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**Angelo Repousis.** "‘The Devil’s Apostle:’ Jonas King’s Trial against the Greek Hierarchy in 1852 and the Pressure to Extend U.S. Protection for American Missionaries Overseas." *Diplomatic History* 33:5 (November 2009): 807-838.

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Review by **Niels Eichhorn**, University of Arkansas

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When historians deal with the 1850s, their primary focus is on the intensifying sectional struggle between the Northern and Southern states of the Union. Diplomatic historians tend to focus on the rivalry between Great Britain and the United States in Central America and the attempts by the United States to purchase Cuba. When it comes to activities of the United States in Europe, narratives are largely limited to the major European powers—Great Britain, France, and Spain. In contrast to what has become a standard narrative, Angelo Repousis uses the 1852 proselytism case against Jonas King, a U.S. citizen in Greece, to illustrate the increasing efforts of the federal government to protect its citizens overseas and the demands of powerful interest groups for protection of their employees in foreign countries. The activities of Jonas King and the pressure placed on the federal government by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) allow Repousis to explain how in the 1850s the federal government started to extend its protection to missionaries abroad.

Greece was difficult terrain for Protestant missionaries because religion and nationalism in this newly independent nation were closely connected. Repousis illustrates in concise detail how the Greek Orthodox Church was “the principle instrument for maintaining national consciousness” (809). As such, the Orthodox Church looked with suspicion on foreign missionaries, like King and the ABCFM, who came to the country for educational and missionary purposes. While the Greek constitution endorsed individual freedom of worship, it prohibited attempts to convert Orthodox Christians to other forms of Christianity. Repousis notes that the religious views of Greek Orthodoxy appalled King and many Protestant Christians in the United States. Initially, King had focused his efforts on building schools for general education, but he soon started to hold religious meetings. Repousis explains that while Greek liberals welcomed foreign missionaries as educators, the conservatives retained their xenophobia and saw a fundamental

connection between politics and religion. In the late 1830s and early 1840s, the Greek monarchy and Greek Synod had made it increasingly difficult for missionaries to do even educational work. Nevertheless, King remained and continued his work and mission, despite the growing antagonism between local authorities and him. On 22 February 1852, the trial against King for preaching his “false doctrines” started (823).

The Millard Fillmore administration, aware of the upcoming presidential election and the need for some foreign policy success, jumped at the chance to support King and the ABCFM. Repousis reminds historians that weak Greece presented a much better chance for a diplomatic success than to tangle with Spain over the recent filibuster activities in Cuba. Repousis connects the popular outcry, created by the treatment of King on the part of the Greek authorities, to the fever for manifest destiny and the Young America movement. Secretary of State Daniel Webster, who had already in 1841 extended federal protection to missionaries abroad, was pleased that the King case offered him another opportunity to set a foreign policy precedent. After Webster’s death, the new secretary of state, Edward Everett, continued to pressure the Greek government. In order to silence critics, the government dispatched the U.S. Minister in Constantinople, George P. Marsh, to Athens to investigate the King case. While maintaining that the case against King had been unfair, the government had to be careful not to sanction King’s religious beliefs. Supported by the Mediterranean Squadron, Marsh filed a protest with the Greek government. In May 1853, Marsh and the Greek foreign minister, Andronikus Paicos, exchanged a series of notes, but both sides stood fast. Only after a more liberal government took office in Greece did events turn in favor of King, who received “full remission of the sentence of imprisonment and exile” (834). It took another representation, this time by the Pierce administration’s representative Roger A. Pryor, for King to receive an indemnity for his property seized by the Greek government.

Repousis’ article illustrates the growing self-confidence of the United States in international affairs and self-awareness of its relative strength in the world. Repousis also illustrates the problem that emerged out of the clash between an intensifying nationalism in the United States and the religiously based nationalism of the young Greek nation. The King case established that the federal government would protect its citizens, “regardless of their profession,” against unjust action by foreign governments (812). He concludes pointedly that “the missionary interest would become a significant focus of U.S. ‘gunboat diplomacy,’” thus foreshadowing events of the later nineteenth century (837).

“The Devil’s Apostle” is a fine piece of scholarship that will force a necessary reevaluation of the foreign relations of the United States during the antebellum and Civil War years. Historians have rarely looked beyond the obvious focal points of Great Britain, France, and Spanish Cuba when it comes to the antebellum years. Repousis thus not only introduces a new focus by including the work of missionaries, the efforts of their sponsors, and early forms of gunboat diplomacy, but also extends the reach of historical scholarship into the Eastern Mediterranean. The Mediterranean has received extensive

attention due to the naval campaigns against the Barbary Pirates. However, scholarship for the 1850s focuses largely on the rivalry between Great Britain and the United States in the Western Hemisphere. Consequently, scholars tend to ignore the often minor but, as Repousis illustrates, nonetheless important and precedent-setting relations in other parts of the world. Despite the confusing organization of the article that sometimes defies chronology, Repousis presents an impressive understanding of Greek domestic affairs and the religious-political relationship in Greece.

Notwithstanding all these positives, two small questions emerge. It remains unclear why the United States, despite probably being aware of the growing antagonism between King and the Greek government, still allowed King to become acting consul. Were there no other merchants who could have filled that role? Slightly more disconcerting if hardly unusual is the absence of Greek primary sources. Repousis mentions the coverage of King's case in Greek newspapers, but his knowledge about those articles derives solely from English language sources in the United States. The article could have been strengthened by using the original Greek newspapers or even the Greek government's official documents related to the case (as far as those still exist). However, these two issues should not detract from the article's overall strength and its important redirection of antebellum scholarship.

Two other areas where it may be hoped the article will contribute to the understanding of antebellum diplomatic scholarship might also be mentioned. The first relates to Repousis' argument about the protection of naturalized citizens abroad. At the time, the relations between the United States and Great Britain, Prussia, and a number of other Central European powers were disturbed continuously by the inability of the United States to protect naturalized citizens, who returned home to visit friends and family, from being taken for military service, which many had evaded by immigrating to the United States. Repousis' article raises the question for future scholars how much relative strength and powerful lobbying influenced the positive outcome of the King case in contrast to the many others in Berlin and London. The second point relates to the show of force by the U.S. Navy during Marsh's visit. The arrival of George March at Athens with three warships occurred very near the outbreak of war between the Ottoman Empire and Russia in 1853. It would be interesting to know if the rumors about the United States trying to obtain a naval base in the Mediterranean were in any way influenced by its recent activities in Greece. Repousis' article may trigger some additional scholarship furthering historical understanding of the role of the United States in the Eastern Mediterranean during the 1850s and the plight of the nation's citizens in foreign countries.

Overall, Repousis offers an important contribution to the scholarship of antebellum diplomatic history. Stretching the field beyond the water edge of the continent into the Eastern Mediterranean, Repousis breaks important new ground. His use of religion to illustrate the operation of the federal government and the U.S. Navy abroad is intriguing and shows how early the United States started to use gunboat diplomacy to protect its

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citizens in weaker nations. Also arising from this growing self-confidence on the part of the United States was the ability of the government in Washington to engage in European-style power politics. Generally, then, Repousis shows that historians of diplomatic history may learn much by extending their focus beyond the normal comfort zone of Anglo-American relations into thus far little explored terrain.

**Niels Eichhorn** received his M.A. from the University of Louisiana at Lafayette and is currently working on his Ph.D. at the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville. He has presented his work on Civil War diplomacy at a number of conferences. Mr. Eichhorn's dissertation research focuses on a German diplomat in Washington during the late antebellum and Civil War years, who participated in the 1848 uprising in Schleswig-Holstein.

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