

Minister of Foreign Affairs Nikos Dendias' welcome address at the event on Ioannis Kapodistrias at the Governor's House in Aegina (26 March 2021)

I am very pleased and moved by the invitation, kindly extended to me by Manolis Kottakis, to be here today.

Throughout most of my life, I have always spoken without notes, but since the Prime Minister did me the honour of making me Minister of Foreign Affairs, I always speak from a text, for reasons I think everyone understands.

Today is a great day following the bicentennial of the start of the Greek Revolution.

It is a great pleasure to be here in Aegina, the first capital of the Greek state under the Ioannis Kapodistrias' government.

And I am very pleased that the occasion for my presence on the island is the publication of the photo-book "Kapodistrias' Aegina," an excellent effort.

The documents, the photographs of objects and buildings, and the portraits contained in this book show the intrinsic link between the history of Aegina, the Revolution and Greece's journey through history, the modern phase of which began at that time.

Aegina had the good fortune to be the first capital of the government of the exceptional – you will allow me to characterise my fellow Corfiot in this way – Ioannis Kapodistrias, the first Governor of Greece.

Part of his work – Manolis Kottakis mentioned this earlier – was achieved while he was here.

The buildings constructed on his instructions are the architectural footprint of his time in government.

And they are proof of the priorities the Governor had set with regard to organizing the newly established state, with education taking a prominent place among them.

Moreover, we cannot and must not forget that Aegina was where most of the more important acts were signed during what was to be – unfortunately for modern Greece – his brief term in office. Such as that of the resolution of 13 April 1828 on the first administrative division of Greece.

The National Financial Bank was established here in February of the same year, and it was here that Kapodistrias proceeded to the restructuring of the military. And he of course handled diplomatic matters, which in the end led to the independence of Greece. As you well know, when he was elected Governor, Greece was autonomous, not yet independent. This came later, in 1830.

The main goal of his activities was the full recognition of our country's independence and, moreover, the inclusion of as many areas as possible in the new state.

This required the improvement, in a particularly difficult environment for his efforts, of the terms of the Treaty of London of 6 July 1827.

The Diplomatic and Historical Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs house a significant portion of the Governor's

correspondence with the governments of the Great Powers of the era.

We all know that his diplomatic efforts were vindicated, as I said before, in 1830, with the London Protocol.

So, it would be no exaggeration to say that Aegina was the capital in which modern Greece was planned.

Unfortunately, this truth – as was observed with some bitterness – is often overlooked in Greece. So, this historical photo-book is crucial in reminding us of this in the clearest manner.

I would be very happy if every Greek could see it, but I can't make that happen. But I can help by ensuring that a number of these photo-books are obtained – I assume you agree, Mr. Mayor – by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to be given either to our foreign guests or to some or a large number of the country's schools, thus making it an asset for the younger generation of Greeks.

Allow me to conclude with a brief personal observation off-text. When I was a high school student, in 1976, I think, the bicentennial of Kapodistrias' birth was celebrated in Corfu. At that time, the President of the Republic, Konstantinos Tsatsos, visited the island. He delivered an excellent speech on Ioannis Kapodistrias. And I remember that the speech began like this: "The great dead speak, and those who want to, can hear them."

Thank you very much.