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Historical, Theological and Political Views of Count Ioannis Kapodistrias: Russian Minister and Greek President

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Abstract

Introduction. The research covers the activities of the Russian Foreign Minister Ioannis Kapodistrias and his relationship with the Russian Emperor Alexander I. The aim of the study is to examine the little-studied issues of the political career of Count Ioannis Kapodistrias in Russia. Objectives include generalising historical and cultural information about I.A. Kapodistrias, studying his public reputation, as well as finding out the political views of the public figure. The history of transformation of the Count's views on political and social processes in the life of Russian society is of interest. It is obvious that I.A. Kapodistrias's personal qualities, character, historical and theological views and socio-political activities had a significant impact on the Black Sea countries.

Materials and Methods. General scientific methods are used: universal connection, method of comparative analysis and synthesis, scientific generalisation, dialectical and systematic approaches. The research is based on a set of historical sources represented by memoir literature, letters, service notes and diplomatic documents.

Results. Ivan Fyodorovich Kapodistriya, a Russian Greek who served as Minister of Foreign Affairs under the Russian Emperor, was of interest to many researchers and was one of those who linked the historical memory of the Greeks and Russians. Ivan Fedorovich's socio-political views are reproduced according to manu-scripts and letters, his professionalism and subtle diplomatic negotiating skills are noted. It is shown that the existing studies are based on rich factual material, how-ever, in most of the works the authors focus exclusively on the history of diplomacy and, accordingly, the role of Ivan Antonovich in the foreign policy relations of that time. This study focuses on the little-studied aspects of his biography as Minister of Foreign Affairs of Russia.

Discussion and Conclusion. Count Ioannis Kapodistrias is a unique figure in the history of Russia and Greece. In the service of the Russian Emperor since 1809, the 'Russian Greek' has performed acts of truly historic proportions in diplomatic relations. His brilliant diplomatic talents, demonstrated during the Congress of Vienna, enabled him to obtain the position of Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Empire and chief co-advisor for the Balkan countries. This study provides material for further research into the history of political ideas and the history of the Church, and is of interest to philosophical anthropology, political sociology, and historical theology.

Keywords: political formation of Russia, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Count Ca-po-Distria, Emperor Alexander I, 'Salvation Union', diplomacy, Paris Peace Treaty

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Историко-теологические и политические взгляды графа Иоанниса Каподистрии: русского министра и греческого президента

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Аннотация

Введение. Рассматривается деятельность министра иностранных дел России Иоанниса Каподистрии и взаимоотношения его с российским императором Александром I. Цель исследования – рассмотреть малоизученные вопросы политической карьеры графа Иоанниса Каподистрии в России. Задачи: обобщить историко-культурологические сведения о И.А. Каподистрии, изучить его общественную репутацию, выяснить политические взгляды общественного деятеля. Интерес представляет история трансформации взглядов графа на политические и социальные процессы в жизни российского общества. Очевидно, что личностные качества, характер, историко-теологические воззрения и общественно-политическая деятельность И.А. Каподистрии имели значительное влияние на страны Причерноморья.

Материалы и методы. Используются общенаучные методы: метод всеобщей связи, сравнительный анализ и синтез, научное обобщение. Исследование построено на комплексе исторических источников, представленных ме-муарной литературой, письмами, служебными записками, а также документами дипломатического характера.

Результаты исследования. Иван Федорович Каподистрия – русский грек на посту министра иностранных дел при русском императоре, был интересен многим исследователям, был одним из тех, кто связывают историческую память греков и русских. По рукописям и письмам воспроизведены социально-политические взгляды Ивана Федоровича, отмечен его профессионализм и тонкое дипломатическое умение вести переговоры. Показано, что существующие на сегодняшний день исследования строятся на базе богатого фактического материала, однако, в большинстве работ авторы сосредотачиваются исключительно на истории дипломатии и, соответственно, роли Ивана Антоновича во внешнеполитических отношениях того времени. Данное исследование акцентирует внимание на малоизученных аспектах его биографии на посту министра иностранных дел России.

Обсуждение и заключение. Граф Иоаннис Каподистрия является уникальной фигурой в истории России и Греции. Пребывая на службе российского императора с 1809 г., «русский грек» совершил в дипломатических отношениях деяния поистине исторического масштаба. Блестящие дипломатические таланты, продемонстрированные в ходе Венского конгресса, дали ему возможность получить должность министра иностранных дел Российской империи и главного советника по балканским странам. Настоящее исследование предоставляет материалы для дальнейшего изучения истории политических идей и истории Церкви, представляет интерес для философской антропологии, политической социологии, исторической теологии.

Ключевые слова: политическое становление России, министр иностранных дел, граф Каподистрия, император Александр I, «Союз Спасения», дипломатия, Парижский мирный договор

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Introduction. History is cyclical, so it is important to preserve and remember the great merits of outstanding people like diplomats, politicians who served Russia faithfully. For many centuries, the friendship between Russia and Greece has always been genuine. The monarchs of the great Empire sincerely wanted to see their ally Greece strong, independent, prosperous and, of course, politically stable. In this respect, Russia's national interests have always been and still are fully coincident with Greek interests. Orthodoxy was the spiritual foundation of the relationship between the two states and their influence on the Black Sea countries.

Ivan Antonovich (as the Count was called in Russian), who linked the peoples of Russia and Greece forever, is a vivid example of selfless service to the great idea of rapprochement between our states, two strongholds of Eastern Christian civilisation. His views and foresight, experience and intelligence were in many ways ahead of their time. European by birth, he thought in terms of the unity of Europe, where both Russia and Greece had a worthy place.

The aim of the work is to consider the little-studied issues of the Count's political career as Minister of Foreign

The aim of the work is to consider the little-studied issues of the Count's political career as Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Empire. Objectives include summarising information about I.A. Kapodistrias, studying his public reputation, finding out his political views.

In 1815, upon his appointment as State Secretary with the consent of the Emperor, Kapodistrias received the informal status of 'chargé d'affaires' of the Greeks to the Russian government. The Balkan-Mediterranean direction was at the centre of his attention, and he was in charge of all matters concerning the Greeks both in the Balkans and within the Russian Empire.

It should be noted that significant Greek settlements, from the mouth of the Danube to the Sea of Azov on the territory of the Russian Empire, appeared during the reign of Catherine II. Communities actively developed in such major cities as Odessa, Nikolaev, Kherson, Mariupol and Taganrog. The geopolitical situation required active and serious decisions on the development of new, expanding territories of Great Russia, Malorossiya and Novorossiya as part of a large and powerful empire. Initially, the project had the working name 'Ekaterinoslav', and the Empress was extremely interested in its realisation. The term 'Novorossiya' was adopted in the second half of the 17th century to designate the areas of the Northern Black Sea coast and the Azov region, which became part of Russia under peace treaties with Turkey in 1739, 1774, 1791 and 1812. The author of the term 'Novorossiya' was Empress Catherine II herself. In the spring of 1764, Lieutenant-General Melgunov submitted a report to her on the expansion of the area of military settlements of Serbs who had defected to Russia, created by Elizabeth Petrovna. Nikita and Peter Panin agreed with this report and suggested that the new gubernia should be called Catherine's gubernia, but the Empress wrote in her resolution: 'Call it Novorossiysk gubernia'.

She centred her attention on the involvement of Greeks in the education, culture, upbringing and religion of the population already living in these territories. The process was not as dynamic as she had imagined, nor did it produce the significant results that the Empress had dreamed of. However, Count Kapodistrias managed to realise the project started by Ekaterina II. It is an important historical fact that this project originated in Bessarabia, and Count Kapodistrias was very careful in his approach to this exciting issue.

Materials and methods. General scientific methods include universal connection, comparative analysis and synthesis, scientific generalisation. The initial methodological idea of the work is the dialectical and systemic approaches. The research is based on a complex of historical sources, represented by memoir literature, letters, memos and diplomatic documents. Some sources are presented for the first time.

Results. The former Secretary of State of the Ionian Islands received The Imperial Order of Saint Anna, 2nd class and an invitation to Russia. From his memoirs: '...Count Rumyantsev, Chancellor of the Russian Empire, officially notified me that His Majesty the Emperor Alexander granted me The Imperial Order of Saint Anna, 2nd class and that the Emperor deigned to give the order to issue me travelling expenses for a trip to Russia and on attributing me to the Department of Foreign Affairs' [1].

His service was confined to writing notes on the Eastern politics of Russia, the Balkans and the Mediterranean. Our study of the diplomat's service to Russia proves that, thanks to his abilities, his fundamental education, his Greek ancestry, lifestyle and upbringing, Kapodistrias, after a few years of residence in Russia, was able to see the extent of the country's political interests. Having realised its possibilities of influence in the political arena, the Count became a politician-diplomat of international level. Kapodistrias applied for a post in Vienna and was appointed on the 1st of August 1811.

It was in Vienna where he learnt about the system of education based on Faith, agriculture and science. Kapodistrias worked, understanding the interests of Russia, and on the world stage tried to play in its favour. Seeing and understanding all the merits and efforts of the State Counsellor, Alexander I granted him the Order of St. Anne of the first degree. Over time, the Emperor entrusted the Count with more and more important and demanding bold decisions and he became Kapodistria's personal patron.

In November 1813, Kapodistrias arrived in Switzerland to fulfil his first diplomatic mission in the Russian service. From that moment on, the monarch brought Ivan Fyodorovich so close to him that he asked all requests to be addressed to him personally, bypassing any intermediaries. Thus, the diplomat became the closest adviser and protégé of the Emperor. Having applied all the connections and experience accumulated by that time, the Count fulfilled the task set by the Emperor and was again favoured by him, receiving The Imperial Order of Saint Prince Vladimir, 2nd degree.

Four countries fought Napoleon: Austria, Prussia, England and Russia. As a result of the victory, the General Act of the Vienna Congress was signed, which later became known as the Holy Alliance. The initiator of this Union was the Emperor of the Great Russia, while Kapodistrias was in charge of the actual realisation of the project.

On 14 (26) September 1815 in Paris, Alexander I, Austrian Emperor Franz I and Prussian Emperor Friedrich Wilhelm III signed the so-called 'Act of Holy Alliance', under which the participants pledged to help each other if necessary. The signing of this act was seen by the participants as the conclusion of a 'fraternal alliance' to consolidate the territorial-

political order that had been established during the Congress of Vienna. On 20 November 1815, on behalf of Russia, the newly appointed State Councillor Ioannis Kapodistrias signed the Treaty of Paris, which formed the basis of the Vienna territorial-political system in Europe. This was the period when he and the Russian emperor established the most trusting relations. He became the main conductor of the monarch's foreign policy in Europe. Thus, the year of the Congress of Vienna was a turning point in the fate of Kapodistrias.

It is known the characterisation given to Ivan Fedorovich by Alexander I in 1813: 'Kapodistrias is a very worthy man by his honesty, gentleness of treatment, by his knowledge and liberal views' [2]. V.A. Zhukovsky wrote a letter to Empress Alexandra Fiodorovna and drew attention to the minister's experience in dealing with people. Zhukovsky carefully emphasized how the count deeply penetrated the needs of his era and people. At the same time, he drew attention to the Count's appearance, finding it very attractive, with the noble features of a true Greek, which inspired trust and deep reverence. Zhukovsky noted the gift of Ivan Fedorovich to express his thoughts clearly and correctly, which gives reason to assume the importance of all this [3].

While studying Russia, Ivan Antonovich was a member of the literary circle 'Arzamas', which included the already famous Pushkin and Zhukovsky. He was closely acquainted with I.I. Dmitriev, V.A. Zhukovsky, I.A. Turgenev. D.P. Severin and D.V. Dashkov served in his department. In 1818 the St. Petersburg Academy of Sciences admitted a new scientist, Ivan Antonovich Kapodistrias. Seeking to ensure stability on the European continent after a decade of the devastating Napoleonic wars, Kapodistrias, on the basis of humanistic ideals, proposed the idea of creating an organisation that, in a sense, anticipated the emergence of the United Nations. He played a key role in the creation of the independent state of Switzerland, writing its Constitution, which remains virtually unchanged to this day.

I.A. Kapodistrias's social and political views deserve a separate characterisation. Researchers point out that his state activity was largely determined by the philosophy of the Enlightenment. Another fact reflecting the nature of the diplomat's worldview was the project of 'universal union', which implied a treaty between European countries, giving equal rights to each of its participants, moreover, he considered the 'universal union' as an instrument to stop the revolutionary movement in Europe.

The liberal sentiments of Alexander I and Kapodistrias were embodied in the Constitution of the Kingdom of Poland (1815), which, despite its limitations, provided more favourable conditions for the development of Poland than those in the Russian Empire itself. In recognition of I. Kapodistrias's merits in the Russian service, the Emperor showered him with honourable orders in 1817. The Count was awarded the Order of St. Alexander Nevsky, the Order of the Polish White Eagle, the Sardinian Order of Mauritius and Lazarus of the Grand Cross, the Spanish Order of Charles III and the Grand Cross of the 1st Class, the Austrian Order of Leopold of the 1st Class and the Baden Orders of Fidelity and the Zeringen Lion of the 1st Class. These awards testified to the high degree of favour that Kapodistrias had earned from the Emperor through his actions.

The Turkish question and Alexander I's unwillingness to plunge into war with the Ottoman Empire to liberate Greece were the reasons for the estrangement between the State Counsellor and the Emperor. The materials published in the last five years give us reason to suppose that it was the events that took place in Aachen and the resolutions that were signed there that did not give much satisfaction to the Emperor. Although at the end of the conference in Aachen the Emperor recognised them as satisfactory and conferred on Kapodistrias the Order of Vladimir of the 1st degree.

The authors of the sketches emphasised the special relationship between the Count and the Emperor, both realising that the meeting would not be as bright as they had hoped. Before his departure, the Emperor visited his close confidant in all matters of Europe and the East: 'The Emperor embraced me with feeling and said to me: "May God bless you, and may He protect you"' [4]. Despite disagreements on some political issues, contemporaries noted that the Emperor always cared for the Count with awe and love, often sent him for treatment and enquired about his health. He appreciated the merits of this great man and realised the contribution he had made to the political importance of Russia throughout Europe.

On 19 March, another event occurred, not in favour of Ivan Fedorovich: in Laibach, Alexander I received a letter from Prince Ypsilanti calling on him to drive the Turks out of Europe and acquire the title of liberator of Greece. The reaction to the events in Greece, which was voiced at the Laibach Conference, convinced its participants that without external support the revolution would soon be defeated, the situation would return to the status quo and that 'in a few days there would be no more talk of Turks or Greeks'. To these words Kapodistrias boldly objected: 'if I must express to you what I think, I will say that, following this system which has now been adopted, in hardly five years you will have the pleasure of hearing no more of Turks or Greeks; as for the status quo, it has ceased *forever*.' [5]. Such a vivid statement of the Count on this occasion gives historians reason to believe that it was Greece, its difficult situation that gave reason to argue these words.

The reaction was immediate: K. Metternich, who had always disliked the liberal Foreign Minister, began an active campaign to discredit him. Alexander I, noticing this, found it necessary to warn the Count, once in private he told him:

‘You are being picked on, beware. Since the end of 1821 Kapodistrias actually left, although he continued de jure to hold the post of State Secretary and even had access to Alexander and was invited to royal dinners.

This change in Kapodistrias’s behaviour, according to him, made a strong impression on the Emperor. He invited him to a private audience, where he asked him to state the reasons for his dismissal, which the Count promptly did. He frankly expressed his thoughts to Alexander I, which were summarised as follows: ‘the system which He [Alexander] now adopted, put me in the necessity either to violate all my duties to myself and to the fatherland ... or not to fulfil my duty as a servant of His Majesty. Such indeed would have been my position if I had continued to consider myself able to serve Him in the Foreign Office at the moment when He intended to exert all His power against the unfortunate Greek people.’

There was only one way out – resignation. Alexander I expressed his decision in a mild form, adding that Kapodistrias officially remains in his position and will leave ‘to improve his health’. The Count recalled with warmth and sadness about parting with the Emperor: ‘Letting me go, the Emperor embraced me. ‘We shall see each other,’ he said to me, ‘or you will let me know of yourself. Be assured that my feelings towards you will never change.’ This farewell conversation took place in May 1822. Thus, the chief part in the cooling between the Emperor and his closest counsellor was certainly not played by the fickle moods of the Emperor. The reasons lay much deeper, i. e. in the global change of the political situation in Europe (a wave of revolutionary and national liberation movements), and, as a consequence, in the change of Alexander I’s general course.

After returning to his homeland, after some time, through political steps, the Count became the President of this country. On 18 September, the Russian representative handed credentials to I. Kapodistrias on the island of Poros, which marked the beginning of official relations between Russia and Greece. According to the documents of the Archive of Foreign Policy of the Russian Empire, the funds allocated by Russia were used for the construction of schools, assistance to smallholders, etc. In 1827–1830, the Greek government received 3.5 million francs from Russia, not counting the funds provided by the Russian Orthodox Church. Thus, the large and comprehensive support of Russia contributed to the rapid transformation of Greece into an independent state, which further strengthened the traditional bonds of friendship between the Russian and Greek peoples.

Studying the political moods of the Count in detail, we use little-known material, for example: the Italian researcher G. Berti found out that Kapodistrias maintained communication with the Italian Carbonari and in some of their actions supported them by order of the Emperor [6]. Foreign policy was studied by the American P.K. Grimstead. From her research it is possible to draw conclusions that Kapodistrias was a supporter of republican regimes [7]. G.L. Arsh, the author of the only Russian monograph devoted to Ivan Fedorovich, paid very little attention to the analysis of political views. He believed that Diplomat was a supporter of constitutional monarchy, ‘ensuring the domination of the aristocratic minority at the expense of certain concessions to the large bourgeoisie’ [8]. Such views were dictated by Marxist methodology, but they do not accurately reflect Kapodistrias’s political views. Some data on the political views of the diplomat are reflected in the works of the author of the article devoted to Kapodistrias’s activities in the service of the Russian Foreign Ministry [9].

Thus we have before us a fundamental work, the undoubted merit of which is the reconstruction of the influence of the diplomat-politician, but at the same time a close friend of Russia. In fact, our country did not seek to play a greater role in Greece than the natural order of things: it was content with the inalienable influence which will always belong to it in the midst of a co-religionist people who have the honour to remember all that it owes. Russia has never tried either in Greece or elsewhere to impose her predominant influence in all things; she fulfilled her great historical mission in the Christian East quite unselfishly liberating the nations of her own faith and leaving them to develop afterwards according to their own aspirations, their own historical tasks.

This was also the way of thinking of the Russian representatives towards the Count Kapodistrias’s government from the very beginning. In this sense, it is not without significance that when welcoming Anagnostopoulos, sent as a deputy from the military commanders who had become estranged from the government and had decided to seek the intervention of the Russian court in favour of Greece, our envoy in Constantinople Count Ribeaupierre, said: ‘nothing can ever dissolve the ties of religion and ancient relations which bind Russia and Greece, and that in consequence of this she quite approves of the attempt which has been entrusted to him, but that, however, at present the Greeks should hold neither to the Russian, nor to the French, nor to the English party, but form one Greek party alone under Count Kapodistrias’ (Letter from Count Ribeaupierre to Count Heyden, 4th October 1827).

The victories of the Russian arms led to the Peace of Adrianople on the 2nd of September 1829, one of the main provisions of which, Article 10, was that the Sultan had to recognise without delay the decisions of the three Powers on the future fate of Greece. As Russia insisted that Greece should be recognised as an independent state for a more lasting solution of the question, England agreed to this, but only under the condition that the boundaries established by the Protocol of the 10th of March should be changed, namely that the Sultan should be ceded all of Acarnania and a considerable part of Aetolia [10].

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs was headed in different years by a Swede, a German, an Austrian, and a Pole. And only one head of the Russian Foreign Ministry was at the same time a foreigner and an Orthodox Christian. This is Count Ioannis Kapodistrias, or Ivan Antonovich Kapodistrias, a Greek nobleman who ended his unusual life as the first president of his homeland.

The fate of this man is dramatic: unable to find understanding either in Russia or in Greece, he died at the hands of assassins. For the Russian Tsar, he was too much of a liberal, while the Greeks reproached him for his tendency towards authoritarian methods of government. By this time Kapodistrias had become one of the most famous diplomats in the world, and Alexander I was perhaps the most powerful statesman at the time. After becoming president, Kapodistrias sought to befriend Russia and even arrived in the country on a Russian warship [11].

Count Kapodistrias left his mark in Russian history as a supporter of active Russian policy in the East and the Balkans. People familiar with the minister highly appreciated his human qualities.

It should be emphasised that the bulk of the works with which we have become acquainted are of a descriptive, biographical nature. Many foreign authors studied in detail the life path of the Count after his arrival in Greece and until his tragic death. We emphasised Ivan Fedorovich's socio-political views, noting his professionalism and subtle diplomatic negotiating skills. Foreign biographers write very little about the time when the Count was in the service of the Russian Emperor, mostly we read about his activities of the period when Kapodistrias held the post of President of the independent Greek state. Our compatriots, on the other hand, have mostly researched the period of Ivan Fedorovich's life in the days of his service to Russia.

The existing studies are based on rich factual material supported by numerous diplomatic documents from Russian archives. However, these works focus exclusively on the history of diplomacy and, accordingly, on Ivan Antonovich's role in foreign policy relations of that time, i. e. they cover the purely external side of his stage-by-stage work in the Russian diplomatic consulate.

As a result of the study of archival documents, letters, notes, not only foreign but also domestic sources, we have come to the following conclusion: Count Ioannis Kapodistrias is a unique figure in the history of Russia and Greece. Staying in the service of the Russian Emperor since 1809, the 'Russian Greek' performed in diplomatic relations acts of truly historic scale. After the ascension to the throne of Emperor Alexander I, an attempt was made to revive and reformat the 'Greek Project'. This work was carried out by the de facto head of the Russian Foreign Ministry after the Congress of Vienna, John Kapodistria, a Greek and a native of Corfu. He tried to combine an active policy in the Balkans with the Emperor's desire to avoid military conflicts with other monarchs under the conditions of the 'Holy Alliance'.

The brilliant diplomatic talents demonstrated during the Congress of Vienna gave him the opportunity to be appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Empire and Chief Counsellor for the Balkan countries.

Discussion and conclusion. Having studied domestic and foreign sources about the man, the great strategist and good friend of Russia Ioannis Kapodistrias, we have highlighted his conviction, which he carried through his life, that reliance on Russia was necessary to improve Greece's plight and independence. He took every opportunity to link Greek interests more closely with those of Russia, donated to the construction of Orthodox churches in Greece and abroad, well aware of the role of Orthodoxy in preserving the national identity of the Greeks.

In our opinion, not only the rapprochement between Russia and Greece, but also other merits of the Count in Russia are covered very incompletely. The narrative of how and why the great Greek served Alexander I so selflessly is extremely important, in our opinion. In Karamzin's opinion, the Count is undoubtedly on the list of those rare people whom Russia needs so much. In the historiographer's opinion, it is the mind that epitomises the wisdom of a good patriot who does not give up his principles. It is not by chance that the fact that such a person is close to the monarch is so important for the historiographer, for which he never tires of praising the emperor. N.M. Karamzin appreciates the human qualities of I.A. Kapodistrias ('I love him sincerely, even more for his soul than for his mind' [12]) and is sincerely upset when the minister decides to leave Russia: 'It is a pity that the amiable, intelligent Count Kapodistrias leaves us. Such people are few' [13].

This study summarises the information about I.A. Kapodistrias's activities, his public reputation and political views. It is noted that the personal qualities, character, historical and theological views and socio-political activities of I.A. Kapodistrias had a significant influence on the Black Sea countries. On the basis of rare materials, letters and testimonies of contemporaries, such as the Russian military man and philhellene Raiko Nikolai, the history of transformation of the Count's views on political and social processes in the life of Russian society is traced [14].

This study provides materials for further study of the history of political ideas and the history of the Church, research in the field of philosophical anthropology, political sociology, historical theology, and is relevant for the development of further diplomatic relations of the Black Sea countries.

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