

= George I of Greece =

George I (Greek : ????????? ?? , ????????? ??? ??????? , Geórgios ?? , Vasiléfs ton Ellínon ; born Prince William of Schleswig @-@ Holstein @-@ Sonderburg @-@ Glücksburg ; 24 December 1845 ? 18 March 1913) was King of Greece from 1863 until his assassination in 1913 .

Originally a Danish prince , George was born in Copenhagen , and seemed destined for a career in the Royal Danish Navy . He was only 17 years old when he was elected king by the Greek National Assembly , which had deposed the unpopular former king Otto . His nomination was both suggested and supported by the Great Powers : the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland , the Second French Empire and the Russian Empire . He married the Russian grand duchess Olga Constantinovna of Russia , and became the first monarch of a new Greek dynasty . Two of his sisters , Alexandra and Dagmar , married into the British and Russian royal families . King Edward VII and Tsar Alexander III were his brothers @-@ in @-@ law and King George V and Tsar Nicholas II were his nephews .

George 's reign of almost 50 years (the longest in modern Greek history) was characterized by territorial gains as Greece established its place in pre @-@ World War I Europe . Britain ceded the Ionian Islands peacefully , while Thessaly was annexed from the Ottoman Empire after the Russo @-@ Turkish War (1877 ? 1878) . Greece was not always successful in its expansionist ambitions ; it was defeated in the Greco @-@ Turkish War (1897) . During the First Balkan War , after Greek troops had occupied much of Greek Macedonia , George was assassinated in Thessaloniki . Compared to his own long tenure , the reigns of his successors Constantine , Alexander , and George proved short and insecure .

== Family and early life ==

George was born at the Yellow Palace , an 18th @-@ century town house at 18 Amaliegade , right next to the Amalienborg Palace complex in Copenhagen . He was the second son of Prince Christian of Schleswig @-@ Holstein @-@ Sonderburg @-@ Glücksburg and Louise of Hesse @-@ Kassel . Although his full name was Prince Christian Vilhelm Ferdinand Adolf Georg of Schleswig @-@ Holstein @-@ Sonderburg @-@ Glücksburg , until his accession in Greece , he was known as Prince Vilhelm (William) , the namesake of his paternal and maternal grandfathers , William , Duke of Schleswig @-@ Holstein @-@ Sonderburg @-@ Glücksburg , and Prince William of Hesse @-@ Kassel .

Although he was of royal blood , his family was relatively obscure and lived a comparatively normal life by royal standards . In 1852 , however , George 's father was designated the heir presumptive to the childless King Frederick VII of Denmark , and the family became princes and princesses of Denmark . George 's siblings were Frederick (who succeeded their father as King of Denmark) , Alexandra (who became queen consort of Edward VII of the United Kingdom and the mother of King George V) , Dagmar (who , as Empress Maria Feodorovna , was consort of Alexander III of Russia and the mother of Tsar Nicholas II) , Thyra (who married Prince Ernest Augustus , 3rd Duke of Cumberland and Teviotdale) and Valdemar .

George 's mother tongue was Danish , with English as a second language . He was also taught French and German . He embarked on a career in the Royal Danish Navy , and enrolled as a naval cadet along with his elder brother Frederick . While Frederick was described as " quiet and extremely well @-@ behaved " , George was " lively and full of pranks " .

= = King of the Hellenes = =

Following the overthrow of the Bavarian @-@ born King Otto of Greece in October 1862 , the Greek people had rejected Otto 's brother and designated successor Leopold , although they still favored a monarchy rather than a republic . Many Greeks , seeking closer ties to the pre @-@ eminent world power , Great Britain , rallied around Prince Alfred , Duke of Edinburgh , second son of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert . British Foreign Minister Lord Palmerston believed that the

Greeks were " panting for increase in territory " , hoping for a gift of the Ionian Islands , which were then a British protectorate . The London Conference of 1832 , however , prohibited any of the Great Powers ' ruling families from accepting the crown , and in any event , Queen Victoria was adamantly opposed to the idea . The Greeks nevertheless insisted on holding a plebiscite in which Prince Alfred received over 95 % of the 240 @,@ 000 votes . There were 93 votes for a Republic and 6 for a Greek . King Otto received one vote .

With Prince Alfred 's exclusion , the search began for an alternative candidate . The French favored Henri d 'Orléans , duc d 'Aumale , while the British proposed Queen Victoria 's brother @-@ in @-@ law Ernest II , Duke of Saxe @-@ Coburg , her nephew Prince Leiningen , and Archduke Maximilian of Austria , among others . Eventually , the Greeks and Great Powers winnowed their choice to Prince William of Denmark , who had received 6 votes in the plebiscite . Aged only 17 , he was elected King of the Hellenes on 30 March [O.S. 18 March] 1863 by the Greek National Assembly under the regnal name of George I. Paradoxically , he ascended a royal throne before his father , who became King of Denmark on 15 November the same year . There were two significant differences between George 's elevation and that of his predecessor , Otto . First , he was acclaimed unanimously by the Greek Assembly , rather than imposed on the people by foreign powers . Second , he was proclaimed " King of the Hellenes " instead of " King of Greece " , which had been Otto 's style .

His ceremonial enthronement in Copenhagen on 6 June was attended by a delegation of Greeks led by First Admiral and Prime Minister Constantine Kanaris . Frederick VII awarded George the Order of the Elephant , and it was announced that the British government would cede the Ionian Islands to Greece in honor of the new monarch .

= = Early reign = =

The new 17 @-@ year @-@ old king toured Saint Petersburg , London and Paris before departing for Greece from the French port of Toulon on 22 October aboard the Greek flagship Hellas . He arrived in Athens on 30 October [O.S. 18 October] 1863 , after docking at Piraeus the previous day . He was determined not to make the mistakes of his predecessor , so he quickly learned Greek . The new king was seen frequently and informally in the streets of Athens , where his predecessor had only appeared in pomp . King George found the palace in a state of disarray , after the hasty departure of King Otto , and took to putting it right by mending and updating the 40 @-@ year @-@ old building . He also sought to ensure that he was not seen as too influenced by his Danish advisers , ultimately sending his uncle , Prince Julius , back to Denmark with the words , " I will not allow any interference with the conduct of my government " . Another adviser , Count Wilhelm Sponneck , became unpopular for advocating a policy of disarmament and tactlessly questioning the descent of modern Greeks from classical antecedents . Like Julius , he was dispatched back to Denmark .

From May 1864 , George undertook a tour of the Peloponnese , through Corinth , Argos , Tripolitsa , Sparta , and Kalamata , where he embarked on the frigate Hellas . Proceeding northwards along the coast accompanied by British , French and Russian naval vessels , the Hellas reached Corfu on 6 June , for the ceremonial handover of the Ionian Islands by the British High Commissioner , Sir Henry Storks .

Politically , the new king took steps to conclude the protracted constitutional deliberations of the Assembly . On 19 October 1864 , he sent the Assembly a demand , countersigned by Constantine Kanaris , explaining that he had accepted the crown on the understanding that a new constitution would be finalized , and that if it was not he would feel himself at " perfect liberty to adopt such measures as the disappointment of my hopes may suggest " . It was unclear from the wording whether he meant to return to Denmark or impose a constitution , but as either event was undesirable the Assembly soon came to an agreement .

On 28 November 1864 , he took the oath to defend the new constitution , which created a unicameral assembly (Vouli) with representatives elected by direct , secret , universal male suffrage , a first in modern Europe . A constitutional monarchy was set up with George deferring to

the legitimate authority of the elected officials , although he was aware of the corruption present in elections and the difficulty of ruling a mostly illiterate population . Between 1864 and 1910 , there were 21 general elections and 70 different governments .

Internationally , George maintained a strong relationship with his brother @-@ in @-@ law , Albert Edward , Prince of Wales (eventually King Edward VII of the United Kingdom) , and sought his help in defusing the recurring and contentious issue of Crete , an overwhelmingly Greek island that remained under Ottoman Turk control . Since the reign of Otto , the Greek desire to unite Greek lands in one nation had been a sore spot with the United Kingdom and France , which had embarrassed Otto by occupying the main Greek port Piraeus to dissuade Greek irredentism during the Crimean War . During the Cretan Revolt (1866 ? 1869) , the Prince of Wales sought the support of British Foreign Secretary Lord Derby to intervene in Crete on behalf of Greece . Ultimately , the Great Powers did not intervene and the Ottomans put down the rebellion .

= = Marriage and children = =

George first met Grand Duchess Olga Constantinovna of Russia in 1863 , when she was 12 years old , on a visit to the court of Tsar Alexander II between his election to the Greek throne and his arrival in Athens . They met for a second time in April 1867 , when George went to the Russian Empire to visit his sister Dagmar , who had married into the Russian imperial family . While George was a Lutheran , the Romanovs were Orthodox Christians like the majority of Greeks , and George thought a marriage with a Russian grand duchess would re @-@ assure his subjects on the question of his future children 's religion . Olga was just 16 years old when she married George in Saint Petersburg on 27 October 1867 . After a honeymoon at Tsarskoye Selo , the couple left Russia for Greece on 9 November . Over the next twenty years , they had eight children :

Constantine (1868 ? 1923) , who married Princess Sophia of Prussia ;

George (1869 ? 1957) , who married Princess Marie Bonaparte ;

Alexandra (1870 ? 1891) , who married Grand Duke Paul Alexandrovich of Russia ;

Nicholas (1872 ? 1938) , who married Grand Duchess Elena Vladimirovna of Russia ;

Maria (1876 ? 1940) , who married firstly Grand Duke George Mikhailovich of Russia and secondly Admiral Perikles Ioannidis ;

Olga (1880) , who died aged seven months ;

Andrew (1882 ? 1944) , who married Princess Alice of Battenberg and was the father of Prince Philip , Duke of Edinburgh ; and

Christopher (1888 ? 1940) , who married firstly American widow Nancy Stewart Worthington Leeds and secondly Princess Françoise of Orléans .

As a marriage gift , the Tsar gave George a group of islands in the Petalioi Gulf , which the family visited on the royal yacht Amphitrite . George later purchased a country estate , Tatoï , north of Athens , and on Corfu he built a summer villa called Mon Repos . George developed Tatoï , building roads and planting grapes for making his own wine , Chateau Décélie . Intent on not letting his subjects know that he missed Denmark , he discreetly maintained a dairy at his palace at Tatoï , which was managed by native Danes and served as a bucolic reminder of his homeland . Queen Olga was far less careful in hiding her nostalgia for her native Russia , often visiting Russian ships at Piraeus two or three times before they weighed anchor . When alone with his wife , George usually conversed in German . Their children were taught English by their nannies , and when talking with his children he therefore spoke mainly English .

The King was related by marriage to the rulers of Great Britain , Russia and Prussia , maintaining a particularly strong attachment to the Prince and Princess of Wales , who visited Athens in 1869 . Their visit occurred despite continued lawlessness which culminated in the kidnap of a party of British and Italian tourists , including Lord and Lady Muncaster . Two female hostages , a child and Lord Muncaster were released , but four of the others : British diplomat E. H. C. Herbert (the first cousin of Lord Carnarvon) , Frederick Vyner (the brother @-@ in @-@ law of Lord Ripon , Lord President of the Council) , Italian diplomat Count Boil di Putifigari , and Mr. Lloyd (an engineer) were murdered . George 's relationships with other ruling houses assisted him and his small country

but also often put them at the center of national political struggles in Europe .

From 1864 to 1874 , Greece had 21 governments , the longest of which lasted a year and a half . In July 1874 , Charilaos Trikoupis , a member of the Greek Parliament , wrote an anonymous article in the newspaper Kairoi blaming King George and his advisors for the continuing political crisis caused by the lack of stable governments . In the article , he accused the King of acting like an absolute monarch by imposing minority governments on the people . If the King insisted , he argued , that only a politician commanding a majority in the Vouli could be appointed prime minister , then politicians would be forced to work together more harmoniously in order to construct a coalition government . Such a plan , he wrote , would end the political instability and reduce the large number of smaller parties . Trikoupis admitted to writing the article after a man supposed by the authorities to be the author was arrested , whereupon he was taken into custody himself . After a public outcry , he was released and subsequently acquitted of the charge of " undermining the constitutional order " . The following year , the King asked Trikoupis to form a government (without a majority) and then read a speech from the throne declaring that in future the leader of the majority party in parliament would be appointed prime minister .

= = Territorial expansion = =

Throughout the 1870s , Greece kept pressure on the Ottoman Empire , seeking territorial expansion into Epirus and Thessaly . The Russo @-@ Turkish War of 1877 ? 1878 provided the first potential alliance for the Greek kingdom . George 's sister Dagmar was the daughter @-@ in @-@ law of Alexander II of Russia , and she sought to have Greece join the war . The French and British refused to countenance such an act , and Greece remained neutral . At the Congress of Berlin convened in 1878 to determine peace terms for the Russo @-@ Turkish War , Greece staked a claim to Crete , Epirus and Thessaly .

The borders were still not finalized in June 1880 when a proposal very favorable to Greece that included Mount Olympus and Ioannina was offered by the British and French . When the Ottoman Turks strenuously objected , Prime Minister Trikoupis made the mistake of threatening a mobilization of the Hellenic Army . A coincident change of government in France , the resignation of Charles de Freycinet and his replacement with Jules Ferry , led to disputes among the Great Powers and , despite British support for a more pro @-@ Greek settlement , the Turks subsequently granted Greece all of Thessaly but only the part of Epirus around Arta . When the government of Trikoupis fell , the new prime minister , Alexandros Koumoundouros , reluctantly accepted the new boundaries .

While Trikoupis followed a policy of retrenchment within the established borders of the Greek state , having learned a valuable lesson about the vicissitudes of the Great Powers , his main opponents , the Nationalist Party led by Theodoros Deligiannis , sought to inflame the anti @-@ Turkish feelings of the Greeks at every opportunity . The next opportunity arose in 1885 when Bulgarians rose in revolt in Eastern Rumelia and united the province with Bulgaria . Deligiannis rode to victory over Trikoupis in elections that year saying that if the Bulgarians could defy the Treaty of Berlin , so should the Greeks .

Deligiannis mobilized the Hellenic Army , and the British Royal Navy blockaded Greece . The admiral in charge of the blockade was Prince Alfred , Duke of Edinburgh , who had been the first choice of the Greeks to be their king in 1863 , and the First Lord of the Admiralty at the time was Lord Ripon , whose brother @-@ in @-@ law had been murdered in Greece 16 years before . This was not the last time that King George discovered that his family ties were not always to his advantage . Deligiannis was forced to demobilize and Trikoupis regained the premiership . Between 1882 and 1897 , Trikoupis and Deligiannis alternated the premiership as their fortunes rose and fell .

= = National progress = =

George 's silver jubilee in 1888 was celebrated throughout the Hellenic world , and Athens was

decorated with garlands for the anniversary of his accession on 30 October . Visitors included the Crown Prince of Denmark , the Prince and Princess of Wales , the Duke and Duchess of Edinburgh , Grand Dukes Sergei and Paul of Russia , and Djavad Pasha from the Ottoman Empire , who presented the King with two Arabian horses as gifts . Jubilee events in the week of 30 October included balls , galas , parades , a thanksgiving service at the Metropolitan Cathedral of Athens , and a lunch for 500 invited guests in a blue and white tent on the Acropolis .

Greece in the last decades of the 19th century was increasingly prosperous and was developing a sense of its role on the European stage . In 1893 , the Corinth Canal was built by a French company cutting the sea journey from the Adriatic Sea to Piraeus by 150 miles (241 km) . In 1896 , the Olympic Games were revived in Athens , and the Opening Ceremony of the 1896 Summer Olympics was presided over by the King . When Spiridon Louis , a shepherd from just outside Athens , ran into the Panathinaiko Stadium to win the Marathon event , the Crown Prince ran down onto the field to run the last thousand yards beside the Greek gold medalist , while the King stood and applauded .

The popular desire to unite all Greeks within a single territory (Megali Idea) was never far below the surface and another revolt against Turkish rule erupted in Crete . In February 1897 , King George sent his son , Prince George , to take possession of the island . The Greeks refused an Ottoman offer of an autonomous administration , and Deligiannis mobilized for war . The Great Powers refused to allow the expansion of Greece , and on 25 February 1897 announced that Crete would be under an autonomous administration and ordered the Greek and Ottoman Turk militias to withdraw .

The Turks agreed , but Prime Minister Deligiannis refused and dispatched 1400 troops to Crete under the command of Colonel Timoleon Vassos . While the Great Powers announced a blockade , Greek troops crossed the Macedonian border and Abdul Hamid II declared war . The announcement that Greece was finally at war with the Turks was greeted by delirious displays of patriotism and spontaneous parades in honor of the King in Athens . Volunteers by the thousands streamed north to join the forces under the command of Crown Prince Constantine .

The war went badly for the ill @-@ prepared Greeks ; the only saving grace was the swiftness with which the Hellenic Army was overrun . By the end of April 1897 , the war was lost . The worst consequences of defeat for the Greeks were mitigated by the intervention of the King 's relations in Britain and Russia ; nevertheless , the Greeks were forced to give up Crete to international administration , and agree to minor territorial concessions in favor of the Turks and an indemnity of 4 million Turkish pounds .

The jubilation with which Greeks had hailed their king at the beginning of the war was reversed in defeat . For a time , he considered abdication . It was not until the King faced down an assassination attempt on 27 February 1898 with great bravery that his subjects again held their monarch in high esteem . Returning from a trip to the beach at Phaleron in an open carriage , George and his daughter Maria were shot at by two riflemen . The King tried to shield his daughter ; both were unhurt though the coachman and a horse were wounded . The gunmen (an Athens clerk called Karditzis and his assistant) fled into the Hymettus hills but they were spotted and arrested . Both were beheaded at Nauplia .

Later that year , after continued unrest in Crete , which included the murder of the British vice @-@ consul , Prince George of Greece was made the Governor @-@ General of Crete under the suzerainty of the Sultan , after the proposal was put forward by the Great Powers . Greece was effectively in day @-@ to @-@ day control of Crete for the first time in modern history .

= = Later reign and assassination = =

The death of Britain 's Queen Victoria on 22 January 1901 left King George as the second @-@ longest @-@ reigning monarch in Europe . His always cordial relations with his brother @-@ in @-@ law , the new King Edward VII , continued to tie Greece to Britain . This was abundantly important in Britain 's support of King George 's son Prince George as Governor @-@ General of Crete . Nevertheless , Prince George resigned in 1906 after a leader in the Cretan Assembly ,

Eleftherios Venizelos , campaigned to have him removed .

As a response to the Young Turk Revolution of 1908 , Venizelos 's power base was further strengthened , and on 8 October 1908 the Cretan Assembly passed a resolution in favor of union despite both the reservations of the Athens government under Georgios Theotokis and the objections of the Great Powers . The muted reaction of the Athens Government to the news from Crete led to an unsettled state of affairs on the mainland .

A group of military officers formed a military league , Stratiotikos Syndesmos , that demanded that the royal family be stripped of their military commissions . To save the King the embarrassment of removing his sons from their commissions , they resigned them . The military league attempted a coup d'état called the Goudi Pronunciamento , and the King insisted on supporting the duly elected Hellenic Parliament in response . Eventually , the military league joined forces with Venizelos in calling for a National Assembly to revise the constitution . King George gave way , and new elections to the revising assembly were held . After some political maneuvering , Venizelos became prime minister of a minority government . Just a month later , Venizelos called new elections at which he won a colossal majority after most of the opposition parties declined to take part .

Venizelos and the King were united in their belief that the nation required a strong army to repair the damage of the humiliating defeat of 1897 . Crown Prince Constantine was reinstated as Inspector @-@ General of the Army , and later Commander @-@ in @-@ Chief . Under his and Venizelos 's close supervision the military was retrained and equipped with French and British help , and new ships were ordered for the Hellenic Navy . Meanwhile , through diplomatic means , Venizelos had united the Christian countries of the Balkans in opposition to the ailing Ottoman Empire .

When Montenegro declared war on Turkey on 8 October 1912 , it was joined quickly by Serbia , Bulgaria , and Greece in what is known as the First Balkan War . George was on vacation in Denmark , so he immediately returned to Greece via Vienna , arriving in Athens to be met by a large and enthusiastic crowd on the evening of 9 October . The results of this campaign differed radically from the Greek experience at the hands of the Turks in 1897 . The well @-@ trained Greek forces , 200 @,@ 000 strong , won victory after victory . On 9 November 1912 , Greek forces commanded by Crown Prince Constantine rode into Thessaloniki , just a few hours ahead of a Bulgarian division . Three days later King George rode in triumph through the streets of Thessaloniki , the second @-@ largest Greek city , accompanied by the Crown Prince and Venizelos .

As he approached the fiftieth anniversary of his accession , the King made plans to abdicate in favor of his son Constantine immediately after the celebration of his golden jubilee in October 1913 . Just as he did in Athens , George went about Thessaloniki without any meaningful protection force . While out on an afternoon walk near the White Tower on 18 March 1913 , he was shot at close range in the back by Alexandros Schinas , who was " said to belong to a Socialist organization " and " declared when arrested that he had killed the King because he refused to give him money " . George died instantly , the bullet having penetrated his heart . The Greek government denied any political motive for the assassination , saying that Schinas was an alcoholic vagrant . Schinas was tortured in prison and six weeks later fell to his death from a police station window .

The King 's body was taken to Athens on the Amphitrite , escorted by a flotilla of naval vessels . For three days the coffin of the King , draped in the Danish and Greek flags , lay in the Metropolis in Athens before his body was committed to a tomb at his palace in Tatoi . Unlike his father , the new king , Constantine , was to prove less willing to accept the advice of ministers , or that of the three protecting powers (Britain , France and Russia) .

= = Titles , styles and arms = =

= = = Titles from birth to death = = =

1845 ? 1852 : His Highness Prince William of Schleswig @-@ Holstein @-@ Sonderburg @-@ Glücksburg

1852 ? 1858 : His Highness Prince William of Denmark
1858 ? 1863 : His Royal Highness Prince William of Denmark
1863 ? 1913 : His Majesty The King of the Hellenes

== Arms ==

The distinctive Greek flag of blue and white cross was first hoisted during the Greek War of Independence in March 1822 . This was later modified so that the shade of blue matched that of the Bavarian coat of arms of the first King of Greece , Otto . The shield is emblazoned with the coat of arms of the Danish Royal Family , and the supporters on either side are also adapted from the Danish royal arms . Beneath the shield is the motto in Greek , *ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ λαοῦ ἐστὶν ἡ δύναμις* (" The people 's love is my strength ") . Beneath the motto dangles the Grand Cross of the Order of the Redeemer , Greece 's premier decoration of honor .

== Ancestry ==