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The British Ionian Consul and Ithaca (1789–1809)

The letters of Consul Spiridion Foresti and Ithacan affairs

Ian Chessell

Spiridion Foresti (1752-1822)

Spiridion Foresti, a native of Cephalonia, lived through the most turbulent times for the peoples of the Adriatic and Ionian region in the closing years of the long eighteenth century.¹ Born in 1752 in Lixouri on Cephalonia, as a young man he moved to Zakynthos in 1770 where he established himself as a currant agent under Venetian rule, later becoming the British Vice-Consul on the island in 1783 and being elevated to Consul in 1789.²

The advent of the French Revolution accelerated the flow of Enlightenment ideas and the spectre of war to the Adriatic and Ionian which changed the region forever, bringing at first a succession of occupations of the Ionian Islands by foreign empires after the fall of the Venetian possessions to the French in mid-1797.³ As British Consul,

¹ For an excellent short introduction to the history of modern Greece with an emphasis on the position and role of the Ionian Islands, see: D. Arvanitakis, 'From Constantinople to Athens: the Vagaries of Greek Geography and the Hellenic World 1453–1830', in A. Delivorrias and E. Georgoula ed., *From Byzantium to Modern Greece: Hellenic art in adversity, 1453–1830*, (New York: Onassis Foundation, 2005).

² C.I. Chessell, 'Britain's Ionian Consul: Spiridion Foresti and Intelligence Collection', *Journal of Mediterranean Studies* 16(1) (2006): 45–61; idem, 'Britain's Ionian Consul: Spiridion Foresti and the Return to the Islands 1807–1810', *Journal of Mediterranean Studies* 19(2) (2010): 201–218.

³ For a treatment of the reception of Enlightenment ideals through the figure Adamantios Koraios, see G. Tolia, 'Κοραΐς και Επτάνησα (1798-1814): αποδοχή και ενδοιασμός των ιδεολόγων', in A. Nikiforou ed., *Επτάνησος Πολιτεία (1800–1807): Τα μείζονα ιστορικά ζητήματα* (Corfu: Γ.Α.Κ.–Αρχαία Νομού Κέρκυρας, 2001), 75–101. On attitudes to government in this period between Venetian and British rule, see the overview in M. Fusaro, 'Representation in practice: the myth of Venice and the British Protectorate in the Ionian islands (1801–1864)', in F. de Vivo, M. Calaresu, J.-P. Rubies ed., *Exploring*

Foresti was taken prisoner by the French in their occupation of the Ionian Islands in 1797, then was exiled to Venice in 1798, but returned in 1799 as the British Minister to the newly formed Septinsular Republic of the seven Ionian Islands under Russian-Turkish rule. Foresti was exiled again on the second French occupation in 1807, and returned as Minister with British Forces as they occupied the islands in the period 1809-1814. He saw the commencement of the Greek War of Independence just prior to his death in 1822 at Corfu.

Consul Foresti was a prolific correspondent and fortunately for historians, many of his letters have survived. His main correspondents were British Foreign Ministers, ambassadors and consuls around the Mediterranean, the local Septinsular Government, British Admirals and ship's captains, Ali Pasha of Ioannina, currant importers and travellers who visited Zante.⁴ A copy of each letter sent was made in the Consul's Copy Book, kept in the Consular Office. Foresti's 7-volume set of these books covering the period 1793-1813 miraculously survived war, earthquakes and neglect and were discovered in the British Consular Office in Corfu in 1936. They were transferred to the National Archives in London and are carefully preserved there today. (see Figure 1). Other major sources of his letters are in collections of letters received by: the Foreign Minister in the National Archives in London; the Septinsular Government in the Historical Corfu Archives and British Naval officers in London's National Maritime Museum. A number of these letters illustrate the effect of the quarantine measures that were in place to prevent the spread of the plague by people and goods across borders. In Figure 2 the effect of smoking the letters in sulphur fumes can be seen.

Cultural History. Essays in Honour of Peter Burke (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), 309–25. More recently, see the comprehensive monograph by D.D. Arvanitakis, *Η αγωγή του πολίτη: Η γαλλική παρουσία στο Ιόνιο (1797–1799) και το έθνος των Ελλήνων* (Heraklion: Πανεπιστημιακές Εκδόσεις Κρήτης, 2020). Also see K. Zanou, *Transnational Patriotism in the Mediterranean, 1800-1850: Stammering the Nation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019).

⁴ The Italianised names of the Ionian Islands have been used in this paper so as to match the usage of the times as reflected in the Consular letters being considered.

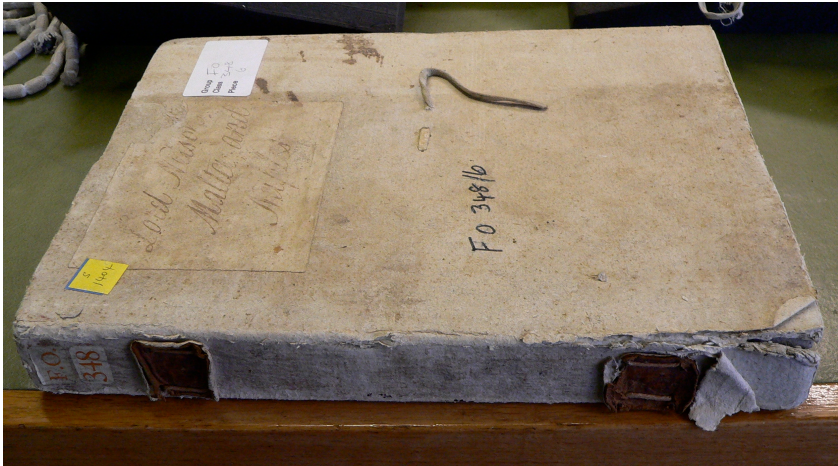


Fig. 1. UK National Archives: Ionian Consular Copy Book FO 348/6. (Photo by author).

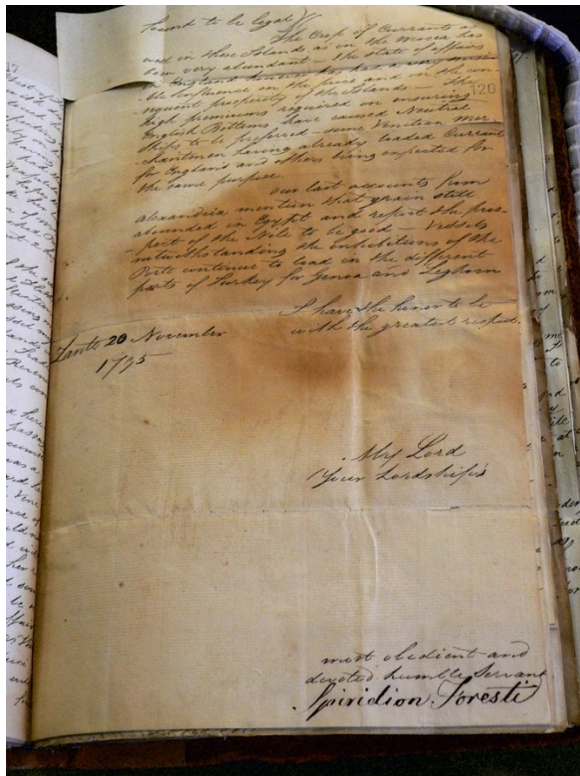


Fig. 2. UK National Archives: Example of letter received in London after fumigation treatment with sulphur fumes in transit. (Photo by author).

In his role as Consul Foresti was responsible for gathering intelligence from across the Ionian Island chain and the Italian and Turkish mainlands. Intelligence was carefully recorded and verified where possible and then forwarded to London when opportunities for carriage occurred. From time-to-time events at or concerning Ithaca were reported on by Foresti. The purpose of this paper is to examine these reports and to set Ithaca's history in the broader context of the Ionian, as seen by Foresti.

Currant Trade

Zante had been the centre of a rich trade in currants since at least the seventeenth century, mainly with European merchants and particularly with those from England.⁵ Cephalonia and Ithaca were also significant producers as well as the region around Patras on the Mainland. Though dependent on favourable weather, it was overall highly profitable for the principals and led to the development of a rich elite who largely controlled the island through political organs like the Council alongside the presence of the Venetian *Provveditor*, or Governor.⁶ The young Foresti established a business acting as an Agent for overseas merchants, buying currants on the public market for shipping back to England on ships owned or chartered by the Merchant. He built the business by each season writing to a number of potential customers in England, giving information on the prospects for the size and quality of the crop both at Zante but also at Cephalonia, Ithaca and Patras. He employed agents at these ports who reported to Foresti on the local market situation. As the season progressed he would provide updates on changing prices and sales volumes and also on destinations of ships so his customers would be aware of likely local competition at home.

⁵ See an overview (in Italian) by M. Fusaro, *Uva Passa, una guerra commerciale tra Venezia e l'Inghilterra (1540–1640)*, (Venezia: Il Cardo Editore, 1996), with introductory comments on Zante at 13–19. In English, see eadem, *Political economies of empire in the early modern Mediterranean: the decline of Venice and the rise of England, 1450–1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

⁶ For an overview of local administration in the Venetian Ionian, with a survey of the reforms of the last two decades of Venetian rule, see D. D. Arvanitakis, 'Προβλήματα κοινοτικής αυτοδιοίκησης και κοινωνικές αντιθέσεις στον Ιόνιο χώρο (1750–1797)', in *Ελληνισμός και Κάτω Ιταλία. Από τα Ιόνια νησιά στην Grecia Salentina*, vol. 1 (Corfu: Ιόνιο Πανεπιστήμιο, 2002), 9–54.

An example is given at Letter 1 in the Annex. Foresti writes to G. and F. Fisher of Bristol updating them on the market situation in some detail and advising that he is gambling on getting them a good price at Ithaca for the cargo they have ordered. In other letters he notes that prices at Ithaca need to be lower as costs of shipping are higher.

Foresti as Consul

Foresti became British Vice-Consul at Zakynthos in 1783 and Consul in 1789. As Consul his responsibilities included diplomatic representation to the island Venetian government, support for British trade, support to British citizens visiting the islands or stranded through piracy or shipwreck, gathering intelligence for Government and military commanders. To assist in this task he had a network of Vice Consuls on the major islands and on key ports on the Mainland. These representatives had usually been Venetian citizens but in 1796 Venice issued orders that their citizens could not act as a Consul for a foreign power (see Letter 3). By this Letter Foresti sends a copy of the Seal of the Vice Consul at Ithaca to London together with those from Cephalonia and Missolonghi but advises that positions at a number of other places will now not be able to be formally filled. He advises his strategy of appointing “agents” rather than Vice-Consuls for the time being.

Empress Catherine II’s ambitions for an expansion of the Russian Empire into the Mediterranean had major impacts on the Ionian Islands. The two Russian-Turkish Wars, 1768-1774 (Orlov campaign) and 1787-1791 led to great hopes in the island communities that Russia would be the power that helped to break the Ottoman grip on Greece and lead to a revival of Greece’s ancient glory.⁷ Both wars proved to be disastrous for the Greeks, as Russia after setbacks withdrew their naval forces leaving the Greeks to defend themselves. Many Greeks including numbers from the Ionian Islands fought with the Russians. One such leader was Lambros Katsonis, distinguished himself fighting in Orlov’s Fleet, being renowned for his bravery, intelligence and cunning. At the start of the second Ottoman War in 1788 Katsonis, sanctioned by Russia, assembled his own

⁷ D.E. Vlasi, ‘Η Συμμετοχή των Επτανησίων στα Ορλοφικά (1770) και η Αντίδραση της Βενετίας’, *Μνήμων* 8 (1982): 64–84.

fleet of armed ships and entered active service in the war against the Turks flying the Russian Flag. Significant early successes with a growing fleet of some 27 small ships led to Ottoman determination to eliminate him which they largely did in a major sea battle in 1790. Foresti reports this battle to London in 1790. Katsonis manages to escape and with a small fleet of 6 ships makes his way to Ithaca to recover and refit. His arrival and activities are noted by Foresti (see Letter 2). Katsonis uses the harbours of Ithaca for safe anchorage for his Fleet and a base for operations against the Ottomans. He befriends the Androutsos Family while on the island, themselves refugees from the Peloponnese and who become important leaders in the Greek revolution. Peace is restored between Russia and Turkey in 1791 but Katsonis refuses to accept it and fights on with his much reduced forces. He becomes a problem for the major powers as he often commits acts of piracy against any shipping that he finds rather than confining himself to Ottoman shipping. His Fleet was finally annihilated by a combined Turkish-French Squadron and Katsonis retired to Crimea.

The First French Occupation

Napoleon took possession of the Ionian Islands in 1797 following his defeat of Venice.⁸ General Gentilli was the first Commander but was replaced in early 1798 by General Chabot. Foresti was made prisoner at Zante and shipped to Corfu where he was held in house arrest. Despite this, Foresti established a system of smuggling letters out from Corfu and managed to maintain a steady stream of intelligence reports to British authorities. The French began to significantly reinforce the Fortresses at Corfu while establishing small garrisons on the other islands. Revolutionary ideas of government were introduced and the dominant role of the old elites was reduced.⁹ At first the other classes of the islands welcomed the wider opportunities for participation in government and the hope that these developments might lead to their greatly increased independence. However, as reported by Foresti to Secretary of State Lord Grenville in early 1798, the islands and some of the mainland possessions

⁸ E. Rodocanachi, *Bonaparte et les îles Ioniennes: un épisode des conquêtes de la république et du premier empire 1797–1816* (Paris :Ancienne Librairie Germer Bailliere, 1899).

⁹ See above nn. 3 and 6.

had been formed into Departments and as such were integrated into the French Administrative system, reducing the hope for independence. Departments were Corfu, Ithaca and Zante, the Department of Ithaca consisting of Ithaca, Cephalonia, Santa Maura, Prevesa, Vonizza and Calamo. These new arrangements had only a short time to operate before a combined Russian and Turkish force occupied the islands in 1799 after a prolonged siege of Corfu.

The Russian-Turkish Occupation

A combined Russian-Ottoman Force wrested the islands from France in 1798-1799. Foresti returned from Venice with the Russian Fleet and was appointed British Minister to the new Septinsular Republic established in the islands under direct Russian-Ottoman control and British approval.

Pirates had for centuries been a major threat to island life, and Foresti had typically called on Venice to provide protection for trading ships and even to towns on shore. In times of war, privateers, pirates operating with approval of participating empires added to the threat. Ithaca itself had a long history of threats of piracy, in the early sixteenth century the island had been almost uninhabited following depredations by corsairs. With the decline of Venice Foresti had to seek support from the Russian naval forces on the island or from cruising British warships. Foresti's reports to London frequently contain intelligence on pirates and French privateers, partly as warning to traders and partly seeking British Navy cooperation for their capture or destruction. Local communities often "allow their shores to be made stations for hostile vessels" as he complained to the Republican Government. Ithaca and the nearby island of Kalamos at times offered such protection and support for pirates. In 1801 (see Letter 4) Foresti writes to his friend John Hawkins in London describing the tragic circumstances of the death of their friend Doctor Artico and his family at the hands of pirates from Ithaca.

From 1800 on initial enthusiasm for the new Russian presence began to wane, and the first Constitution of the Republic largely limited power once more to the 'nobles' of the Venetian period, causing unrest and rising

tensions.¹⁰ Dissatisfaction with the local government and intense rivalry between leading families led to rebellion in Cephalonia which the Septinsular Government had great difficulty in controlling. On Zakynthos amid unrest and turmoil an English party emerged who took control of the island and taking down the flag of the Republic, raised the British Flag in early 1801. A British officer who appeared on the island, Colonel Callander, was made the Governor and Military Commander. However appeals to British authorities in the Mediterranean did not receive support as the actions were contrary to British policy of close cooperation with the Porte and Britain had just given Royal approval for the new Republic's Constitution. The revolutionary ideas spread to nearby Ithaca and Callander provided financial support to the revolutionary party there. The situation was made more difficult by the withdrawal of all Russian Forces from the islands on orders from the new Russian Czar Alexander. The task of the Septinsular Government was consequently made more difficult as the Republic only had a small force to enforce its policies.

Foresti as the British Minister in Corfu was charged by the Septinsular Government with taking down this British flag and restoring order. In September of 1801 Foresti sailed to Zakynthos on board a British Sloop *El Corso*, Captain Ricketts. (See Letter 5). They were initially received with the island forces heating shot in the Fortress, but Foresti was allowed ashore and after considerable negotiation, agreement was reached and the British Flag lowered and the Republican Flag raised. On his return journey to Corfu Foresti called at Ithaca to check on the situation on that island and reported that conditions were quiet there after timely action by his Vice-Consul.

By 1803 the Russians had returned to the islands with Count Mocenigo as Plenipotentiary. In January as the new Constitution for the islands had not received approval by the Turkish and Russian Governments, the local Government decided to renew the membership of

¹⁰A.D. Nikiforou ed., *Constitutional Charters of the Ionian Islands* (Athens: Hellenic Parliament Foundation, 2012), 133. For this period in Ithaca, see the overview in A. Lekatsas, 'Επτάνησος Δημοκρατική Πολιτεία', in *Η Ίθάκη*, vol. 2 (Athens: Φήμιος, 1998), 94–178.

the Senate with the same number of members as the previous Senate, from Ithaca that meant a single representative (see Letter 6).

With the resumption of War between France and Britain in May, 1803, the threat of French privateers to British trade became of concern again. Admiral Nelson now in command in the Mediterranean had an almost impossible task of protection over the length of the Sea and prevention of French break outs from Toulon. One effective tactic was the formation of convoys of merchant ships escorted by a British warship. The Septinsular Republic was to be neutral in this new conflict, and it was important to Foresti in protecting British trade that this neutrality was strictly maintained. In Letter 7 is an account of an interaction between a French privateer the *Veloce* operating in the waters around Ithaca which captured a prize in a British convoy. The British 28-gun Frigate, HMS *Thisbe*, in a series of boat actions captured the *Veloce* and its prize, but only after taking considerable damage from the Privateer's fire and from shore guns. Captain Shepherd of the *Thisbe* is very incensed by the breach of neutrality by the Ithacan population, and by the various other islands of the Republic in general. He asks Minister Foresti to voice strong condemnation of the actions of Ithacans to the Government of the Septinsular Republic.

A major issue for Foresti was managing the relations between the Russian Government and Ali Pasha, Vizir of Ioannina.¹¹ British policy was to maintain good relations with Ali Pasha and the Ottoman Government to ensure they would not go over to the French. Britain and Russia were allies and were supposed to have a common policy towards Ali Pasha but Russia and particularly the Russian Plenipotentiary Count Mocenigo, opposed Ali Pasha because of his treatment of their co-religionists the Greeks in his conquered territories.

Problems arose over two main issues: the first, of Greeks and Albanians seeking refuge in the islands from Ali Pasha's 'justice'. Ali was continually demanding their return saying they were criminals seeking to avoid legal punishment. Russia (and in reality Britain through Foresti), saw them as legitimate refugees fleeing a despotic Ruler. The second issue

¹¹ K.E. Fleming, *The Muslim Bonaparte: Diplomacy and Orientalism in Ali Pasha's Greece* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1999).

concerned freedom of passage of Ali's armed shipping through the Straits of Corfu down the east side of the islands, Ali believed he had the right to this passage but the Septinsular Republic saw this passage as prohibited under the Convention of 1800 agreed by all parties.

In May 1806, Ali lodged complaints on both issues, requesting the return of a number of refugees that were assembled on Ithaca and Santa Maura, and complaining of Russian actions in preventing passage of his shipping in the Corfu Channel. He sought Foresti's help through the British Consul at Ioannina, John Morier, to help resolve these issues. At Letter 8 in the Annex, Foresti writes to Mocenigo in the politest terms (as an ally) outlining the situation and seeking some consideration be given to the Vizir's requests. Mocenigo's reply to Foresti, again in the politest but firm manner, is at Letter 9. Note that the 'Common Enemy' being referred to is France. Mocenigo advises that Ithaca was offered for the preservation of these families as the Septinsular Government saw them as legitimate refugees, unhappy victims of Ali's persecution. The refugees were not returned to the Vizir. These letters illustrate something the complexity of the relationships between the parties, all ostensibly allies or neutral, under the threat of Napoleon.

Second French Occupation

In August 1807 the French took possession of the seven Ionian islands again following their surrender to Napoleon by Emperor Alexander at Tilsit. The French were initially welcomed by the population of Ithaca as they established a new democratic government regime centred now on Corfu. A 14-member Senate was established in which Ithaca had one member. This attitude soured as the French imposed heavy taxation and the British blockade of the islands severely limited Ithacan trading opportunities which had expanded greatly under the Russians. The French built a number of defensive structures to face the expected invasion by the powerful British Fleet.

Foresti was exiled at Malta but continued with his Ministerial duties as the new situation would allow. His extensive network of contacts across the Adriatic and Ionian proved invaluable and he was able to continue to gather significant intelligence for the British Government and for local

British commanders. The British were most concerned about the fate of the large Russian Naval Force present in the islands at their surrender as these ships were to be handed over to France as well. Together with new constructions from Venice, the French would be enabled to assemble a powerful Naval Squadron and threaten British domination. A few months after the surrender of the islands, Foresti, using reports from his agents, was able to provide complete intelligence on the enemy Naval and Military Forces in the Adriatic and Ionian to the British Commander in the Mediterranean, Admiral Collingwood (see Letter 10). At Ithaca he reports there were only a few Italian soldiers making up the small Garrison. But he notes that some 50 merchant vessels were in the harbour at Ithaca. Septinsular merchant shipping, and particularly that of Cephalonia and Ithaca, had grown remarkably during the Russian/Ottoman period due to the encouragement and protection given by these two Governments.¹² However with the arrival of the French and the consequent British blockade, trade had fallen sharply. Foresti reports that Ithacan shipowners refused French offers to arm some of these idle ships and resume trading operations, the risks of such operations would have been considered too high as British cruisers would consider them legitimate targets as they would be sailing from a French occupied port.

British Capture of Ithaca

By 1809 the focus of the war had shifted to Peninsula, where Britain was attacking France from the South and to the Danube campaigns between France and Austria. The British Navy controlled the Mediterranean after Trafalgar in 1805. Foresti at Malta was well placed to urge the Commander-in-Chief Admiral Collingwood to consider an operation to capture the Ionian Islands as in his view the islanders themselves, excepting at Corfu,

¹² G.D. Pagratis, 'From the Septinsular Republic to the 'White Sea'. Ionian Shipping in the Port of Smyrna (1800-1807)', *Journal of Mediterranean Studies* 19(2) (2010): 335–50. Sir William Gell visited Ithaca in April 1806 and records 50 vessels in the harbour of Ithaca: W. Gell, *The Geography and Antiquities of Ithaca* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, and Orme, 1807), 30. A census undertaken by the French administration in 1808 recorded 45 ships: Π. Καπετανάκης, *Ναυτιλία και εμπόριο υπό Βρετανική Προστασία. Ιόνιο Κράτος (1815-1864)* (Αθήνα: Εθνικό Ίδρυμα Ερευνών, 2015), 73.

were ready to push the small French garrison forces out given the smallest encouragement by the British Navy (see Letter 11). The islanders only restraint in acting was their fear that if they are without outside Naval support, the French would launch a punitive expedition from the large French forces on Corfu or Santa Maura.

Others also urged similar views and although resisting these pressures for some time, Collingwood is finally persuaded to act and an expedition is launched from Sicily in September 1809. Foresti travels with the expedition and as a close adviser to the commander, General Oswald. He outlines the following events to the Foreign Secretary (see Letter 12). On the 1st of October Zante is captured with only limited resistance, and Oswald proclaims the restoration of the Septinsular Republic under British protection.

On the 5th of October Cephalonia followed and on the 8th Foresti boards the Sloop HMS *Philomel*, Captain Crawley, at Argostoli and sails to occupy Ithaca (see Letter 13).¹³ The *Philomel* arrived on the 8th October and entered the harbour before Vathi. Here they were confronted with well positioned batteries which made advancement impossible.¹⁴ Captain Crawley therefore landed a detachment of troops and marines who proceeded to a height commanding the main French battery which surrendered on seeing they were out-manoeuvred. The British were thus in possession of the island. Foresti consulted with the local leaders and established an interim Government for the island modelled on those established on the other islands. A letter welcoming the new arrangements in glowing terms and pledging the island's loyalty to the British Crown was sent to Canning in London by the new Ithacan Provisional Committee of

¹³ Captain Crawley's report was published in *The London Gazette*, No 16321, 2–5 December 1809: 1930–1931.

¹⁴ G. Livitsanis, 'Ιθάκη 1809: Στη Δίνη των Ναπολεόντειων Πολέμων', in E. Toumasatos ed., *ΙΑ' Διεθνές Παινόνιο Συνέδριο. Επτανησιακός βίος και πολιτισμός, Κεφαλονιά, 21-25 Μαΐου 2018. Πρακτικά*, vol. 1 (Argostoli: Εταιρεία Κεφαλληνιακών Ιστορικών Ερευνών, 2019). Livitsanis provides details of the defences constructed by the French at Ithaca in the expectation of British assault and further details of the assault itself. His paper also recounts earlier unsuccessful attempts by British warships to make contact with the British party on the island.

Government (see Letter 14).¹⁵ It appears that the local pro-British party played only a minor role in the outcome.

Conclusion

The letters of Consul/Minister Foresti provide a different perspective on the history of Ithaca. He sees the island in a wide political context and recognises it as a key player in the tumultuous events that follow the French Revolution. He shows Ithaca is tightly integrated in the important currant trade and in the broader carriage trade that develops around the eastern Mediterranean in the Russo–Turkish Republican period. Though of course small, Foresti considers Ithaca to be an important element of the Republic and is concerned that it adopts the policies of the central Government. The islands past traditions with piracy are seen to sometimes revive, particularly at times of economic stress, causing distress to friendly shipping and travellers. For Foresti his participation in the inclusion of Ithaca in the new Seven Islands arrangements protected by Britain was a satisfying finish to his interactions with this Island over some forty years.

*

¹⁵ This is an English translation of the original letter in Italian published by G. Livitsanis, ‘Ιθάκη 1809’, at 608.

Annex: Letters

1. Spiridion Foresti to G. and F. Fisher, Bristol, dated at Zante, 1 September, 1794.

Sirs,

You will notice from the preceding copy of my last, that the hope of being enabled to purchase your cargo of Currants on terms somewhat more advantageous than either the late established price of 16 Sequins in Zante or 15 1/2 in Cephalonia, had induced me to delay for a little the execution of your Commission. With this view therefore I am now endeavouring to purchase for you in the Island of Ithaca (otherwise called Little Cephalonia) from whence I wait with impatience the result; I have many doubts of my success because I find that there are many bidders for the Currants of that Island. I expected the price in Cephalonia would by this time have abated some little, but I find that after Mr Caridi had finished his purchase which including the cargo of the ship Olive amounts to one Million lbs., and also after the purchase of 100 tons by Mr Macri all at 15 1/2 Sequins, that Mr Strane has also sent there and purchased 250 m at the same rate which has served to sustain the price. I still however continue my views upon Cephalonia, and will not relinquish my attempts to obtain the fruit at something beneath the prices above mentioned. From the returns lodged by the Merchants who called the price here on the 27 Ultimo, the latest quantity purchased by them amounts to 2 million 724 m lbs. The remainder yet unsold is computed to be at least 4 million lbs. The English Brig Mentor is arrived here in six days from Venice. She will load about 200 tons of Currants for London. Another two English Brigs are expected daily from Venice to load Currants also.

I am etc.,

Spiridion Foresti.

Source: UK. National Archives, Ionian Consular Copybooks, FO 348/1, [no folio numbers].

2. Spiridion Foresti to Lord Grenville, His Majesty's Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, London, dated at Zante, 10 June. 1791.

My Lord,

The 5th of this month I received by the way of Venice your most respectable Letter dated the 22nd April, with which your Lordship was pleased to honour me.

Some time since I assign'd triplicate Letters to Government concerning the Plague in Morea, notifying its continued progress, in caution to them [sic] most interested objects of Health and Commerce.

I must again repeat, that in that afflicted Kingdom instead of consuming, the Disorder, continually blazes with the utmost vigour. Tripolizza the Capital, and Argos, with several other Inland Cities and Villages, and which is most interesting the Sea Port Towns of Napoli, Romania, Corinto, Vostizza, Patrasso, Gastuni in Chiarenza etc are all attacked to the utmost excess. All the European Consuls and Negotiators have lately left Patrasso, with the utmost precipitation, and have arrived in these Islands, where they are all shut up in our Lazzarettos, where is exacted the most rigorous and exact Rules for Quarantine.

The Plague has manifested itself in several Persons arrived here from Patrass, and which are now in the Lazzarettos of Zant and Cephalonia, where Government takes the most diligent precautions in quelling it, by using the utmost vigilance, that the disorder may not communicate itself out of its vicinity. We have as yet preserved ourselves from that terrible infection, and it is to be hoped we shall also for the time to come.

Our Commerce has not in the least suffered any interruption, but continually has increased, which we cannot say of Turkey, where there neither are any rules observed, nor the least tendency to any kind of discipline, as the Kingdom of Morea has communicated the disorder to the opposite shores Romelia, Lepanto, [...], Livadia and Leitoun in the Gulph of Vollo, where the aforementioned shores are fiercely attacked.

The Venetian Squadron commanded by that sage and vigilant Chevalier Emo, the greatest part is now anchored in this Road, where at intervals he sends out vessels as common upon cruises. This Admiral protects all Commerce in general, conserving the strictest neutrality in these present circumstances of War between the Court of Russia and the Porte, and is of the utmost service to these Islands, by his continual and unremitting vigilance upon all Vessels or Boats which may be infected by the contagious disorder, taking the wisest and most salutary measures to preserve us.

General Tamara, and Colonel Lambro Cazzone the Commanders of the Russian Squadron has arrived lately at Itacha. Where their force consists of sixteen vessels (viz.) small Frigates, Corvettes and Galiottes from twelve to twenty eight guns each. The major part of this small Squadron has lately left the Port of Ithaca and have proceeded to Calamo, a place not far off belonging to the Turks but uninhabited, where as yet they have not entered upon action.

We have had recent intelligence of a Turkish Fleet consisting of eighteen sail, some of which are of the Line, being actually at Hydra in the Archipelago.

These are all the particulars that I am able to inform your Lordship at the present; and always ready to obey your most respectful commands.

I have the honour to be etc.,

Spiridion Foresti.

Source: UK. National Archives: Ionian Islands, FO 42/1, pp.182-185.

3. Spiridion Foresti to Lord Grenville, His Majesty's Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, London, dated at Zante, 17 April, 1797.

My Lord

In conformity with the injunctions contained in Your Lordship's dispatch of the 16. August last, I have the honour of enclosing in the present, the

Impression of the Seal of this Consulship, together with the Signatures and Impressions of the Seals of the dependent Vice Consuls of the Islands of Cephalonia, and Ithaca, and that part of Turkey called Missolongi.

Allow me, My Lord, to remark, that the Senate of Venice, some time ago, enacted a decree prohibiting any Venetian Subject from accepting for the future, of the Consular Office, of any of the Foreign Powers. In consequence of this prohibition, I have not been enabled since the decease of my late Vice-Consul of the Islands of Corfu, Santa Maura, Cerigo, and that part of Rumely known under the denomination of Prevesa, of supplying their places by any persons not within the cognizance of the decree, and immediately dependent on the Consulship and on the honourable protection of the British Government. I, indeed, did myself the honour of making an application to His Majesty's Minister at Venice, on the subject, but it was found that the Decree was too express, to admit of any alteration, or exception. The places above mentioned may be said, therefore, to be legally vacant, but I have not failed to make choice of Persons as suitable to the Office and who, under the name of agents, in a great measure answer the purpose of regular Vice-Consuls. It is probable, that at a future period of less discord among the different Powers, I may have an opportunity of selecting some eligible person among the Consuls of the other Courts, who would esteem it an honour to be invested with the office; and, in that case, I will certainly make it my business to inform Your Lordship of the circumstance.

I have the honour to be etc

Spiridion Foresti.

Source: UK. National Archives: Ionian Consular Copybooks, FO 348/2, [no folio numbers].

4. Spiridion Foresti to John Hawkins, London, dated at Corfu, 6 June 1801.

Sir,

I shudder at reciting the catastrophe of Doctor Artico. Unfortunate man! He went from Candia to Patras, where he hired a boat from Ithaca to go to the Gulph of Lepanto, but the crew proved to be pirates and murdered him, his Wife, and his Son and a Turkish Guide. He removed from Candia at the desire of his friend the Pasha of that place, who was appointed to a Government in Rumely. One of the accomplices went to Ithaca and confessed the fact: the others have not yet been apprehended. It is understood that some British and Turkish forces are to come to these Islands to set matters right. I am really afraid, that without some measure of this sort, the most atrocious crimes will become familiar to the Islanders. They are, in general, discontented with the present Government, tho' I believe less so here. An unfortunate affair took place here two days ago, in consequence of the extreme aversion of the Greeks for the Turks. Two Greeks who imprudently ventured to separate some Turkish sailors who had quarrelled, were killed by them. The Greeks took up arms, and pursued the Turks to a house, where they certainly would have burned them, if the Russians had not been prevailed to interfere and take them to the Fortress. As it was, 12 Turks were killed upon the spot, and 5 wounded, almost all mortally. Not a Turk has since come on shore. I was by chance upon the spot when the affray took place, and I say with truth that I was very instrumental on prevailing upon the Russians to interfere on behalf of the Turks. It was fortunate that it ended as it did, for the Greek Populace certainly meant to have seized the moment to massacre some of the obnoxious nobility. The outlaws, who might have headed the people, upon this occasion, have been since pardoned by Government in consideration of their forbearance. Upwards of one hundred have in consequence come to town.

I have the honour to be etc,

Spiridion Foresti.

Source: Cornwall Record Office, Hawkins Collection, J/3/5/91.

5. Spiridion Foresti to Lord Hawkesbury, His Majesty's Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, London, dated at Corfu, 22 September, 1801.

My Lord,

I have the honour to inform Your Lordship of my return hither; of the taking down of the English Flag at Zante; and of the hoisting of that of the Republic of the Seven Islands in its room.

Upon my arrival at the town of Zante, on board of His Majesty's Sloop *El Corso*, and in company with the Turkish Frigates under the command of Vice Admiral Seremet Bey, I found that the Government at the Island and Colonel Callander were determined not to take down the English Flag without an order to that purpose from His Majesty himself, and that they had been the means of arming a very great proportion of the Inhabitants, in order to support their pretensions.

Captain Ricketts, who commands the *El Corso* and myself, signified to the above mentioned Government that the orders in consequence of which the *El Corso* had come to Zante were not less than the orders of Government because they were expressed by His Majesty's Ambassador Extraordinary at Constantinople, and that the English Flag must in consequence be taken down.

After some troublesome subsequent negotiation, it was agreed, that the First Lieutenant of the *El Corso* should be sent on shore, under the safeguard of Government, and that he should take down the British Flag. This was done accordingly: the Fortress and the Turkish Commodore saluted that Flag at the time with 13 guns, and the Colours of the Republic of the Seven Islands were immediately hoisted in its room, and saluted by Captain Ricketts. This event took place on the 14. Instant. The Flag in question was delivered to Captain Ricketts. Colonel Callander then made his escape on board of a vessel in which Mr Spencer Smith was on his passage to Trieste, and left the place soon afterwards.

Although the Inhabitants of Zante were previously in a state of great ferment, yet I can assure Your Lordship, that the transaction just alluded to took place with the greatest tranquillity, and I did not omit to recommend to the last moment I staid at Zante, the preservation of good order, and submission to the Senate of Corfu, as required by the Constitution agreed to by the Courts of Russia and Turkey and sanctioned by Great Britain .

I should have remained somewhat longer at Zante, had I not received letters in the interval from His Majesty's Ambassador at Constantinople, addressed to me at Corfu, which required of me not to leave Corfu for reasons more closely connected with the King's Service, and which cannot but be well known to Your Lordship, and had I not also received intelligence of there being reason to apprehend, that the enemy might, in the absence of Anglo-Turkish Forces, attack this Island, from the Neapolitan Territory.

I touched however at Ithaca, and found that Colonel Callander and his party at Zante had sent a considerable sum of money to the leading people of Ithaca, in order to induce them to hoist the British Colours at that Island, but, that the Inhabitants had, through the well employed influence of my Deputy, resisted the temptation. Colonel Callander had employed the same means, for the same purpose, at Cephalonia.

I cannot but do justice to the great zeal and alacrity which Captain Ricketts which manifested in every stage of the occurrence above detailed.

I have the satisfaction to inform Your Lordship of the capture of the *Bulldog* Sloop of War, and of a transport under her convoy laden with ordnance, by His Majesty's Frigate *Champion* now in this Port. This event does the greatest honour to the Right Hon. Lord William Stuart who attacked and took the vessels in question, on the 16. Instant, under the batteries of Gallipoli, notwithstanding a heavy fire from them and the musquetry of the troops on shore, as well as from the vessels. The *Bulldog* and 5 transports were on their passage from Ancona to Taranto.

The Turkish Frigates were to sail from Zante the day I did. I much urged the Commodore to hasten to the protection of Corfu, and I understand that he is now on his voyage.

His Majesty's Sloop of War *la Bonne Citoyenne* arrived here this morning from Alexandria, and brought accounts of the conquest of that place by His Majesty's arms. The Right Hon. Lord Keith directed the Captain of the Sloop to touch here to take my advice as to the propriety of forwarding His Lordship's dispatches by sea or by land, and as I have advised the Captain to proceed to Trieste, I have an opportunity of forwarding this letter to Your Lordship.

I have the honour to be etc.,

Spiridion Foresti.

Source: UK. National Archives: Ionian Islands, FO 42/4, ff. 161r–164v.

6. Spiridion Foresti to Lord Hawkesbury, His Majesty's Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, London, dated at Corfu, 22 January 1803.

My Lord,

I take advantage of this favourable opportunity of transmitting by the return of the Alligator Frigate to Malta, which Sir Richard Bickerton sent here, and which arrived on the 17th December last, a quadruplicate of that of the 10th of December, and a triplicate of that of the 2nd Instant, with several enclosures under cover to that Admiral, since I am doubtful whether some of them may not have miscarried or have been intercepted.

Since the new Constitution is not arrived, the general government, with the consent of H. E. the Russian Plenipotentiary Count Mocenigo, thought it expedient to renew the Senate provisionally, which is to be composed of the same number of members as the last one; viz, three of Corfu, three of Cephalonia, three of Zante, two of Santa Maura, one of Ithaca, one of

Cerigo, and one of Paxo. The Prince of the Senate has sent orders to the Delegates of the different Islands for the election of the Senators, who are daily expected here. The Prince published a proclamation on the 30th December last, concerning the change in question, as also did Count Mocenigo on the same date, both of which permit me to enclose for Your Lordship's perusal.

The Russian Frigate and the Turkish Corvet that went with troops to the Island of Cerigo, have not as yet returned, but are shortly expected, since the Russian Frigate is arrived at Zante on her way hither. The Turkish Vice Admiral Seremet Bey is gone on a visit to Patras in the Morea, and is likewise expected here.

Permit me to take the liberty of enclosing to Your Lordship , a packet that the Russian Minister Count Mocenigo consigned to me for Count Woranzoff, the Russian Ambassador at our Court, wherein he mentions the proceedings of Horatio Sebastiani, and the French Commissaries in these Islands, and which Your Lordship will have the goodness to have consigned to that Ambassador.

The several persons whose misconduct has been notorious, and who have in consequence been committed to prison, have confessed in their examination that five or six of the inhabitants of the City have been the leaders in all their illegal proceedings; (the same as in all the other Islands) yet policy at present prevents both the Government and Count Mocenigo from using the severe animadversion these persons merit, and who are now not only skreened but rewarded with important and lucrative situations, since they are absolutely protected by the French Commissaries, as they were particularly warm in French interests during the late war.

It was customary under the Venetians for the Consul in each Island, (Corfu excepted) to hoist the Colours of his Nation, the same as in the different sea ports in Turkey, on the arrival of any ships and on holidays; but when the French took possession of these Islands this was prohibited, and the ensign-staffs were all taken down. Hitherto the French Commissaries at Zante and

Cephalonia are the only persons who have erected ensign-staffs, and hoisted the Colours of their nation.

I have the honour to be etc.,

Spiridion Foresti.

Source: UK. National Archives, Ionian Consular Copybooks, FO 348/4, [no folio numbers].

7. Captain Shepherd, of His Majesty's Ship *Thisbe* to Spiridion Foresti, dated at Corfu Harbour 5 May, 1804.

Sir,

I have the honour to acquaint you in answer to your letter of this day's date respecting the capture of the *Veloce*, which fired into and boarded one of my convoy, that, on the 1st Instant, when only three quarters of a mile from the shore of Ithaca. She in a violent and hostile manner took out the master, his son and nephew and plundered the vessel of many articles, among which were her Colours and the master of his money and wearing apparel. It being calm, I immediately sent my boats to her assistance, which the Privateer perceiving she quitted her. The boats got the above information from the people in consequence of which they followed the Privateer to regain the Master and his people whom they took out. Immediately on the approach of my boats the Privateer fired upon them and also from the shore and killed and wounded several of my men, which I considered then, and do now to have been the greatest breach of neutrality that could have possibly occurred, not to mention their having captured the Brig in the situation which she then was.

I have therefore to acquaint you if you or the Russian Plenipotentiary, or the Government of the Republic of the Seven Islands wish for any further information, I refer you to Lord Nelson, Commander in Chief in the Mediterranean to whom only I am to give an account of my proceedings, and I beg of you to acquaint the Government of Corfu and the Russian

Plenipotentiary that I am sorry to be obliged to give you a very unpleasant report to Lord Nelson respecting the asylum which is given in the Ports of the Republic of the Seven Islands to the Privateers, and Piratical boats bearing the French Flag which so much annoy, and is likely to annoy the commerce of His Majesty's Subjects in these Seas.

I have also to acquaint you that I found no papers of commission on board the *Veloce* to entitle her to make captures, therefore on my arrival at Malta I intend to have the fourteen men which were taken on board her prosecuted and proceeded against for Piracy.

I have the honour to be etc.,

Lewis Shepherd.

Source: UK National Maritime Museum: Admiral Warren WAR/73, ff. 164v–165v.

8. Spiridion Foresti to His Excellency Count Mocenigo, Russian Plenipotentiary at the Republic of the Seven Islands, dated at Corfu, 17 May 1806.

Sir,

The declarations of our august respective Courts to maintain the Independence and Integrity of the Ottoman Empire and to provide as far as may be for the tranquillity of the same, declarations already well known to your Excellency, have imposed an imperious duty on the Ministers of those Courts respectively to give every possible proof of the authenticity and validity of them in all their relations and connections with that Empire.

Some transactions have however taken place between Agents of His Majesty the Emperor of all the Russias in these Islands and those of the neighbouring Ali Pasha of Ioannina, attended by certain circumstances on the part of the former, that have unfortunately excited in the latter sentiments which are irreconcilable with the above declarations. Among

these transactions the protection extended to the Albanian Refugees in Santa Maura and Ithaca is particularly to be regarded.

The irrefragability of these wise and beneficent Intentions by which His Imperial Majesty, in perfect concert with my August Sovereign, is actuated towards the Turkish Empire, forbids me at once to ascribe the origin of these unfortunate sentiments of the Vizir to any other cause than to that of misrepresentation of the facts alluded to, or to the insinuation arising from the intrigues of the Common Enemy carried on at Ioannina.

This interpretation however Ali Pasha has not given to the transactions alluded to, but he has attributed them to motives of an hostile disposition towards himself.

So strongly penetrated is he with this persuasion that he has communicated it to His Britannic Majesty's Consul General at Ioannina, reporting to him at the same time the facts which lead him immediately to make this communication. The British Consul has informed me in his official dispatch of the 1/13 Instant, of these facts, namely that some of his Boats laden with provisions which were going from Arta to the coast about Gomenizza have been intercepted by certain Russian Vessels; and that some of his armed vessels have been ordered away from the latter place by Russian Ships of War.

Ali Pasha unable to account for these proceedings on the part of the Russians on any other ground than that before mentioned, alleging that no satisfactory reason for them has been given to him, and the nature of the facts appearing to him not to correspond to the intentions of our respective Courts so often expressed to him, has judged it expedient to recur to the mediation of the British Consul General in his Capital, hoping that the differences unfortunately subsisting between the Russian Agents at Corfu and Himself may be brought thereby to a speedy and amicable issue.

Not being acquainted with the grounds and details of the facts I have quoted otherwise than by the report made by Ali Pasha to the British Consul General I cannot answer to the general merits of the Vizir's

Complaints. But as your Excellency can have nothing more at heart than to execute in the fullest manner the wise and friendly intentions of our respective Courts in favour of the Ottoman Empire, it is with confidence that I invite you to communicate to me the motives and disposition on which the transactions alluded to were founded, in order that my Influence in conjunction with that of Mr Morier His B. Majesty's Consul General in Albania may be exerted to remove from the mind of the Vizir those unfavourable impressions, which on this occasion he has received to the great prejudice of the Common Cause which our respective Courts are united to defend.

The repeated assurances of esteem and consideration given by us to Ali Pasha, the grounds on which they were given, and the conditions, by a strict observance of which he was only to expect a continuation of our support, must be too fresh in the recollection of your Excellency to need my recitation of them. It is deeply to be regretted that any occurrences should have arisen to invalidate this reliance on the sincerity of these assurances. And if measures be not now taken to prevent a recurrence of these complaints and suspicions, which, if well founded or not on the part of the Vizir, afford him plausible pretexts for enlarging his power and oppressing the Greeks, and to our Common Enemy the most favourable opportunity of establishing their influence in Albania, the joint Interests of Great Britain and Russia cannot but be impaired in that Country; a circumstance which demands therefore the most speedy and effectual redress.

The fatal measures to which the Vizir may resort while he sees that the influence of Great Britain cannot be exerted to support him, whilst he sees such various reasons to doubt the sincerity of the intentions of the Russians towards him and when he knows the disposition of the Porte towards him, these are considerations which, in the present important crisis, demand the most serious deliberation.

In proposing this mediation and offering these reflections to your Excellency in perfect conformity to the wise and friendly intentions of my Court, in all that regards the Turkish Empire, I have only in view to afford fresh Proofs of my ardent and sincere desire to contribute as far as depends

on me to preserve that good understanding between the parties now at issue, which for the success of the Common Cause, which our august respective Courts have engaged to defend, it is so desirable to cement and strengthen.

Nothing more remains for me than to pray your Excellency to accept the frank assurance of the distinguished consideration with whom I have the honour to be etc.,

I have the honour to be etc.,

Spiridion Foresti.

Source: UK. National Archives: Ionian Letter Books, FO 42/8A, ff. 70r–73v.

9. His Excellency Count Mocenigo, Russian Plenipotentiary at the Republic of the Seven Islands, to Spiridion Foresti Esq., His Majesty's Resident at the Republic of the Seven Islands, dated at Corfu, 20 May 1806.

Sir,

Your note of the 17th Instant has afforded me the same satisfaction, which I shall feel on all occasions, where your intervention is employed for promoting the better success of the service of our respective Sovereigns. This premised, it was my duty to observe most religiously those declarations, which our august Courts have made to secure the integrity of the Ottoman Empire under the present political circumstances, and as far as may be its tranquillity. I observe at the same time you have been so far actuated by this principle, which certainly is mine, as to consider it as your duty to represent to me the complaint of the Vizir of Ioannina, Ali Pasha, on two articles, the one relative to the refuge, which the Greek Armatoli have taken in the Islands of Santa Maura and Ithaca, and the other concerning the measures taken to remove from the Channel of Corfu the maritime armaments of the said Vizir.

Supported by the reflections of Mr Consul General Morier you have found in them an additional reason to endeavour that certain suspicions, which may injure the Common cause, by assisting that perhaps of our Common Enemy, be removed from the mind of that powerful neighbour. I observe lastly that actuated by these reasons you addressed me in order to learn the real state of the business and to concert with me, in the present important crisis such measures as may be necessary.

Fully appreciating the opportunity where you have offered me, I do not hesitate a moment to lay before you on both articles such explanations as will evince to you that the measures taken relative to these events through my interventions cannot bear the slightest shadow of the suspicion entertained, and which if they disturb the Vizir of Ioannina do not on that account affect in any manner the sacred inviolability of the declarations of our august Courts, or occasion any legitimate injury to the Common Cause.

If every other important situation is to be neglected, if the mere circumstances of the moment are to determine the immediate end of the measures to be taken, and if lastly no regard is to be paid to the primitive causes, which have occasioned the Emigration of the Greek Armatoli, certain it is that the humanity of this Government and of Him who protects it, would not have been opposed by me to deprive these unhappy victims of persecution of that Asylum, which the vicinity of the Islands of Santa and Ithaca offered for their preservation. Notwithstanding this, perceiving that the Vizir of Ioannina opposed the most daring and even indecent hostility to these humane and laudable Sentiments of the Septinsular Government, perceiving moreover the Tranquillity of the confines of the Seven Islands was disturbed and the commercial intercourse with the neighbouring State suspended, desirous also to accommodate our interests with those of the Vizir, and no longer regarding the Excesses committed, I availed myself of the regular and pacific measures of adjusting such differences by making sincere and equitable proposals: and I hastened in consequence to address the most excellent Senate, offering every cooperation on my part, in order, that by prompt and vigorous resolutions, it might render the residence of these refugees in its state compatible with

the demands of the Vizir of Ioannina and with those views, which cannot be overlooked but by those, who never accustomed themselves to look beyond the occurrence of the moment: and in order that the opening of a conciliatory negotiation might have the most efficacious success a Senator on the part of the Government and the Russian Consul residing at Ioannina were charged with this amicable negotiation, which I supported so much more readily, as I will frankly confess how reasonable a ground I found in the complaint of the above mentioned Vizir relative to these refugees, as far as it concerns the violent Incursions made by them into his territories, a violence arising however from a spirit of revenge natural to all persecuted persons destitute of subsistence for their families and of the most urgent wants of life.

I flatter myself therefore that this mission, in whatever light it may be regarded by the Vizir, will be fully appreciated by the Agents of His Britannic Majesty, who will see in it a very striking proof of the moderation and sincerity which have been employed and are employed to bring to a termination this ceaseless and troublesome business.

In passing to the second article I cannot conceal from you, Sir, my surprise in finding that Mr Consul Morier did not immediately remark to the Vizir, Ali Pasha, that the removing his maritime armaments and preventing the passage of military stores through the Channel of Corfu a measure adopted at the particular instance of the Septinsular Government, was and is to *garantie* [sic] to the same the inviolability of its own waters protected by the Forces of my Sovereign, and above all for the purpose of maintaining as is my duty, the august Convention of 21st March 1800, which convention and treaty cannot be unknown to Mr Morier, and certainly not to the Vizir himself, as he did omit to apply to His Excellency Vice Admiral Seniavin to obtain under a fair pretence of free passage for his vessels laden with provisions through the channel of the Republic, while he had already sent to Gomenizza various armed vessels laden with military stores and with everything that could prove to me the manifest desire of wishing openly to violate the cardinal point of a Treaty, to the observance of which I cannot nor ought not to be indifferent. However it may be I can adduce, under all circumstances, the most evident proof that the act alledged, of his vessels

laden with provisions or vessels not armed and not carrying more than the necessary complement, having been obstructed in passage, is totally false. I feel on the other hand however that I cannot deny to the Senate of the Republic that assistance and protection, which by the Treaty of the 21st March, is provided as well for the Inviolability of its Waters, the security of its small, but interesting daily commerce, as for the peace in short of its frontiers, and which assistance I repeat I could not absolutely refuse but in the case where the orders of my august Master shall command me to do so.

I can assure you, Sir, that the Instructions, clear and precise, issued to the Commanders of the Imperial Cruisers have only for their object the removing of armed vessels or of the vessels of the same nature, whenever these, either singly or united, shall attempt to violate the above mentioned Treaty. Nor should I have undertaken this had it not been for the repeated and pressing as well as legal and just demands of the Ionian Senate; nor upon the most mature reflection, will I desist to support it on these legitimate titles and in the forms prescribed so long as the acknowledged protection continues, which my Sovereign accords to this Government, as required by the Guarantee in the solemn Treaty of 1800. And unless the august Courts take measures on this subject, the free navigation of the armed vessels of the Vizir in the channels of this Republic cannot be authorised.

The intestine wars which now rage on the Shores and in the Country of Epirus offend in no respect nor have any direct relation with the Septinsular State or with the dignity of the Imperial Arms, which support it, but the case is very different with regard to the maritime wars, which had already begun in the waters surrounding this Island. For if these armed vessels, which had already entered into the Channel, and which refuse to leave it at the intimation given to them were to be allowed, and if similar permissions were to be given to the vessels, which might be armed by the Pashas who are now at war with the Vizir, and of whose example the former have already availed themselves to ask of me the same privilege the dignity of the Imperial Squadrons would be offended, the greatest injury would arise to the Public Opinion and considerable obstruction to the commercial intercourse both of the Seven Islands among themselves and of the Islands

with the Continent. For which reasons it is evident that if the Vizir of Ioannina, in his character as true Governor of a vast province of the Ottoman Empire is really interested to serve with loyalty the common cause, he cannot notice or complain of the prohibition given to his naval armaments to pass without the permission of the Government into these Channels, over which, I shall not cease to repeat that the Treaty of 21st March gives to the Senate of the Septinsular Republic the most absolute and declared jurisdiction nor, lastly can he complain of any of those means that have been employed for a long time and particularly in the late proceedings, to accommodate in a conciliatory way, those incidents which might have occurred, even after the aggravation which misconception and false representation might have added to them.

For the rest I beg you Sir, to believe that I shall always receive with infinite acknowledgment every conciliatory means compatible with the basis of the above mentioned Treaty, which you can offer me, any thing contained in this act notwithstanding; and also to accept the assurances of my particular esteem and distinguished consideration, etc.,

Conte Georgio Mocenigo.

Source: UK. National Archives: Ionian Letter Books, FO 42/8A, ff. 74r–78v.

10. Spiridion Foresti to His Excellency the Rt. Hon. Admiral Lord Collingwood, dated at Malta, 23 December, 1807.

My Lord,

I have the honour of receiving Your Lordship's letter by Captain Leake, and beg leave to return you my particular thanks for its contents.

The Proposals of Ali Pasha are what might have been expected from the spirit of personal ambition and cupidity which animates that Chief. Aware that the present moment is favourable to his aggrandizement with a subtlety peculiar to his character he wishes to have a pledge of our support in his hands. Expediency might lead the British Government to such a

concession; it is to be regretted, however, that it should be made in favour of a man professing so little good Taste and Moderation.

I have just received information from Corfu that the Enemy, there, are daily expecting the arrival of the Venetian Squadron and of reinforcement of National Troops with ammunition of which they stand so much in need.

By very recent accounts that I have received from Trieste I learn that the French at Venice had launched two 44-gun Frigates in addition to the Force they had there, and that there were also on the stocks three Ships-of-the-Line, two of which were to be launched soon after the arrival of Buonaparte at that Capital.

I beg leave to enclose a Statement of the Naval and Military Force at Corfu and in the other Islands. There are besides, about 180 merchant vessels at the Port of Argostoli in Cephalonia and about 50 at Little Cephalonia (Ithaca). The French have proposed to the Inhabitants of these Islands to arm a number of their vessels and to operate in the way they did under the Russians, but they declined for many considerations.

I think it useful also to mention to Your Lordship that General Berthier, having received information of an intention on the part of the English Government to make an immediate attack on Corfu, called a Council of War to consult on the best means of defending the Island and it was ascertained that they had only six weeks of provisions and hardly any ammunition. He assembled together also the Inhabitants, particularly those who commanded different districts, and exhorted them to unite with him in defending their Island. They showed no inclination to join with him, and with great reluctance they submit to their political change: and although many who have distinguished themselves for their attachment to Great Britain and for their aversion for the present Government became the peculiar objects of persecution, they, nevertheless did not hesitate particularly on that occasion to avow the impatience and fervency with which they looked to the hour of their liberation.

Such a procedure on the part of the Inhabitants is not, indeed, to be wondered at when it is considered that the arbitrary Requisitions together with the Extinction of all commercial Enterprise, must reduce to a considerable distress many of them who derived their subsistence from commerce and who depended totally upon it.

Yesterday arrived a vessel from Trieste in 9 days, which brought accounts of the arrival of Buonaparte in Venice.

I have the honour to be etc.,

Spiridion Foresti.

Attachment. Statement of the Naval and Military Force in the Seven Ionian Islands on the 2nd December, 1807.

Naval: 16 Russian vessels from 80 to 14 guns [two unfit for service], 5 French vessels 44 to 18 guns, plus gunboats etc.

Military: Corfu 1500 French troops / 800 Albanians and Italians; Santa Maura 200/1000; Cephalonia 60/5; Zante 150/400. Ithaca and Cerigo no French troops and but a few Italians.

Source: UK National Maritime Museum: Collingwood- In and Out letterbook to Consuls, COL/6, pp. 59–61.

11. Spiridion Foresti to the Rt. Hon. George Canning, His Majesty's Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, London, dated at Malta, 15 May 1809.

Sir,

H. E. Mr Adair's dispatches forwarded by the present conveyance will furnish you with a full detail of his recent proceedings at Constantinople in consequence of certain Septinsular Captains of Merchant Ships having on the 20th Ultimo hauled down the Flag given them by the French

Minister there, hoisted the Septinsular Colours and demanded the British Protection which was immediately accorded to them.

Aversion of the Septinsular Inhabitants to their present Rulers and their public declaration that their uncertainty of receiving His Majesty's protection alone prevents them from taking up arms against the Enemy I have frequently had the honour to represent to you.

Under the apprehension of an approaching rupture between Turkey and France this disposition of the Inhabitants has increased to a degree that the temporary appearance of a British naval Force before either of the Towns of Cephalonia, Zante, Ithaca and Cerigo and the Commander empowered to give them the assurance of His Majesty's support in maintaining their ancient Government would be alone necessary in instigating them to expel the French Party and establish their former government.

I have the honour to be etc.,

Spiridion Foresti.

Source: UK National Archives: Ionian Consular Copy Books, FO 348/7, [no folio numbers].

12. Spiridion Foresti to Rt. Hon. George Canning, His Majesty's Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, London, dated at Zante, 17 October 1809.

Sir,

In my dispatch dated Malta September 22nd of which the enclosed is a duplicate I had the honour to submit to you the motives that induced me to leave Malta and embark on H. M. Frigate *Spartan*.

I have now to acquaint you that I joined the Expedition at the appointed Rendezvous on the 28th Ultimo and on the same day was received on board H. M. Ship *Warrior* in which Brigadier General Oswald was embarked.

On the morning of October 1st the Squadron, consisting of H. M. Ships *Warrior*, *Magnificent*, *Spartan* and *Philomel* with ten Transports, arrived off Zante and every arrangement for Debarkation being completed and notice sent to the principal Inhabitants of the Island, the Troops landed at a distance of three miles from the City, and on the next day the Fortress and Island were surrendered to His Majesty's Arms.

Brigadier Oswald after having proclaimed the Restoration of the Ionian Republic, established a provisional Government, and left a sufficient Force, sailed with the Remainder of the Troops to Cephalonia.

Complying with Brigadier General Oswald's request I accompanied him to Cephalonia and on the 5th we arrived and took possession of that Island without any Opposition.

His Majesty's Ship *Spartan* with a Company of the 34th Regt. was immediately detached for the reduction of the Island of Cerigo, from whence the Enemy have been enabled to interrupt the trade of the Archipelago, and H. M. Ship *Philomel* with another portion of Troops was sent against the Island of Ithaca.

I sailed with the latter expedition and on the 8th we landed and occupied that Island.

Measures similar to those at Zante being adopted for Cephalonia and Ithaca, General Oswald and myself returned to Zante on the 15th.

Soon after our arrival we received accounts of the occupation of Cerigo by the Force detached from Cephalonia.

For the detailed account of the Naval and Military operations as also of the political arrangements connected with those operations I beg leave to refer you to the official reports of Captain Spranger of H. M. S. *Warrior* and of Brigadier General Oswald.

There remains for me only to offer you my Congratulations upon the Success which has attended, hitherto, these Operations and upon the advantages which may be confidently expected to be derived from them.

It is my intention to continue with Brigadier General Oswald until I shall have the honour of receiving His Majesty's further Instructions, and I have only to express a hope that the Part I have humbly taken in the conduct of these Operations will meet with His Majesty's gracious Approbation.

I have the honour to be etc.,

Spiridion Foresti.

Source: UK National Archives: Ionian Consular Copy Books, FO 348/7, [no folio numbers].

13. Captain C. Crawley, His Majesty's Sloop *Philomel* to Captain J. W. Spranger, His Majesty's Ship *Warrior* dated at Outer Harbour Ithaca, 10 October, 1809.

Sir,

I beg leave to inform you that His Majesty's Sloop *Philomel* anchored here on the 8th Instant, having been prevented from gaining the Port before by contrary winds. On working into the Harbour, I observed that the Battery was so situated as to render any attempt to destroy it by the guns of the Sloop impracticable; the detachment of troops, together with the Marines belonging to the *Philomel*, were therefore immediately landed under the Command of Captain Church, accompanied by a party of seamen, which I conceived might be of use, should the enemy be foolish enough to make any resistance.

The Gun Boat having been previously directed to keep the enemy in check, we immediately proceeded to a height commanding the Battery, with an intention of taking it by storm, which was only prevented by their making an unconditional Surrender immediately they observed us, and in less than

an hour from the Time the *Philomel* anchored, we had the satisfaction to find ourselves in full possession of the Island.

A few shots were exchanged between the Gun Boat and Battery, which consisted of two guns only, with a garrison of between seventy and eighty men, which was greatly reduced by the whole of the Albanians having deserted it.

The Cordiality and general good conduct of the troops and seamen, was such as I am fully convinced would ever ensure success in any of our enterprises; I have only to regret that they had not a greater opportunity of evincing their resolution and zeal.

The Inhabitants are apparently much pleased with the established provisional Government; a copy of the form of which you will herewith receive.

I should be much deficient in my duty did I now neglect to state the exertions made use of, and very essential services rendered, by Mr. Foresti, H. B. Majesty's Minister, which were such as to claim my greatest gratitude, and I am happy in this opportunity of making my acknowledgments to him.

I have, etc.

G. Crawley

Return of Prisoners and Ordnance taken in the Island of Ithaca, October 8, 1809.

2nd Italian Regiment – 3 Officers, 23 Rank and File

Albanians – 4 Officers, 46 rank and File.

Total – 7 Officers, 69 Rank and File.

1 Major de Place

Iron Ordnance.

2 Six-Pounders (mounted).

2 ditto (ready to mount).
4 Four-Pounders (dismounted).
3 Three-Pounders (dismounted).
2 Nine-Pounders (dismounted).
Total—13.

R. Church, Assist. Quarter Master General.

Source: UK National Archives: Mediterranean 1809, ADM 1/415, [no folio numbers].

14. Provisional Government of the Island of Ithaca to Rt. Hon. George Canning, His Majesty's Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, London, dated at Ithaca, 11 October 1809.

May it please Your Excellency,

As it is impossible to express the joy and exultation of this affectionate population of Ithaca on the recovery of their freedom, which awoke them from the lethargy into which they had been miserably plunged, raised them from the debasement and inertness under which they groaned, and opened them the way to resume their suspended navigation and ruined commerce, that gave them existence; so, likewise, do they set no bounds to their obligation, gratitude and acknowledgments toward His Majesty, who was the great and beneficent Author thereof. The people, who are represented by us, have not powers sufficient either to express or describe their devotion; still, however, animated by the knowledge of the immense generosity of the Royal Benefactors, we make bold to assure Y. E. of this dutiful and eternal gratitude of ours, which is indiscriminately engraven on the hearts of all the inhabitants of this Island, and to declare at the same time our loyal attachment to the great British Nation and our highest veneration for the Crown.

While, however, most honourable Sir, we supplicate Y. E. to be pleased to lay our most humble duty at H. M. feet we cannot pass over in silence the incomparable merit of his very worthy Minister, Mr Foresti, which has been conspicuous not only in his personal and indefatigable cooperation in that

fortunate circumstance, whereby he was instrumental in bringing matters to a happy issue, but also in exerting at all times his best endeavours for the prosperity and relief of the Ionian people in their most trying situations.

We have the honour to be,

Your Excellency's

Demetrio Vlassopulo, President
Spiridion Caravia
Gerasimo Draculi
Provisional Committee of Government.

Source: UK National Archives: Ionian Letter Books, FO 42/11, pp. 220–222.

Note: Contemporary translation in which the incorrectly spelt names of letter's authors have been corrected to match the original Italian document published in G. Livitsanis, 'Ἰθάκη 1809', at 608.

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UK. National Archives, Ionian Consular Copybooks, FO 348.

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— Mediterranean 1809, ADM 1.

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Abstract

This paper presents fourteen letters relating to Ithaca selected from the papers of Spiridion Foresti, Britain's consul in the Ionian during the last years of Venetian rule and into the early nineteenth century. A short commentary provides some background for the documents, particularly to emphasise the letters as sources for the history of Ithaca in its regional political and economic context.

Περίληψη

Η εργασία αυτή παρουσιάζει δεκατέσσερις επιστολές σχετικά με την Ιθάκη, επιλεγμένες από τα έγγραφα του Σπυρίδωνα Φορέστη, προξένου της Βρετανίας στο Ιόνιο κατά τα τελευταία χρόνια της βενετικής κυριαρχίας και μέχρι τις αρχές του δέκατου ενάτου αιώνα. Τα έγγραφα παρουσιάζονται με συνοπτικό σχολιασμό, προκειμένου να δοθεί ιδιαίτερη έμφαση στις επιστολές ως πηγές για την ιστορία της Ιθάκης μέσα στο περιφερειακό πολιτικό και οικονομικό της πλαίσιο.