"Our own Correspondent from Greece"; Covering Diplomatic War and Conflict in Early-Victorian Britain (1835–1857)

"O nosso próprio correspondente da Grécia"; Cobrindo a guerra diplomática e o conflito no início da Grã-Bretanha vitoriana (1835–1857)

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Palavras-chave: Grã-Bretanha, Grécia, jornais Vitorianos, conflito, guerra, bloqueio de 1850, Guerra da Criméia.
Keywords: Britain, Greece, Victorian newspapers, conflict, war, blockade of 1850, Crimean War.

Introduction

In February 1850, when the British fleet blockaded the Greek ports demanding the immediate settlement of some long-standing disputes between the two countries, Sir Thomas Wyse, the British minister in Athens, complained to Stratford Canning, the British ambassador in Constantinople, for the "misrepresentation of the facts" in the English press and especially for the disposition of the *Times*: "it is hostile to Lord P.[almerston] and loves for all who hate him" (Wyse, 1850). Canning recommended that Wyse should approach Patrick O'Brien, the correspondent of the *Times* in Constantinople, who was now heading for Athens to cover the events.

> Mr. O'Brien writes copiously for me. His reports to England, if he takes a correct view of what is passing around him, may possibly produce soon change in the language of the Times. (Canning, 1850)

What Canning proposed in 1850 was rather common practice in covering Greek affairs than a singular settlement due to the extraordinary occasion of the presence of British forces in the Greek ports.

RECEBIDO 28-12-2022 · ACEITE 23-03-2023 • DOI: 10.34624/FB.V0I19.34699

In fact, the Greek case was not unique; statesmen in the nineteenth century fully appreciated the value of a "sympathetic journalistic voice in the country" that would inform and heed public opinion on international issues especially in times of crises and war. Lord Palmerston in particular is usually cited as the prime example of a politician using newspapers as a ready and effective medium through which to communicate with the public and increase popular interest in politics and foreign affairs. Manipulation of the press could take different forms; from what are now called "leaks" for notice and comment generally on foreign affairs to carefully cultivated "channels of communication between journalists and the diplomatic corps" and from "the use of secret service funds to bribe newspapers and journalists, both at home and abroad" to the dissemination of what are now called "fake news" (Brown, 2012, pp. 185, 187, 209).

Of course, the coverage of armed conflicts, in which Britain was involved, naturally attracted the attention of public opinion and the press. The journalistic presentation of the political and military policies of the government, their implementation on the battlefield, the successes and defeats of the British army and fleet abroad, were both interesting popular reading and a source of anxiety for the political forces at home. The case of the Crimean War constitutes the starting point and the best example of the power that the British press gradually acquired in covering war on the continent (Figes, 2012, pp. 304-311).

However, it is the study of the relations between press and British politics during periods of tension and "diplomatic war" that best highlights the gradually emerging nineteenth-century faith in the power of public opinion to influence policy making, as "foreign tensions were very frequently presented in ideological terms" (Parry, 2002, p. 4). Whether "public opinion" represented the opinion of the educated middle classes or simply the readers of the metropolitan press, for those who handled Britain's foreign affairs, in particular, the importance of manipulating newspapers rested on "the construction (and appreciation) of positive images and impressions" of themselves and the justification of their actions in public estimation (Brown, 2022, p. 31).

In fact, the connection between press and foreign policy in Britain, not only during open warfare but also in periods of tense relations between the country and foreign states, has long been examined with reference to developments in France, Spain, and the Ottoman Empire (Brown, 2012, pp. 187, 208). However, relations between the London press, British diplomacy, and the affairs of modern Greece during the early-Victorian era have attracted minimal interest and are hardly present in studies of press influence and press manipulation. In the minute analysis of the foreign correspondence of the *Times* in the second quarter of the nineteenth century, there is but one reference to Greece, the case of Patrick O' Brien mentioned above, although the paper published the first letter from "our own correspondent" in August 1834 and until March 1847 in its columns appeared correspondence from Greece in more or less regular intervals. In Greek historiography, on the other hand, in the classical and well-researched *Politics and Statecraft in the Kingdom of Greece, 1833–1843* there is but a passing reference to the contacts of the British Legation in Athens with the London press, which John A. Petropulos finds "most likely" to have existed (1968, p. 368).

The total lack of study on the subject of the presence of modern Greece in the columns of early-Victorian newspapers is hardly surprising. The Greek kingdom remained in the margins of the political, economic and intellectual developments in Europe during the first thirty years of its existence. The name of Greece was rather associated with the classical civilization which had flourished in the same soil than with the modern weak and minor kingdom established in 1832. In Britain the affairs of modern Greece scarcely attracted the interest of the press; the few leading articles devoted to Greek affairs and the form and frequency of the correspondence from Greece confirm the relative unimportance of the kingdom to the London papers.

Although the developments in the Greek kingdom rarely attracted any interest in the leading articles of the London press, some bits of news and some more lengthy accounts from modern Greece appeared regularly in the papers' columns. Extracts from foreign newspapers, unsigned letters from Greece, and mainly the reports of "our own correspondent" from Athens supplied the readers with more frequent, though often partial and contradicted, information on Greek affairs.

From the continental papers, which provided an easily accessible body of news from Greece, London papers chose mainly from articles that appeared in the German press and, to a lesser degree, from French and Greek newspapers. German, and especially Bavarian, newspapers enjoyed the privilege of publishing news from and comments on the condition of the Greek kingdom directly furnished to them by the Greek authorities. Obviously, therefore, the German press during the reign of King Otho, who was the second son of the Bavarian king, set the pace for the promotion of the "official" views of the Bavarian dynasty in Europe, a process which could hardly have escaped notice. Extracts from French and Greek newspapers appeared in fact only during period of crisis, as they definitely lacked the directness of information and the capability of reaching Britain in time respectively – advantages that both enjoyed the German papers. The rare French comments on the Greek kingdom were decidedly critical towards Otho's administration but, at the same time, condemned the interference of Britain and Russia in the internal political affairs of Greece. Moreover, the difficulty of citing from Greek newspapers was not raised by the language, as many Greek editions were bilingual, or the avowed impartiality, which a Greek paper was supposed to show in dealing with Greek affairs. It was rather a problem of obtaining the journals in time so that the news could appear in the London press at the appropriate time (Hionidis, 2002).

In this context, the study of letters "from our own correspondent", commenting on the foreign policy of Greece during periods of tension, diplomatic conflict, and open war acquire a special interest with regard to the running of early-Victorian newspapers and their influence on patterns of thought and behaviour of British diplomats and statesmen and the "general public" when facing the prospect of or the actual running of warfare.

In this article, I will argue that, contrary to the generally accepted notion that today the overabundance of information and, therefore, the inability to reliably check it are responsible for wartime propaganda, in the first half of the nineteenth century it was the limited and, therefore, easily manipulated provi-

sion of news that provided an opportunity for expressing the "official", governmental opinion on Greece and the Greeks publicly, prominently, and often coherently trying to accommodate them within a broader political and diplomatic context (Jones, 2016, p. 38). In the first half of the nineteenth century the press was already acknowledged as an important element in shaping foreign policy. Deprived of the promptness with which modern mass media react to global developments, early-Victorian papers secured their leading role by the scarcity of information on distant lands. As Lucy Brown (1997, p. 39) puts it, "it is hard to see how people's mental picture of the remotest parts of the world could fail to be influenced by them."

The interrelation between the British diplomatic mission in Athens and London newspapers in the years 1835–1857 strongly confirms this assumption. The British Legation in Athens fully exploited the offer establishing links with London papers, the *Times* and the *Morning Chronicle*, especially during the period 1835-1849, when Sir Edmund Lyons was the minister at Athens, and thus attempted and succeeded to a certain degree in controlling the information that reached the British public from Greece. In periods of limited British interest in Greek affairs a regular correspondence from Greece was incontestably the most effective method for a British diplomat to vindicate his policies by providing the right kind of information on the condition of the Greek kingdom.

This article will attempt to describe the role of the British diplomatic mission in setting up a network of correspondents from Greece, to assign the reasons of its involvement in journalistic activities, and to assess the outcome of the whole effort to manipulate British opinion on foreign affairs. Indeed, the Greek case offers itself to the study of the interrelation between statesmen and papers, as the relationship in the years 1834–1849 was more straightforward and carefully cultivated by British diplomats themselves. The task involves a threefold process. The first step consists in presenting Greek-British relations at the time and their representation in the London press. Secondly, this article presents in detail the links between diplomats and correspondents, political objectives and newspapers' reports. Lastly, in the concluding remarks this study tries, counting on the evidence from the Greek case, to identify the reading public targeted by these practices and to specify how far the influence of the early-Victorian press spread.

1. The end of philhellenism in Britain? King Otho of Greece and Lord Palmerston

On May 7, 1832, a treaty was signed in London between the three European Powers, Great Britain, France, and Russia and Bavaria establishing the Greek kingdom. The articles of the treaty provided for the accession of Prince Otho of Bavaria to the throne of the independent kingdom, the appointment by his father of three regents to exercise royal power during Otho's minority, and the formation of a corps of troops of 3,500 soldiers from the German states to accompany the young king to Greece. Lastly, the Greek state was placed under the protection of the three Powers, which also offered their guarantee for the raising of a loan to the amount of 60 million francs. The treaty of 1832 was the

final act in a series of diplomatic activities on behalf of the European Powers since their first intervention in Greek affairs, five years after the outbreak of the Greek revolution in 1821. The landing of Otho in Nauplia, the provisional capital of his new kingdom, in February 1833, marked the beginning of his long association with Greece (Dakin, 1973).

The establishment of the Greek state did not attract any considerable attention in Britain. The *Times* expressed some doubts as to the election of a minor king, but steadily confirmed Britain's "right to see that Greece is well governed, both from the expenses we have incurred in establishing its independence and the immense diplomatic labours which we have expended on its settlement" (*Times*, August 8, 1832). In parliament, Palmerston, who had negotiated and signed the treaty for Britain, appeared optimistic about the future prospects of the kingdom.

> Notwithstanding it had now been the scene of a ten years' barbarous and exterminating warfare . . . it required no very sanguine fancy to anticipate, from its maritime advantages and fruitfulness of soil, a commercial eminence, such as distinguished Venice and Genoa during the last brilliant days of the Italian history. (Palmerston, 1832)

Palmerston's expectation of the existence of a flourishing and peaceful kingdom in the Eastern Mediterranean, which was in harmony with British policy on the Eastern Question, was disappointed. The aggressive foreign policy pursued by the Greek kingdom against the Ottoman Empire threatened to destabilize it and to upset Britain's plans in the region. The term Megalē Idea (Great Idea) referred to a policy, the ultimate aim of which was the incorporation of all members of the Greek Orthodox population of the Ottoman Empire in a large kingdom, the dream of the revival of the Byzantine Empire. Britain's constant efforts to restrain the expansionist schemes of King Otho produced an almost permanent tension in the relations between Britain and Greece (Skopetea, 1988). The incompatible policies of Greece and Britain towards the Ottoman Empire led, in 1850, to the blockade of the Greek ports by the British fleet and during the Crimean war to the occupation of Athens by French and British troops (Miliori, 1998, pp. 150-171).

Moreover, Palmerston's policy and language towards Greece and King Otho were also related to his attitude and rhetoric with reference to despotic government in Europe. For Palmerston the appeal to Britain's role as an example and promoter of constitutionalism abroad and as the defender of political liberty against political reaction was an integral part of a doctrine directed largely to Liberal opinion at home, as he was beginning to stake a claim to "the moral leadership of liberalism in Western Europe" (Brown, 2012, pp. 187, 318-319). With regard to Greek affairs, Palmerston has been portrayed as a crusader of political liberty, who was overwhelmed by a sense of moral duty to the Greek people and intervened in Greek affairs partly in order "to punish Otho for rejecting the path of constitutionalism and the rule of law" (Southgate, 1966, p. 275). On the other hand, Palmerston's commitment to liberal interventionism abroad has been dismissed as a cynical excuse "for the purpose of the Foreign Office was

to secure and promote British interests and not to teach the world a lesson of liberalism" (Kofas, 1980, p. 53).

Therefore, in reference to the relations between Britain and Greece in the years 1835–1857, two elements should be kept in mind. Greek foreign policy after 1837 contradicted British interests in Eastern Mediterranean leading to a state of permanent tension. Lord Palmerston readily adopted any measure that could put pressure on King Otho, while Aberdeen adhered to a more conciliatory and straightforward policy condemning any interference in Greek politics as he was anxious to avoid any negative effects of the rivalry between Lyons and his French colleague on the Anglo-French rapprochement (Mac Lean, 1981, pp. 118, 126-127).

2. Building up the network: Sir Edmund Lyons and the London press, 1835-1849

Sir Edmund Lyons, who was entrusted with the execution of British policy between 1835 and 1849, was more interested in the practical application of British "influence" than in the principles that justified British intervention in Greek affairs. Even more, Lyons, the British minister in Athens, had formed from an early stage of his mission a fixed opinion on Greek affairs and he proved willing, if not anxious, to impose his interpretations on his superiors than to follow their instructions when they were adverse to his analysis. Although during the period of his Mission in Greece there was no armed conflict between Britain and Greece, Lyons was decisive in the management and journalistic presentation of the tense relations between the two countries.

Lyons boasted that he had broken "the rules and forms of Diplomacy" preferring to risk his place rather than play "a safe game" (Lyons to Sir Malcolm Pulteney, May 10, 1838, Lyons Papers [LP]). The manipulation of the press was certainly one of these approaches to his duties that lay outside the confines of conventional diplomatic practice, although granting privileged "entrée" to European political society to journalists and correspondents was more or less common practice in British diplomatic service (Brown, 2012, p. 209).

At first, through a network of friends in Britain, British consuls in the East, and members of the British community in Athens, Lyons made tenacious efforts to present his views on the condition of Greece, contradict any reports adverse to his policy, and identify and isolate their authors. His friends in England complemented the undertaking: "With those papers where we had any influence we pressed the Editors and procured the insertion. With other we paid for insertion" (John S. Gregory to Sir Edmund Lyons, March 22, 1837, LP).

In addition, Lyons immediately after the assumption of his duties tried to find persons suited to acting as correspondents for English newspapers.

John Green, consul at Nauplia and after 1838 vice-consul at Piraeus, wrote for the *Morning Chronicle*, his choice of paper resulting from the fact that "the Chron' Editors now and then get hints from the F.O.", as Green stated to the secretary of the British Legation (John Green to Griffiths, October 7, 1837, LP). The *Morning Chronicle* enjoyed significant Whig support in the 1830s and 1840s. Indeed, Palmerston himself "had enjoyed a long connection with the Morning

Chronicle," a relation that partly explains the Legation's preference (Koss, 1982, pp. 74–77). Green, who stressed the need for absolute secrecy as to his journalistic activities — "remember that I do not wish to be known that I correspond for any of the papers" — was in contact with Lyons from whom he obtained, as we will see, for publication secret documents about Otho's health (Green to Griffiths, October 19, 1837, LP). Green's added advantage was his excellent command of the Greek language and the close, personal contacts he developed with leading figures in the "English party", one of the major political parties in Othonian Greece.

James Black, who came to Greece in 1828 and held the post of British vice--consul in Misolonghi between 1856 and 1866, was the *Times*' correspondent in the period 1835–1845 signing his letters as "J". Black's relations with the British Legation predated his official appointment (History of the Times, 1939, p. 567). Moreover, Black was on intimate terms with Lyons and his family (Brouzas, 1949, pp. 48-50). In fact, his relationship with Lyons and his willingness to act as a relay of his views seem to have been his only abilities. When the *Times* tried to find a correspondent to cover the Don Pacifico affair of 1850, the editor of the paper, Mowbray Morris, "who was already acquainted with Mr. Black, who had occasionally served the paper", remarked that "his personal qualification may be thus represented – 0" (History of the Times, 1939, p. 567).

Lyons was now ready to use the correspondence to the English press from Athens as an extra means of pressure - diplomatic and political - on the Greek government and King Otho personally to comply with British interests.

3. Putting the network into practice

The first episode that revealed Lyons's intention of using the press as a vehicle in order to vindicate his own opinions on Greek politics was the dismissal in 1837 of Armansperg, King Otho's chancellor who was supported by the "English" party. According to the correspondents of the *Morning Chronicle* and the *Times* the condition of the Greek kingdom changed dramatically after Armansperg's departure with scenes of misery and destruction replacing the notion of a prosperous people and a developing country. In 1836 Greece was a flourishing kingdom; Athens was rebuilt, perfect tranquillity prevailed in the provinces, a "modern theatre" marked "a new epoch for Greece," and, in general, "everybody is busy and happy." Even the imposition of new taxes "has been very well received, contrary to general opinion a month ago" (*Times*, July 2 and August 30, 1836; *Morning Chronicle*, January 11, 1837).

When the first rumours of the decision of Otho to dismiss Armansperg were made known, the prospects of Greece became immediately connected with the presence of Armansperg in the government: "Should Count Armansperg remain, all will go on quietly and well. Should anyone else be appointed, it will then be clear that Russian influence prevails at our Court" (*Times*, February 7, 1837). When finally Otho dismissed Armansperg, the correspondent of the *Times*, who in the last months of 1836 and in the beginning of 1837 complimented the progress of the Greek kingdom, presented an entirely different account of the country.

> Russia takes the lead once more in Greece; how long it is to last God knows. The fact is, that since the King's return everything goes wrong. Everything in the way of business is at a stand-still; the employés of the different public offices desert their posts for the cafés or the houses of those who can tell them anything about changes. [We hope that] a few British men-of-war will make their appearance in this neighbourhood.
> (April 1, 1837)

In two leading London newspapers, therefore, long and elaborated letters written on the spot by supposedly "reliable" observers, waging war against the little kingdom and its military occupation were proposed as the only solution for the country and a way out for the British citizens who lived there in distress.

Soon after, the correspondent of the *Morning Chronicle* directed his attention to the personal abilities of Otho. In 1838 Green kept on providing sarcastic remarks on "the unfortunate aberration of the king of Greece's mind" and his alleged impotence.

> The German newspapers announce very frequently that an heir is expected; but if the doctors about the Palace can be believed, there is so much prospect of such an event as of King Otho himself becoming *enceinte* [*sic*]; unless indeed the King of Bavaria, who is wise they say in such matters, should give his son some good advice. (July 5, 1838)

On March 6, 1839, the same paper published "from our own correspondent" a certification written in 1835 in which the Bavarian physicians of Otho informed the king of Bavaria that his son was mentally and physically incapable of becoming a king. Green assured Lyons, who furnished him with the document, that "if I was put on my oath I should have to reply that the statement was principally founded on *Guess* [*sic*]" (December 23, 1837, LE91, LP). This was one of the four similar reports prepared under the auspices of Armansperg in what Petropulos has called "the most deplorable intrigue at this time — an intrigue against the king himself, a virtually helpless, homesick boy" (1968, pp. 230-233). The Greek authorities directed their suspicions to the British diplomatic mission and Lyons sent a long despatch to Palmerston on the subject denying any responsibility "of Her Majesty's Government for the letters which have appeared in that paper [*Morning Chronicle*] in disparagement of the administration of affairs in Greece . . . and for the numerous letters which have been published during the last twelve month in England and France by newspapers of every shade of political opinion" (Sir Edmund Lyons, 1839). The political implications of Otho's stupidity became apparent in another correspondence from Athens; "mind that the correspondence of the Morning Chronicle has never expressed an opinion that King Otho, surrounded by the representatives of the Greek people, is incapable of sitting on his throne; and it is now come to this that a constitution must be given or King Otho must go" (Morning Chronicle, August 28, 1839).

The constitutional revolution of 1843 tested again the aptitude of the correspondents of the *Morning Chronicle* and the *Times* for adapting their comments on modern Greece to the demands of British policy and the variations in Lyons's stand on the party political balance in the kingdom. In August 1843 both cor-

respondents agreed that a radical transformation was inevitable in a country suffering under an inefficient government. University professors were dismissed, while the Bavarians were absorbing the revenue of the country, the harvest had failed, the army and the civil list had become the fields of widespread corruption: "The poverty of the people, in consequence of the misadministration, is very great . . . they cry out for a change of the present political system: they are anxious to see a constitutional government" (*Morning Chronicle*, August 22, 1843).

After the revolution of September 1843, the critical political and financial problems that the kingdom was facing until August suddenly disappeared from the columns of the *Times* and the *Morning Chronicle*. The elections for the national assembly were conducted "with no violation of the laws" and, of course, the "English" party had obtained the majority in the legislative body (*Times*, November 7, 1843). In this context even King Otho could find a place under certain conditions: "If King Otho wishes to reign over Greece . . . constitutionally he may now do so, and continue to do so to the day of his death . . . let us express our sincere hope that he will now see that the way to govern happily, is to do so seconding to the wishes of his people" (*Morning Chronicle*, September 30, 1843). In March 1844 the country under the government of Mavrocordatos, leader of the "English" party, manifested the first signs of a steady recovery: "The news from the provinces still announce perfect tranquillity and it is said a small amelioration of trade and commerce has been perceived" (*Morning Chronicle*, April 9, 1844).

But a few months later Colettis, head of the "French" party, overthrew the government of the "English" party. No wonder the correspondent of the *Times* predicted: "Colettis generally begins his Ministry when in power by filling the gaols with state prisoners and his Ministry is always called the reign of terror" (*Times*, September 3, 1844). In the following months, the correspondent of the *Times* did come up to the expectations which he had anticipated. His letters provided minute descriptions of cases of corruption, brigandage, and torture, which infested the Greek kingdom under the administration of Colettis.

Lyons was in this case, and in general during his mission in Greece, eager to address his views on Greek affairs — almost in conformity to Lord Palmerston's line in foreign policy and opposed to Aberdeen's diplomatic schemes — to the British public; the irony was that he managed to do so partly through the columns of a newspaper which appeared to be the stauncher supporter of Aberdeen's principles in foreign policy and the most unbending critic of Palmerston. The reports from Greece were so extreme that the *Times*, which as "a reliably Aberdonian journal" (Brown, 2022, p. 198) expressed the moderate opinions of Aberdeen in foreign policy, was compelled to dispute the credit of the correspondence from Greece in the English press. The leading article of the *Times* did not exclude its "own correspondent" from the critique: "Unfortunately, the passionate prejudices arising out of these party contentions are so general in Athens, that even foreign observers are infected by them" (*Times*, October 9, 1845).

The network of propaganda, which Lyons had set up, had reached its peak, since it had now become autonomous from British politics to become a means of presenting the views of its master and to instigate crises instead of covering them. In the period 1835-1849, while the leading articles of the *Times* that

referred to Greece followed a certain line in their comments on the condition of the kingdom and the suggested policy Britain should pursue, the correspondents of the paper from Greece adopted a different but equally consistent view on Greek affairs.

Throughout his presence and after his departure from Greece, Lyons was the target of bitter criticism for these contacts. Contemporaries did not fail to recognize that the letters which appeared in the London press "originated in diplomatic circles," though the name "of the secret libeller... has never been revealed" (Anonymous, 1847-1848, pp. 75-76). John Green was later named as "the ostensible correspondent of an English paper" (Philhellene, 1848, p. 20), while Lyons's methods were described accurately already in 1850: "those calumnies [about Otho] had their origin solely in the intentional representation of a small clique at Athens surrounding the British Legation" (Dracatos Papanicolas, 1850, p. 14).

This fact, nevertheless, did not deter Lyons from using the press to complement his despatches and make public his strong opinions on the Greek kingdom.

4. Keeping up the relation: Sir Thomas Wyse and the London press, 1849–1857

Sir Thomas Wyse, the successor of Lyons, dealt with two major crises in Greek-British relations that led to the naval blockade and the military occupation of the Greek soil - the closest Greece and Britain came to war. Favourable reporting of events was now essential to the attainment of the diplomatic mission's scope.

Wyse's attempt to control correspondence from Greece, following the example of his predecessor, faced two serious setbacks. After the take-over of the *Morning Chronicle* by the Peelites, in February 1848, the tone of the paper changed, becoming more critical of Palmerstonian diplomacy and methods. In addition, Wyse, contrary to Lyons, made the mistake of neglecting the network of correspondents in time of peace; in time of tension, therefore, he found himself forced to trust persons he could not control.

At the beginning of this article we touched upon Wyse's efforts to secure a "dependable" correspondent to cover the naval blockade of Greek ports by the British fleet in 1850. Palmerston had ordered warships to the Greek port of Piraeus to seize Greek ships as ransom, to put pressure on Otho's government to compensate Don Pacifico (a British subject though a Portuguese Jew of Gibraltar) for his apparent loss of money at the hands of a local mob. Prince Albert, the French and Russian governments were furious at Palmerston's behavior in Greece, because it showed no respect for the ordered Concert of the Powers and the House of Lords censured Palmerston's policy (Parry, 2002, pp. 199-200). Palmerston's critics in Britain used the daily press to present in black colors the misfortunes of the Greek people and the unpopularity of England among the Greeks.

Wyse was in urgent need of favorable covering of the events. When Patrick O' Brien, reached Athens, Wyse followed Stratford Canning's advice. The members of the British Legation certainly tried to assist O'Brien, the *Times*' correspondent

at Constantinople moved to Athens, who counted himself a "professional" reporter, in forming a "correct view" of what was passing around him (Griffiths, 1850).

However, things did not go according to plan. O'Brien also collected information from the French diplomats and kept in touch with the Greek government. Even worse, O'Brien frequented the Greek Court; the queen's Grand-Lady-in--Waiting, noted in 1850 with satisfaction in her personal diary "O'Brien has written an excellent article" (Busse, 2014). In 19 March 1850 Queen Amalia wrote to her father:

> Here is a certain Mr O'Brien, the *Times*'s correspondent, who tries very hard to be fully informed, goes to all the envoys, has access to all state documents. He is furious and writes very well (Busse, 2011, p. 207).

O'Brien's correspondence to the *Times* became an account of the sufferings of the Greek people because of the British blockade: "Food has risen to famine prices, and death from starvation threatens the poor, whilst the ruin of the better classes seems imminent" (*Times*, May 13, 1850). When the crisis ended he received a decoration from King Otho for his services (*Daily News*, May 30, 1850). Finally, in October 1850 the editor of the *Times* dismissed O'Brien arguing that "it is impossible to regard you any longer as an independent spectator of passing events, or to place confidence on your record of them" (History of the Times, 1939, p. 137).

When in 1854 an insurrection broke out in the Ottoman provinces of Thessaly and Epirus among the Greek population, Wyse had learned his lesson from the case of O'Brien and this time he proposed the person he thought as the most suitable correspondent for the English newspapers: "Mr. Black long domesticated here, is a respectable man whom I can safely recommend and it would be of great *public* advantage for the *Morning Chronicle* or the *Times* to employ him" (History of the Times, 1939, p. 567).

In any case, during the Crimean war the almost unanimous approval of British policy towards Greece by the London press rendered the need for "suitable correspondence" from the kingdom less pressing. After repeated warnings to the Greek government for the support given to the insurgents in the neighbouring provinces of the Ottoman Empire, Britain and France proceeded to the military occupation of Athens and the Piraeus in order to secure the strict neutrality of the Greek state during the conflict in the East (Kofas, 1980, pp. 42–128). In Britain, newspapers' leading articles censured Greece for its irresponsible policy and invoked the already shaped image of the kingdom to justify Western intervention. Greece remained a "miserable little kingdom," the condition of which "is a standing disgrace to Europe" (*Morning Herald*, April 26, 1854). Even representative government, introduced in 1844, did not work properly; "the Constitution has been a shadow, and the government a laughing stock" (*Morning Post*, April 7, 1854).

The next step in this line of argumentation was to allege that Britain and France had occupied the Greek kingdom in order to relieve its people from the misery inflicted on them by their own government. The presence of the foreign troops provided a unique opportunity for the introduction of the much needed

reforms in domestic affairs: "it is probable that, before they withdraw again from the soil of Greece, some considerable change will have been made in the imperfect and unsatisfactory settlement of 1832." By the time the British troops left Greece, in February 1857, the London press had lost all its interest in the role of Britain in the promotion of reforms in Greece (*Times*, June 5, 1854).

In the years 1854–1857 it was again British diplomatic expediency that led to the depiction of Greece as a "failed experiment," though on that occasion the mediation of the British Legation in Athens was not necessary.

Conclusions

In periods of British interest in Greek affairs, which usually coincided with diplomatic crises or military conflict, a regular correspondence from Greece was incontestably the most effective method for a British diplomat to vindicate his policies by providing the right kind of information on the condition of the Greek kingdom.

The state of the London press in the 1830s and 1840s seconded statesmen's and diplomats' efforts to take advantage of it. Although professionalism was rapidly progressing, in the case of continental developments only piecemeal information reached the public whose interest, nevertheless, on foreign affairs kept on increasing. In the 1840s the telegraph, "as an effective channel for communication," had grown only over western Europe, while in this period the services of the news agencies were not yet available (Brown, 1977, pp. 26-27). Long letters, especially when written by a competent and well-informed writer, even if he was anonymous, could attract a following of readers. However, newspapers could maintain, and pay, their own correspondents at Paris or Rome, but were subject to the readiness and the partiality of residents when publishing news from Athens. The papers' dependence on uncontrolled "amateurs" often caused odd episodes. In 1845 the leading article of the *Times* challenged the reliability of the paper's correspondent whose reports from Athens the paper continued to publish. Gradually, however, newspapers started picking contributors by carefully evaluating their talent.

In this state of affairs a small number of "experts" from Greece could easily supervise the information that reached Britain and guide it to serve their interests. Lyons, who manipulated the press on Greek affairs, activated his consul and a close friend to become correspondents and furnished them with inside information which made their reports reliable. But their great advantage when addressing their countrymen was their "Englishness" as they spoke the language, they knew the habits, and they shared the notions of their readers. Subjects such as absolutism, free institutions, and material progress were keen to early-Victorian readership and often featured in correspondence from Greece alongside points of political and diplomatic interest.

It was, therefore, the very nature of the London press in the first half of the nineteenth century that enabled a diplomat with strong convictions to slide over the formalities of diplomacy in order to present his opinion. The final point refers to the reading public: how far did the influence of these papers spread?

The members of the British diplomatic mission in Athens who used the London press in order to manipulate "public opinion" were aware of the benefits of presenting their views to a wider audience. In early-Victorian Britain the national questions in continental Europe did not affect only the traditionally politically literate classes or a small group of "experts", but mobilized wider sections of the middle and the working classes, who "did want to read about foreign affairs in the newspapers." As a consequence, for men like Palmerston manipulating the press seemed the most critical step in his "courtship of public opinion" that aimed at "linking Britain's power and prestige abroad and what he termed 'progressive improvement' at home" (Steele, 1991, pp. 24, 26).

Lyons and Wyse, on the other end of the scale, aimed at becoming the most reliable unofficial source of information on modern Greece mainly for British statesmen with an interest in the affairs of the kingdom. Their object was to exonerate their conduct and present their views to a limited audience — mainly their superiors in the Foreign Office and British statesmen with an interest in the affairs of the East — and the columns of the daily press answered to their needs. The imperfect state of the diplomatic machinery meant that even ministers were often reliant on the press for news. These intentions, of course, do not detract at all the fact that since such arguments were designed for public articulation they would have tried to use the shared evaluative language of their readers and listeners. Therefore, comments on the Greek kingdom and modern Greeks, which involved general and universally applicable notions of "national progress", probably did influence patterns of thought and behaviour regarding Greek efforts and British foreign policy.

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Abstract

In the years 1835–1857 the British diplomatic mission in Athens did not confine its activity to carrying out British policy but built up a straightforward and carefully cultivated relationship with the English press. Several episodes revealed its intention of using the papers as a vehicle in order to vindicate the conduct and the opinions of its personnel on Greek politics. This article argues that in early-Victorian Britain statesmen were fully conscious of the implication of supervising the information on foreign affairs that reached the public and of exerting diplomatic pressure on other states through the daily press. As international developments gradually made interesting reading, the scarcity of communication from a faraway country such as Greece lent authority to the reports published in the London papers, which were heavily "influenced" by British international considerations. In this context the columns of a daily newspaper and the brevity of journalistic contributions enabled members of the British Legation in Athens to present their severe censor of successive Greek governments to a wider section of the British political body.

Resumo

Nos anos 1835-1857, a missão diplomática Britânica em Atenas não limitou a sua atividade à política britânica, mas construiu um relacionamento direto e cuidadosamente culto com a imprensa inglesa. Vários episódios revelaram a sua intenção de usar os artigos jornalísticos como veículo para justificar a conduta e as opiniões dos funcionários de estado sobre a política grega. Este artigo argumenta que no início da Grã-Bretanha vitoriana os políticos estavam plenamente conscientes da implicação de supervisionar as informações sobre relações exteriores que chegavam ao público e de exercer pressão diplomática sobre outros Estados através da imprensa diária. Com o desenvolvimento internacional, fez-se gradualmente uma leitura interessante, a escassez de comunicação de um país distante como a Grécia deu autoridade e influência às reportagens publicada nos jornais de Londres, fortemente "influenciados" pelas considerações internacionais Britânicas. Nesse contexto, as colunas de um jornal diário e a brevidade das contribuições jornalísticas permitiram que os membros da Legação Britânica em Atenas apresentassem o seu severo censor dos sucessivos governos gregos a uma seção mais ampla do corpo político britânico.