequently, the Greek Fleet would soon face paralysis due to a lack of funding.

Moreover, without Byron—a financially influential and highly esteemed figure in Greece—it would have been extremely challenging for the Greeks to assemble a *national* army by themselves. In Byron's absence, creating such a *cohesive* fighting force, well-equipped and adequately supplied, would have been nearly impossible. The fledgling Greek State was economically bankrupt, politically divided, entangled in civil strife, and plagued by the regionalism of chieftains in the Greek War of Independence.

Burdened by these nightmarish thoughts, Mavrokordatos sounded the alarm in Messolonghi. In response, the squadron of the (5) Spetsiot ships, led by brig *Leonidas* under captain **George Prides**, set sail immediately to scour the stormy Ionian Sea in search of Byron's ship. Simultaneously, military detachments of *Souliotes* hastily advanced from Messolonghi to the seafront of Acarnania and the southwestern beaches of Aetolia, actively searching for Lord Byron, the bearer of money. Their mission was to locate and safeguard him from potential threats posed by Turkish fighters or



The Souliot warrior **George Drakos**.

[Oil painting on canvas by **Themistocles Drakos** (1830-1905),
National Historical Museum, Athens.]



The Reception of Lord Byron at Messolonghi (5 January 1824).
[Oil painting on canvas (1861) by Theodoros Vryzakis (1814-1878),
National Gallery of Greece.]

Turkicized Greeks, as well as from Greek or Albanian bandits. The Greek armed forces under Mavrokordatos were at last mobilized by land and sea—and Messolonghi held its breath, awaiting news and the outcome of the efforts to find and protect Lord Byron.

7. The Messianic reception of Byron in Messolonghi

After three days of anxious anticipation, a ship from the Greek fleet approached Messolonghi in the early morning of January 5, 1824—Christmas Eve in Greece (December 24, 1823) according to the Julian calendar—and delivered the joyful news: The Spetsioties had successfully located Lord Byron's ship, which would soon be arriving at Messolonghi, escorted by *Leonidas* and the other three Spetsiot ships. Relief swept through Messolonghi, and the Messolonghites and other Greeks could finally breathe freely again.

The *reception of Lord Byron in Messolonghi* surpassed any precedent in the Greek War of Independence, as immortalized by **Theodoros Vryzakis** in his painting of the same title. A vast crowd of Greeks (by the standards of the time), consisting of 5,000 armed men and 4,500 civilians, welcomed the English lord warmly as “their” prince. On behalf of all Hellenism, the “besieged free” of Messolonghi welcomed Lord Byron at a liberated part Greece, positioned at the front line of fire. They saw in him the potential to unite the Greek nation during wartime and to liberate the entirety of Greece from the Ottoman yoke. In an unprecedented atmosphere, saturated with the enthusiasm of armed heroes and the feelings of gratitude and hope from the equally heroic civilians of Messolonghi, Byron's arrival was a momentous and literally thunderous occasion: Upon landing, the air resounded with hundreds of rifle shots, dozens of cannon shots, voices, music, chants, tears of joy, and looks of jubilation. This celebration marked the elevation of Messolonghi as the **war capital of Greece** in 1824 and a **geostrategic bastion of Europe** in its southeast

corner, as signified by the English lord's establishment of his headquarters in their city.

To Byron's surprise, his messianic reception in Messolonghi included the presence of **Gamba**, who had been released by **Yussuf Pasha of Patras** on the previous day (January 4). The release came after the Turks failed to find any incriminating evidence against Gamba. Just before his arrest, Gamba had cleverly attached the correspondence of Lord Byron and the *London Philhellenic Committee* to a cannonball, which a sailor discreetly dropped into the sea. Additionally, only Heptanesians (under British protection) were aboard Gamba's ship, in contrast to the crew on Byron's ship, which included non-Heptanesian Greeks (without such protection). The joy Byron experienced upon his unexpected encounter with Gamba in Messolonghi was beyond words, as recounted in Gamba's memoirs.

Despite the extraordinary welcome Lord Byron received in Messolonghi, the urgent and immense needs of the place seemed to overshadow the fact that Byron—fatigued after eight consecutive days of wintertime adventure, his first engagement in the war—required immediate rest at least for a few hours, if not days. Without the opportunity to settle into the house where his associate Colonel Stanhope was staying, dozens of armed local prefects and commanders, accompanied by their own armed bodyguards, promptly gathered there to respectfully present their pressing requests to the exhausted English lord.

Byron's associates faced a challenging task in convincing those packs of wild warriors that the hearings would commence the following day at prearranged hours. This would allow Lord Byron the opportunity to rest and, more importantly, to have sufficient time for calm and individual conversations with every Greek leader. The key was to ensure that these discussions took place without the presence of armed bodyguards on either side. The aim was to facilitate meaningful and unhurried dialogue between Byron and the Greek leaders.

In any case, for the belligerent and impoverished Greeks, that Christmas marked a period of national war and civil strife; yet it was also filled with great expectations: For Greece, Byron's presence in beleaguered Messolonghi signaled a new hope for national independence. For Great Britain, his arrival at Messolonghi virtually laid the foundation for a **geostrategic alliance** between Great Britain and the emerging independent state of Greece. This alliance has endured for 200 years, weathering various challenges, including regional and world wars, to this day.

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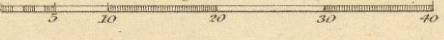
CORFU
on the same scale

Longitude East from Greenwich



GREECE.

Scale of English Statute Miles.





George Gordon Noel Byron, 6th Baron Byron (1788-1824).