

UDC 930.85(4-12)

ISSN 0350-7653

SERBIAN ACADEMY OF SCIENCES AND ARTS
INSTITUTE FOR BALKAN STUDIES

BALCANICA

XLVI

ANNUAL OF THE INSTITUTE FOR BALKAN STUDIES

Editor-in-Chief

DUŠAN T. BATAKOVIĆ

Director of the Institute for Balkan Studies SASA

Editorial Board

JEAN-PAUL BLED (Paris), LJUBOMIR MAKSIMOVIĆ,
ZORAN MILUTINOVIĆ (London), DANICA POPOVIĆ, BILJANA SIKIMIĆ,
SPIRIDON SFETAS (Thessaloniki), GABRIELLA SCHUBERT (Jena),
NIKOLA TASIĆ, SVETLANA M. TOLSTAJA (Moscow)

BELGRADE
2015



ΛΟΥΚΙΑΝΟΣ ΗΑΣΣΙΟΤΙΣ, *ΕΛΛΗΝΟΣΕΡΒΙΚΕΣ ΣΧΕΣΕΙΣ, 1913–1918. ΣΥΜΜΑΧΙΚΕΣ ΠΡΟΤΕΡΑΙΟΤΗΤΕΣ ΚΑΙ ΠΟΛΙΤΙΚΕΣ ΑΝΤΙΠΑΛΟΤΗΤΕΣ* [GREEK–SERBIAN RELATIONS, 1913–1918. ALLIES' PRIORITIES AND POLITICAL RIVALRIES]. THESSALONIKI: VANIAS PUBL., 2004, 442 p., tables, photos, maps and appendices

Reviewed by Radmila Pejić*

There are topics in historiography that although widely considered as sufficiently studied are in fact underrated or unelaborated. Such is the case with Serbian-Greek relations during the First World War. Even a quick look at the available literature shows that until recently this chapter of one of the most critical periods in the contemporary history of both nations was not sufficiently covered, at least on the level of primary research. Between 1974 and 1991, a series of scholarly conferences (organised by the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts (SANU) and the Institute for Balkan Studies (IMXA) in Thessaloniki) were largely devoted to political, cultural and particularly literary relations between the two nations during the period of Ottoman domination (mainly between the eighteenth and early twentieth century). This astonishing historiographical lacuna may perhaps be attributed to technical reasons (i.e. difficult access to state archives in both countries in the past) or to scholarly or even ideological reasons. Be that as it may, since the end of the 1990s a new research impetus has given rise to a substantial number of studies on bilateral relations in the first half of the twentieth century. Despite this growing interest, however, some works show a tendency to an idealisation of Serbian-Greek relations and some, quite the contrary if rarely, tend to overemphasise their negative aspects – doubtless as a result of the impact of contemporary events in the former Yugoslavia and generally in the Balkans on the shaping of both aca-

demical and public discourse about intra-Balkan relations.¹

As far as Serbian historiography is concerned, quite a few notable exceptions to the abovementioned situation should be welcomed, notably a book by Miladin Milošević which is based on Serbian archival sources.² A work that is less known to the Serbian community of historians and broader public is Loukianos Hassiotis's *Greek–Serbian Relations 1913–1918. Allies' Priorities and Political Rivalries*, published in Greek. Hassiotis, currently Assistant Professor at Aristotle University in Thessaloniki, examines Serbian-Greek relations between 1913 and 1918, indeed a critical period in the modern history of both nations.

The first merit of Hassiotis's book is that it is based on exhaustive research

¹ For two opposite examples in the Greek literature see Stefanos Sotiriou, *Greeks and Serbs. History of Greek–Serbian Relations* (in Greek) (Athens 1996), and Tassos Kostopoulos, *War and Ethnic Cleansing: the Forgotten Side of a Decade of National Campaign, 1912–1922* (in Greek) (Athens 2007). See also Helen Gardikas-Katsiadakis, "Greek–Serbian Relations 1912–1913: Communication Gap or Deliberate Policy", *Balkan Studies* 45.1 (2004), 23–38.

² Miladin Milošević, *Srbija i Grčka, 1914–1918. Iz istorije diplomatskih odnosa* (Belgrade 1997). See also Dušan T. Bataković, "Serbia and Greece in the First World War. An Overview", *Balkan Studies* 45.1 (2004), 58–80; Aleksandra M. Pećinar, "Stvaranje Kraljevine SHS i Grčka", *Zbornik radova Narodnog muzeja, Čačak* XLI (2011), 101–124.

* Institute for Balkan Studies SASA

of archival sources: Greek – the Diplomatic and Historical Archives of the Greek Foreign Ministry, the Historical Directory of the Hellenic Army General Staff, The Hellenic Literary and Historical Archive, and other political and private archives; Serbian – the Archives of Serbia and the Military Archives of Serbia; and international – the British National Archives, the French Archives du Ministère des Affaires Étrangères and the Service Historique de l'Armée de Terre. The source material in Hassiotis's book also includes a considerable section of the Greek, Serbian and British press from the period under study. Another big merit of Hassiotis's study is his dispassionate and balanced approach to the subject, which stands in contrast to earlier works that tended to idealise Serbian-Greek relations using vague arguments inspired by national myths.

The first chapter of the book, "From independence to alliance", is an introduction to the subject from the creation of the two nation-states to the Balkan Wars. The second, "The Treaty of Alliance", is devoted to the factors that led to the signing of the Greek-Serbian Alliance Treaty of 1913, its provisions and its significance at that particular moment. The chapter "A short period of peace, 1913–1914" discusses various challenges that the Greek-Serbian Alliance faced as regards regional issues and disputes, and the mounting European crisis. The fourth chapter, "Diplomatic and political developments during the first year of the Great War", examines Serbia's appeal for military assistance, Venizelos's plans for the reconstruction of the Balkan Alliance and Greek official and unofficial support to Serbia until the autumn of 1915. The fifth chapter, "National dissension and the crisis in Greek-Serbian relations", analyses the impact of Greece's internal political strife on the Alliance and, inevitably, on bilateral relations. The following chapter,

"The provisional government at Salonika and Serbia", examines the role of the Venizelist movement in northern Greece and Serbian responses to the Greek crisis. The seventh one, "The revival of the Alliance", sheds light on several aspects (diplomatic, political and military) of Greek-Serbian cooperation during the last year of the Great War, but also on developments in Serbian political and military circles (the Apis Affair, the Yugoslav Union) as commented by Greek officials. The next two chapters are devoted to some lesser-known aspects of relations between the two countries which bring into question the myth of their unclouded and consolidated relations: one deals with Serbian propaganda activities in the Hellenic part of Macedonia and the other looks at Greek propaganda activities in the area of Bitolj (Monastir) between 1913 and 1918. Serbian propaganda was organised mainly by junior army officers and administrative officials, but it was tolerated by the political and military leadership, at least until Venizelos's return to power and the trial of D. T. Dimitrijević Apis in 1917. Greek propaganda in the Serbian part of Macedonia had from the very beginning an unofficial character, since Athens did not want to challenge Serbia's sovereignty in the area and to alienate the Serbs. The last chapter of the book, "The issue of citizenship", discusses the problems of defining nationality in the "new areas" of both the Greek and Serbian kingdoms, the motives behind the official policies of both sides and their impact on the local population. It also includes a brief reference to the little-known history of the Serbian community in Thessaloniki.

Hassiotis finds that Serbian-Greek relations in 1913–1918 were based on a curious balance which was convenient enough for the main interests of the political elites in both countries. The balance of interests was maintained for the most part of the period due to their awareness

of the threat that the Bulgarian national aims posed to both sides and to their mutual support regarding the territorial status in the Balkan Peninsula created by the Balkan Wars and the Treaty of Bucharest (1913). Cooperation between the two states in the subsequent years reinforced the prevailing notion of traditional and undisturbed Greek-Serbian friendship. In reality, according to Hassiotis, things were much more complicated. It is true that the alliance became a priority for the political leaderships in Serbia and Greece, but political rivalries both between them and

within them brought this option more than once to a deadlock and to apparent diplomatic shifts. Serbian and Greek propaganda activities are indicative of these contradictions. In the final analysis, the author of this interesting study attempts, and largely succeeds, to interpret the development of Greek-Serbian relations in a realistic context determined by international and regional geopolitical factors and by internal political antagonisms in two neighbouring, closely interconnected countries.

PRVI SVJETSKI RAT – UZROCI I POSLJEDICE [FIRST WORLD WAR – CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES], EDs. DRAGO BRANKOVIĆ AND NIKOLA B. POPOVIĆ. BANJA LUKA: AKADEMIJA NAUKA I UMJETNOSTI REPUBLIKE SRPSKE, 2014, 528 p.

*Reviewed by Goran Latinović**

The centenary of the Great War in 2014 was commemorated by various events, conferences, research projects and ceremonies around the globe. One such conference took place in Banja Luka, the administrative capital of the Serbian entity in Bosnia and Herzegovina, under the aegis of the Academy of Sciences and Arts of the Republic of Srpska. Held on 30 and 31 May 2014, it was the most important scholarly gathering addressing topics about the Great War in the entity in 2014. The Academy published the collection of twenty-nine papers submitted by the participants of the conference. The volume is in Serbian, but every paper is furnished with a summary in English, with one French exception.

The book begins with a Foreword (pp. 9–10) and several photos taken during the conference (pp. 11–12), followed by an introduction to the topic by Rajko Kuzmanović (pp. 15–22), Drago Branković (pp. 23–28) and Nikola B. Popović (pp. 29–34), all of them drawing

attention to the First World War as the major history topic in 2014. Popović particularly emphasises the growing, politically motivated, tendency towards using unscholarly methodological approaches, which necessarily leads to the production of pseudo-scholarly books on the Great War. Dušan Berić (pp. 35–66) discusses the German *Drang nach (Sud-)Osten* and the question of responsibility for the First World War, while Boro Bronza (pp. 67–83) writes about the aspects of the continuity of Austrian expansive policy in the Balkans in 1683–1914. Galib Šljivo (pp. 85–114) gives an overview of the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina at the beginning of the twentieth century, and Dušan Bataković (pp. 115–143) contributes one of the most instructive articles in the volume. His text on external and internal challenges Serbia was facing on the eve of the First World War, based on a

* University of Banja Luka