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The origin of the Institute goes back to the Institut des Études balkaniques founded in Belgrade in 1934 as the only of the kind in the Balkans. The initiative came from King Alexander I Karadjordjević, while the Institute's scholarly profile was created by Ratko Parežanin and Svetozar Spanaćević. The Institute published *Revue internationale des Études balkaniques*, which assembled most prominent European experts on the Balkans in various disciplines. Its work was banned by the Nazi occupation authorities in 1941.

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Université de Thessalonique

Le Front d'Orient dans la Grande Guerre
Enjeux et stratégies*

Résumé : Le front d'Orient initialement était conçu comme le moyen d'aider la Serbie a résister à l'attaque conjointe des forces austro-hongroises, allemandes et bulgares. Or, après que l'avancée bulgare avait rendu vains les efforts alliés, il fut maintenu pour assurer la présence alliée dans les Balkans. La présence des forces alliées dans les Balkans, après la prise de Monastir, fut justifiée par la pression sur la Grèce afin qu'elle se décide de se joindre à l'Entente. Seulement, après que la Grèce avait rejoint les Alliés il fut possible d'envisager une offensive d'envergure, comme celle qui en septembre et octobre 1918 obligea d'abord la Bulgarie et ensuite l'Empire ottoman à demander la fin des hostilités.

Mots-clés : Front d'Orient, Grande Guerre, stratégie

En ces années de commémoration du centenaire, il faut bien se rendre à l'évidence. Dans le contexte de la Grande Guerre, Salonique n'est qu'un théâtre marginal. La mission de celui-ci se dresse sous des traits plutôt modestes: se mettre en situation de s'engager afin de faciliter les opérations des autres fronts.

A travers l'ouverture et l'organisation stratégique de ce théâtre, modelées toutes deux au gré des circonstances, c'est le principe même de la conduite de la guerre qui se met en vigueur avec ses multiples prolongements : le jeu complexe des alliances, l'inhabileté d'établir une ligne d'action commune à longue échéance à cause de la diversité des intérêts en jeu, les courants internes de la vie politique et leur portée sur le processus décisionnel, la stratégie périphérique avec l'importance accordée aux fronts secondaires dans le contexte d'un conflit généralisé, l'unité de commandement, bref, des composantes éternelles de toute guerre de coalition.

Quelle est la justification de la présence d'un corps expéditionnaire allié à Salonique ? Jean Delmas en détermine successivement plusieurs.[1] **La justifi-**

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* Le présent texte fut l'objet d'une publication dans le cadre du volume collectif : *Cahiers de la Villa « Kérylos » № 26, La Grèce et la guerre*, Actes du XXV^e^ colloque de la Villa Kérylos, 3–4 octobre 2014, éd. M. Zink, J. Jouanna et Ph. Contamine (Paris : Académie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres, 2015)

[1] Jean Delmas, « Les opérations militaires sur le front de Macédoine », in *La France et la Grèce dans la Grande Guerre* (Université de Thessalonique, 1992), 3–11.

cation initiale est simple : voler au secours des serbes, dont la situation devient intenable lorsque la Bulgarie entre en guerre en octobre 1915. A la lumière de la défaillance serbe, deux mois plus tard, et devant l'impossibilité d'établir la jonction sur le Haut-Vardar, les avis divergent quant à l'avenir de l'expédition.

A Paris, les partisans de la stratégie indirecte se prononcent en faveur du maintien et de l'organisation du dispositif allié dans les environs de Salonique. La valeur principale de cette région, disent-ils, est plutôt celle d'une place forte de défense, permettant l'entreprise d'actions offensives en temps et lieu opportuns. Choix d'autant plus impératif qu'il permet de se mettre à l'abri de tout fléchissement intempestif de la Roumanie et de la Grèce, fournissant à l'adversaire l'occasion de réaliser ses ambitions impérialistes en Orient. On reproche même au gouvernement d'assister inactif à l'anéantissement de la Serbie. Menés par Clemenceau, les « occidentaux » s'opposent, quant à eux, à tout engagement prématuré, même dans le cas favorable, peu probable pourtant, d'un alignement grec. Faisant l'objet d'attaques de tous les côtés, le gouvernement Viviani est remplacé, fin octobre, par un cabinet Briand, mieux disposé face à un éventuel maintien de l'expédition.[2]

C'est un refrain tout différent que l'on entonne sur les bords de la Tamise. Chercher la victoire sur le théâtre principal en y consacrant le maximum des moyens disponibles, limiter, par ailleurs, l'effort en Orient à la stricte défense des possessions britanniques, telle est l'idée maîtresse devant présider à la direction des opérations. C'est l'avis d'Asquith, Balfour et Curzon. Colonial de carrière et résolument opposé au principe des *side shows* (théâtres secondaires), Kitchener suggère le repli sur l'Égypte, où il compte pouvoir réunir 15 divisions, une partie desquelles proviendrait justement des Balkans.[3] Seule une minorité guidée par Lloyd-George se prononce en faveur d'un envoi de renforts en Macédoine.[4] Aristide Briand a toutes les peines du monde pour avorter ce projet. Il y parvient, mais de justesse, en mettant en avant un argument de poids : exercer pression sur la Grèce, très attachée à une neutralité incertaine et équivoque, et tâcher de l'entraîner dans la coalition de l'Entente.

De nouveau le problème fera-t-il l'objet d'un tour d'horizon entre Français et Britanniques du 9 au 11 décembre 1915 à Paris, où le gouvernement de Sa Gracieuse Majesté dépêche d'urgence les deux ministres compétents, Grey et Kitchener, avec pleins pouvoirs pour fixer les mesures à prendre en vue d'une retraite des forces alliées et de la mise en état de la défense de la ville-même de Sa-

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[2] Yannis Mourélos, « Le front d'Orient en 1916. Enjeux et strategies", in *The Salonica Theatre of Operations and the Outcome of the Great War* (Thessalonique : Institut for Balkan Studies et National Research Foundation Eleftherios K. Venizelos, 2005), 38.

[3] Maurice Larcher, *La Grande Guerre dans les Balkans, Direction de la Guerre* (Paris : Payot, 1929), 101.

[4] David Lloyd-George, *War Memoirs* (Londres 1933–1936), t. 2, 531, et t. 4, 3200.

lonique. On tombe d'accord sur la nécessité d'occuper les positions stratégiques autour de la ville sans préjuger la durée, plus ou moins longue, de l'occupation. Formule qui ménage toutes les hypothèses, mais qui dissimule à peine le malaise anglais.[5] C'est ainsi que, le mois de décembre courant, le corps expéditionnaire exécute un mouvement de repli, tout en se groupant à l'intérieur d'un périmètre autour de Salonique. Envoyé sur place en mission spéciale, le général de Castelnau conclut sur la possibilité de tenir les positions occupées.[6]

Reste à régler l'unité de commandement. Théoriquement, celui-ci est assuré à la fois par le général commandant en chef de l'armée française d'Orient, le commandant supérieur des forces britanniques dans le même secteur et le vice-amiral commandant l'escadre des Dardanelles. La campagne de Serbie, où le rôle de chaque associé avait été déterminé par Joffre n'étant plus en cours, l'unité de commandement s'impose. Une étape dans ce sens semble avoir été franchie lors de l'inspection du général de Castelnau. L'ordre était parvenu de Londres au commandement britannique local de déférer aux propositions de l'émissaire en matière d'organisation défensive de la place. Nulle part ailleurs que sur un terrain étroit, à effectifs limités, dont la défense peut dépendre de la rapidité de concentration de tous les moyens sur le point de l'attaque, la question se pose. Pressenti dans ce sens le 23 décembre, Londres acquiesce. Il se déclare, par surcroît, disposé à outrepasser au principe d'après lequel la supériorité numérique comporte l'exercice du commandement (le contingent britannique étant à l'époque le plus nombreux) « *en raison de l'influence prépondérante de la France dans les décisions concernant les opérations* ».[7] Transfert judicieux de responsabilités ? Manœuvre habile permettant un futur désengagement militaire ? Quoi qu'il en soit, le commandement sur le front d'Orient sera unifié à partir de janvier 1916 et son titulaire français (Sarrail, puis Guillaumat et Franchet d'Esperey) procède désormais comme s'il était unique et intégré.[8]

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[5] Ministère de la Guerre, *Les armées françaises dans la Grande Guerre* (dorénavant AFGG), vol. VIII, t. 1, annexe 3, No 850. Larcher, *La Grande Guerre*, 104 ss ; William Robertson, *Conduite générale de la guerre* (Paris : Payot, 1929), 429 ss.

[6] AFGG VIII, 1, 3, Nos 1013, 1027. Service Historique de la Défense (Section Armée de Terre), carton 5 N 147, Rapport du général de Castelnau sur la défense de Salonique, 24 et 25 décembre 1915 ; Maurice Sarrail, *Mon commandement en Orient* (Paris : Flammarion, 1920), 71 ss.

[7] AFGG, VIII, 1, 3, Nos 1017, 1054, 1057.

[8] Jean-Claude Allain, « Le commandement unifié sur le front d'Orient. Théorie et pratique en 1918 », *Guerres mondiales et Conflits contemporains* 168 (1992), 38. Sur la question du commandement consulter également Gabriel Terrail dit « Mermeix », *Le commandement unique. Sarrail et les armées d'Orient* (Paris : P. Ollendorff, 1920), ainsi que la thèse volumineuse de Gérard Fassy, *Le haut-commandement français en Orient (1915–1918)* (Paris : Economica, 2003).

Une fois le corps expéditionnaire maintenu sur place, il faut bien lui assigner une mission. C'est la **deuxième justification** de la présence militaire alliée dans cette région. Cette mission se dresse comme suit : causer à l'adversaire le maximum d'inquiétude par la menace constante d'une attaque partant de Salonique. C'est du bluff pur et simple aussi longtemps que cette action ne se traduit pas par une préparation réelle d'offensive, ce qui présuppose un réajustement favorable des forces en présence.

En somme, la question est plus politique que militaire, la nouvelle donnée dans cette affaire étant désormais la Roumanie avec qui la coalition de l'Entente engage des pourparlers qui traînent en longueur. A la volonté d'établir un front oriental continu exprimée par Paris, Bucarest oppose sa préférence en faveur d'une offensive en direction de la Transylvanie. Ainsi, la fonction attribuée à l'armée d'Orient varie-t-elle selon les diverses hypothèses. Protagoniste dans le cadre d'un effort simultané, destiné à faire sauter le maillon bulgare, elle se voit automatiquement reléguée au second rang, chargée d'une simple manœuvre de diversion : enchaîner la liberté d'action de l'armée bulgare pour permettre à son homologue roumaine de se concentrer et pouvoir passer en action face aux Autrichiens.[9]

L'attaque allemande sur Verdun bouleverse la situation. Le commandement de Salonique reçoit l'ordre d'envisager une action agressive, destinée à fixer l'adversaire, ce qui soulagerait indirectement le front français. Pour les Britanniques, absorbés par leurs problèmes en Mésopotamie, pareille initiative est hors de question. De ce fait, Sarrail est sollicité de faire savoir s'il s'estime en mesure de remplir cette mission avec la seule participation des forces françaises et serbes. Celui-ci répond que l'exécution comportera une préparation méthodique et lente. Autrement dit, l'armée d'Orient est fatiguée. L'état sanitaire (paludisme en particulier) a brusquement fléchi et son moral s'en trouve atteint. Malgré l'affaiblissement, le commandant en chef conçoit un plan rationnel avec ou sans le concours des contingents britanniques, qui consiste à prendre pied sur la frontière, mais sur un front agressif aussi étendu que possible. En attirant son dispositif, il espère pouvoir retenir le maximum des forces bulgares. L'attaque principale aurait lieu sur la rive droite du Vardar, des attaques de diversion dans la plaine, au pied du mont Bélès. Les Serbes s'engageraient vers l'ouest, en direction de Monastir. On espère, ainsi, obtenir un succès local, permettant de s'orienter et marcher vers l'avance roumaine.[10]

Cette réponse n'a vraiment pas de quoi satisfaire. Cependant, Paris baigne dans l'optimisme. L'offensive victorieuse des Russes en Galicie et en Volhynie,

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[9] Jean Delmas, « Les problèmes logistiques de l'armée roumaine, 1916–1917 », in *Les Fronts invisibles*, éd. Gérard Canini (Presses universitaires de Nancy, 1984), 143 ss.

[10] AFGG, VIII, 1, 3, Nos 1349, 1351, 1381, 1387 ; Mourélos, « Le front d'Orient en 1916 », 44–49 ; Sarrail, *Mon commandement*, 135 ss.

le recul des Autrichiens en Italie, le développement de la bataille de la Somme justifient, dit-on, un nouvel examen de la question de l'offensive dans les Balkans. En tout cas, la Roumanie semble assurée contre toute attaque sur son flanc méridional.[11] En conclusion, il suffit de faire agir l'armée d'Orient contre les Bulgares et toutes les principales conditions formulées par la Roumanie pour se joindre à l'Entente se trouveraient remplies. A lire Robertson, le nouveau chef de l'EMG Impérial, « *comme lors d'autres occasions d'examen des affaires de Salonique, les ministres français considéraient beaucoup trop les avantages et beaucoup trop peu les inconvénients* ». Il ne faut guère, poursuit-il dans un effort destiné à modérer l'élan de Paris, perdre de vue que toute action entreprise sur les pourtours doit, en fait comme en principe, être subordonnée aux opérations sur les fronts principaux dont les besoins en hommes et en munitions doivent être satisfaits avant tout autre. En conséquence, l'étendue de la coopération sera proportionnée à la puissance et au degré d'organisation des contingents britanniques dans le secteur de Salonique.[12]

Réunis à Chantilly le 22 juillet 1916, les hauts-commandements français et britannique trancheront par un compromis : *initialement*, la mission à remplir par les armées alliées en Orient consiste à couvrir la mobilisation roumaine par des opérations sur toute la longueur de la frontière grecque. *Ultérieurement*, lorsque la Roumanie aura commencé ses opérations au sud du Danube, l'armée d'Orient, combinant son action avec les forces russo-roumaines, s'efforcera à réaliser la destruction de l'armée bulgare. Autrement dit, la nouvelle mission assignée au corps expéditionnaire allié, une fois de plus ne dépasse pas les normes d'une simple manœuvre de diversion.[13]

A peine fermées à Londres, les écluses ouvrent, cette fois-ci, du côté de Bucarest. Non seulement l'armée d'Orient doit-elle participer au complet aux opérations, mais on parvient de subordonner l'entrée en guerre de la Roumanie au déclenchement de cette offensive. Dans la convention militaire du 17 août, il est spécifié que les forces de Salonique attaqueront le 20 août, l'armée roumaine n'entrant en campagne qu'une semaine plus tard seulement.[14] Comble d'infortune, ce sont les Bulgares qui anticipent en attaquant dès le 18 sur toute la lon-

[11] Jean Delmas, « La place de la Roumanie dans la stratégie française (1915–1916) », communication présentée dans le cadre du Colloque International d' Histoire Militaire, tenu à Bucarest et à Sibiu en septembre 1996.

[12] AFGG, VIII, 1, 3, Nos 1374, 1376, 1377, 1382, 1384. Robertson, *Conduite générale de la guerre*, 445.

[13] AFGG, VIII, 1, 3, No 1392 ; Ministère des Affaires étrangères, série Guerre 1914–1918, carton No 989, Protocole sur les conditions d'entrée en guerre de la Roumanie signé le 11 août 1916 au Quai d'Orsay entre la France et la Grande-Bretagne.

[14] AFGG, VIII, 1, 3, No 1457, Texte de la convention militaire du 4/17 août 1916 entre la France, la Grande-Bretagne, l'Italie et la Russie.

gueur du front. La réaction alliée sera extrêmement lente, la ville de Monastir n'étant atteinte qu'en novembre seulement. L'attitude docile des autorités helléniques à l'égard des Germano-Bulgares dans la partie orientale de la Macédoine pose, en même temps, pour le corps expéditionnaire un problème persistant de sécurité. L'effondrement roumain, en décembre, bouleverse la situation. Le camp retranché de Salonique redevient ce qu'il était auparavant : le plus grand camp d'internement allemand.

Une lueur d'espoir persiste, malgré tout. La crise interne de la vie politique grecque, **troisième et dernière justification** de la présence alliée à Salonique. Une brèche qui sera exploitée à fond grâce à une dynamique implacable et à de moyens déconcertants, dans un effort d'entraîner en guerre un pays dont on estime préférable de l'avoir à ses côtés, plutôt que de le maintenir dans une neutralité incertaine et équivoque. Exemple typique de diplomatie conjoncturelle et inégale.

Quiconque scrute plus attentivement doit nécessairement tenir compte de certaines composantes qui font de l'affaire grecque des années 1914–1918 un cas hors pair, à commencer par la question de la neutralité. Prêchée par la société conservatrice et, en grande partie, germanophile, cette neutralité n'est, en fin de compte, que simple choix tactique, produit d'une réflexion mûrie sur les conséquences d'un alignement éventuel aux côtés des empires centraux et sur les dangers d'une riposte dynamique provenant du camp adverse. La nature du dialogue implanté par les puissances de l'Entente constitue le deuxième volet de cette étrange neutralité grecque. Elle en forme, en quelque sens, le contrepoids. En effet, à partir de 1916, on ne procède que par *ultimata* remis aux autorités d'Athènes sous la menace des canons de l'escadre. Langage surprenant à l'égard d'un neutre ! Sans doute se voit-il justifié par la présence militaire alliée dans le nord du pays et les problèmes découlant de la sécurité de l'armée d'Orient. Il reste, pour autant, que l'on est témoin d'une dynamique implacable : on ficelle progressivement le pays, le prive de ses moyens de résistance, l'engage de vive force dans la voie de l'intervention armée. Ultime point de référence, la crise elle-même. Sociale à l'origine, politique par la suite, constitutionnelle enfin, à partir du moment où, dans un effort pour consolider sa propre position face à une classe moyenne en pleine mutation depuis la fin du XIX^{e} siècle, le roi Constantin s'acquittera délibérément de ses fonctions de surarbitre afin de se lancer, en tant que chef de parti, dans l'arène des conflits politiques. Cette crise se verra amplifiée par le jeu dangereux d'un homme politique, Eleuthérios Vénizélos, qui n'hésitera guère à torpiller un régime national de l'intérieur en relation étroite avec la coalition de l'Entente.

Propagande et action subversive serviront de pointe à la réalisation de cette politique. Quand la propagande détient le monopole de l'information, elle tisse un réseau de pressions psychologiques qui fait que le monde se débat dans un climat d'artifices, de fausseté et d'arbitraire. Elle dégénère graduellement en

un art subtil de persuasion qui prétend modeler à son gré le vrai ou le faux. En même temps, elle laisse du champ libre aux improvisations de quelque provocateur insidieux, agent de renseignements. C'est très exactement ce qui se produira en Grèce.[15] Face à une propagande allemande solide, coûteuse et à direction unique, les Français n'ont à opposer, en Grèce, qu'une activité ponctuelle, conduite sans concentration par différents services. Pourtant, comme Jean-Claude Montant le signale fort bien, la partie sera gagnée grâce au rôle des auxiliaires. La dynamique de la propagande française, propagande de contre-offensive, sera donnée non par les diplomates, mais par les attachés militaires et navals, mieux entraînés dans ce genre d'action.[16]

La question paraît, donc, incontournable. L'immixtion alliée dans les affaires internes grecques constitue-t-elle un exemple d'expansion impérialiste ou, tout simplement, une relation dictée par les nécessités d'une guerre ? La réponse n'est pas facile. Tout compte fait, c'est la deuxième explication qui devrait l'emporter. Le phénomène le plus éclatant en est l'abolition, dans les mois qui suivent l'entrée en guerre du pays, de tous les contrôles établis à l'intérieur du territoire hellénique, restituant au pays son indépendance administrative, politique et militaire tout en lui permettant, ainsi, de reconquérir son identité. On y voit, incontestablement, les signes d'une diplomatie conjoncturelle. Quoi qu'il en soit, l'adhésion finale de la Grèce, en juillet 1917, modifie les données stratégiques. Salonique peut, désormais, servir de base de départ pour des opérations plus ambitieuses.

C'est justement la tâche confiée aux deux successeurs de Sarrail à la tête de l'armée d'Orient : Guillaumat et Franchet d'Esperey. Le premier, met en chanter une opération combinée, à objectifs limités, le long du Vardar et sur la Strouma qu'il pense, néanmoins, ne pouvoir lancer avant l'automne 1918. Son commandement atteint à peine une durée de six mois. Du coup, il est considéré comme étant transitoire. A tort ! Pendant son court séjour à Salonique, Guillaumat procède à une réorganisation radicale du commandement des Armées Alliées d'Orient, étape essentielle, voire même déterminante, pour comprendre l'issue victorieuse des opérations militaires dans ce secteur. Grâce au travail de fond, qui a précédé son arrivée sur les lieux, Franchet d'Esperey parvient à ac-

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[15] Sur l'activité du Service de Renseignements consulter Nicolas Dujin, « Un attaché naval dans la Grande Guerre. Le commandant de Roquefeuil à Athènes (1915–1917) », *Guerres mondiales et Conflits contemporains* 224 (2006), 95–109, et Yannis Mourélos, « A l'ombre de l'Acropole. Espionnage et contrainte politique en Grèce pendant la Grande Guerre », *Relations Internationales* 78 (1994), 175–184.

[16] Jean-Claude Montant, « Les attachés navals français au début du XX^{e} siècle », *Relations Internationales* 60 (1989), 424–442 et « Aspects de la propagande française en Grèce pendant la Première Guerre mondiale », in *La France et la Grèce dans la Grande Guerre* (Université de Thessalonique, 1992), 61–87.

tionner les forces placées sous ses ordres comme un seul ensemble, chose qui ne s'était jamais produite auparavant.[17]

Le 27 mai 1918, une nouvelle offensive allemande se déclenche près de l'Aisne, à partir du Chemin des Dames, où, l'année précédente, les Français avaient échoué dans une attaque meurtrière. L'offensive s'arrête pourtant dix jours plus tard, en raison de l'épuisement des assaillants, mais ceux-ci ont avancé de 45 km, enlevé Château-Thierry et sont à une distance de 70 km seulement de la capitale. Clemenceau rappelle en catastrophe Guillaumat à Paris, un des rares généraux en qui il a toute confiance. Le général Franchet d'Esperey, qui commandait justement le groupe d'Armées dans le secteur du front où la percée allemande s'était produite, est envoyé à Salonique, presque en mission de disgrâce. Pendant la première quinzaine du mois de juillet, le nouveau commandant en chef élabore un plan d'attaque générale sur le front des Balkans. Cette fois-ci, l'action principale de rupture aura lieu là où personne ne l'attend, c'est-à-dire dans le secteur central du front, en pleine montagne et face à des positions adverses fortifiées et bien taillées dans le rocher. Le choix de Franchet d'Esperey correspond à sa volonté de menacer directement les voies de communication de l'armée bulgare, celle de la vallée du Vardar et celle de l'axe Monastir–Prilep–Gradsko. De son côté, Clemenceau tient à exploiter militairement aussi bien que politiquement un éventuel succès rapide de l'offensive, au-delà de la mise hors cause de la Bulgarie, maillon le plus faible du dispositif ennemi dans les Balkans.[18]

L'offensive se déclenche le 14 septembre par une préparation foudroyante d'artillerie. Cette attaque ouvre immédiatement des brèches, à travers lesquelles les fantassins s'infiltrent dès le lendemain. A la tombée du 16 septembre, la brèche mesure une profondeur de 25 km sur une longueur de 11 km. Succès qui dépasse les prévisions les plus optimistes. Entre le 15 et le 23, l'avance est de l'ordre de 50 km de profondeur sur l'ensemble du front. Avant la fin du mois, Français et Serbes atteignent la ville d'Uskub, alors que sur leur droite, les unités britanniques et grecques pénètrent en profondeur à l'intérieur du territoire bulgare. Le 27, le gouvernement de Sofia demande un armistice. Il sera signé le surlendemain à Salonique et entrera en vigueur à partir du 30, à 12h00.

C'est la goutte d'eau qui fait déborder le vase. Un mois plus tard, le 30 octobre, à Moudros, c'est le tour de l'Empire ottoman. Suivront, en l'espace de quelques jours seulement, l'Autriche-Hongrie, le 3 novembre, à Villa Giusti et, finalement, l'Allemagne, le 11 novembre, à Rethondes. La coalition des empires

[17] Gérard Fassy, « La réorganisation du commandement des Armées Alliées d'Orient par le général Guillaumat (janvier – mai 1918) », in *The Salonica Theatre of Operations*, 143–152.

[18] Bruno Hamard, « Le rôle des troupes de Salonique dans la victoire alliée de 1918 », in *The Salonica Theatre of Operations*, 309–319.

centraux, nous affirme Jean-Claude Allain, se désintègre dans l'ordre inverse de sa formation, illustrant, avant même son énoncée, la théorie des dominos.[19]

Ainsi, d'un front secondaire est partie une attaque qui s'avère capitale dans la conclusion de la Grande Guerre. Franchet d'Esperey y doit son bâton de maréchal. Il est l'instigateur d'une manœuvre audacieuse. Il dirige personnellement cette manœuvre et lui imprime une vitesse qui bouscule l'adversaire et l'empêche de se regrouper. Il obtient la décision par une rupture de front, réalisée en pleine montagne, suivie d'une exploitation rapide dans la brèche qui dépasse toute prévision. Une véritable guerre de mouvement en somme. Franchet d'Espèrey réalise, en l'occurrence, un rêve caressé vainement par ses collègues Français, Britanniques, voire même Allemands sur le front principal, pendant quatre longues et sanglantes années de guerre de tranchées presque inutile.[20]

Se concentrer donc à l'ouest, tout en menant quelques actions isolées sur les pourtours, octroyées, il faut bien le reconnaître, d'une dose renforcée d'improvisation, telle est la mission assignée au théâtre secondaire de Salonique, qui l'est, certes, dans cette perspective, tout en se révélant fort essentiel dans l'application d'une stratégie de victoire.

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[19] Jean-Claude Allain, « Les armistices de la Grande Guerre de l'Orient à l'Occident », dans *The Salonica Theatre of Operations*, 343–353.

[20] Jean Delmas, « Les opérations militaires sur le front de Macédoine », 10–11.

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Italian Volunteers in Serbia in 1914

Abstract: Seven Italian volunteers decided on 29 July 1914 to join the Serbian army responding to a proclamation issued by the son of Giuseppe Garibaldi, Ricciotti. They were Republicans and Anarchists, and saw their engagement as the advance party of Italian volunteers that would eventually force Italy to join the ranks of the Entente in order to accomplish the last phase of the Italian Risorgimento by liberating Trento and Venezia Giulia with the city of Trieste. Five of them were killed on the Drina river, while the remaining two returned soon afterwards to Italy. Nevertheless, their memory was honoured as the first Italian participants in the Great War and as the tangible proof of the Italian engagement in favour of Serbia, and later Yugoslavia.

Keywords: Great War, Serbia, Italia, volunteers, Ricciotti Garibaldi

This contribution deals with a lesser-known episode that occurred in the first months of the European war in the summer of 1914. More generally, it should be construed through the framework of the historical phenomenon of international voluntarism during the so-called "long" nineteenth century. More specifically, it is linked to the tradition of the Garibaldian movement, one of the most famous models of non-State military mobilization in Europe.[1]

On the 29th of July 1914, just one day after Austria had declared war on Serbia, a small group of Italian volunteers left their homes to join the Serbian Army in the fight against those they saw as the eternal enemy of the Italian nation: the Habsburg Empire. There were only seven of them. Most came from neighbouring villages around Rome; one came from an important and wealthy family of Salerno, Southern Italy, not far from Naples. They were, for the most part, republicans; more importantly, though, they were closely associated with the Garibaldian movement, led in that period by one of the sons of Giuseppe Garibaldi (1807–1882), Ricciotti (1847–1924).[2] The names of these seven vol-

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[1] For the typologies and a comprehensive historical analysis of war voluntarism see Nir Arielli, *From Byron to bin Laden. A History of Foreign War Volunteers* (Cambridge, MA / London: Harvard University Press 2018).

[2] See G. Monsagrati, "Ricciotti Garibaldi e la fedeltà alla tradizione garibaldina", in *I Garibaldi dopo Garibaldi. La tradizione famigliare e l'eredità politica*, eds. Z. Ciuffoletti, A. Colombo and A. Garibaldi Jallet (Manduria/Bari/Rome: Piero Lacaita 2005), 81–124.

unteers were Mario Corvisieri, the brothers Cesare and Ugo Colizza, Arturo Reali, Nicola Goretti, Vincenzo Bucca and Francesco Conforti.

The Garibaldian movement had long-standing ties with the Balkans. Following his exploits in Italy between 1848 and 1866, and in particular the Expedition of the Thousand in the summer of 1860, Giuseppe Garibaldi emerged as a revolutionary icon. Thus, in Europe, particularly in the most radical circles, he became the focus of widespread expectation: during the following years there was no end to planned insurrections that foresaw his involvement. In relation to the last phases of the Italian Risorgimento, plans to organize a Garibaldian expedition across the Adriatic, to exhort the Balkan populations to rebellion, and then to return to the peninsula and advance to the north in order to strike at the heart of the Habsburg Empire, thereby resolving the Venetian question, and possibly the Roman one,[3] were never accomplished. There were Garibaldian volunteers in the Cretan uprising in 1866/67, the revolts in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1875/76, and the Greek-Ottoman war in 1897. On those occasions the romantic, patriotic and national components of voluntary commitment in the Balkan liberation wars were also enriched by social ideas. European transnational solidarity then began to be extended from national struggles to those relating to social reform.[4] Furthermore, the Garibaldian movement, now led by Ricciotti, undertook initiatives in favour of the Albanian cause, though without achieving any substantial results.[5] Finally, during the Balkan wars, a group of volunteers came to Greece to fight in the war of 1912.[6] It was this tradition of political commitment that animated Italian volunteers in Serbia in 1914, to which they, moreover, added the ferment of political and social regeneration that swept through Italian society at the beginning of the twentieth century. In analyzing their story, it is therefore necessary to keep this cultural background in mind.

As previously noted regarding the experience of 1912, there were three members of the group that went to Greece who would go also to Serbia two years later: Francesco Conforti, Mario Corvisieri and Cesare Colizza, fought

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[3] A. Tamborra, "Questione veneta e progetti di azioni garibaldine dalla Dalmazia all'Europa centrale (1861–1866)", in *Conferenze e note accademiche nel I centenario dell'unione del Veneto all'Italia* (Padua: Università degli studi di Padova – Accademia patavina di scienze, lettere e arti, 1967), 81–95.

[4] A. Tamborra, *Garibaldi e l'Europa. Impegno militare e prospettive politiche* (Rome: Stato Maggiore dell'Esercito – Ufficio storico, 1983), 132.

[5] F. Guida, "Ricciotti Garibaldi e il movimento nazionale albanese", *Archivio storico italiano* CXXXIX (1981), 97–138.

[6] F. Guida, "L'ultima spedizione garibaldina in Grecia", in *Indipendenza e unità nazionale in Italia e in Grecia* (Florence: Olschki 1987), 191–220. See also N. A. Anastasopoulos, "Voluntary Action in Greece During the Balkan Wars: The Case of the Garibaldini in Ioannina in 1913", *Ricerche storiche* XLVII (2017), n. 3, 61–72.

in the Battle of Drisko against the Ottomans.[7] They had republican leanings, except Colizza, who was an anarchist;[8] their future companions of 1914, Nicola Goretti, Vincenzo Bucca, Ugo Colizza (Cesare's younger brother) and Arturo Reali[9] were also anarchists. These young men were of different social backgrounds, but already somewhat politicized. When the conflict between Serbia and Austria-Hungary broke out, they felt the need to engage in person.

Their experience and sacrifice in Serbia have been studied by a number of scholars. Some brief references to them can be found in some of the most important Italian studies on Italian neutrality and in Eva Cecchinato's[10] excellent research on the subject of the Garibaldian movement after Italian Unification. More recently, Colonel Antonino Zarcone, head of the Historical Section of the Italian General Staff, has studied this topic,[11] availing himself of a dossier held in the Italian Military Archives. As a result of such work, the story has become more widely known. The group left Italy in late July and reached Greece and Salonika by sea; then they arrived in battleground along the Drina river valley – up to a point, they retraced a part of the journey that some of them had made two years earlier.

For them the dream of Garibaldian intervention in the Balkans was still very much alive. For most of them the Balkans was the symbol of national battles for liberty, a sort of traditional space where the secular struggle between the liberty of nations and the imperial despotic power – and also between national rights and dynastic power – was fought. Italian neutrality seemed a cowardly choice to many Italian democrats. For all of these reasons, the seven men decided to go to Serbia. They were men of action and strongly believed in the key role of the Italian nation in the Balkans and remained deeply convinced of the possibilities of a war fought by volunteers.

In the hectic days of July 1914 and, in particular, in the hours that followed the Serbian reply to the ultimatum of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, several Italian politicians, particularly Republicans and Anarchists, approached Ricciotti Garibaldi with the need to organize a group of volunteers to assist the Serbian people. The general then made some initial contacts with the Serbian

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[7] C. Marabini, *Dietro la chimera garibaldina… Diario di un volontario alla guerra greco-turca del 1912* (Rome: Sacchi & Ribaldi, 1914), 6–7, 16.

[8] R. Sassaroli, "Oro di Serbia e anarchici italiani", *Camicia rossa* XXXIV (2014), 14–15.

[9] Some biographical information in A. Mannucci, *Volontarismo garibaldino in Serbia nel 1914* (Rome: Associazione nazionale veterani e reduci garibaldini, 1960).

[10] E. Cecchinato, *Camicie rosse. I garibaldini dall'Unità alla Grande Guerra* (Rome–Bari: Laterza, 2007), 284, 355.

[11] A. Zarcone, *I Precursori. Volontariato democratico italiano nella guerra contro l'Austria: repubblicani, radicali, socialisti riformisti, anarchici e massoni* (Rome: Annales, 2014).

Legation in Rome to find out whether Italian volunteers would be welcome to join the Serbian Army.[12]

Therefore, on the day of Austria's declaration of war on Serbia, the 28th of July, General Ricciotti Garibaldi launched a proclamation to the youth of Italy, encouraging them to support the Serbian people. In the proclamation, Ricciotti defined the actions of the Habsburg Monarchy as potentially dangerous for the unity and freedom of Italy. Therefore, Ricciotti stated, "I invite, in the name of Garibaldi, the Italian youth to join existing bodies and to create new organizations in order to defend, in case of an offensive, Trento and Trieste, with the slogan: Every nation master in its own house. Long live the Serbian people!"[13] The evocation of the irredentist Association of Trento and Trieste was not accidental and had some foundation.

Indeed, at the beginning of August, in Florence, a committee was set up with the purpose of finding volunteers to be sent to Serbia. The promoters of those initiatives were once again local Republican circles. According to the information of the local governmental authority, this committee was soon dissolved. It is interesting to note that this project received a small financial contribution from the Trento and Trieste Association.[14] Even in Milan the authorities received reports of secret meetings for the enlistment of young volunteers to be sent by sea to Serbia's aid.[15] The purpose of this activity was to undermine relations between Italy and Austria, and to put an end to the state of neutrality, and force Italy to enter the war against Austria. For these reasons, the Italian Ministry of the Interior soon ordered the local authorities of the main cities along the Adriatic coast – Venice, Ancona, Bari, Lecce and Brindisi – to monitor the ports to prevent any kind of movement towards the Balkans and Serbia.[16]

However, this invitation was not met with enthusiasm by most of the young Italian democrats. Many of them decided to wait and see how the political situation would develop. Even the initiative by Ricciotti Garibaldi in favour of Serbia was itself weak and poorly organized. It was just a proclamation that

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[12] C. Premuti, *Come Roma preparò la guerra* (Rome: Società tipografica italiana, 1923), 79.

[13] Archivio centrale dello Stato, Rome (hereafter ACS), Ministero dell'Interno, Direzione generale Pubblica sicurezza, Divisione Affari generali e riservati, A5G (Prima guerra mondiale), b. 14, fasc. 20, s.f. 9, ins. 24: the prefect of Rome to the Ministry of the Interior, Direzione generale della P.S., Rome, 7 August 1914.

[14] ACS, A5G, b. 14, fasc. 20, s.f. 9, ins. 8: reports of the prefect of Florence to the Ministry of the Interior, Direzione generale della P.S., Florence, 8 and 10 August 1914.

[15] ACS, A5G, b. 103, fasc. 225, s.f. 1: telegram of the prefect of Milan to the Ministry of the Interior, Cabinet of the Ministry, Milan, 28 July 1914.

[16] ACS, A5G, b. 14, fasc. 20, s.f. 9, ins. 12: telegram from the Ministry of the Interior to the prefects of Venice, Ancona, Bari, Lecce, 4 August 1914.

had little prospect of being put into action.[17] In general, Brunello Vigezzi wrote: "Garibaldian followers do not enjoy much sympathy in the revolutionary ranks; [...]. Distrust is felt instantly and Ricciotti's proclamation is not welcomed with enthusiasm."[18]

In the Italian republican movement, however, the Serbian cause was viewed with some sympathy, but it was quite impossible to make any serious plans to come to its aid at the time. Only those seven men responded to Ricciotti's first proclamation and decided to depart for Serbia; they were convinced that they would soon be followed by hundreds of other volunteers. However, within a few days the war escalated and came to involve not only Serbia but also four great powers, Germany, Russia, France and Great Britain. On the 6th of August, Ricciotti Garibaldi issued another call upon Italian volunteers inviting them to avoid any kind of action in Serbia and ordering those few still remaining there to return to Italy. This call was decided together with the Serbian diplomatic mission in Rome: "Serbia has no need for men and the epicentre of the battle fought today has shifted to other borders. The remaining volunteers should therefore return to their homeland."[19] After the spread of the conflict, Ricciotti Garibaldi, his sons and close collaborators began putting together a voluntary Garibaldian legion to fight in France; the plan was completed in the following months and a large group of volunteers left for France, where two of Ricciotti's sons, Bruno and Costante, lost their lives on the Argonne front.[20]

What about the seven brave volunteers in Serbia? Disobeying Garibaldi's call to return to Italy, they decided to continue their mission. As Francesco Conforti recounts, they were remarkably well received by the Serbian Legation in Athens and were given a letter of recommendation for a Serbian General Staff colonel residing in Salonika, who was tasked with being of assistance to them.[21] In Salonika, the group was informed by the Italian consul that "a dozen Italians passing by stated that they were going to fight for Serbia, and that they would

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[17] ACS, A5G, b. 14, fasc. 20, s.f. 9, ins. 24: prefect of Rome to the Ministry of the Interior, Direzione generale della P.S., Rome, 7 August 1914.

[18] B. Vigezzi, *L'Italia di fronte alla Prima guerra mondiale*, vol. I: *L'Italia neutrale* (Milan/Naples: Ricciardi, 1966), 166.

[19] "Niente volontari in Serbia", *Il Messaggero*, 6 August 1914.

[20] See H. Heyriès, *Les garibaldiens de 14. Splendeurs et misères des Chemises Rouges en France de la Grande Guerre à la Seconde Guerre mondiale* (Nice: Serre, 2005). See also Camillo Marabini, *La rossa avanguardia dell'Argonna* (Rome: Anonima Tipo-Editoriale Libraria, 1935).

[21] Francesco Conforti to his brother Antonio, Athens, 3 August 1914, in F. Belmonte, *Un eroico cavaliere dell'ideale. Francesco Conforti* (Salerno: Linotyp. M. Pepe, 1964), 34. In this volume several letters and documents in the possession of the Conforti family have been published.

soon be followed by a few hundred of their countrymen".[22] It is interesting to note that the Italian consul spoke of some ten volunteers; from Athens, Conforti reported that there were in the Greek capital twelve Italian volunteers (whom he had met on board the steamship that had brought them to Greece) and that they all were about to join the Serbian army.[23] However, the presence of only seven Italian volunteers on the Serbian front is documented with certainty. It is not known if there were others and, if there were, their identity remains unknown.[24] It may be assumed that they were Italians from Venezia Giulia, Dalmatia or other regions of the Habsburg Empire, as Conforti reported in another letter to his brother a few weeks later, in which he explained that a "Garibaldian company would be formed, entirely made up of Italian and Dalmatian students: all intelligent and well-meaning people who speak Italian".[25]

From Salonika, they reached Skopje, then Niš and Kragujevac where they were finally enlisted in the Serbian Army. Conforti was convinced, although he had no news of the war in Europe, that in the following weeks the group would reach other Italians on the Adriatic to fight together against Austria.[26] Their last letter, from Užice, is dated 17 August. Cesare Colizza wrote to a friend in Italy that they were heading for the Bosnian border. The unit was made up of volunteers: those seven Italians, but also students from Montenegro and Bosnia, as well as other Italian irredentists who had deserted from the Austro-Hungarian Army. Colizza and Corvisieri, the most experienced men, veterans of the Greek campaign, were in command of this group, attached to a larger komitadji unit.[27] These were groups of volunteers, trained mainly by Serbs, not subject to conscription or from territories of the Habsburg Empire, who wanted to fight alongside Serbia. They were soon joined by other South-Slav volunteers (Bosnians, Montenegrins, Croats, etc.).[28] Cesare Colizza wrote in the letter of August 17: "We wear a bizarre uniform, somewhere between military and hunting outfit in style, and *opanak* […] on our feet. In order not to renounce our Garibaldian identity, we wear a band of red silk around one arm to distinguish ourselves

[22] ACS, Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri, Guerra europea, b. 26, fasc. 17.1.11: telegram from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Ministry of the Interior, Rome, 17 August 1914.

[23] Francesco Conforti to his brother Antonio, Athens, 3 August 1914, in Belmonte, *Un eroico cavaliere*, 34.

[24] It is also worth noting that Premuti, *Come Roma*, 79, reports of an eighth volunteer who left for Serbia, Enzo Polli of Vicenza; no news was ever obtained concerning his fate.

[25] Francesco Conforti to his brother Antonio, Užice, 11 August 1914, in Belmonte, *Un eroico cavaliere*, 41.

[26] Belmonte, *Un eroico cavaliere*, 41–42.

[27] See Marabini, *La rossa avanguardia*, 233.

[28] A. Mitrović, *Serbia's Great War 1914–1918* (London: Hurst, 2007), 81.

from the others."[29] Unfortunately, just three days later, on 20 July, five of them died in battle on the boundary between Serbia and Bosnia, near Višegrad, in a place called Babina Glava (or Babina Gora, Borna Gora, as it is named in some sources).[30] Two of them (Ugo Colizza and Arturo Reali) survived and returned to Italy in the following months.[31]

The seven Italian volunteers in Serbia soon became a symbol for the democratic interventionist movement. They were considered the very first Italians to fall in the Great War and, more importantly, a sort of desperate patrol of the Italian interventionist movement. Therefore, their sacrifice soon became the focus of political propaganda aimed at supporting the campaign for Italian intervention in the First World War against the Central Powers.

The first large commemoration ceremony for the five men fallen in Serbia took place in Rome on the 14th of September 1914. According to information held by the prefecture, the event would be a pretext to attempt demonstrations in favour of France. Moreover, "the republicans, in particular, have it in mind to give greater impulse to the agitation against the neutrality of Italy in the current conflict [for] the purpose [of] creating complications".[32] Of great interest is an anonymous report held by the police authorities that provides an account of the ceremony. The event was held at the Casa del Popolo (in Via Capo d'Africa near the Colosseum) and had a predominantly republican overtone, including the participation of representatives of reformist socialism and anarchism. The speakers who took the floor rallied against the monarchy because of its alliance with the Central empires, praising the war from which the social republic responsible for the redemption of the peoples should emerge. None of them, after a few words dedicated to the memory of the five fallen men, held back from denouncing the Savoy dynasty, the government and their political opponents, arguing that the republicans wanted war because that would mean the collapse of the House of Savoy.[33] An account of the meeting was also published in the

[29] Published in Mannucci, *Volontarismo garibaldino*, 28.

[30] On the name of the place of the battle where the five Italian volunteers fell, see O. Bruni, "I garibaldini di Babina Glava", *Camicia rossa* XIV (1938), n. 3–4 (March–April), 51–52; see also U. Onorati and E. Scialis, *Eroi in Camicia rossa combattenti nel 1914 per la libertà dei popoli* (Marino/Rome: A.N.P.I. – Sezione "Aurelio Del Gobbo", 2017), 29–30.

[31] See Mannucci, *Volontarismo garibaldino*; A. Bandini Buti, *Una epopea sconosciuta* (Milan: Ceschina, 1967), 163–165; Zarcone, *I Precursori*, 43–50; Onorati and Scialis, *Eroi in Camicia rossa*.

[32] ACS, A5G, b. 118, fasc. 242, s.f. 1: phonogram of the Prefecture of Rome to the Ministry of the Interior, Rome, 13 September 1914.

[33] ACS, A5G, b. 118, fasc. 242, s.f. 1: anonymous report dated 15 September 1914, Rome.

Roman newspaper *Il Messaggero*, including the names of various persons who had participated and the groups present.[34]

The majority of those present belonged, as mentioned, to republican circles. This is understandable in the light of the political creed of the volunteers who had left for Serbia that summer, but also because the republicans were the first to take a stand to prevent a war alongside Austria and to call for the alignment of the country with republican France. As Alessandra Staderini wrote, "for the republican component, the war could finally bring about, without the mediation of parliamentary democracy, a non-Savoy tradition, with an impassioned content that went back to the legacy of Mazzinianism".[35] The sacrifice of the five Italian volunteers, therefore, lent itself perfectly to the reaffirmation of these political objectives.

The volunteers in Serbia were evoked again on 10 September 1917, when a public ceremony was held, in Rome organized by interventionist parties in honour of the war disabled, in which a Serbian military delegation handed over honours to the families of the fallen and the two survivors, Ugo Colizza and Arturo Reali.[36]

After the end of the Great War they remained part of the Garibaldian legacy, which was subsequently manipulated by the Fascist regime. Mussolini wished to be seen as a sort of continuation of the Italian Risorgimento and, more specifically, of the Garibaldian tradition. In 1925, for example, he referred to the 1914 volunteers in France as the forerunners of Italian intervention and the Fascist revolution.[37] The link of continuity between the Garibaldian movement and Fascism was also established by one of Ricciotti's sons, Ezio, who had spoke of the Argonne "as the resumption of the battles of the Risorgimento, destined to continue in the First World War and then to lead to the advent of fascism".[38] It is also interesting to remember when the story of the seven Italians became a focus of attention again. After the Agreement between Italy and Yugoslavia, signed by Galeazzo Ciano and Milan Stojadinović in 1937, the sacrifice of those five men in 1914 was perceived as a possible symbol of friendship between the two countries and a sign of the renewed peace in the Adriatic.[39] On the occasion of Stojadinović's visit to Italy in December of 1937, in the columns of the

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[34] "Per gl'Italiani caduti in Serbia. Una solenne commemorazione alla Casa del Popolo", *Il Messaggero*, 15 September 1914. See also *L'Illustrazione italiana*, 20 September 1914.

[35] A. Staderini, *Combattenti senza divisa. Roma nella grande guerra* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1995), 56.

[36] See *Il Messaggero*, 9 and 10 September 1917; *Il Giornale d'Italia*, 9 and 10 September 1917.

[37] Referred in the article "Babina Glava", *Camicia rossa* XIII (1937), n. 12 (December), 228.

[38] M. di Napoli, "Ezio Garibaldi e la 'Camicia rossa' negli anni del fascismo", in *I Garibaldi dopo Garibaldi*, 179.

[39] "Per gli eroi garibaldini di Babina Glava", *Camicia rossa* XIV (1938), n. 2 (February), 47.

newspaper *Il Telegrafo* of Livorno, the journalist Giovanni Ansaldo once again recalled the episode and wrote, addressing the head of the Yugoslav government: "you implement the collaboration between Italy and Yugoslavia, which is based mainly on the reality of political facts and economic interests. And this is very fair. But you know that populations respond especially to ideal bonds, created by blood and tightened by sacrifice. And this is why today, Your Excellency, we did not want to greet you with the names and with the memory of the five of Babina Glava, fallen for you and for us."[40]

Nonetheless, the memory of those men was expunged in the following years; only recently can we perceive a certain interest in this story.

In conclusion, what is the meaning of this small episode of the First Word War in South-Eastern Europe?

In the case of the Italian volunteers in Serbia in 1914, it must be said that their aim should have been the revival of the Italian Risorgimento through the liberation of the lands still under Habsburg rule in North-Eastern Italy, Trentino and Venezia Giulia with the city of Trieste. In the first months of war, beside the formation of a group of volunteers for Serbia, someone in certain republican circles also envisioned an expedition to Dalmatia. The aim was always the same: provoke Austria and push Italy into the war;[41] Italian neutrality was seen as an act of cowardice. More broadly, the republicans saw the war as a unique opportunity to make the democratic tradition of the nineteenth century triumph over monarchic and moderates forces. They could not believe that, at last, a war against the eternal enemy had been set in motion. For many of them that moment was probably the beginning of a broader revolution and it was mandatory to engage somehow in the fight.

As George Mosse has pointed out, the volunteers of 1914 were placed in the tradition of the romantic voluntarism of the nineteenth century. As in the previous century, they were not mercenaries, they mostly came from the middle class, they were quite well educated and they fought for an ideal, for the liberty of nations, also conceived as liberty for themselves. Patriotism, the search for a purpose in life and the love of adventure were just a few of the many motivations behind their engagement as volunteers in a war.[42]

The seven Italian volunteers in Serbia at first, and then the Garibaldian Legion in France were symbols of an entire generation rooted in the roman-

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[40] G. Ansaldo, "I cinque di Babina Glava (lettera aperta a S. E. Stojadinovic)", *Il Telegrafo*, 5 December 1937.

[41] ACS, A5G, b. 12, fasc. 20, s.f. 1, ins. 7: report of the prefect of Rome to the Ministry of the Interior, Rome, 30 September, 1914; ACS, A5G, b. 103, fasc. 225, s.f. 1: report of the prefect of Milan to the Ministry of the Interior, Milan, 7 December 1914.

[42] G. L. Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990).

tic tradition of war and the politics of the Risorgimento as well as the struggle of nations against the despotism typical of nineteenth century. They could not imagine that the war which had just broken out in the summer of 1914 was a completely different one. They imagined a brief war that would mark the final accomplishment of the struggles of the previous century. They soon became aware that this was an illusion.

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The British Adriatic Squadron and the Evacuation of Serbs from the Albanian Coast 1915–1916

Abstract: Unpublished sources and archival material can still shed fresh light upon the history of the evacuation of the Serbian Army and civilian refugees from the Albanian coast in 1915–1916. Among them are reports to the British Admiralty written in 1915 and 1916 by the commander of the British Adriatic Squadron, Rear Admiral Cecil Fiennes Thursby. These documents deposited in the National Archives in Kew Gardens have never been used in reconstructing the evacuation operation. Written on an almost daily basis, Thursby's reports of 1915 and 1916 constitute a unique source not only for the history of the evacuation of Serbs but also for the history of the South-East Europe in the Great War.

Keywords: Serbia, Albania, British Adriatic Squadron, Corfu, evacuation, Entente Powers

I

In the autumn of 1915, Serbia and Montenegro were attacked by the combined force of Germany, Austria-Hungary and Bulgaria. Decimated by the battles of 1914 and devastating epidemics of 1915, the Serbs fought and gradually retreated, expecting the Allies' help. However, it would not be an exaggeration to say that they were left to their fate, since the Entente Powers failed to fulfil their promises.

Especially clear among Allied officials' reassuring messages[1] was Sir Edward Grey's House of Commons announcement of 28 September 1915 concerning Bulgarian mobilisation on the eve of the attack on Serbia:

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[1] See D. R. Živojinović, *Nevoljni saveznici: Velike sile i Solunski front (1914–1918)* [Unwilling Allies: The Great Powers and the Salonika Front (1914–1918)] (Belgrade: Zavod za udžbenike, 2008), 121–148; D. R. Živojinović, "Velika Britanija i 'moralna podrška' Srbiji (decembar 1915 – mart 1916)" [Great Britain and "Moral Support" to Serbia (December 1915 – March 1916)], *Nadmeni saveznik i zanemareno srpstvo: Britansko-srpski odnosi (1875–1941)* [Domineering Ally and Neglected Serbdom: British-Serbian Relations (1875–1941)]

> If, on the other hand, the Bulgarian mobilization were to result in Bulgaria assuming an aggressive attitude on the side of our enemies, we are prepared to give to our friends in the Balkans all the support in our power, in the manner that would be most welcome to them, in concert with our Allies, without reserve and without qualification.[2]

David Lloyd George realised immediately what had been done to Serbia. As a minister in Herbert Henry Asquith's government, he was vainly trying to induce Grey and other colleagues to stick to their promises. In his memoirs, he wrote extensively about this "deception practised upon Serbia".[3] Another minister in the Asquith government, Edward Henry Carson, was even more "disgusted".[4] In his House of Commons speech of 20 October 1915, Carson stated that he resigned from the government because of its broken promises, Edward Grey's in particular:

> The statement made by the Foreign Minister, under the sanction of the Cabinet, in this House, appeared to me to have announced a policy of the highest importance in our obligations in the Balkans, involving our prestige and our honour.[5]

However, Serbian Crown Prince Alexander Karadjordjević, Nikola Pašić's Cabinet and *Vojvoda* (Field-Marshal) Radomir Putnik's Supreme Command were united in refusing to surrender even after the Bulgarians cut off the Serbian Army's route to Salonika, where the dilatory landing of insufficient Allied forces started. After the epic and tragic winter retreat through the mountains of Montenegro and Albania, in December 1915 the remnants of the Serbian Army numbering, according to Serbian official sources, nearly 152,000 soldiers, as well as some 15,000 civilian refugees and more than 22,000 Austro-Hungarian prisoners of war,[6] reached the Albanian coast, where the aid of the Allied fleets was

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(Belgrade: Albatros Plus, 2011), 391–402; M. Ković, *Jedini put: Sile Antante i odbrana Srbije 1915. godine* [The Only Way: The Entente Powers and the Defence of Serbia in 1915] (Belgrade: Filip Višnjić, 2016), 85–95; M. Ković, " 'Obmana Srbije' 1915. godine: Nekoliko britanskih svedočenja" ["Deception Practised upon Serbia": A Few British Testimonies], *Srpska politička misao* 51/2 (2016), 271–284.

[2] *Hansard*, vol. 74, 732. On Grey's attitude towards Serbia see M. Ković, "The Peace Initiative of Sir Edward Grey and his Proposal for Austro-Hungarian Occupation of Belgrade (29–31 July 1914)", in *The Serbs and the First World War 1914–1918*, ed. D. R. Živojinović (Belgrade: Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, 2015), 299–307.

[3] D. Lloyd George, *War Memoirs*, vol. I (London: Ivor Nicholson & Watson Ltd, 1933), 489–529.

[4] Ibid. 513.

[5] *Hansard*, vol. 74, 1813.

[6] C. Stoyanovitch and M. Savtchitch, *Rapport sur les Dommages causés à la Serbie et au Monténégro présenté à la Commission des Réparations des Dommages* (Paris: Impr. slave, 1919), 14.

expected. As the enemy forces approached Albania, the starving and dying Serbian soldiers, civilian refugees and enemy prisoners had to be evacuated. For the Allies, the state of affairs in the Balkans now became more urgent.

II

All Balkan countries and Great Powers were involved in the evacuation of Serbs from Albania. In December 1915, the Serbs found themselves on Albanian soil, where Italy, Montenegro and Greece, as well as Serbia itself, had their own interests and territorial claims. The Allies chose the island of Corfu as a base for the recuperation and reconstruction of the Serbian Army and the next step was to transport the Serbs to Greek territory. Before that, about 10,000 Serbian soldiers had been evacuated to Bizerte, Tunisia. The transport of some 189,000 Serbs and Austro-Hungarian prisoners by Italian, French and British ships, under the constant threat of Austro-Hungarian and German submarines, warships and aeroplanes, happened to be the largest sea evacuation in the First World War. Historians have found that it was even "the largest sea evacuation in history until Dunkirk".[7]

These topics have been explored by many generations of Serbian historians, but in historiography in general, Balkan battles and fronts (with the exception of Gallipoli) are, along with the Eastern front, largely neglected topics. Some basic facts about the 1916 evacuation remain uncertain even in Serbian historiography, including chronology, the exact number of evacuated soldiers and civilians, or the role of Italian, French and British fleets in the evacuation.

There are still many unpublished sources and archival material that can shed new light upon these events. Among them are reports to the British Admiralty written in 1915 and 1916 by the commander of the British Adriatic Squadron, Rear Admiral Cecil Fiennes Thursby. These documents are deposited in the National Archives in Kew Gardens, and they have never been used in reconstructing the evacuation of Serbs from the Albanian coast.[8]

Written by one of the main participants on an almost daily basis, Thursby's reports of 1915 and 1916 constitute a unique source not only for the history of the Serbian evacuation but also for the history of the South-East Europe in the Great War. An accomplished officer and acute observer, Admiral Thursby

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[7] D. T. Bataković, "Serbia 1914–1918: War Imposed, Martyrdom, Resurrection", in: *Serbia in the Great War: Anglo-Saxon Testimonies and Historical Analysis*, ed. D. T. Bataković (Belgrade: National Library of Serbia, 2014), 33.

[8] The National Archives, UK (TNA), Admiralty (ADM), 137/780, Adriatic, Reports of Proceedings of the Rear Admiral Commanding British Adriatic Squadron, 18 May 1915 to 28 February 1916; Ibid. 137/781, Adriatic, Reports of Proceedings of the Rear Admiral Commanding British Adriatic Squadron, 29 February to 20 December 1916; Ibid. 137/833, List of Charts Submitted with Reports of Proceedings, British Adriatic Squadron.

had substantial experience with the eastern Mediterranean. He was commander of a detached squadron during the Adana massacres in 1909, of the International Squadron in Crete in 1910, of the 5th Battle Squadron in the Dardanelles and of the 2nd Squadron landing ANZAC forces in Gallipoli in 1915. At the time of the evacuation of Serbs, he commanded the British Adriatic Squadron. Later that year he became commander-in-chief of the East Mediterranean.

III

According to Admiral Thursby's reports of December 1915, when exhausted Serbian soldiers and civilian refugees were dying on the Albanian coast, the Allies had no plan or clear idea about what to do with them. "At present we do not know how it is intended to deal with the Serbian refugees and the Serbian army" – this is what Thursby writes on 28 December.[9]

Moreover, from 1 to 11 December, the Italians were focused on the transport of their own troops to Valona. The British believed that the main goal of the Italians was the defence of their sphere of influence against what they had perceived as the Serbian threat. Thursby reported that Italian warships, being occupied with transporting their troops, could not provide escort to the steamers carrying provisions from Brindisi to the Serbs at San Giovanni di Medua and Durazzo. These ships were under constant threat from Austro-Hungarian destroyers, cruisers, submarines and aeroplanes coming from nearby Kotor; it took submarines only one hour to get from Kotor to Medua, and aeroplanes, about half an hour.[10]

British and French cruisers and destroyers provided escort to the Italian supply ships carrying food and provisions for the Serbs. Coming from the naval base in Brindisi, they were chasing and attacking Austro-Hungarian submarines. The Gulf of Drin was the site of frequent skirmishes between British, French and Italian ships and the enemy's submarines. At the same time, British net drifters were employed to protect the landing of Italian troops at Valona.[11]

British and French ships sought to prevent the advance of enemy forces from the naval bases in Kotor, Šibenik and Pula with limited success.[12] Enemy vessels had free passage up and down the Dalmatian coast, since the British and French at that time had no submarines capable of patrolling the Quarnero and further off the Dalmatian islands. The Austro-Hungarians were able to return from Medua and Durazzo to their naval bases before being cut off by any

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[9] Ibid. 137/780, Rear Admiral Cecil F. Thursby to Secretary of the Admiralty, Report of Proceedings, H. M. S. "Queen", 28 December 1915.

[10] Ibid. 1 December 1915.

[11] Ibid. 9 December 1915.

[12] Ibid.

force sent from Brindisi. The difficulties of keeping the naval force at sea instead of sending them from Brindisi were obvious, because the Allies could not determine in advance the strength of the approaching enemy forces, and because many large German submarines were operating in these waters. On 5 December 1915 a strong group of Austro-Hungarian cruisers and destroyers managed to enter the port of Medua, sinking the Italian steamer which had just unloaded food for the Serbs, the Greek steamer *Thira* carrying ammunition for Montenegro, and a number of small vessels at Medua and, a little later, at Durazzo.[13]

After the attack of 5 December, no supplies were despatched to the starving Serbs until the last Italian troops were embarked at Valona on the 11th. Only after that were Italian cruisers and destroyers, together with British and French ships, engaged in protecting supply transports. The harbour in Medua was still blocked with sunken vessels. However, two steamers brought about 700 tons of supplies to Durazzo on the 13th.[14]

The bulk of the Serbian army retreating through Montenegro and northern Albania reached Scutari and Alessio between 15 and 21 December. On the same day, 21 December, the Serbian Timok Army left Elbasan for Durazzo and Valona. Austro-Hungarian prisoners had already reached Valona. From Scutari, Serbian Crown Prince Alexander Karadjordjević repeatedly sent messages to the Allies requesting urgent evacuation of his starving and dying soldiers. They were threatened from the north and east by the approaching Austro-Hungarian and Bulgarian armies.[15]

On 21 December Admiral Thursby estimated that there were between 80,000 and 120,000 Serbian soldiers in Albania, mainly in the Scutari and Elbasan areas.[16] Thursby reported that small steamers were carrying food to Durazzo and Medua, but "the whole question is much complicated as no definite decision has been arrived at as to what is to be the ultimate fate of the Serbian army".[17]

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[13] Ibid.

[14] Ibid. 15 December 1915.

[15] *Veliki rat za oslobodjenje i ujedinjenje Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca* (VRS), vol. XIII [The Great War for the Liberation and Unification of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes] (Belgrade: Štamparija Skerlić, 1927), 306–365; M. Zelenika, *Rat Srbije i Crne Gore 1915* [The War of Serbia and Montenegro in 1915] (Belgrade: Vojno delo, 1964), 444–465, 511–513; Ž. G. Pavlović, *Rat Srbije sa Austro-Ugarskom, Nemačkom i Bugarskom 1915. godine* [Serbia's War with Austria-Hungary, Germany and Bulgaria in 1915] (Belgrade: Medija centar "Odbrana", 2017), 868-893; M. Dj. Nedić, *Srpska vojska na Albanskoj Golgoti* [Serbian Army on Albanian Golgotha] (Belgrade: Finegraf d.o.o., 2018), 69–114.

[16] TNA, ADM, Rear Admiral Cecil F. Thursby to Secretary of the Admiralty, Report of Proceedings, H. M. S. "Queen", 21 December 1915.

[17] Ibid.

The evacuation of Serbian soldiers was postponed again. Italians had first to supply their own troops in Valona. Then they decided to evacuate "refugees of all nationalities, who have been serving with the Serbian army", and Austro-Hungarian prisoners, who, as Thursby noted, were "in a dreadful state of disorganisation, disease and starvation".[18] According to Thursby, there was a total of 24,000–25,000 Austro-Hungarian prisoners.[19] On 5 January, he reported that about 25,000 prisoners had been transported, noting that the steamers which had transported them had to be put in quarantine because of many cases of cholera. As a result, the evacuation of Serbian soldiers had to be delayed again.[20]

From 21 to 28 December four small steamers, each carrying 300 to 400 tons of provisions for the Serbs arrived in Medua and Durazzo. In Medua they were attacked by Austrian aeroplanes, bombs hitting even the hospital ship *Panama* evacuating Red Cross personnel from Medua.[21]

Admiral Thursby collaborated with the officers of the British Adriatic Mission sent from Britain to help the Serbs, and with Admiral Ernest Troubridge, who had retreated with the Serbs and was now in charge as commander of the harbour of Medua.[22] A few days later Thursby met French Lieutenant General Piarron de Mondésir as well. Not knowing that the purpose of Mondésir's mission was to take charge of the entire operation, Thursby assumed that he was to report on the situation.[23] Obvious lack of coordination, together with the fact that on 28 December Thursby noted again that "at present we do not know how it is intended to deal with the Serbian refugees and the Serbian army",[24] demonstrated that the Allies were in fact unprepared for the evacuation operation, despite the fact that, back in Serbia, their officials had encouraged and even threatened the Serbs not to surrender but instead to retreat to the coast.[25]

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[18] Ibid.

[19] Ibid. 28 December 1915.

[20] Ibid. 5 January 1916.

[21] Ibid. 28 December 1915.

[22] Ibid. 21 December 1915.

[23] Ibid. 28 December 1915. On Piarron de Mondesir's mission see P. de Mondezir, *Albanska golgota: Uspomene i ratne slike* [Albanian Golgotha: Memoires and Images of War] (Belgrade: Prosveta a.d., 1934); M. Živanović, "O evakuaciji srpske vojske iz Albanije i njenoj reorganizaciji na Krfu (1915–1916) prema francuskim dokumentima" [On the evacuation of the Serbian Army from Albania and its reorganization in Corfu (1915–1916) according to French documents], *Istorijski časopis* 14–15 (1963–1965), 272–294. See V. G. Pavlović, *De la Serbie vers la Yougoslavie: La France et la naissance de la Yugoslavie, 1878–1918* (Belgrade: Institut des Études balkaniques, 2015), 254–259.

[24] TNA, ADM, Rear Admiral Cecil F. Thursby to Secretary of the Admiralty, Report of Proceedings, H. M. S. "Queen", 28 December 1915.

[25] M. Ković, *Jedini put*, 188–199.

On 29 December, the Allied force defending the lines of supply between Brindisi and Albania had to fight its biggest battle in the Adriatic since the beginning of the war.[26] On its way from Kotor to the Albanian coast, an Austro-Hungarian squadron consisting of a light cruiser and five destroyers destroyed a French submarine, and then appeared in front of Durazzo harbour. After shelling the town, and sinking some small boats, the squadron run into a minefield, losing two destroyers. Then an Allied force composed of two British light cruisers, two Italian light cruisers, five French destroyers and four Italian destroyers left Brindisi to chase the Austrian squadron which was retreating back to its naval base. In support of the squadron, an Austrian armoured cruiser and a light cruiser were despatched from Kotor. The Allies caught up with the Austrians, damaging another enemy destroyer in a long-range gunnery duel. After that, the remaining Austrian force managed to reach Kotor.[27]

How dangerous these routes and waters could be was proven on 8 January 1916, when the Italian merchant cruiser *Città di Palermo*, transporting British and Italian troops to Valona, hit a mine in the vicinity of Brindisi and sank drawing down a number of soldiers who were on board. Two of the drifters picking up survivors also hit mines and were blown to pieces.[28] The previous day the steamship *Brindisi* struck a mine at Medua, sinking with 266 Montenegrin volunteers from Canada and the USA.[29]

On 5 January Thursby reported that three British and two French cruisers were ready to escort, together with Italian forces, the transports of Serbian troops. Allies' submarines were now able to patrol the Austrian-held coast all the way to Cape Planka, near Šibenik. From Venice, British submarines patrolled in the northern Adriatic.[30]

According to Thursby's report of 10 January, about 1,000 Serbian soldiers had already been transported by the French cruiser *Jules Michellet* from Medua to Brindisi and then to Bizerte in Tunisia. Thursby wrote that the original plan approved by Mondesir was to evacuate 88,000 Serbian soldiers in the area of Scutari from Medua, 45,000 men in the Elbasan area from Durazzo, and about 10,000 recruits in Fieri from Valona. Admiral Troubridge, however, reportedly warned that this port, being too close to the enemy base in Kotor, was unfit for

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[26] P. G. Halpern, *A Naval History of World War I* (London and New York: Naval Institute Press, 1995), 156.

[27] TNA, ADM, Rear Admiral Cecil F. Thursby to Secretary of the Admiralty, Report of Proceedings, H. M. S. "Queen", 5 January 1916.

[28] Ibid. 10 January 1916.

[29] Ibid. According to other sources, the number of "Brindisi" casualties was 402: I. Petrović, *Brodolomnici pod Medovo* [The Shipwrecked off Medua] (Podgorica: Književna zadruga Srpskog narodnog vijeća Crne Gore, 2015), 151–190.

[30] TNA, ADM, Rear Admiral Cecil F. Thursby to Secretary of the Admiralty, Report of Proceedings, H. M. S. "Queen", 5 January 1916; Ibid. 10 January 1916.

the mass and safe evacuation of Serbian soldiers. Thursby relayed Troubridge's concerns to the Admiralty, although he believed that "no doubt it could be done in time".[31] Already on 10 January he "understood" that the Allies decided that the Serbian Army would have to march again, this time all the way from Medua to the comparatively safe harbours at Durazzo and Valona.[32]

"Plans are being changed daily, but since the capitulation of Montenegro, plans for the evacuation of the Serbian army seem to be getting more settled," Thursby reported on 19 January.[33] On the same day he expected that steamers would evacuate the Serbian Crown Prince and government, together with a part of the Montenegrin government. In the evening the King of Montenegro and Admiral Troubridge were to be transported. Three hospital ships, British, French and Italian, were ready to evacuate the sick, wounded, women and children from Medua and Durazzo. After them, "the reminder of the Serbian army, estimated at 140,000, will be evacuated from Medua and Durazzo…"[34] Around 10,000 recruits have, according to Thursby, already been evacuated from Valona. The island of Corfu, occupied by the French, was ready for the reception of the Serbian Army. Two thousand Serbian soldiers had already been sent there. The main body of about 50 British drifters, supported by two destroyers, were now protecting the transport route from Valona to Corfu.[35]

On 19 January, Thursby sent to the Admiralty the list of vessels, mostly Italian along with three British and two French cruisers, which had been to Medua and Durazzo since 10 December, dispatching and escorting provisions to the Serbs and evacuating them from Albania on their way back. According to him, from 10 December to 18 January, 5,823 tons of provisions had been discharged, and 6,283 passengers evacuated on the return journeys.[36]

By 25 January, the total number of the evacuated was approximately 20,000 Serbian soldiers, 24,000 Austrian prisoners and 6,000 "sick, wounded and refugees".[37] The British Admiralty ordered that "British hospital ships must

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[31] Ibid.; Ibid. Troubridge to Thursby, Medua, 6 January 1916. See M. Ković, "Admiral Ernest Trubridž: Uzroci srpskog poraza (1915)" [Admiral Ernest Troubridge: The Causes of Serbian Defeat (1915)], *Srpska politička misao* 51/1 (2016), 239–251.

[32] TNA, ADM, Rear Admiral Cecil F. Thursby to Secretary of the Admiralty, Report of Proceedings, H. M. S. "Queen", 10 January 1916.

[33] Ibid. 19 January 1916.

[34] Ibid.

[35] Ibid.

[36] Ibid.

[37] Ibid. Rear Admiral Cecil F. Thursby to Secretary of the Admiralty, Report of Proceedings, H. M. S. "Queen", 25 January 1916.

not be used for evacuating women & children unless sick",[38] and Thursby had to assure his superiors that he was acting in compliance with the order.[39] The rate of evacuation was only 2,000 persons per day, since all ships were engaged in transporting provisions not only for the Serbs in Medua, Durazzo and Valona but also for the Italian troops in Valona and Durazzo.[40] By 20 January, "a total of 5100 men have been taken to Bizerta, making 9741 troops all told".[41] By 25 January, the Allies had evacuated the King of Serbia, the King and Queen of Montenegro, the Serbian government, a part of the Montenegrin government, the foreign diplomats who had retreated with the Serbs, the English hospital units attached to the Serbian Army, Admiral Troubridge and his mission.[42]

The last transports left Medua on 22 and 23 January. This port was now in the Austrian hands, and Thursby warned that Durazzo might be the next to fall to the enemy. At the same time, Serbian troops were marching from Medua to Durazzo and Valona.[43] On 22 and 23 January, the ships *Regina Elena* and *Cordova* managed to evacuate 4,087 Serbian soldiers from Valona, and on 23 January four small steamers transported 2,300 from Durazzo. Thursby reported that most of the Serbian troops embarked on fifteen Italian and French ships in Durazzo would first be transported to Valona, and the rest directly to Corfu.[44] From Valona to Corfu Serbian troops were to be evacuated by thirteen Italian and French ships.[45]

On 1 February Thursby noted that the evacuation from Durazzo was considerably expedited. The traffic to and fro between Durazzo and Valona was "now practically continuous". Within seven days, from 25 January to 31 January, 23,450 Serbian soldiers were transported from Durazzo to Valona by twelve small steamers. Another 1,500 soldiers were evacuated from Durazzo directly to Corfu. Nine huge boats had already evacuated 31,187 Serbian soldiers from Valona to Corfu.[46]

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[38] Ibid. Secretary of the Admiralty to Rear Admiral Thursby, London, 24 January 1916; Ibid. Telegram, 1 February 1916.

[39] Ibid. Rear Admiral Cecil F. Thursby to Secretary of the Admiralty, Report of Proceedings, H. M. S. "Queen", 25 January 1916.

[40] Ibid.

[41] Ibid. Attached, General Intelligence, 25 January 1916.

[42] Ibid. Rear Admiral Cecil F. Thursby to Secretary of the Admiralty, Report of Proceedings, H. M. S. "Queen", 25 January 1916.

[43] Ibid.

[44] Ibid.

[45] Ibid.

[46] Ibid. 1 February 1916.

The safety of the transports depended upon Allied fleets. The British, French and Italian submarines divided the coast from Dubrovnik southwards into their respective zones of responsibility. Five British and three French cruisers, sixteen Italian and nine French destroyers escorted transports of the Serbs, occasionally making sweeps north, chasing enemy submarines and ships. The fleet of seventy-seven British net drifters defended the route from Valona to Corfu against enemy submarines.[47]

However, the evacuation operation entailed serious losses. On 2 February, the French steamer *Jean Bart* transporting Serbs from Durazzo to Valona struck a mine or was torpedoed, leaving only five survivors. On the same day two aeroplanes attacked Valona, killing some twenty Serbian and Italian soldiers and a few sailors. Two days later, the Italian steamer *Assiria* carrying Serbs from Durazzo to Valona was hit by a submarine torpedo, which, however, failed to explode.[48] According to Thursby, on the same day, 4 February, Serbian troops repulsed some 8,000 Austrians on the Ishmi river, north of Durazzo, inflicting heavy losses on them and taking some prisoners.[49] According to Serbian sources, this battle took place a day earlier, on 3 February.[50] Parts of the Serbian Army were still a fighting force, obviously capable of defending themselves and winning battles.

On 8 February Thursby reported that since 1 February 51,256 Serbian soldiers had been evacuated from Durazzo and Valona to Corfu. 28,793 were transported from Durazzo to Valona, 8,121 from Durazzo directly to Corfu, and 43,185 from Valona to Corfu.[51] According to Thursby, evacuation from Durazzo was to be completed on 9 February, and the remaining Serbian troops were to be transported from Valona the following week. In his estimation, the total number of Serbian soldiers in Corfu, exclusive of the wounded, sick, refugees, women and children, would be about 130,000.[52]

In his report of 16 February, Thursby updated these figures. From 9 February to 16 February, 25,942 Serbian soldiers were evacuated from the Albanian coast. All troops were transported from Valona, since the evacuation from Durazzo was completed on 9 February, with the transport of the last 2,500 soldiers

[47] Ibid.; Ibid. 28 December 1915; 8 February 191616 February 1916.

[48] Ibid. Attached, General Intelligence, 8 February 1916.

[49] Ibid.

[50] *VRS*, vol. XIV, 249–250. See Ch. E. J. Fryer, *The Destruction of Serbia in 1915* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 123–124.

[51] TNA, ADM, Rear Admiral Cecil F. Thursby to Secretary of the Admiralty, Attached, Transport of Serbian Troops, 8 February 1916.

[52] Ibid. Report of Proceedings, 8 February 1916.

directly to Corfu. With the previously reported numbers, the total of Serbian soldiers evacuated to Corfu by 16 February was 119,483.[53]

"There are still between 15,000 and 20,000 more Serbians in addition to cavalry and horses to be evacuated from Valona," Thursby wrote.[54] A more precise number of Serbian troops in Albania that were yet to be evacuated was given in the General Intelligence document attached to Thursby's report: 7,685 at Valona, and 29,000 "at Vojussa", on route for Valona, with 18,000 horses.[55]

On 23 February Thursby reported that the evacuation was completed, with the exception of the cavalry and horses. According to him, the total number of Serbs transported to Corfu was 130,000.[56] The General Intelligence document of the same date offered an estimate of 10,000 men and 16,000 horses yet to be evacuated to Corfu.[57]

Writing about the completed operation of evacuating Serbian troops and refugees on 28 February, Admiral Thursby stressed "the very creditable part taken in it by the British Cruisers and Drifters". According to him, British cruisers of the "Town" class were the only Allied cruisers capable of dealing with the best enemy cruisers, and they had usually chased them back to Kotor. Naval drifters have kept off submarine attacks, and "saved many lives from ships which have struck mines or been torpedoed". Since October 1915, six drifters were lost while on service. "No praise is too high for them," Thursby concluded.[58]

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As it was demonstrated in this article, Admiral Thursby's 1915 and 1916 reports to the Admiralty offer many important facts considering especially the role of the Allied naval forces in the evacuation of Serbs from the Albanian coast, its precise chronology and the numbers of the transported soldiers. They obviously are a very useful source for the reconstruction of this huge historical event, largely neglected in the historiography of the First World War.

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[53] Ibid. Attached, Transport of Serbian Troops, 16 February 1916.

[54] Ibid. Rear Admiral Cecil F. Thursby to Secretary of the Admiralty, Report of Proceedings, H. M. S. "Queen", 16 February 1916.

[55] Ibid. Attached, General Intelligence, 16 February 1916. However, the "Transport of Serbian Troops" document mentioned only 15,000–20,000 remaining Serbian soldiers in Valona.

[56] Ibid. Rear Admiral Cecil F. Thursby to Secretary of the Admiralty, Report of Proceedings, H. M. S. "Prince of Wales", 28 February 1916.

[57] Ibid. Attached, General Intelligence, 23 February 1916. Cavalry Division of the Serbian Army will be transported to Corfu between 22 March and 5 April 1916.

[58] Ibid. Rear Admiral Cecil F. Thursby to Secretary of the Admiralty, Report of Proceedings, H. M. S. "Prince of Wales", 28 February 1916.

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The Serbian Army in the Chalkidiki in 1916 Organization and Deployment

Abstract: The transportation of the Serbian Army to the Chalkidiki and deployment on the Salonika front was part of the unique process of reorganizing, equipping, training and engaging the Serbian Army within the Allied coalition. Combining unpublished archival documents and the literature, this article analyzes military reasons and diplomatic circumstances in which the Serbian Army was deployed to the Chalkidiki and became part of the Allied military forces on the Salonika front. The most important part of this research are details related to the activity of the Serbian Military Mission in the Chalkidiki, which was tasked with making arrangements for receiving, accommodating and supplying the Serbian Army in the peninsula.

Keywords: Serbian Army, Chalkidiki, organization, formation, Serbian Military Mission, Salonika (Macedonian) front

The combined invasion by Austro-Hungarian, German and Bulgarian forces in the autumn of 1915 forced the Serbian Army to withdraw south across Albania, reaching the Adriatic coast,[1] from where it was evacuated to the island of Corfu by Allied ships. The exhausting march across Albania had taken a heavy toll in lives.[2] The numerical strength of the Serbian Army in August 1914 had been 319,979 men according to the army enlistment records, or 286,686 men on the ground. Based on the report put together by the Adjutant Division in late December 1915, it had a total of 142,164 combatants and non-combatants. According to the data the Supreme Command submitted to the army minister on 23 February 1916 the Serbian Army had a total of 147,000 men, of whom 110,800 combatants and 36,200 non-combatants. According to the surviving reports of April 1916, there were 113,814 combatants and non-combatants on the

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[1] Andrej Mitrović, *Serbia's Great War 1914–1918* (London: Hurst and Company, 2007), 151–161.

[2] *Veliki rat Srbije za oslobođenje i ujedinjenje Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca*, vol. XIV: *1916. godina, Treći period: Opšte odstupanje srpske vojske, IV faza: Prebacivanje iz Albanije na ostrvo Krf* (Belgrade: Istorijsko odeljenje Glavnog đeneralštaba, 1928).

spot, while a month later there were 116,954.[3] French sources recorded that on 22 February 135,000 Serbs were evacuated to Corfu and 9,010 to Bizerte. At the same time, in the vicinity of Valona, the Cavalry Division comprising 13,068 men and 10,144 horses awaited evacuation, which was carried out in early April. To be added to this number of men and animals are about 4,000 men who had withdrawn with the French from the southern parts of the Kingdom of Serbia to Greece.[4] According to the data of the Central Supply Section, the numerical strength of the Serbian Army at the beginning of the enemy offensive in October 1915 was about 420,000.[5] The same source suggests that between 290,000 and 300,000 people reached Kosovo, while about 220,000 withdrew towards the Adriatic coast through Montenegro and Albania. A total of 150,000 were evacuated by sea. Research conducted by Milivoje Alimpić suggests that the exact numerical strength of the Army is difficult to establish because of the mixing of soldiers between units and because of several evacuation and disembarkation ports (Corfu, Algeria, Tunisia).[6] According to a report of the Serbian Supreme Command cited by Alimpić, the numerical strength of the Army before the evacuation from Albania was 145,000 men, while on 24 February 1915 the Supreme Command informed the army minister that the Allies could count on 146,000 Serbian soldiers for the upcoming operations in the Balkans. According to General Petar Pešić, Assistant Chief of the General Staff, the total numerical strength was 151,920, of whom 110,000 combatants and 41,920 non-combatants. French records for 25 February provide the figure of 164,618 men (10,000 near Valona, 134,000 in Corfu, 10,624 in Bizerte, 4,584 in Salonika, about 2,000 in French and Greek hospitals, and about 3,000 in Epirus). The figures provided for 30 May 1916 by French and Serbian military sources pretty much tally:[7] the French produced the figure of about 146,800 men, while the Serbian Supreme Command recorded about 144,000 men. According to the research by the historian Dušan Bataković, in May 1916 the Serbian Army had 6,025 officers and 124,190 soldiers.[8]

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[3] *Veliki rat Srbije za oslobođenje i ujedinjenje Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca*, vol. XV: *1916. godina. Reorganizacija srpske vojske na Krfu i prebacivanje u Solun i okolinu* (Belgrade: Istorijsko odeljenje Glavnog đeneralštaba, 1929).

[4] Milivoje Alimpić, *Solunski front* (Belgrade: Vojnoizdavački zavod, 1967), 59–60.

[5] Ibid. 60.

[6] Ibid. 68.

[7] Ibid. 68, 69.

[8] Dušan T. Bataković, "Serbia in the Great War 1914–1918: War Imposed, Martyrdom, Resurrection", in *Serbia in the Great War. Anglo-Saxon Testimonies and Historical Analysis*, ed. Dušan T. Bataković (Belgrade: National Library of Serbia, 2015), 33.

From Corfu to the Chalkidiki

The issue of deploying Allied forces to Salonika and establishing the Salonika front was tied to the issue of Greece's participation in the war. The possibility of an Allied attack on Greece precipitated the Greek government into assenting to the Allied landing in Salonika, which was followed, on 27 September 1915, by Prime Minister Venizelos request to the British and French governments to send troops.[9] A day later the French war minister ordered deployment of parts of the 156th Division to Salonika, and Lord Kitchener ordered the transfer of the 10th Division from Gallipoli to Salonika. French General Sarrail was appointed commander of the expeditionary forces in the Balkans, and he disembarked in Salonika on 12 October.

After the recuperation and reorganization in Corfu, the Serbian Army was deployed to the Chalkidiki. The deployment of the Serbian Army was a subject of intensive negotiations between the Serbian General Staff and the French Supreme Command, the role of the main intermediary being played by General Piarron de Mondésir, head of the French Mission to the Serbian Army. On 20 February the general announced the imminent deployment of Serbian troops to the Chalkidiki, assuring the Serbian General Staff that the Serbian troops on the Salonika front would not be absorbed by Allied units but rather that it would be able to operate independently. He also announced that the Serbs would be armed by the Allies in the Chalkidiki.[10] It was planned to form no more than six divisions of twelve battalions each with a total of 140,000 men. On 17 March 1916 the Serbian Supreme Command suggested to the war minister to reach an agreement on the disposition of the Serbian Army in the Chalkidiki and its use in the upcoming operations. Convinced that the Serbian Army should be able to operate independently, the Supreme Command insisted that it be given a specified direction of advance and a specified sector of the front. General Mondésir informed the Serbian Supreme Command that the first echelon of Serbian troops would soon be transferred to Salonika.[11]

On 9 April, after the disembarkation of horses and cavalry equipment in the Chalkidiki began, the Serbian Supreme Command ordered the transportation of the corresponding units from Corfu to the Chalkidiki. The first to be transported were the staff of the food supply column of each division and a section of the division food supply column. The transportation began on 12 April from the port of Govino for the units of the 1st Army, and from Moraitika for those of the 2nd and 3rd Armies. These units were tasked with preparing camps in the Chalkdiki and receiving the first transport of horses. On 13 April the Su-

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9 Alimpić, *Solunski front*, 8.

10 *Veliki rat Srbije za oslobođenje i ujedinjenje*, vol. XV, 14–15.

11 Ibid. 148–149.

preme Command ordered the transport of 1st Army units. On 15 April the commander of the Cavalry Division was ordered to have all healthy horses sent to the port of Corfu for transport to the Chalkidiki. At the Inter-Allied conference held at Chantilly on 12 March 1916 it had been decided to reorganize and transport the Serbian Army to Salonika.[12] The decision suited the Allies because they wanted to reinforce their forces with a reorganized Serbian force, and it suited the Serbian Army to be deployed to the Salonika front because it opened the shortest route home. The Allies insisted on deploying the regiments one by one, as soon as reorganized and ready. They believed that the opening of the Salonika front would precipitate the entry of Romania and Greece into the war.

About 112,000 men and 8,300 horses were transported from Corfu to Salonika.[13] Since it was a highly risky operation because of the presence of enemy submarines in Greek waters, the French and British ambassadors suggested to the Greek prime minister, Stefanos Skouloudis, that the Serbian troops be disembarked in the port of Patras and then transported by rail to the town of Ekaterini in the region of Thessaly, from where they would proceed to Salonika on foot.[14] Prime Minister Skouloudis rejected the suggestion as detrimental to Greece's political and economic interests and as compromising her neutrality. The rejection had an adverse impact on the relations between the Athens government and the Allied governments.

The transportation operation plan was developed by the French Navy, which also provided means of transportation and convoy protection.[15] In order to preclude any confusion and delays in unloading materiel from ships, infantry units were to be transported in the order of divisions and armies, and the rest in the order in which the materiel intended for them arrived in the port of Mikra near Salonika. The operation took forty-eight days, as opposed to only thirty days had the idea of the landing at Patras been accepted.

The first Serbian units that had embarked in Corfu on 12 April disembarked at Mikra on 18 April.[16] The main phase of transportation began on 18

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[12] Alimpić, *Solunski front*, 76.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Efpraxia S. Paschalidou, "Greece's Prolonging Neutrality Perception during WWI. Stance towards Serbia", in *The First World War, Serbia, the Balkans and Great Powers*, eds. Srđan Rudić and Miljan Milkić (Belgrade: Institute of History and Strategic Research Institute, 2015), 134.

[15] Alimpić, *Solunski front*, 77.

[16] Ibid. 78; Miladin Milošević, *Srbija i Grčka 1914–1918. Iz istorije diplomatskih odnosa* (Zaječar: Istorijski arhiv "Timočka krajina", 1997), 205. Reports on the first Serbian troops in the Chalkidiki kept in Vojni arhiv Ministarstva odbrane Republike Srbije, Belgrade [Military Archives, Ministry of Defence, Republic of Serbia, hereafter: VA], Belgrade, Register 3, box 388, file 2, document 2/5.

April.[17] Troops from the 1st Army and the Cavalry Division embarked in the port of Govino, and those of the 2nd and 3rd Armies in the port of Mariotika. Before embarkation the soldiers underwent medical examination and were given new clothing. The embarkation of the 1st Army took from 18 April to 7 May, of the 2nd from 6 to 17 May, of the 3rd from 17 to 21 May, and of the Cavalry Brigade from 24 to 26 May.

On 23 May, by order of General Sarrail, the Volunteer Unit of Vojvoda Vuk (Vojin Popović) was deployed to the Florina area – where some smaller French units had already been dispatched – with the task of preventing arms smuggling.[18]

The Staff of the Serbian Supreme Command embarked the ship, *Ingoma*, for Salonika on 14 May 1916. Chief of Staff of the Supreme Command, Assistant Chief of Staff, Chief of the Operation Section and Chief of the Intelligence Section left for Salonika the following morning. They arrived in Salonika at 14:00 on 16 May. The Staff of the Serbian Supreme Command and the French military mission headed by General Piarron de Mondésir arrived in Salonika together, and the Staff was accommodated there.[19] General Mondésir's successful mission ended with the completion of the transportation of the Serbian Army to the Chalkidiki. He was recalled on 24 April 1916 by order of General Joseph Joffre.[20] The Staff of the 1st Army was headquartered in the village of Yenikey, the Morava Division was encamped near the village of Surukli/Souroti, and the Vardar Division near the village of Zahardji. The Staff of the 2nd Army arrived in the port of Mikra on 15 May and set its headquarters in the village of Loutra, the Timok Division was encamped near the village of Zoumbata and the Šumadija Division near the village of Loutra. The Staff of the 3rd Army set its headquarters in the village of Vasilika, the Danube Division and Drina Divisions were encamped near the village of Talatishte. The Cavalry Division was encamped near the village of Redesa. Regent Alexander Karadjordjević, Commander-in-Chief, stayed behind in Corfu awaiting the solution to the issue of command authority on the future front. Command over the troops that remained in Corfu was assumed by the war minister on 13 May.

The transportation of the Serbian Army was completed in perfect order and according to plan. Owing to the measures taken by the French Navy, not a single case of torpedoing had occurred. Once in the Chalkidiki, the Serbian

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[17] Alimpić, *Solunski front*, 78.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Ibid. 79.

[20] Miljan Milkić, "Serbia and Allies in 1916", in *The Year of 1916 and the Impact of the World War Dynamics. Romania's entry into the Great War*, ed. Dr. Mihael E. Ionescu (Bucharest: Institutul pentru studii politice de aparare si istorie militara, Editura militara, 2017), 45.

troops were equipped with arms and materiel shipped from France.[21] Training was an important step in the process. The infantry training plan developed by the Serbian Supreme Command in Corfu on 16 May 1916, envisaged a two-month timeframe for producing an efficient and disciplined armed force.[22] At the same time, Serbian military chaplains provided moral instruction.[23] On 1 March 1916, in the camp at Govino in Corfu, the French military organized a training of Serbian officers and non-commissioned officers in handling a new type of rifle. The training in handling the French St Etienne Mle 1907 machine-gun that had begun in Corfu was completed in the Chalkidiki. A few manoeuvres were also carried out. After the arrival of the Serbian troops that had been evacuated to Bizerte, the formation of the Serbian Army was finally completed in the Chalkidiki.[24]

The Serbian Mission in the Chalkidiki

By order of the Chief of Staff of the Serbian Supreme Command of 20 February 1916, Captain 1st Class Aleksandar Stojanović and Major Velimir Tomašević were transferred from Corfu to Salonika.[25] Stojanović was assigned the task of selecting locations for the encampment of Serbian soldiers in collaboration with a member of the French Mission, Lieutenant-Colonel Broussoud. Maj. Tomašević, commander of the Cavalry Depot, and his men were tasked with the reception of horses from all units of the Serbian Army. On 27 February 1916, the Serbian Supreme Command set up a special mission tasked to organize the accommodation of Serbian troops and sent it to Salonika.[26] The Mission was composed of Colonel Petar Todorović as its head, Colonel Miloš Jovanović as his deputy, Colonel Radisav Zečević, medical doctor Colonel Dragutin Petković, and supply officer Colonel Stanoje Ristić. The Mission was to act in compliance with the Supreme Command's written instructions of 4 March and oral instructions received from the Chief of Staff of the Supreme Command and chiefs of some sections of the Supreme Command.[27] The Mission was to ensure the tactical, sanitary and economic functioning of the camps. The order of the Supreme Command instructed the Mission to limit itself to assigning encamp-

[21] Alimpić, *Solunski front*, 75.

[22] *Veliki rat Srbije za oslobođenje i ujedinjenje*, vol. XV, 115–123.

[23] Miljan Milkić, *Verska služba u srpskoj vojsci u Prvom svetskom ratu* (Belgrade: Medija centar Odbrana, 2016), 204–207.

[24] Alimpić, *Solunski front*, 75.

[25] *Veliki rat Srbije za oslobođenje i ujedinjenje*, vol. 15, 17–18.

[26] Alimpić, *Solunski front*, 77.

[27] VA, 3, 388, 2, 2–5.

ment sites to divisions, parts of armies and parts of the Supreme Command. It also had to address all other issues relating to the landing and reception of troops and materiel. Its special duty was to ensure regular meals and water for the troops upon disembarkation. The type of problems the Mission had to address may be illustrated by the fact that the distribution of troops had to take into account the capacity of water sources in each area of encampment. The Mission acted as an institution of the Supreme Command. Upon arriving in Salonika on 10 March and coming into contact with French authorities, the Mission was based at Sedes, where it analysed the earlier reports of French Lt. Col. Broussoud and Serbian Maj. Stojanović, and put together a memorandum on general and particular issues concerning different fields (supply service, medical service, artillery and engineering). The Mission submitted its report on these issues to the Supreme Command on 19 March 1916.[28] As far as the selection and organization of encampment sites was concerned, the Mission followed the instructions of the French military. At its first meeting with the delegate of the French Eastern Army, Colonel Descoins, and its first meeting with General Sarrail, the Mission was told that the area designated for encamping Serbian troops was the valley of Vasilika.[29] The Mission was ordered to move to Vasilika in order to prepare the camp at Surukli, which it did as early as 13 March and, at the request of Col. Descoins, immediately set to work. According to the earlier plan by Lt. Col. Broussoud and Maj. Stojanović, the camp at Surukli was to be the first to accommodate a division. The Mission generally accepted the earlier suggestions of the two officers, but rejected encampment away from main roads. Analysing the area assigned for the encampment of Serbian troops, the Mission concluded that its low population density, limited water supply and lack of good roads required that inhabited places be chosen as encampment sites and that the Mikra–Galatista road be the main line of supply for Serbian troops. The Mission's first decision concerning the distribution of Serbian troops was as follows:

- At Sedes: Cavalry Division with the Cavalry Depot, and the central hospital
- At the villages of Surukli and Loutra: 1st Army on both sides of the Mikra–Galatista road and the headquarters at Loutra
- At the village of Galatista: the 2nd Army with all its parts
- In the area of Yenikey–Zakardja–Zumbat: the 3rd Army
- At Vasilika and in its environs, on both sides of the main road: the staff and departments of the Supreme Command.

The camps were to be set up in the order laid down in this plan of the Serbian Mission, but the plan had to be changed. According to General Sarrail's

[28] Ibid.

[29] Ibid.

order of 16 March, the sequence of entering the camps was to be as follows: Sedes, Surukli, Zakardji, Galatista, Zumbat, Loutra (where the French 17th Colonial Division was stationed at the time) and, possibly, the area between Aksakan and Agia Paraskevi.[30] The latter was a swampy area with few roads and an inadequate number of usable wells. A further inconvenience was that such a sequence of establishing camps would break up the armies and cause considerable communal and administrative difficulties. Therefore, the Mission promptly requested to be assigned the area north of and around Loutra unless occupied by the 17th Colonial Division, in which case the Loutra camp would be second in line. But the request was denied, and it was even made clear to the Mission that unless it withdrew the request the 17th Division would leave its camp at Loutra and cease the ongoing construction of communications. Such a prospect would have made it impossible for the Mission to fulfil its assignment. The few workers it had at its disposal would not have been able to prepare the Surukli camp, let alone to resume the construction of communications. As a result, the Mission was compelled to comply with General Sarrail's order. Since it refused to use the area between Aksakan and Agia Paraskevi, the camp at Galatista had to accommodate two divisions instead of one. That meant that the Serbian 6th Division could be accommodated there only after the departure of the 17th Colonial Division. The problem was presented to Col. Descoins. The reply came on 21 March. General Sarrail decided that the Serbian Division encamped at Surukli be deployed to the front as soon as it was armed, thus making way for the division that would arrive last. But these decisions concerning the distribution of Serbian troops were not definitive. The ensuing period saw frequent changes, at times completely contrary to the earlier plans. The lodging of the Supreme Command was a particularly delicate issue for the Serbian Mission. Based on General Sarrail's order of 16 March, the Supreme Command was to be headquartered at Vasilika. When General Mondésir arrived on 2 April, his chief of staff, Colonel Douchy, stated to the members of the Serbian Mission in a private conversation that the Serbian Supreme Command would be lodged in the eastern part of Salonika and that the Serbian military would be in charge of Mikra. Col. Descoins, on the other hand, went on claiming that the Serbian Supreme Command would be in Vasilika and that the Cavalry Division would arrive last. He insisted that the construction of barracks for the Serbian Supreme Command should be stepped up even though the elementary school in Vasilika had been designated for the purpose. On 12 April the Serbian Mission began the construction of barracks for the Supreme Command in Vasilika since it failed to obtain private buildings from the local municipal authorities. Later on the issue of the accommodation of the Serbian Supreme Command became the subject of direct talks between the Serbian Army delegate Colonel Dragomir Milojević

[30] Ibid.

and the Staff of the French Eastern Army and was finally settled in April. The distribution of troops and the sequence of entering the camps were also subject to change. Upon the arrival of General Mondésir the Serbian Mission was informed of the imminent arrival of Serbian troops and the need to prepare all camps simultaneously.

Pursuant to the order of 3 June 1916, the Serbian Mission submitted a full report on its work.[31] The report, received on 7 June, states that the Mission was met with a cold reception from the French military representatives at their first meeting and that the Staff of the Eastern Army had made no preparations for the arrival of Serbian troops. Instead of getting answers to its many questions, the Mission was told not to expect to ever get them. The answers to some general questions it did get were so vague that they were of no use. The problem was in that the Mission could not learn what of the equipment and furnishings for the camps it could expect to get from the French military and what it had to procure itself. It was only after the arrival of the Morava Division that the Mission was informed of the Supreme Command's order of 20 April which specified in more detail what of the material was allocated to which unit. There was also the problem of transportation of the material. Another of the Mission's objections was the fact that not a single automobile had ever been placed at its disposal; by contrast, every member of the French Mission ("even a second lieutenant") had one at his disposal. So they had to do their work on horse or on foot. This problem became particularly acute once the Serbian troops began to disembark at Mikra. The Mission was unable to tend to the disembarkation and the preparation of the camps at the same time. The troops arriving in the Chalkidiki were completely unprepared and needed not only lodging and meals but also all manner of instructions and explanations, which the Mission frequently was unable to give them. The information given to the Mission did not specify the allocation of materiel among units, which caused many problems and compelled them to ask questions over and over again.

One of the Mission's assignments was to designate the sites for shooting exercises. A shooting ground was assigned to every infantry division in the vicinity of its camp. Grounds for artillery practice had to be limited to two sites: in the environs of the camp at Galatista, with a 4-km shooting range, and at Big Karaburun, with a range of 11.5 km.[32] Each division commander was shown the encampment site and the location of water sources, the layout of his division's camp, diet plans, the operation procedure for the medical staff, the exercise ground. The units whose camps were not yet ready to receive them were temporarily accommodated in the provisional camp at Sedes.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Ibid.

The first camp to be set up was the one at Surukli and preparatory work began on 14 March,[33] involving sixty-four railway workers and three engineers the Mission had brought from Corfu. All the necessary material and tools were requested from the French military. A few days later, on 18 March, two 3rd-line companies of the 1st Combined Regiment were brought to build a road between Vasilika and Surukli. Namely, the building of roads by the French 17th Colonial Division had begun before the Mission's arrival. The Mission also worked on establishing telephone communications. The plan was to establish communications between Vasilika and Salonika (for communication between the Serbian Supreme Command and the commander of the Eastern Army), Vasilika and Galatista (for communication with one of the armies), Vasilika and Zumbat (where an army was to be headquartered) and Vasilika and Loutra (for communication with the 3rd Army headquarters). But by 20 March the Mission was informed by the Telephone Department of the 17th Colonial Division that there were no technical conditions for establishing new telephone lines and was advised to take over the 17th Colonial Division's lines once it left the camp.

The preparation of the camp ran slowly because of delays in the delivery of material and tools by the French. Time went by, often without any reply to the Mission's requests or the delivery of the necessary material. The Mission was therefore compelled to try to procure the material on its own, and it was requested of the Supreme Command to dispatch engineer units to the Chalkidiki as soon as possible. Deliveries by the French began to arrive fifteen days after the request from the Mission. The delivery of building material was still awaited and it was only on 3 April that blacksmith tools and the tools for installing water pumps arrived. General Piarron de Mondésir visited the camp at Surukli on 1 April and promised the necessary labour but it did not arrive by the time the first Morava Division troops began to be lodged in the camp. Preparations of the camp at Surukli were nearing completion when, on 7 April, preparations began at Yenikey and Zakardja. Preparations of the Surukli camp ran in parallel with those of the camp at Sedes. At the express request of Col. Descoins, the Serbian Mission did not take part in the preparations of this camp, intended for the 1st 3rd-line Combined Regiment, which began on 20 April, the date when engineer units arrived. Preparations of the camp at Zakardja were followed by those of Zumbat and then Galatista. Preparations of the camp at Loutra, which was now placed at the disposal of the Serbian Mission, ran concurrently. Although 17th Colonial Division had been encamped there, the Serbian Mission assessed that it needed additional furnishing.[34]

The supply of drinking water for Serbian troops involved chemical analysis of the existing sources, their covering to prevent contamination and instal-

[33] Ibid.

[34] Ibid.

lation of pumps. Bacteriological analyses began on 27 March. The Loutra and Galatista camps were equipped with various installations, drinking fountains and water tanks.[35]

By the time of the arrival of Serbian troops, preparations of the camp and in particular the maintenance of roads were covered by the French 17th Colonial Division. After their departure from the Chalkidiki, the organization of the work was resumed by the Serbian Mission in collaboration with the British Mission.[36]

Among the issues addressed by the Serbian Mission was the one of food.[37] The issue had not been considered by the command of the Eastern Army, and the chief supply officer of the French Army was surprised by the Serbian Mission's questions and requests. It was necessary to develop a diet chart and a plan for the upkeep of Serbian troops. The French chief supply officer stated, however, that the provisions for the Serbian soldiers would be the same as those for the French. The allowance of hay and straw for bedding and the consumption of coffee were cancelled, and the rations of cooked vegetables and firewood cut down. At a meeting held on 21 March, the main principles of supplying the Serbian Army were presented: the Serbian Army would be supplied in the same way as the French; a central base would be set up at Mikra which would supply food to the Serbian camps; the Serbian divisions were allowed to keep only a day's supply of food in storage. One of the conclusions of the meeting was that the French supply service would do all the work, while the Serbian supply officer should only organize the reception and distribution of food deliveries. The Serbian Mission objected on the grounds that transportation difficulties in case of bad weather might leave the troops without food and suggested the establishment in each area of a division depot holding two-day food supplies. The Mission also requested the urgent dispatch of Serbian bakery units to the Chalkidiki. The provision of food for Serbian troops became the Mission's most important task and many others fell in the background as a result. The Mission's effort to have food and clothing depots set up for each division ended in success.

A few days after the arrival of the Serbian Mission, the command of the Eastern Army requested of the Serbian Supreme Command to send horses to the Chalkidiki, first those from the Cavalry Division and then from the other divisions. The horses began to arrive on 30 March, but there were no conditions for their accommodation and care. All that was needed for horse care and maintenance, including blacksmiths and their materials, was yet to come from Corfu, and so the Serbian Mission tried to procure the necessary material in the Chalkidiki.

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[35] Ibid.

[36] Ibid.

[37] Ibid.

On 5 May 1916 the Serbian Mission requested of its Supreme Command to provide interpreters to facilitate its communication with representatives of the Allied armies.[38] Twenty-eight members of the Serbian Army speaking one or several foreign languages – French, English, German, Greek, Russian, Spanish, Turkish, Italian, Romanian, Czech, Hungarian and Dutch – applied for the duty. On 31 May the Mission asked for another ten interpreters for French to be engaged in the French military hospitals in the Chalkidiki.

During its term the Mission had a budget of 200,000 drachmas.[39] It was used to pay the rent for the buildings where the Serbian Supreme Command was accommodated, for salaries and various allowances, food provisions and various materials for furnishing the camps. Despite all difficulties, the Serbian Mission managed to have the camps prepared for the accommodation of Serbian troops. Having fulfilled its assignment, the Mission ceased to operate on 4 June 1916 by order of the Chief of Staff of the Supreme Command.[40]

The disposition of the Serbian troops on the Salonika front

The Serbian Army stayed in the Chalkidiki for about two months, where its reorganization was completed, and it was armed and equipped. At its meeting of 24 June 1916 the Serbian government accepted General Sarrail's request for the deployment of the Serbian Army to the front, with the proviso that it should operate as a single force.[41] The area where Serbian troops were deployed was bounded by the rivers Kodjidere and Vardar in the east, the two Prespa Lakes in the west, in the south by the road from Salonika to Yannitsa and Edessa, then the railway to Ostrov (Arnisa) and thence the line Katranitsa–Aitos–Turnovo villages on the Florina–Kastoria road. Their deployment in the assigned area was carried out under the protection of parts of the French Army. The Serbian troops were in fact to block the possible penetration of the enemy towards Edessa, which would make it easy for them to reach Salonika. The 1st Army was deployed between the Kodjidere and Vardar rivers and the river Moglenitsa, the 2nd Army between the Moglenitsa and the line Kaimakchalan–Drushka (east of Ostrov), and the 3rd Army between the line Kaimakchalan–Drushka–Katranitsa and the two Prespa Lakes. During the transfer from Salonika to the front, General Sarrail assigned some Serbian divisions to secure a bridge on the Salonika–Edessa–Bitola railway and road. At first the task was assigned to the Šumadija Division, and from early July it was replaced successively by the

[38] VA, 3, 263, 10, 8/31.

[39] VA, 3, 388, 2, 2–5.

[40] VA, 3, 388, 2, 2-4.

[41] Alimpić, *Solunski front*, 94, 95.

Timok, Morava and Vardar Divisions. Military experts are of the view that this was an unnecessary assignment because the Salonika–Edessa–Bitola line had already been protected by the disposition of French forces along the Vardar.[42]

After long negotiations, which ended in late July 1916, the issue of command over the Serbian Army was settled. While in the Chalkidiki, it had still been under Crown Prince Alexander Karadjordjević as commander-in-chief, and then General Sarrail took over. The 1st Army, headquartered in the village of Goumenissa, completed the deployment of its Morava Division by 31 July and of the Vardar Division by 7 August. The 2nd Army was headquartered in the village of Dragomantsi (Apsalos); its Šumadija Division completed deployment by 24 July and the Timok Division by 28 July. The Drina Division of the 3rd Army completed deployment in the area of Ostrov (Arnisa), where the 3rd Army was headquartered, by 24 July, and the Danube Division by 5 August.[43] The Cavalry Division, temporarily reassigned as an infantry unit by order of the Supreme Command of 24 July, left the camp at Sedes on 18 July, and was deployed to two positions. The 2nd Cavalry Brigade Staff and the 2nd Cavalry Regiment were transferred to Edessa, where the latter was assigned to secure the Salonika–Amyntaio (Sorovič) railway. The rest of the Cavalry Division, including its Staff, was sent to Gorno Vrbeni to protect the left flank of the Danube Division. The British 17th and 156th Divisions were also deployed in the course of July. In that way, the Salonika front was fully formed.

The deployment of Serbian troops on the Salonika front was carried out smoothly and without disturbance on the part of the enemy. The inclusion of the Serbian Army into the Allied force boosted the morale of Serbian troops. The Serbian government and Supreme Command succeeded in their effort to preserve the Army's national character and to get it employed as a unified force along a defined operational direction, along Greece's northern border. The Army was now near its occupied homeland and the fact aroused hopes of its imminent liberation.

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[42] Ibid. 95.

[43] Ibid. 96–97.

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The Austro-Hungarian Occupation of Serbia as a "Civilizing Mission" (1915–1918)

Abstract: This paper analyses the Austro-Hungarian occupation of Serbia during the First World War and the activity of the occupation administration of the Military Governorate in the context of its "civilizing mission". It points to the aspects of the occupation that reveal the Austro-Hungarians' self-perception as bringers of culture and civilization as conducive to creating an ideological basis for a war against Serbia. The paper also presents their outlook on the world in the age of empires and their idea of establishing what they saw as a more acceptable cultural basis of Serbian national identity shaped primarily by loyalty to the Austro-Hungarian Emperor and King and the ideals of order and discipline. The process is studied through analysing the occupation policies aimed at depoliticizing the public sphere by closing the pre-war institutions of culture and education and introducing educational patterns primarily based on the Austro-Hungarian experience in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Keywords: Serbia in the First World War, Austro-Hungarian occupation 1915–1918, Imperial and Royal Military Governorate, civilizing mission, cultural and educational policies in the First World War

After the ultimately abortive Austro-Hungarian invasions of 1914 and early 1915, the exhausted Serbian forces were unable to resist the new attack by the Central Powers, this time joined by Bulgaria. In the late autumn of 1915, the Serbian armies started to retreat across Montenegro and Albania.[1] In the months following the occupation of the Kingdom of Serbia, most of its terri-

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[1] The decision to withdrew across Albania was made between 25 November and 1 December, see D. T. Bataković, *Srbija i Balkan. Albanija, Bugarska i Grčka 1914–1918* (Novi Sad: Prometej, and Belgrade: RTS, 2016), 58–60; M. Ković, *Jedini put: Sile Antante i odbrana Srbije 1915. godine* (Belgrade: Filip Višnjić, 2016), 218–229; A. Mitrović, *Srbija u I svetskom ratu* (Belgrade: Stubovi kulture, 2004), 208-216; M. Radojević and Lj. Dimić, *Srbija u Velikom ratu 1914–1918: kratka istorija* (Belgrade: Srpska književna zadruga and Beogradski forum za svet ravnopravnih, 2014), 183–185. For a detailed overview of military operations see Živko G. Pavlović, *Rat Srbije sa Austro-Ugarskom, Nemačkom i Bugarskom 1915. godine* (Belgrade: Naučno delo, 1968).

tory was, after strenuous negotiations, divided between Austria-Hungary and Bulgaria, while Germany took control over some strategic points and resources, keeping it throughout the war.[2]

The future fate of defeated Serbia was yet to be determined. During the war the political and military elites of Austria-Hungary, Germany and Bulgaria considered various solutions, ranging from the abolition of its status of a sovereign state and partition to partial annexations to the unification of smaller, landlocked, mountainous parts of Serbia and Montenegro into a petty kingdom ruled by the Archduke Maximilian of Habsburg, brother of the Emperor and King Karl.[3]

Common to all this political and strategic planning was the destruction of Serbia's ability to pursue an independent foreign policy after the war. For example, in the spring of 1917, the Austro-Hungarian foreign minister, István Burián, summed up the aims of the occupation: to establish a harsh regime which would break "Serbentum" (Serbdom) and thwart its aspirations for as long as possible. The Austro-Hungarian Joint Ministerial Council with Burián presiding found that the main trouble with the Serbian question was its "nationalpolitische" (national-political) nature because of the strong influence of "grosserbischen Agitation" (Greater Serbian agitation) among the people.[4]

In practice, the Austro-Hungarian occupation zone encompassing the northern, western and most of the central pre-war Kingdom of Serbia, consisted of eleven counties, including the capital, Belgrade, and the other larger towns except Niš and Skoplje. The "k. und k. Militär-Generalgouvernement in Serbien" (Imperial und Royal Military Governorate General in Serbia), which was its official name, separated the military and civil administrations with the principal aim to establish control over the population and ensure material resources for the war effort of the Danube Monarchy.[5]

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[2] M. B. Fried, *Austro-Hungarian War Aims in the Balkans during World War I* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 111–118; A. Mitrović, *Prodor na Balkan i Srbija 1908–1918* (Belgrade: Zavod za udžbenike, 2011²), 470–478.

[3] Mitrović, *Srbija*, 273–280.

[4] Ibid. 317; *Protokolle des Gemeinsamen Ministerrates der Österreichisch-Ungarischen Monarchie (1914–1918)*, prefaced and compiled by M. Komjáthy (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1966), doc. 15, 355–356. The occupiers approached it by "eradicating national politics" using the establishment of "discipline and order", J. E. Gumz, *The Resurrection and Collapse of Empire in Habsburg Serbia, 1914–1918* (Cambridge University Press, 2013), 62.

[5] D. Djordjević, "The Austro-Hungarian Occupation Regime in Serbia and Its Break-down in 1918", *Balcanica* XLVI (2015), 110–111, originally published as „Austro-ugarski okupacioni režim u Srbiji i njegov slom 1918. godine, in *Naučni skup u povodu 50-godišnjice raspada Austro-ugarske monarhije i stvaranja jugoslavenske države* (Zagreb: Jugoslavenska akademija znanosti i umjetnosti, 1968), 205–226; M. Ristović, "Occupation during and after the war (South East Europe)", in *1914–1918-online. International Encyclopedia of the First World*

The first military governor, from late 1915, officially from the beginning of January 1916, was Johann Ulrich Count of Salis-Seewis (1862–1940), while the first civilian commissioner, from 17 January, was Lajos Thallóczy. After July 1916, Salis-Seewis was succeeded by Adolf Baron von Remen. The administrative division of the occupied zone was based on pre-war Serbia's counties and the administrative structure had four chief departments: military, political, economic and judicial.[6] As has been noted, the main objective of the occupiers was economic exploitation. The Austro-Hungarians found it to be successful since even in a largely depopulated Serbia subjected to draconian measures they obtained a food surplus which contributed not just to the Austro-Hungarian war effort but also to the starving home front.[7]

Upon arriving in Serbia, Governor Salis-Seewis described the Austro-Hungarian soldiers as pioneers of Central European culture which was being opened to Serbia by their victories.[8] Apart from pursuing material interests from the beginning of the occupation, the Austro-Hungarian administration's self-labelled "civilizing mission" was designed to denationalize the population by closing the institutions of education and culture and by supressing the intellectuals. It should be underlined that the definition of an intellectual was a very broad one. In an official document of the Governorate, the targeted persons ranged from railway clerks to members of the Royal Serbian Academy.[9] So, why can the Austro-Hungarian occupation be defined as a civilizing mission in the context of the Age of Imperialism? First, as pointed out by Edward Said in his book *Culture and Imperialism*, the culture of imperialism was never secret; it was

War, eds. U. Daniel et al. (Berlin: Freie Universität Berlin, 2014–10–08. DOI: 10.15463/ie1418.10481), 3–4.

6 Djordjević, "Austro-Hungarian Occupation Regime", 111.

7 Mitrović, *Srbija*, 273; M. Rauchensteiner, *The First World War and the End of the Habsburg Monarchy* (Vienna–Cologne–Weimar: Böhlau Verlag, 2014), 732–733. Although the "brutal terror" abated by the spring of 1916, fierce measures were never ceased and deportations of people were constant, Mitrović, *Srbija*, 313.

8 *Beogradske novine/Belgrader Nachrichten* (*Belegrade Newspaper*, hereafter *BN*) no. 4, 9 January 1916. Serbia was also considered as a country which had barely passed from an uncultured age to a "so-so" civilization in the nineteenth century, *BN* no. 10, 23 January 1916.

9 Arhiv Srbije [Archives of Serbia], Belgrade, Vojno-generalni guvernman [Military-General Governorate; hereafter VGG], VIII/1168, Statistische Daten über die Serbische Intelligenz im Bereiches Militargeneralgouvernement in Serbien. Also VGG, VIII/647, Statistische Daten über die Intelligenz, Nr. 7042, 22 August 1916. The collected data included every person's workplace, age, religion, marital status, role in political life, material situation and knowledge of foreign languages. See also B. Mladenović, "Srpska elita u Prvom svetskom ratu", *Istorijski časopis* XLIX (2002), 249.

public and open about its goals.[10] It had a space in public discourse shaped by the concepts such as "inferior and conquered races", "dependence" and "submission of peoples".[11]

It was definitively so in the case of occupied Serbia, while the analogous policies of, for example, Bulgaria can be characterized as forced Bulgarization.[12] The Austro-Hungarian occupiers openly described themselves as bringers of culture ("Kulturträgers") and European civilization.[13] In European context, Serbia was part of "internal colonialism", which can also be traced in the regions such as Ireland, Brittany, the Balkans or southern Italy.[14]

If we look at the other occupation regimes in Europe, we can see that the German occupation of Belgium, for example, was marked by a strong insistence on Belgian culture being inferior to German "Kultur".[15] The same status was reserved for the Slav populations of Eastern Europe, Polish, Ukrainian and Belarusian, which were subjected to an authoritarian colonial-style occupation and racial stereotyping. The German occupation strategy promoted the concepts of "Ordnung" (order) and "Bildung" (best understood as "proper" education) in order to establish "Kultur" (German-shaped national identities). So, in the German "Ober Ost" the civilizing role of the German Empire in Eastern Europe was to shape local cultures through new educational institutions. Such cultural policies also sought to instil a sense of mission in German soldiers.[16] In a similar manner, the Italian authorities had a patronizing attitude towards the Slovenians based on the notion of a presumed superiority of Italian culture.[17] I would

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[10] "Imperialism's culture was not invisible, nor did it conceal its worldly affiliations and interests. There is a sufficient clarity in the culture's major lines for us to remark the often scrupulous notations recorded there, and also to remark how they have not been paid much attention", E. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage books, 1994), xxi.

[11] Ibid, 50.

[12] Bataković, *Srbija i Balkan*, 308–310; D. R. Živojinović, "Serbia and Montenegro: The Home Front, 1914–1918", in *East Central European Society in World War I*, eds. B. K. Kiraly and N. F. Dreisziger (New York: East European Monographs, 1985), 251; Ristović: "Occupation during and after the War", 7.

[13] Mitrović, *Srbija*, 318.

[14] A. Porter, *European Imperialism, 1860–1914* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 1994) 7.

[15] G. Corni, "Occupation during the War", in: *1914–1918-online. International Encyclopedia of the First World War*, eds. U. Daniel et al. (Berlin: Freie Universität Berlin, 2014–10–08. DOI: 6.10.15463/ie1418.10119), 6.

[16] V. G. Liulevicius, *War Land on the Eastern Front: Culture, National Identity and German Occupation in World War I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 113–115.

[17] P. Svoljšak and B. Godeša, "Italian interwar administration of Slovenian ethnic territory: Italian ethnic policy", in *Frontwechsel: Österreich-Ungarn "Großer Krieg" im Vergleich*, eds. W. Dornik, J. Wallezek and S. Wedrac (Vienna–Cologne–Weimar: Böhlau Verlag, 2014), 304–305.

argue that the Austro-Hungarian occupation had similar goals. This was clearly outlined in the *Beogradske novine/Belgrader Nachrichten* (Belgrade Newspaper), the official gazette of the occupying force.[18] The mission was fed on Austro-Hungarian elites' pre-1914 beliefs about Serbia as a nation of "king slayers", a semi-Oriental country ranking below Central-European cultural standards.

Among the Governorate's first measures taken in the field of cultural and educational policies was the prompt closure of the University of Belgrade. At the same time, the central national institutions such as the Royal Serbian Academy, the National Museum and the National Library were robbed of historical artefacts and art collections in their possession. These were transferred to Governorate administration buildings or shipped out of the country.[19] The aftermath of the closure was marked by a dispute between the military authorities, which wanted the seized artefacts to be sent to Vienna, and the civil authorities, especially those in Budapest, Zagreb and Sarajevo, which wanted a share for themselves in order to be able to compete for the position of a new South-Slav cultural centre.[20] Furthermore, the existing elementary and high schools were to be shut down and replaced with new ones which would operate with different curricula.[21]

Besides the formal dissolution of all Serbian cultural institutions and various public associations, the method of the civilizing mission included a ban on the use of the Cyrillic alphabet and its replacement by the Latin alphabet.[22] The Cyrillic alphabet was labelled as "staatsgefährlich" (dangerous to

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[18] In 1918, for example, the newspaper had a circulation of 120,000 copies in Serbian and 30,000 in German, T. Scheer, "Manifestation österreichisch-ungarischer Besatzungsmacht in Belgrad (1916–1918)", in *Der Erste Weltkrieg auf dem Balkan. Pespektiven der Forschung*, ed. J. Angelow (Berlin: be.bra wissenschaft verlag, 2011), 302.

[19] VGG VIII/1759, 8 November – 10 December 1915, letters exchanged between the president of the Hungarian government and the High Command on setting up a commission tasked with searching for and classifying museum artefacts; Scheer, "Manifestation österreichisch-ungarischer Besatzungsmacht", 299; V. Stojančević, *Srbija i srpski narod u ratu i okupaciji 1914–1918. godine* (Belgrade: Gutenbergova galaksija, 2016), 95; Mitrović, *Srbija*, 322.

[20] C. Marcheti, "Zwischen Denkmalpflege und ethnographischem Interesse. Die Erforschung von Kunstdenkmälern in den besetzten Balkangebieten durch österreichisch–ungarische Wissenschaftler während des Ersten Weltkriegs", in *Apologeten der Vernichtung oder "Kunstschützer"? Kunsthistoriker der Mittelmächte im Ersten Weltkrieg*, eds. von R. Born and B. Störtkuh (Cologne–Weimar–Vienna: Böhlau Verlag, 2017), 255–269; Ristović, "Occupation during and after the War", 5.

[21] VGG VIII, no. 64, 17 March 1916, on a plan to establish elementary schools with the request to local commands to determine the number of schools and teachers.

[22] VGG VIII, no. 597, 2 June 1916. The official ban was to be put in force as of 1 January 1917, B. Trifunović, *Život pod okupacijom: čačanski okrug 1915–1918* (Čačak: Međuopštinski

the state).[23] All books that were designated as suspicious were removed from bookstores and not only from public but from private libraries.[24] The reading material perceived as questionable dealt with subjects from Serbian history or Austro-Serbian relations. Moreover, the number of bookstores in pre-war Serbia was described as too numerous in proportion to the economic strength and cultural level of Serbian society.[25] Secret agents were sent out in search of prohibited volumes and a possible underground book market.[26] Schoolbooks and books in French, English, Russian and Italian were also banned. Also, all printing presses in Belgrade were confiscated and transferred to the premises of the *Beogradske novine*, and Cyrillic printing press type letters were systematically destroyed.[27] The decision to replace the Julian calendar, in force in pre-war Serbia, by the Gregorian one was described by the *Beogradske novine* as an act of ushering the Serbian people in the civilized world, in contrast with their previous "cultural backwardness".[28]

As part of the campaign against the political consciousness of Serbian citizens, all Belgrade streets named after the persons perceived as significant for national identity were given new neutral names such as Lower, Narrow or Garden Street.[29] All street names containing toponyms located in Austro-Hungarian lands, Montenegro and Albania were also to be changed and so were those named after members of the Karadjordjević dynasty and their supporters, especially those who had fought in the first phase of the Serbian revolution against the Ottomans led by Karadjordje Petrović, the founder of the ruling Serbian

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istorijski arhiv, 2010), 44–45; B. Mladenović, *Grad u austrougarskoj okupacionoj zoni u Srbiji od 1916. do 1918. Godine* (Belgrade: Čigoja štampa, 2000), 111.

[23] Djordjević, "Austro-Hungarian Occupation Regime", 118–119.

[24] E.g., the Orthodox Prayer book, which among other things contained a song dedicated to Saint Sava of Serbia and mentioned some territories of Austria-Hungary, was banned being seen as a part of "Greater Serbian propaganda", VGG VIII, no. 2696, 1 March 1916; Mladenović, *Grad*, 151.

[25] Such a large number of bookstores was explained away as an instrument of Serbian expansionist plans, Mladenović, *Grad*, 152; D. Milikić, "Beograd pod okupacijom u Prvom svetskom ratu", *Godišnjak grada Beograda* V (1958), 306.

[26] L. Lazarević, *Beleške iz okupiranog Beograda 1915–1918* (Belgrade: Jasen, 2010[2]), 74; Mladenović, *Grad*, 153.

[27] Predrag Marković, "Razaranja Beorada u Prvom svetskom ratu", in *Srbija 1918. godine i stvaranje jugoslovenske države*, ed. Ljiljana Aleksić-Pejković (Belgrade: Istorijski institut, 1989), 49–50.

[28] *BN* no. 22, 20 February 1916.

[29] VGG VIII/1757, Polizeikomando, no. 1309, Verzeichnis sämmtlicher Strassen, Gassen und Plätze Belgrads mit der Deutung der Namen derselben und beanragten Neubennenung; B. Mladenović,"Promena naziva ulica u Vojno-generalnom Guvernmanu", *Istorijski časopis* XLV–XLVI (2000); Mladenović, *Grad*, 53; Milikić, "Beograd pod okupacijom", 304.

dynasty.[30] The purpose of removing the aforementioned toponyms was to fragment the mental framework of Serbian national identity, reducing it to the area under occupation. The other set of changes was focused on dismantling the dynastic allegiances of Serbian citizens.

The main role of the "civilizing mission" was the education of the Serbian youth that was to be instilled with loyalty to the Emperor and appreciation for the greatness and might of the Monarchy.[31] The opening of the first new school in Belgrade was announced in a *Beogradske novine* article which described it as bringing "real knowledge" and "real culture" in Belgrade for the first time – a "lesson that Serbian society did not understand during the reign of Peter Karadjordjević".[32] In the last year of the occupation there were eight grammar and 135 elementary schools in the Governorate.[33] As governor Salis-Seewis put it, the main goal was to enforce the spirit of hard discipline rather than scholarly knowledge.[34]

The teachers had previously attended a pedagogical course held in Belgrade in 1916 under the tutelage of Lajos Thallóczy, the civil commissioner of the Governorate and a well-known historian.[35] Following the course, Thallóczy put together a book providing guidelines for the future educators of the Serbian youth. The leitmotif of the book was that the central problem in Balkan politics was the "Greater Serbian idea" with its aspirations for annexing the Serb-inhabited areas of the Monarchy to Serbia.[36] On the other hand, Austria-Hungary's Balkan policy was presented as having no territorial expansionist agenda, quite unlike Serbia which, as a result of its "unhealthy internal development", nur-

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[30] Belittling the Karadjordjević dynasty was common in the occupation press. On the occasion of the 200th anniversary of the Austrian conquest of Belgrade of 17 August 1717, the armies of Eugene of Savoy were likened to the k. und k. troops of 1915, whereas King Peter and the Serbian defenders of the city were equated with the Ottoman Sultan Ahmed III and his army depicted as backward occupiers of Europe which the Habsburg dynasty had defended then as it did now, *BN* no. 225, 17 August 1917.

[31] T. Scheer, *Zwischen Front und Heimat. Österreich-Ungarns Militärverwaltungen im Ersten Weltkrieg* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang 2009), 90; Ristović, "Occupation during and after the War", 6. The chief aim of this policy was the "denationalization" of the Serbian youth, Gumz, *Resurrection and Collapse*, 74.

[32] *BN* no. 19, 13 February 1916; Djordjević, "Austro-Hungarian Occupation Regime", 118.

[33] Djordjević, "Austro-Hungarian Occupation Regime", 130.

[34] VGG VIII, no. 64, 14 February 1916.

[35] Mladenović, *Grad*, 121.

[36] L. v. Thalloczy, *Oesterreich-Ungarn und die Balkanländer mit besonderer Rücksicht auf das okkupierte Serbien. Historisch-politische Vorlesung gehalten an dem ersten k. u. k. militärischen Verwaltungskurse in Belgrad* (Belgrade: k.u.k. Gouvernement-Druckerei in Belgrad, 1916), 3.

tured the Greater Serbian idea.[37] Thallóczy also pointed out that the House of Habsburg had ever since the sixteenth century pursued the "welthistorischen Mission" of protecting not just Central Europe but Europe as a whole against the Ottoman invaders.[38] Thallóczy described the Slavs, the Serbs included, as a community lacking any state-building potential,[39] and he also claimed that during the existence of the Habsburg Kingdom of Serbia (1718–1739) nothing had been done to tie the "Bosnian, Serbian or Wallachian" elements to the Danube Monarchy. The administration had been focused solely on fiscal policy and material gains, which, in Thallóczy's opinion, had been a mistake that should not be made again. As a result, he believed, the Serbs (and the rest of the Balkan Christians) had not been exposed to the influence of Western Europe from which they were even more remote than their Turkish masters.[40] Such a development gave rise to the aforementioned "unhealthy" Serbia. Finally, the ongoing conflict, Thallóczy concluded, was set off by "ungrateful" Serbia which owed its culture to the Monarchy and whose very foundation and sovereignty was the product of the benevolence of the Danube Monarchy.[41] These views were to be the basis of education and of the creation of a new political and cultural model for a Habsburg Serbia. The Danube Monarchy was portrayed as a benevolent power, the protector of Europe and its civilization which made Serbia indebted to it throughout history and would now succeed in bringing Serbia in the imagined circle of European culture.

Teachers were recruited almost exclusively from the ranks of Austro-Hungarian non-commissioned officers; later on, teaching staff was brought from the Monarchy. History was banished from the curriculum and the name Serbia was not mentioned at all.[42] The importance that the occupiers attached to their educational policy can be seen from the fact that Serbian personnel were not hired even amidst the most drastic shortage of teachers.[43] The only exception were religion classes: they were taught by Serbian Orthodox priests

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[37] For a short summary see V. Stojančević, "Lajos–Ludwig von Thallóczy as Head of Pedagogical Course in the Occupied Belgrade", in *The Serbs and the First World War 1914–1918*, ed. Dragoljub R. Živojinović (Belgrade: SASA, 2015), 337–340.

[38] Thallóczy, *Oestereich-Ungarn und die Balkanländer*, 60. There was also his "companion book" with the relevant literature: *Zur Geschichte Serbiens. Anhang zu den Vorlesungen des k. u. k. Verwaltungskurses vom 1. August – 25. November* (Budapest: Magyar Királyi Állami Nyodda, 1916).

[39] Thallóczy, *Oestereich-Ungarn und die Balkanländer*, 20.

[40] Ibid. 83.

[41] Ibid. 107–108.

[42] Mladenović, *Grad*, 147; Gumz, *Resurrection and Collapse*, 76.

[43] In some cases a Serbian teacher could teach a class but only in the presence of a "Croatian-speaking" officer, VGG VIII, no. 242, 3 February 1916; Gumz, *Resurrection and Collapse*, 76.

but in the mandatory presence and under the supervision of Austro-Hungarian army chaplains; moreover, the language of instruction was not Serbian but Old Slavonic. At first schoolbooks were brought from Croatia and Slavonia, and then from the province of Bosnia-Herzegovina.[44] High school students were often described as poisoned by state and dynastic sentiment that had to be suppressed. The overall conclusion was that the ideal educational model for Serbia would be the one used in the province of Bosnia-Herzegovina.[45]

What were the limitations of the civilizing mission? The harsh occupation regime, from drastic deportations to the seizure of artworks and rare books, gave little assurance that the Governorate cared about the "cultural level" of the population. Understaffed schools were not efficient enough, and some of the teaching personnel, such as Slovak officers or Croat female teachers, often focused merely on formal teaching instead of on instilling loyalty, which, overall, undermined the official educational policy. Moreover, 105,000 children could not attend school at all because of a lack of space.[46] One of the most striking measures, the ban on the use of the Cyrillic alphabet, was most efficiently implemented in Belgrade as a result of the presence of the central occupation institutions in comparison with the rest of the occupied territories.[47]

In conclusion, what makes the Austro-Hungarian "civilizing mission" in Serbia during the First World War an important research topic is the fact that it opens up the possibility of understanding the premeditated motivations of the occupation administration. In this paper it has been looked at in the broader European context of wartime cultural policies and as part of the discourse repertoire of European imperialism.

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[44] In the meantime, textbooks produced in Serbia were to be stripped of all political, historical or dynastic content, VGG VIII, no. 78, 27 January 1916. For the use of textbooks from Bosnia see VGG, VIII, no. 337, 19 February 1916; VGG VIII, no. 360, a letter to the government in Sarajevo requesting elementary and high school textbooks in the Latin alphabet; Lj. Popović, "Osnovno školstvo pod okupacijom", in *Srbija 1918. godine i stvaranje jugoslovenske države*, ed. Lj. Aleksić Pejković (Belgrade: Istorijski institut, 1991), 39.

[45] VGG VIII/1409, no. 1428, 26 July 1916; R. Okey, *Taming Balkan Nationalism. The Habsburg "Civilizing Mission" in Bosnia, 1878–1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 252–255.

[46] D. Djordjević, "The Austro-Hungarian Occupation Regime in Serbia", 130.

[47] The ban was eventually lifted for practical reasons – the need to communicate with the population more efficiently – even though the occupiers lacked sufficient personnel proficient in reading the Cyrillic alphabet, T. Scheer, "The perfect opportunity to shape national symbols? Austro-Hungarian occupation regimes during the First World War in the Adriatic and the Balkans", *Acta Histriae* 22/3 (2014); Milikić, "Beograd pod okupacijom", 304.

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German Propaganda in the Balkans during the First World War

Abstract: Immediately after the outbreak of the First World War Germany mobilized human resources from all fields and put up all the necessary funds to counter British and French propaganda. In a very short period of time, it was in a position to organize its own propaganda networks abroad, to a large extent, by using the respective commercial networks and the pre-war enterprises operating in various countries. It was the neutral countries around the world that were among the primary targets of German propaganda. In the Balkans particular effort was made to create a favourable climate for the Central Powers and prevail over the adverse British and French influence. With the assistance of commercial circles and the appropriation of large sums of money, newspapers, journalists and publishing groups were bought off, information offices set up, agents recruited, political parties and politicians bribed, and pro-German parties founded. The aim was to influence public opinion, promote the German version of war developments, and manipulate political leaders to give up their stance of neutrality and make the decision for their country to take part in the war on the side of Germany. However, even though Berlin focused its attention on the Balkans where the major propaganda networks were organized, the propaganda campaigns proved to be essentially ineffective. Following Bulgaria's entry into the war on the side of the Central Powers and the destruction of Serbia, first Romania and then Greece joined the Entente, finding themselves on the winning side at the war's end.

Keywords: German propaganda, German Foreign Ministry, neutrality, Greece, Rumania, Bulgaria, newspapers, Freiherrn Garl Schenck von Schweinsberg, Ludwig Roselius, Agentia Romana-Germana de Informatii, public opinion

It was immediately after the outbreak of the war, and because of the vilifying way the British Consulate in Constantinople had portrayed the German naval defeat, that Berlin realized, uneasily, the enemy had already formed the organizational basis for its propaganda presentation of the war to European public opinion and, in particular, to the neutral countries. It was, therefore, imperative that Germany use the same means, as soon as possible, in order to counteract the campaign of "false information" and "slander" which the British had launched.[1]

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[1] Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amts [hereafter PA AA], R 20936: Wangenheim(;) an Reichskanzler Freicherrn von Bethmann-Hollweg, Berlin, 18 August 1914.

Commercial circles stressed the need to radically alter the prevailing view that German diplomacy was unable to refute British claims of atrocity.[2]

For a coordinated German propaganda campaign that would literally have worldwide effect, it was necessary to establish a unified operational centre based in Berlin but with the Middle East as its focal point. This was not only for the sake of the battle for the "soul of the Middle East" but also, and more importantly, for conducting the war, and for defending vital economic interests in the Ottoman Empire. It was a golden opportunity for the Germans to strike a blow to the British Empire. In this way, they would be able to force it to agree to peace talks in order to relieve pressure that it would be facing from the uprisings of its Muslim subjects in India and Egypt.[3]

Of course, Germany and its ally, the Sultan, would help instigate the rebellion. However, for this to happen, certain conditions were necessary: organization, the mobilization of all available means and resources, realistic military plans, and operational propaganda which would present Germany to these populations as a defender against the enemy, as a crusader of honour and truth and as a supporter of self-determination. The support of the Turkish government at all costs and the preservation of their common goals had, thus, become fundamental to fulfilling German political and military plans in the East.[4]

It was a given fact that the German press would be used to publish and distribute military commentary and news reports to all European countries, which would then be translated for press outlets in Africa and the Middle East. The publication of German press releases in the newspapers of the region, the bribing of journalists and publishers, in fact the buying off of entire publishing houses, also meant the involvement of the local embassy and consular authorities, the recruitment of suitable agents, as well as the allocation of the necessary funds. An entire body comprising translators, teachers (both German and natives) from the seminar for the East in Berlin and from the Institute for the Colonies in Hamburg would staff these places.[5]

People from every position, field and profession were called to contribute to the success of the German international propaganda campaign: bankers and representatives of large merchant houses abroad, Baghdad railway staff, German schools and Christian missionaries, members of the Jewish communities,

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[2] PA AA, R 20936: Verband Deutscher Handlungsgehilfen zu Leipzig an das Ministerium des Auswärtigen Amtes (Berlin), Mannheim, 19 August 1914.

[3] PA AA, R 20936: Wangenheim (;) an Reichskanzler Freicherrn von Bethmann-Hollweg, Berlin, 18 August 1914.

[4] PA AA, R 20936: Wangenheim (;) an Reichskanzler Freicherrn von Bethmann-Hollweg, Berlin, 18 August 1914.

[5] PA AA, R 20936: Wangenheim (;) an Reichskanzler Freicherrn von Bethmann-Hollweg, Berlin, 18 August 1914.

exiles and foreign communities in Europe, in the East and in America. Members of independence movements, inter alia, constituted the manpower behind the counterpropaganda, as well as being responsible for active propaganda, which – wherever needed – rerouted public opinion and strengthened pro-German sentiments in order to gain new supporters.[6]

The incitement and the steady feeding of the pan-Islamist movement with ideas, weapons, men and money as a way to force England into a peace agreement; the instigation of an insurrection in Russia by its Muslim and Jewish populations; the exploitation of independence movements such as the Irish, were all actions which represented one element of the German counterattack against the allegations made by its enemies. The other element consisted of comprised the need to fortify the military camp of the Central Powers by browbeating the neutral countries into the war, or to quote: "In every neutral country, we must have our agents, who will have won the trust of the country and its people, so that a favourable stance towards us is formed. This too is a service to the fatherland."[7]

The main objective was for all to contribute to the fatherland in order to deal swiftly with the enemy who had the upper hand in the propaganda game. In this, the role of the German entrepreneurs and business giants was decisive for providing the capital and the networks abroad. Persil, Henkel, Odol, Maggi, among others, with an advertising turnover of about 30 to 50 million marks a year, received a proposition from the Foreign Ministry to participate on a committee to help national propaganda that would establish and fund propaganda networks in the form of war offices of information.[8]

For anyone who might have had doubts about the connection between advertising and propaganda,[9] the Foreign Ministry had plenty of suggestions from prominent entrepreneurs about the organization of propaganda on business bases. Here, the key was to understand the psychology of the masses and

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6 PA AA, R 20936: Wangenheim (;) an Reichskanzler Freicherrn von Bethmann-Hollweg, Berlin, 18 August 1914.

7 PA AA, R 20936: Verband Deutscher Handlungsgehilfen zu Leipzig an das Ministerium des Auswärtigen Amtes (Berlin), Mannheim, 19 August 1914.

8 PA AA, R 20937: Ludwig Roselius an Unterstaatssekretär Zimmermann, Berlin, 5 January 1915. The instigator of the proposal, a merchant himself and owner of the firm Kaffee-Handels-Aktiengesellschaft, with its headquarters in Bremen, was the mastermind behind German propaganda in the Balkans, organizing a wide-ranging network based in Bucharest.

9 Edward L. Bernays, *Propaganda*, trans. Dimitris Tannis (Athens: Nefeli Publishing, 2015). Bernays, a member of the Wilson government's Committee on Public Information during the First World War, realized early on that the mechanisms of control and manipulation of public opinion could likewise be implemented during peacetime. Adapting his knowledge of advertising, he was the initiator of the women's smoking campaign: cigarettes as beacons of freedom were directly associated with women's emancipation.

the mechanisms of persuasion, which created the belief in the masses that they were not forced into anything but that whatever they adopted corresponded fully to their beliefs and was in their best interest. By adopting the practices of advertising, marketers and entrepreneurs had the tools to point out rule number one to the politicians, which was none other than the total identification of politics and business interests with propaganda. And for anyone who was concerned about the principles of promoting propaganda, the businessmen had a ready answer was simple and to the point: "The foundations of propaganda are lies, defamation and immorality."[10]

The main propagandist of German interests in Greece did indeed come from the business world. Freiherrn Carl Schenck von Schweinsberg, better known as Baron Schenck, had already been living in Athens as the representative of Krupp when the war broke out. This event forced him to stop negotiations with the Greek government for the purchase of four submarines, a battleship and ammunition, and for Krupp to terminate its cooperation with him abroad.[11] Although the company expected him to return to head office, it received a notice from the Foreign Ministry that the Krupp employee would now be engaged by the Embassy in Athens, responsible for Press matters and other intelligence issues.[12]

Without a doubt, of decisive importance was his association with the Greek royal couple, while he was already doing an excellent job on propaganda in the Greek press. Soon Baron Schenck's room at the Hotel Grande Bretagne was transformed into an informal press office and propaganda centre, which he staffed with Greek agents in collaboration with the secret police. Proof that German money intended for propaganda purposes, handled by the then ambassador through bank transfers from Berlin to accounts with the Greek National Bank, had been put to good use was the sudden pro-German turnaround of certain newspapers in the Greek capital, which indicated their having been bought off.[13]

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[10] PA AA, R 20937: Ludwig Roselius, "Ein Kapitel über Organisation", Bremen [Ludwig Roselius an Baron Langwerth von Simmern, Berlin, 6 January 1915].

[11] PA AA, R 7465: Various documents. For the last attempts made by German industry for market share gain over its competitors of the Greek arms market before war broke out and the role of Schenck as Krupp's representative in Athens see Kostas Loulos, *The German policy in Greece, 1896–1914*, trans. Katerina Liaptsi (Athens: Cultural Institute of Agricultural Bank of Greece, 1990), 200–212.

[12] PA AA, R 19891 (Weltkrieg vom 20 August 1914): K. Gesandte (Quadt) an Auswärtiges Amt, no. 345, Athens, 20 August 1914 and R 7465: Friedrich Krupp, Aktiengesellschaft, an das Auswärtige Amt, no. 1776, Essen/Ruhr, 26 August 1914.

[13] Stratos Dordanas, "This traitor should not have survived the attempt of June 21st: Antivenizelism and German Propaganda in Greece of the National Schism", in *1915–2015: 100 years since the National Schism*, Conference, Municipality of Argos/Mycenae-Philologists Association of Argolis, Cultural Centre of the Municipality of Argos/Mycenae, Argos, 7–8

The German Embassy in Athens became the centre for propaganda, where an entire operation funded by Berlin was set up. The main objective of the propaganda mechanism was to buy off Greek newspapers and journalists, and use them to promote German interests by influencing public opinion. There were newspapers, which after being bought off by the embassy, changed their political line completely; from being pro-Entente, they overnight became pro-German. Likewise, there were journalists who were paid to publish the German General Staff's communiqués. In the propaganda war in neutral Greece, competition between the Entente and the Central Powers was fierce. Both rival alliances sought to win the country over to their side and steer public opinion by disseminating what was often censored information about the war. In particular, the large amounts of money spent by Germany for this purpose revealed the importance attached to this tactic. German propaganda very quickly made up the top news in Greece, raising a major political and ethical issue in the spheres of journalism and politics.[14]

However, Greece was not at the centre of German designs because the country had already been won over when the Greek king, from the outbreak of the war, showed a commitment to benevolent neutrality. The only assurance that he needed was not to be left entirely without help should difficulties arise. If, in the same period, one looks just a little further north, more exactly at Bucharest, one can see millions of German marks being made available for specific purposes, including the purchase of the Romanian grain production, and the buying off of newspapers and leading political figures, all this in order to overturn the country's neutrality from the outset of the war.

Recruited from the very beginning of the war, Ludwig Roselius, a renowned merchant from Bremen, zealously set up the propaganda machine in Bucharest, which extended all the way to Sofia, and which was continually supplied with millions of German marks, a part of which was financed from the respective government coffers in Vienna. To be able to do this implies that the political contacts needed to prepare the ground had already been made. Having received German assurance that after the end of the war Romania would get Bessarabia, King Carol informed Roselius that in the event of Bulgaria attacking Serbia, Romania would not intervene. In response, the German propagandist

November 2015 (in press). By the same author: "In the German Embassy: diplomatic agents and invisible key players of German Politics and Propaganda", in *Aspects of the First World War in the Balkan Peninsula*, Workshop, Hellenic National Defence General Staff/Hellenic Committee on Military History, Thessaloniki, 7 October 2017.

[14] On this issue see Despina Papadimitriou, "The Press and the Schism, 1914–1917" (PhD thesis, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, 1990); also (Sir) Basil Thomson, *The Allied Secret Service in Greece* (in Greek) (Athens: Logothetis Publishing) (English original, London: Hutchinson, 1931).

explained that his mission was not directed against the dynasty or the state, but rather at winning the very best of the Romanian people for the German cause. What exactly was the German cause? With the participation of Northern Europe and the Balkans, except Serbia, Germany continued to fight for the creation of the United States of Europe as a shield against Russian and English aggression. In this union, all peoples would have equal rights regarding education, religion and ethnicity; furthermore, the inviolability of the dynasties would be assured.[15]

On receiving the king's indirect approval, Roselius put to use the people at his disposal who had sound knowledge of Romanian reality, and wasted no time in taking control of certain newspapers; he not only acquired entire publishing groups but also bought off top politicians. The attainment of these objectives was actually based on a very simple but effective reasoning: by paying more for the grain than its real value, access was automatically granted to Romanian markets, and to the political offices as well.[16]

With Take Ionescu's son-in-law playing a key role in many of these trade agreements, it did not take long for the politician and his party, the Conservative Democrats, to join the ranks of neutrality, although at first he was strongly in favour of the Entente. Proud of its significant achievements in Romania, Berlin acknowledged that this practice brought the best results; to quote: "We gain the trust of those behind the ministers, who eventually succumb to the pressure of their own people. In order not to buy off Ionescu directly, even though he badly wants it, we use his people. [...] There are many incompetents who maintain relations with ministers and party leaders, to whom we daily give a few thousand leu, asking them for something in return. This is how we gain adherents on a daily basis."[17]

The press was the main instrument for influencing public opinion in Bucharest[18] and Sofia (40 million was the amount spent for buying off the newspapers *Ziua*, *Minerva* and *Seara*), which were constantly fed with news reports

[15] PA AA, R 21196: "Unterredung Roselius mit Seiner Majestät dem König", Bucharest, 6 September 1914 [Kaiserlich Deutsche Gesandtschaft in Rumänien an dem Reichskanzler Freicherrn von Bethmann-Hollweg, no. 267, Bucharest, 7 November 1914.]

[16] PA AA, R 21196: Kaiserlich Deutsches Konsulat an das Auswärtige Amt, no. 1–8, Bucharest, 26 September 1914.

[17] PA AA, R 21196: Kaiserlich Deutsches Konsulat an das Auswärtige Amt, no. 1–8, Bucharest, 26 September 1914.

[18] Ibid. no. 9: "Reading a Romanian newspaper one gets the impression that the Germans and the Austrians are defeated daily, that in these countries there is starvation, that the Germans are destroying cultural monuments, that our Kaiser can be compared only with Attila and many other such things. One can talk with serious and educated people and realize their certainty that the Hindenburg army has achieved not even a small victory, that the German and Austrian army have not had a single victory in this war".

from the News Office, *Agentia Romana-Germana de Informatii*. Along with politicians willing to be bribed,[19] this resulted in the establishment of a small Germanophile party that was also in need of financial assistance in order to win more supporters from the wider society.[20] In Romania, the Germans used agents from Jewish circles for the purposes of propaganda and espionage, being impressed by their honesty and credibility.[21] After all, the recruitment of agents was one of the responsibilities of the News Office.[22]

Furthermore, the German-Romanian News Office played a key coordinating role because, on the one hand, it controlled the newspapers that had been bought off, and, on the other, it promoted the publication of news on the war depicting events in a decidedly pro-German light. It also published brochures, maps and cards of Bessarabia, which had a sentimental effect on the Romanians. With the help of a telegraph network, information arrived from the war correspondents on the battlefields, which was then sent to the embassy and the consulates for processing in order to end up in the newspapers. The *Agentia Romana-Germana de Informatii* was so successful that besides the Bucharest office, there were plans to establish branches in Constantinople and Sofia.[23] Towards this end, contact was made with the Bulgarian Prime Minister, Radoslavov himself, as well as his influential circles. Bulgarian participation was agreed in the form of a joint Romanian-Bulgarian committee that for propaganda purposes would travel to Berlin, as well as to the battlefields; it would send press releases to Bucharest and Sofia, as well as distribute propaganda to other neutral countries.[24]

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[19] The most important politicians in Romania were Ion I. C. Brătianu and Emil Costinescu (former director of Banca Generala Romana/Berliner Diskonto-Gesellschaft). Brătianu supported the king's political stance, which was completely pro-German, while Costinescu, who was a former newspaper editor and came from a poor background, became one of the richest people in Romania with the assistance of German capital and due to the support he provided for business deals between the two sides. It is well known that in Romania the cabinet ministers had invested their capital in industry, as did Costinescu, whose main investments were in the sugar industry, with which his entire family were involved. As finance minister and responsible for the economic policy-making of the state, his continued backing of German interests, with personal economic gain, was considered a foregone conclusion. That is why, despite his age and weak health, the Germans had decided to make use of him.

[20] PA AA, R 21196: Kaiserlich Deutsches Konsulat an das Auswärtige Amt, no. 5, Bucharest, 26 September 1914.

[21] PA AA, R 21196: Kaiserlich Deutsches Konsulat an das Auswärtige Amt, no. 7, Bucharest, 26 September 1914.

[22] PA AA, R 21196: Ludwig Roselius, "Deutsche Propaganda-Rumänien".

[23] PA AA, R 21196: Ludwig Roselius, "Deutsche Propaganda-Rumänien".

[24] PA AA, R 21196: Kaiserlich Deutsches Konsulat an das Auswärtige Amt, no. 12, Bucharest, 26 September 1914.

To make sure that the propaganda machine in Romania and Bulgaria would continue to operate even under the most adverse conditions Roselius bought large quantities of paper in the event that the overseas supply was suspended. Under his orders, agents were ready to sabotage the publication of printed matter that was hostile to the Central Powers, and organize trade union protests and peasant demonstrations in support of "peace" and the king.[25]

Two Bulgarians that had been bought off had the task of sending pro-German accounts to the Bulgarian press. One was a priest, who received funding for his church, and the other was a correspondent who received a healthy check.[26] In turn, the Chief of Police of Ruse in Bulgaria banned the circulation of all non-Germanophile newspapers.[27] His agreement with the Chief of Police in Sofia was to arrest anyone involved in actions against the government's stance of neutrality. Having previously received the money agreed on, some newspaper editors of the Bulgarian press were willing to publish news items given to them directly by the German and Austrian consulates.[28]

What did the Germans think about Romanian society and the reading public? And how did they present the buying off of newspapers to promote their propaganda? According to Roselius and his superiors in Berlin: "In times of peace, a newspaper can simply serve the economic and commercial interests of Germany. But in these crucial moments that we are living in, a newspaper under German control and serving German interests, can, under the right conditions, produce the same effects as our army, with substantially fewer losses."[29] The Romanian newspapers that had been bought off had, therefore, to adapt their contents according to the instructions of their new employers, as well as the needs of their readers.

German comments regarding the readers were not very flattering: "The Romanian reading public likes sentimentality and lies; they do not want to learn the truth of the events, but in the spirit of battle and the rattling of the machine guns, they want to see blood flow. This is not only the case in Romania but in every place where newspapers are sold on the street like, for example, in Paris, Copenhagen, et cetera. This type of press depends on the nation and on state lobby groups. At this late moment, for the Reich to be able to compete with Russia and France, it is necessary to make money available – in no case does it need to be the high amounts that the enemy is spending – but it needs to offer money

[25] PA AA, R 21196: Kaiserlich Deutsches Konsulat an das Auswärtige Amt, no. 14, Bucharest, 26 September 1914.

[26] PA AA, R 21196: "Bericht", 17/30 September 1914.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Ibid.

[29] PA AA, R 21196: (Ludwig Roselius;) Bericht no. 6, "Angelegenheit Universul", Bucharest, 9 October 1914.

that ends up in the pockets of journalists [*journalistischer Strauchdiebe*] so as to prevent further sacrifices in German blood and materials."[30]

Ultimately, just how this huge amount of money and the well-organized structure connecting Berlin to Bucharest and Sofia, including Athens, contributed to fulfilling German pursuits, was clearly demonstrated by the subsequent political and military developments in the Balkans. Bulgaria, after having secured promises of territorial concessions against Serbian and Greek Macedonia, and the granting of a loan, took part in the Central Powers' autumn attack against Serbia,[31] whereas Romania entered the war in August 1916 on the side of the Entente.[32] At around the same time, in Greece, the conflict between King Constantine and the Anglo-French supported by the former Prime Minister Venizelos, split the country in two and soon led to open warfare, taking on the character of a civil war.[33]

To conclude, in any event, German propaganda against the neutral countries in the Great War was based on the words of Otto von Bismarck, and that meant using every available means to get across the German version of the "truth" on the war. This "truth" must, of course, be read as "lies" which is told by hunters and politicians especially during elections, and – as in our case – by propagandists during war.

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[30] Ibid.

[31] For Bulgaria during the First World War see Richard C. Hall, *Bulgaria's Road to the First World War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996).

[32] For Romania after the defeat from the Central Powers see Lisa Mayerhofer, *Zwischen Freund und Feind. Deutsche Besatzung in Rumänien, 1916–1918* (Munich: Verlagsbuchhandlung, 2010).

[33] For Greece during the First World War see George B. Leon, *Greece in First World War, 1917–1918* (Athens: Cultural Institute of National Bank, 2000) and, by the same author, *Greece and the Great Powers 1914–1917* (Thessaloniki: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1974).

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Conflicts over Dobruja during the Great War

Abstract: A sensitive topic for decades (for ideological reasons), Dobruja is still a challenge for many Romanian and Bulgarian historians. A peripheral and hardly populated region, this territory lying between the Danube and the Black Sea became the major source of dispute between Bucharest and Sofia at the dawn of the last century. After 1878, legal history and statistics were the pillars of the new identity of this former Ottoman territory divided between Romania and Bulgaria, as a result of a decision made by the Great Powers. In order to meet the specific requirements of young national states, Dobruja underwent a colonisation process (whose intensity differed in the two parts of the region). Ethnic diversity caused much concern, particularly in the critical moments that endangered the relations between the two neighbouring countries. The Balkan Wars represented the moment when the Dobruja question officially emerged. Romania's decision to annex Southern Dobruja would traumatise Bulgarian society, which would look forward to retaliating. This moment occurred earlier than many Romanian politicians expected. The spirit of revenge explains why the fighting on the Dobrujan front was so intense in the autumn of 1916. Dobruja was the first province of the Romanian Kingdom that fell under the Central Powers' occupation. The documents stored in Romanian archives are too few to make it possible to accurately reconstruct the history of this province during its military occupation by the Central Powers. This is not an easy challenge: Romania, Bulgaria, Russia, Serbia, Germany, Turkey and Austro-Hungary were in some way involved in the events in Dobruja in the autumn of 1916.

Keywords: Dobruja, Bulgaria, Romania, First World War, military occupation, minorities, territorial disputes

Only a few days after Romania had entered the Great War, Dobruja became the Romanian army's Achilles' heel. For the Bucharest authorities the territory between the Danube and the Black Sea had to play a secondary role in the unfolding of the military campaign. Blinded by the image of a poorly defended Transylvania, Romanian politicians and generals relied too much on the aid they had been expecting from their new allies in order to secure the border with Bulgaria. A potential offensive triggered by the Allied Army of the Orient on the Salonika Front and the deployment of Russian troops in Dobruja were thought to be enough to immobilize the Bulgarians who, like Romanians, were facing

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the same option of a two-front-war.[1] The experience of the Second Balkan War definitely played an important role in making such a decision. First of all, we can say that Romania's supremacy in the Balkans was an illusion if we think of it as the arbiter of this part of Europe. Its southern territorial expansion was seen as the first step in fulfilling its national ideal. Deprived of the possibility to gain real experience on the battlefield, the Romanian army had the ill luck of becoming part of a triumphalist discourse. The flaws noticed during its short campaign in Bulgaria were simply overlooked. The price paid for its success was the only thing that stirred the interest of public opinion.[2] Consequently, the strategy adopted by the Romanian government comes as no surprise after the outbreak of the Great War: repeating the tactics employed in 1913, yet at a larger scale. According to this scenario, maximal success was to be achieved with a minimum of sacrifice. However, this plan was marred by the fast and intense answer given by the Central Powers. The lack of experience on the battlefield was a crucial factor: the panic caused by the first blows on the Dobruja front put an end to the offensive in Transylvania and finally led to the transformation of the 1916 Romanian campaign into a disaster. Some explanations that can still be found in Romanian historiography help us understand what happened on the Dobruja front in the autumn of 1916: the Russian troops' lack of reaction and the allies' refusal to fulfil the commitments undertaken by the military convention with Romania.[3] Blaming the allies for the Romanian army's defeat in the autumn of 1916 needs a much more nuanced approach to what a coalition war means. Western historians are straightforward: Romania did not join the Great War so as to help its allies, but to pursue its national interest.[4] The reality of this simple truth was most harshly experienced by the Serbian kingdom. While waiting for the right moment to enter the war, Romania preferred to forget about its commitments undertaken by the Treaty of Bucharest in August 1913. The Romanian govern-

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[1] The Military Convention signed with the Entente on 4/17 August 1916 compelled Romania to declare war against Central Powers on 15/28 August 1916, at the latest. During this period, its new allies had to launch an offensive both on the Salonika Front and in Bukovina. Also, to counteract the Bulgarian danger Russia committed itself to deploying three divisions in Dobruja. For further details about Romania's entry into the Great War, see Glenn E. Torrey, *Romania and World War I. A Collection of Studies* (Iași/Oxford/Portland: Center for Romanian Studies, 1998), 95–153.

[2] See Daniel Cain, "L'illusion de la suprématie dans la Péninsule Balkanique: le Royaume de Roumanie entre le Traité de Bucarest et Sarajevo (août 1913 – juin 1914)", *Revue des études sud-est européennes* LII (2014), 171–192.

[3] Comisia Română de Istorie Militară [The Romanian Commission of Military History], *România în anii Primului Război Mondial* [Romania in the First Years of the First World War], vol. II (Bucharest: Editura Militară, 1987), 578.

[4] Michael B. Barrett, *Prelude to Blitzkrieg. The 1916 Austro-German Campaign in Romania* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013), 304.

ment's policy was clear: the disputes between its Balkan neighbours were not a sufficiently serious reason to renounce its neutral status. Prime minister Ion I.C. Brătianu was aware that Romania's interests could not always be the same as those of some countries like Serbia or Greece.[5] Moreover, though part of the same camp, Serbia was excluded from the talks held by Brătianu over Romania's entrance into the Great War. The Great Powers' acknowledgement in writing of as many territorial claims of Romania as possible was crucial to Brătianu.[6] During the Paris Peace Conference, the absence of direct negotiations with the Serbian government during the entire year of 1916 led to the emergence of disputes over the division of Banat.[7]

In the autumn of 1916, Dobruja unquestionably became a bloody theatre which involved civilians too. Romanians, Russians and Serbians fought side by side on this initially 140-km-long front against the Bulgarian, German, Turkish and Austro-Hungarian troops. Irregular fighting and excesses against the civilian population occurred during the four months of war in Dobruja. Exacerbated nationalist feelings explain the atrocities committed on both sides during these months of war waged on the Dobruja battlefront. History provides an explanation for this matter of fact. A border region with a mixed population, Dobruja became a territory disputed between Romania and Bulgaria at the beginning of the past century, as long as the Balkan borders began to change. For the Bucharest authorities Bulgaria gradually began to be viewed as a problematic state, as well as a competitor to Romania's supremacy in the region. The rift between the two states was caused by the Romanian government's decision to take advantage of Bulgaria's military and diplomatic difficulties in order to modify their common border in Romania's own interest in the summer of 1913. The need for a strategic border with Bulgaria was brought into discussion in order to justify the annexation of Southern Dobruja (nearly 8,000 km² in area). Even if Romanians amounted to 5 per cent of the population of the new territory (estimated to nearly 300,000 inhabitants, particularly Turks and Bulgarians),[8] people in Bucharest were hopeful of the successful integration of this region into the Ro-

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[5] I. G. Duca, *Amintiri politice* [Political Memoirs], vol. II (Munich: Jon Dumitru Verlag, 1981), 25.

[6] Keith Hitchins, *Ion I.C. Brătianu. Romania* (London: Haus Publishing Ltd., 2011), 82.

[7] Sherman David Spector, *Rumania at the Paris Peace Conference* (New York: Bookman Association, Inc., 1962), 123–126.

[8] George Georgescu, *Județul Caliacra din punct de vedere administrativ, financiar, economic, social și cultural* [Caliacra County from an Administrative, Financial, Economic, Social and Cultural Point of View] (Bucharest: Institutul de Arte Grafice Carol Göbl, 1915), 3; Ion N. Cămărășescu, *Durostorul. Expunerea situațiunei județului la 1 decembrie 1914* [Durostor. The County's State of Affairs on 1 December 1914] (Bucharest: Tipografia Ion C. Văcărescu, 1915), 20.

manian Kingdom. The manner in which Northern Dobruja was colonized and transformed after 1878, when it was annexed to Romania by the Congress of Berlin, fuelled the Romanian authorities' trust in the success of their mission.[9] Therefore, an exceptional regime was the solution for this new Romanian territory. The Romanian Parliament held open discussions of the different issues when the two parts of Dobruja were annexed. Take Ionescu, former minister of the interior, provides a necessary explanation: in 1878, we annexed a Turkish province with a rare population. In 1913, we received a strip of land with a population that led a constitutional life for three decades. As a result, warns Ionescu, we should show those whom we uprooted from their homeland that we are superior to their former sovereigns by our tolerance and civilization.[10]

Despite the Bucharest authorities' optimistic attitude, the territory annexed by Romania in the summer of 1913 proved to be a real time bomb, not only because of the feelings experienced by the Bulgarian minority, but also of the feelings of rage and revenge the Romanian campaign across the Danube provoked in Bulgarian society. Shortly afterwards, Romania was to be perceived as a treacherous neighbour that deprived Bulgaria of the possibility to harvest its victories won during the First Balkan War.[11] Resentments escalated until the armies of the two countries faced each other on the battlefield. In the autumn of 1915, the decision of Bulgaria to join the Central Powers enhanced the Romanian government's distrust. All the war plans drafted by the Romanian General Headquarters both before 1913, and particularly between 1914 and 1916, considered Bulgaria a hostile state.[12] Special attention was paid to the monitoring of Bulgarian propaganda among the inhabitants of Southern Dobruja.[13]

In November 1915, prime minister Ion I.C. Brătianu approved a detailed action plan that had to be put into execution by the Romanian authorities in the territory annexed after the end of the Second Balkan War, in the event of a war with Bulgaria. Essentially, the plan contained the steps that the civil and mili-

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[9] See Constantin Iordachi, "The California of the Romanians: Integration of Northern Dobrogea into Romania, 1878–1913", in Balázs Trencsényi et al., eds., *Nation-building and Contested Identities: Romanian and Hungarian Case Studies* (Budapest/Iași: Regio Books/Polirom, 2001), 121–152.

[10] *Desbaterile Adunării Deputaților* [The Deputy Assembly Debates], Sesiunea ordinară 1914 [Ordinary Session], no. 30/29 March 1914, ședința din 27 martie 1914 [meeting of 27 March 1914], 400, 404.

[11] Anastas Ishirkov, *Kŭsi napŭtni belezhki vŭrhu Dobrudzha i Moravsko* (Sofia 1917), 16.

[12] Ministerul Apărării Naționale [The Ministry of National Defence], *România în Războiul Mondial* [Romania in the Great War], vol. I (Bucharest: Imprimeria Națională, 1934), 83–84.

[13] See, e.g., Arhivele Naționale ale României [National Archives of Romania], Serviciul Arhive Naționale Istorice Centrale [The Central Historical National Archives Department, hereafter SANIC], Direcția Poliției și Siguranței Generale [Police and General Security Division], files 132/1914, 556/1914, 243/1915.

tary authorities from Southern Dobruja had to follow during the week before the Romanian army was to be mobilised. The plan aimed to put in requisition all that was deemed as necessary for the army's needs (animals, food products, transportation means). They had to be shipped over to the other side of the Danube. Also, all the suspects had to be detained and then deported along with "all men of foreign nationality aged between 18 and 60" who lived in the area of Romanian fortresses. The remaining population (women, elderly people and children) had to be warned over the consequences of "any act of hostility or treason" for the Romanian troops. More specifically, not only the culprits, but also their relatives would pay with their life.[14] The events that unfolded in August 1916 show that the Romanian authorities enforced the measures that had been agreed upon nine months before.[15] Official statistics say that between August 1916 and April 1918 the Romanian government decided to intern about 38,000 civilians. There were three categories of civilians interned by the Romanian authorities: those who held the enemy states' citizenship, those who had obtained Romanian citizenship and those who had not. The deportations, as well as the requisition and arson of villages during the retreat of the Romanian army show that the Bucharest authorities saw Southern Dobruja as a hostile territory. This is easily explained by the lack of trust in the loyalty of the new subjects. Statistics are clear in this respect: ethnic Bulgarians (over 60%) and ethnic Turks (almost 15%) are the most numerous interned civilians who were Romanian subjects. On the other hand, the number of interned civilians – Romanian subjects – was double compared to that of civilians from enemy countries.[16]

Romania's war plan (the so-called Hypothesis Z) included an offensive across the Carpathians and a defensive in Dobruja. Subsequently, an offensive was to be launched in Dobruja as well. Three quarters of the Romanian troops were engaged in the Transylvania offensive. It was expected that in 40 days' time the Romanian army would reach the Hungarian Plain. Once a new offensive was launched, the Romanian troops based in the south had to reach the Ruse-Varna line in only a few days.[17] It seems to have been an easy campaign won from the very start. Yet this successful plan depended on two questionable factors: 1) Was

[14] SANIC, Mihail Berceanu Personal Fonds, file I Ca 39, 1–19.

[15] George Georgescu, *Fapte, împrejurări și amintiri în timpul neutralității și războiului. 1914–1919* [Facts, Circumstances and Memories during the Neutrality Period and the War. 1914–1919] (Bucharest: Cartea Românească, 1933), 22–23.

[16] Bogdan Negoi, *Mărturii documentare: Lagărele de prizonieri din România în timpul primului război mondial* [Documentary Testimonies: The Romanian Prison Camps during the First World War] (Geamăna-Argeș: Tiparg, 2009), 214.

[17] Comisia română de istorie militară [The Romanian Commission of Military History], *Proiecte și planuri de operațiuni ale Marelui Stat Major Român (până în anul 1916)* [Projects and Operation Plans of the Romanian General Staff], (Bucharest, 1992), 178–191.

the military operation coordination between the allies possible? 2) How would the enemy general headquarters react?

Due to the extension of the Russian front, Dobruja was the territory of the first direct military collaboration between Russia and its allies. The Romanian prime minister considered that the presence of Russian troops in Dobruja was compulsory so as to secure the southern border of the country. Some politicians from Bucharest and Petrograd believed that the Bulgarians would not dare shoot those who liberated them in 1877 from Ottoman rule.[18] This reasoning was not shared by the commander of the Russian troops that were to be sent in Dobruja. General Andrei Zayonchkovski was suspicious of the troops of Serbian-Croatian volunteers he led, i.e. the famous Serbian First Division led by Colonel Stevan Hadžić.[19] Above all, he did not trust the former Austro-Hungarians soldiers' capacity to fight. Besides, he feared that the Bulgarian-Serbian antipathy would be stronger than the Bulgarian-Russian sympathy.[20] There were also the Russians' doubts about the operational capacity of the troops dislocated at the border with Bulgaria, as Romanians lacked any real war experience.

While Brătianu was holding final negotiations over the country's entrance into the war, the German, Austro-Hungarian and Bulgarian general headquarters began to elaborate an action plan for this scenario in July 1916. A month before Romania's entrance into the war, the Central Powers had already approved a concrete action plan for the new frontline. Briefly, first they aimed at attracting as many troops as possible in Transylvania, followed by a massive offensive of the Bulgarian troops in Dobruja and, eventually, the crossing of the Danube and the advancement to Bucharest.[21] The concrete details of this plan sparked off disputes between the allies. The Bulgarian Chief of Staff, General Zhostov, objected to the Bulgarian troops' crossing of the Danube and their fast advancement to Bucharest. There were few troops available for such an undertaking and the danger of a Romanian offensive in Dobruja was too high. Zhostov was reticent to allow the presence of Turkish divisions in Dobruja, and to accept that Field-marshal August von Mackensen could take over the lead of the Bulgarian troops that would fight against Romania.[22] His unexpected death on the very

[18] Duca, *Amintiri*, 266.

[19] Information (including information contained in the Romanian archives) on the presence of this division on the Dobrujan front can be found in Miodrag Milin, "Voluntari sârbi pe frontul românesc din toamna anului 1916" [Serbian Volunteers on the Romanian Front in the Autumn of 1916], *Analele Banatului* XXI (2013), 439–453.

[20] Barrett, *Prelude*, 70.

[21] See Ministerstvo na voĭnata, *Bŭlgarskata armiia v Svetovnata voĭna, 1915–1918*, vol. VIII: *Voĭnata sreshtu Rumŭnia prez 1916 godina* (Sofia: Dŭrzhavna pechatnitsa, 1939), 60–75.

[22] Gen. Sava Savov, gen. Konstantin Zhostov, *Intimnite prichini za pogromite na Bŭlgariia* (Sofia: Izadtelstvo Zemia, 2000), 143–155.

eve of the outbreak of the war with Romania smoothed these disputes. Meanwhile, the Bulgarian troops had taken over control on the Salonika Front, thus hampering the likelihood of any offensive launched by the Allied Army of the Orient. Consequently, a key condition for Romania's entrance into the war was missing just days before the Romanian army was mobilized. From that moment on, the German and Bulgarian authorities could plan the counteroffensive at the southern border of Romania in case the latter declared war against the Central Powers. The first movements of the Bulgarian troops from the Salonika Front to the border with Romania began prior to the mobilization of the Romanian army.[23]

On the evening of 14/27 August 1916, Romania declared war only against Austro-Hungary. Brătianu was reluctant to declare war against Bulgaria straight away. The head of the Bucharest Cabinet believed that during the first days of the Romanian campaign the military effort was required only in Transylvania. Of course, if the Bulgarian troops had attacked the Romanian or the Russian troops in Dobruja, the prime minister would have been forced to declare war against Bulgaria too.[24] The Bulgarian government needed four days to react. In fact, Bulgaria was the last ally of Austro-Hungary that declared war against Romania. This generated an exaggerated felling of enthusiasm in Bucharest. It was believed that the presence of Russian soldiers in Dobruja was the reason for the Bulgarian troops' inactivity.[25] The Bulgarian government's lack of immediate reaction irked the German general headquarters that considered their ally to be reluctant. In order to make a political decision, the Bulgarian sovereign summoned the Crown Council.[26] Prime Minister Vasil Radoslavov was anxious not only about the difficulty in waging a two-front war but also about the ever-growing number of Russian troops on the Dobruja front. For a society divided into Russophiles and Russophobes such a presence could exert a strong influence on the political life of the Bulgarian state.[27] Finally, the last disputes over an offensive in Dobruja were resolved. Surprise was the key element of this offensive. A moral victory was expected before mobilizing more troops in Dobruja. The Bulgarian general headquarters objective was to immediately

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[23] Glenn E. Torrey, *The Romanian Battlefront in World War I* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2012), 30–44.

[24] General Vasile Rudeanu, *Memorii din timpuri de pace şi de război, 1884–1929* [Memoirs of Peace and War, 1884–1929] (Bucharest: Cavallioti, 2004), 180.

[25] Constantin Argetoianu, *Memorii* [Memoirs], vols. III–IV (Bucharest: Editura Machiavelli, 2008), 34.

[26] Georgi Markov, *Goliamata voĭna i bŭlgarskiia mech nad balkanskiia vŭzel, 1914–1919*, vol. I: *Zaplitaneto* (Sofia: Izdatelstvo Zahariĭ Stoianov, 2016), 412–413.

[27] D-r Vasil Radoslavov, *Dnevni belezhki 1914–1918* (Sofia: Izdatelstvo UI "Sv. Kliment Ohridski", 1993), 195–196.

take control of the major Romanian fortifications in Southern Dobruja and to establish the front along the Cernavodă–Constanța line. Much easier to defend, this line covered the shortest distance between the Danube and the Black Sea (approximately 50 km).[28]

Almost two months of bloody war were needed for the troops of the Central Powers to achieve their goals on the Dobruja front. The occupation of the strategic railway between Constanța and Cernavodă deprived the Romanian army of the possibility to launch massive operations in Dobruja because of its lack of infrastructure. Controlling the shortest distance between the Black Sea and the Danube, the troops of the Central Powers enjoyed great strategic advantages: they could defend this part of the front more easily and could also dislocate a part of the troops. In late November 1916, a part of these troops crossed the Danube and joined the units that entered Wallachia after having crossed the Carpathians. By the end of the year, the Bulgarian troops managed to conquer the rest of Northern Dobruja, which was only defended by Russian troops.[29] A new chapter in the tumultuous history of this land began. This time the emerging disputes were related to the economic exploitation of the Romanian territory occupied by the Central Powers. Sharing the spoils of war was an important stake, as was the region's economic exploitation, a real breath of fresh air for the ailing economies of the countries that had been at war for years. The grievances were caused by the disproportion between the contribution to conquering this region and the quota share of the spoils of war. The oil and grain reserves in Constanța, as well as the railway which connected this port to Cernavodă were of paramount importance to the Germans, who dismissed the idea of a Bulgarian civil and military administration in Northern Dobruja. It was declared an occupation military zone that was briefly under German administration. Instead, the German general headquarters decided to leave Southern Dobruja under Bulgarian administration. Austro-Hungary and Turkey were also interested in exploiting Dobruja's economic potential.[30]

Much to the Bulgarian authorities' dissatisfaction, this status quo was maintained until the spring of 1918. After the collapse of the Russian front, accepting the tough conditions imposed by its victors was Romania's only chance.

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[28] *Bŭlgarskata armiia v Svetovnata voĭna*, 270–331.

[29] Torrey, *Romanian Battlefront*, 110–117.

[30] Information about the Central Powers' Administration in Dobrogea can be found in a memorandum signed by the German General Kurt von Unger, published in Constanța in 1917. In 2012, this brochure was reedited in a bilingual edition: Valentin Ciorbea, Constantin Cheramidoglu and Walter Rastätter, eds., *Denkschrift der Deutschen Etappen Verwaltung in der Dobrudscha Abgeschlossen Mitte April 1917/Memoriu al administrației germane de etapă în Dobrogea. Întocmit la mijlocul lui aprilie 1917* [Memorandum of the German Stage Administration of Dobruja Issued in Mid-April 1917] (Constanța: Ex Ponto, 2012), 1–123.

The Peace Treaty of Bucharest signed on 24 April/7 May 1918 stipulated that Romania "cedes to Bulgaria the Bulgarian territory which had fallen to it as a result of the peace treaty of Bucharest of 1913" with a small rectification of the frontier in favour of the latter. Also, Northern Dobruja, which Romania ceded to the Central Powers, was to be administered as a condominium. In exchange, the Central Powers pledged that Romania would get "a guaranteed commercial road to the Black Sea" by way of Cernavodă and Constanța.[31] Visibly dissatisfied with the new status of Northern Dobruja, the Sofia government hoped that this formula would help the Bulgarians play first fiddle and would thus be subsequently able to take control of the whole province. It was only in September that a new agreement was reached on Northern Dobruja, which passed under complete Bulgarian control in exchange for certain commitments undertaken by the Sofia Cabinet towards its allies. This is, however, a legally unimportant act, given that Bulgaria was forced to surrender a week later.[32] This was the beginning of the end for the Central Powers. Only a day before the capitulation of Germany, the Romanian government entered the war again. This symbolic gesture, which pointed to the forthcoming peace treaty, placed Romania in the victorious camp. The Central Powers' administration in Dobruja was replaced by that of the Entente, which mediated the return of the Romanian authorities. The Bulgarian troops were urged to pull out of Dobruja up to the border drawn in the summer of 1913. This situation gave rise to new feelings of resentment. The return of the Romanian authorities faced the opposition of the Bulgarian population. French, English and Italian troops were deployed in Dobruja so as to secure peace in the region until a new peace treaty was signed. Unfortunately, the Treaty of Neuilly (27 November 1919) failed to put an end to the violence that occurred at the Romanian-Bulgarian border. The wounds of war were too fresh to be healed by a diplomatic treaty alone. Throughout the interwar period, Dobruja was a troublesome issue both for the Romanian and for the Bulgarian authorities. When the Second World War broke out, an exchange of population and a recreation of the old border established in 1878 were the last resort. During the time that elapsed from the signing of the Treaty of Craiova (7 September 1940), the two parts of Dobruja irreversibly lost their ethnic and confessional diversity, which caused many problems to the inflexible politicians in Sofia and Bucharest.

[31] For the English translation of the Peace Treaty between Romania and the Central Powers, see United States, Department of State, *Texts of the Roumanian "Peace"* (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1918), 5–28.

[32] Antonina Kuzmanova et al., eds., *Istoriia na Dobrudza*, vol. IV (Veliko Tŭrnovo: Izdatelstvo "Faber", 2007), 222–236.

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De la Grèce rêvée à la Grèce vécue
L'armée d'Orient dans une interculturalité complexe

Résumé : Après l'échec subi aux Dardanelles, les Alliés décidèrent d'envoyer des troupes en Grèce et les premiers contingents de l'armée d'Orient débarquèrent à Salonique au mois d'octobre 1915. L'armée d'Orient se déploya à travers la Macédoine grecque jusqu'en janvier 1921. Cette région abritait des populations variées : Turcs, Bulgares, Serbes, Albanais, Tziganes, Koutso-Valaques, Juifs sépharades, Grecs, chacun s'exprimant dans sa propre langue. Ainsi l'armée française d'Orient s'imposa sur un territoire au peuplement très divers, qui de surcroît venait de quitter l'empire ottoman pour être rattaché à la Grèce. Ce caractère multiculturel rendit le contact entre l'armée d'Orient et le pays particulièrement complexe. En arrivant dans la rade de Salonique, les soldats avaient inévitablement mobilisé leurs référents culturels ainsi que tout un imaginaire nourri de stéréotypes. Rattachaient-ils la Grèce à son passé antique prestigieux, ou se tournaient-ils plutôt vers un orientalisme considéré comme plus attirant car plus fantasmagorique ? Les clichés véhiculés dans l'esprit des soldats français par la culture classique des humanités et par le courant orientaliste ont-ils pu résister au choc d'une interculturalité polysémique ? L'analyse de la *Revue franco-macédonienne*, écrite par les soldats de l'armée d'Orient, et l'étude de souvenirs publiés ou inédits, laissent largement apparaître la profonde déception des soldats français, qui ne comprirent pas la configuration culturelle du territoire macédonien, et qui restèrent prisonniers d'impressions subjectives et de réactions émotionnelles. La Grèce rêvée avant le départ ne résista pas à la confrontation avec la réalité, qui fut alors rejetée de façon virulente par de nombreux soldats.

Mots clés : Première guerre mondiale, armée d'Orient, Grèce, Salonique, Macédoine, interculturalité, altérité, orientalisme, philhellénisme

À la fin de l'année 1915, les Alliés envoyèrent des troupes en Grèce pour porter secours aux Serbes et conserver, après l'échec de l'expédition des Dardanelles, une influence dans le sud-est européen. Les premiers contingents de l'armée d'Orient débarquèrent à Salonique au mois d'octobre 1915. Cette entrée sur le territoire grec amplifia une crise interne qui commençait à secouer le pays. La Grèce était en effet partagée entre les partisans du roi Constantin, beau-frère de Guillaume II, qui défendait l'idée d'une neutralité bienveillante à l'égard de l'Allemagne, et ceux du Premier ministre Éleuthère Vénizélos, qui souhaitait s'engager du côté de l'Entente. Vénizélos autorisa les Alliés à débar-

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quer à Salonique mais Constantin le désavoua et le contraint à la démission. Les Alliés n'en poursuivirent pas moins leur installation dans ce pays officiellement neutre, mais en réalité profondément divisé entre germanophiles et ententistes. La tension s'exacerba jusqu'à précipiter le pays dans une situation de guerre civile lorsque Vénizélos institua à Salonique un Gouvernement provisoire de défense nationale (octobre 1916). Ce gouvernement fut établi avec le soutien des Alliés (et particulièrement de la France), qui reconduisirent ainsi une politique interventionniste héritière des pratiques d'avant-guerre. Finalement, sous la pression de l'Entente, Constantin fut obligé d'abdiquer en faveur de son fils. Vénizélos redevint alors Premier ministre et la Grèce s'engagea dans la guerre le 30 juin 1917.[1]

Une partie des troupes s'installa à proximité de Salonique, dans le camp retranché de Zeitenlik, avec les bureaux d'état-major à Salonique même. Le reste de l'armée d'Orient se déploya dans la Macédoine grecque,[2] sur un front de presque 400 km qui suivait plus ou moins la frontière du pays. La Macédoine abritait des populations très variées : Turcs, Bulgares, Serbes, Albanais, Tziganes, Koutso-Valaques, Juifs sépharades, Grecs, chacun s'exprimant dans sa propre langue. Ainsi l'armée d'Orient s'imposa sur un territoire au peuplement très diversifié, qui de surcroît venait juste de quitter l'empire ottoman pour être rattaché à la Grèce.[3]

Ce caractère multiculturel rendit le contact entre l'armée d'Orient et le pays particulièrement complexe ; il est intéressant d'analyser comment les soldats français ont appréhendé la Grèce et sa population, et comment fonctionna le rapport entre la Grèce rêvée et la Grèce vécue. Les clichés véhiculés dans l'esprit des soldats par la culture classique des humanités et par les phantasmes d'un Orient mystérieux ont-ils pu résister au choc d'une interculturalité polysémique ? Pour proposer des éléments de réponse, cette étude s'appuie sur des témoignages et correspondances de soldats, publiés ou inédits ; sur des articles de Marcelle Tinayre, femme de lettre qui passa plusieurs mois à Salonique ; sur la *Revue franco-macédonienne*, revue publiée à Salonique par un groupe de soldats de l'armée d'Orient en 1916 et 1917.[4] En arrivant dans la rade de Salonique les

[1] Sur l'entrée en guerre de la Grèce voir Yannis Mourelos, *L'intervention de la Grèce dans la grande guerre, 1916–1917* (Athènes : E.F.A., 1983).

[2] La Macédoine grecque est comprise entre le Nestos à l'Est, la chaîne du Pinde à l'Ouest et le mont Olympe au sud. Au nord c'est la frontière qui marque la délimitation. Avec l'avancée militaire la zone investie s'étendit progressivement jusqu'à Florina, puis Monastir, puis s'étend vers l'ouest jusqu'aux confins albanais (région de Koritza).

[3] Salonique et une partie de la Macédoine devinrent grecque après les guerres balkaniques de 1912–1913.

[4] Les souvenirs publiés pendant la guerre ou dans l'immédiat après-guerre se ressemblent beaucoup au point de perdre parfois de leur intérêt. Les sources inédites ou publiées long-

soldats avaient mobilisés leurs référents culturels ainsi que tout un imaginaire nourri de stéréotypes. Il convient d'analyser si cet univers mental, qui se déclinait en termes de philhellénisme et surtout d'orientalisme, résista à la confrontation avec le pays et sa population ; et quels sentiments la découverte de l'altérité et de la contemporanéité de la Grèce suscita parmi les soldats de l'armée d'Orient.

La Grèce rêvée

En 1915, l'image que les soldats français avaient de la Grèce était le fruit d'échanges historiques et de productions artistiques qui avaient mis à l'honneur l'hellénisme en France durant le XIXe siècle. Pendant la révolution grecque, entre 1821 et 1829, un vaste courant philhellène s'était développé en Europe et particulièrement en France. Un double lien filial avait rattaché les deux pays : les intellectuels et les artistes français avaient le sentiment d'être les héritiers des anciens Grecs ; d'autre part, la volonté hellène d'indépendance se rattachait au principe des nationalités qui se diffusait dans toute l'Europe et qui était héritier des idées de la Révolution française. En 1830, en vertu du traité de Londres, la Grèce devint un État indépendant sous la protection de la France, de l'Angleterre et de la Russie. La charge de protecteur de ce nouvel État vint alors s'ajouter au sentiment de filiation culturelle des Français. Le philhellénisme[5] se développa considérablement en France, grâce à de grandes œuvres littéraires ou picturales, mais aussi grâce à de nombreuses œuvres mineures – plaquettes, brochures – qui permettaient à ceux qui ne pouvaient voyager de se représenter la Grèce. Il était d'ailleurs souvent mâtiné d'orientalisme. Est-ce à dire que la Grèce appartenait à l'Orient dans l'imaginaire des Français ? Le philhellénisme rejoignait-il l'orien-

temps après la mort de leur auteur peuvent alors apporter un éclairage neuf. Ces textes nous renseignent sur le ressenti des soldats ainsi que sur leur perception de la Grèce. La relation de souvenir permettait aux soldats de fixer leur expérience du front d'Orient. Pendant la guerre les sources d'information n'étaient pas fiables : mensonges et fausses nouvelles avaient envahi la société française. Face à cet usage du faux qui devint « une composante structurelle » de la guerre, se fit ressentir l'impérieuse nécessité de rétablir la vérité. Les soldats, acteurs de la guerre, furent ainsi sollicités et devinrent alors témoins, chargés d'établir ou de rétablir la vérité. C'est ainsi que doit se comprendre l'étendue des témoignages publiés pendant et juste après la guerre. Voir sur ce sujet Christophe Prochasson et Anne Rasmussen, éd., *Vrai et faux dans la grande guerre* (Paris : La Découverte, 2004), 18–19.

[5] Au sens strict du terme, le philhellénisme est réservé « à la désignation du mouvement de sympathie pour la cause des Grecs, entraîné par la guerre d'indépendance », pour reprendre la définition de Sophie Basch dans son ouvrage. Pourtant ce terme, sorti de son contexte historique, a été constamment réutilisé dans un contexte différent par les écrivains et les voyageurs. Il acquit alors un sens plus général : toute sympathie ou tout intérêt porté à la Grèce. Sa mauvaise utilisation, fréquente, engendra d'ailleurs une certaine méfiance à son égard. Voir Sophie Basch, *Le Mirage Grec. La Grèce moderne devant l'opinion française depuis la création d'Athènes jusqu'à la guerre civile grecque : 1846–1946* (Athènes et Paris : Hatier, 1995).

talisme ? Edward Saïd, dans son étude sur l'orientalisme,[6] ne traite guère de la Grèce et semble de ce fait ne pas combiner les deux. Jean-Claude Berchet, par contre, consacre à la Grèce une partie de son anthologie *Le Voyage en* Orient.[7] Le terme *Orient* n'a jamais défini une entité géographique précise. C'est par rapport à son altérité face à l'Occident que l'Orient a été imaginé. Comme l'écrit Edward Saïd, « l'Orient est une idée qui a une histoire et une tradition de pensée, une imagerie et un vocabulaire qui lui ont donné réalité et présence en Occident et pour l'Occident ».[8] Dans ce schéma d'analyse, une distinction s'impose d'emblée entre Orient et Grèce. En effet, même si les Français avaient développé, pour les deux, un système de représentations codées, ces idées stéréotypées restaient confuses pour l'un alors que la connaissance de la culture grecque classique les rendait bien plus précises pour l'autre. Ainsi, de prime abord, la Grèce peut être considérée comme un pays à part, qu'il ne faut pas inclure dans le terme générique *Orient*. Mais cette analyse était l'apanage d'une minorité formée aux humanités classiques, qui mobilisa ses référents culturels issus d'une connaissance livresque de l'Antiquité grecque. En revanche, le mythe de l'Orient était beaucoup plus présent dans la société française au début du XXe siècle. Largement nourri par le mouvement littéraire et artistique de l'orientalisme, en vogue depuis le XVIIIe siècle en France, il influença considérablement la plupart des témoins. Les références aux œuvres d'Eugène Delacroix et de Pierre Loti sont omniprésentes dans les souvenirs publiés pendant la guerre et dans l'immédiat après-guerre.

La littérature et la peinture orientalistes imposèrent aux hommes, avant même leur départ, un certain conditionnement à l'Orient, et ils ne sont pas partis sans bagage référentiel, même si celui-ci était probablement très souvent réduit à sa plus simple expression. L'univers mental des soldats se rapportant à l'Orient était extrêmement flou car alimenté par une vision artistique : il était dominé par l'imaginaire, et non pas par des connaissances précises d'un Orient qui, de toute façon, est par nature non-définissable. C'est ainsi que certains hommes, parmi ceux qui n'avaient jamais quitté leur environnement avant la guerre, reconnaissaient déjà une manifestation de l'Orient avant même d'avoir quitté le territoire national. En effet, le climat et les paysages du sud de la France leur paraissaient un dépaysement suffisant pour les qualifier de *turcs*, terme utilisé de façon générique, faute de connaître et de maîtriser un vocabulaire plus spécifique.[9]

L'attrait du voyage, de l'exotisme, était d'ailleurs très présent chez les soldats volontaires pour le front d'Orient, comme Drieu La Rochelle qui s'imagi-

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[6] Edward Saïd, *L'orientalisme. L'Orient crée par l'Occident* (Paris : Seuil, 1980).

[7] Jean-Claude Berchet, *Le Voyage en Orient. Anthologie des voyageurs français dans le Levant au XIX^e siècle* (Paris : Laffont, 1985).

[8] Saïd, *L'orientalisme*, 17.

[9] Pierre Drieu La Rochelle, *La Comédie de Charleroi* (Paris : Gallimard, 1934), 128.

nait « transporté dans un pays de rêve ».[10] Marcel Brochard reconnaissait « la curiosité de faire un beau voyage, tout simplement ».[11] Même si la plupart des hommes n'étaient pas volontaires, ils reconnaissaient volontiers être attirés par la nouveauté que constituait ce voyage. Ils espéraient en outre une guerre plus facile, une guerre de mouvement qui les sortirait des tranchées, dans un pays au climat plus agréable.[12] Malgré cela, au moment du départ, l'inquiétude et la peur de l'inconnu étaient très présentes dans leur esprit. La correspondance d'Édouard Divry illustre parfaitement cette ambivalence : « Malgré les nombreux inconvénients et la misère certaine qui nous attend là-bas, je pars content dans l'espoir de voir un autre genre de guerre et du nouveau pays. Si nous pouvons aller jusque Constantinople ; quelle fête !! ». Au fur et à mesure que le départ se rapprochait, il s'inquiétait : « Nous nous demandons tous ce qui nous attend en Orient : est-ce la misère ou une vie à peu près supportable ? » Avant de s'embarquer il envoya même un mot à tous ses correspondants pour leur dire un adieu déguisé : « Rien de bon en perspective mais j'espère que nous nous reverrons quand même ».[13] L'embarquement signifiait déjà pour les hommes le début de l'aventure car la traversée était une première pour nombre d'entre eux. Elle matérialisait en outre le passage vers l'ailleurs inconnu, tout à la fois attirant et inquiétant.[14]

De l'exaltation à la désillusion

La première vision que les soldats eurent de Salonique se fit depuis les bateaux qui arrivaient dans la rade. Les premières impressions de la ville furent plutôt positives. Les hommes étaient heureux de percevoir des éléments sécurisants : une ville considérée comme normale, sans aucune trace de la guerre : « La ville grandit à nos yeux à mesure que nous en approchons. Enfin, pensons-nous, voilà un pays civilisé où il existe une population civile et dont les maisons ne sont pas démolies ».[15] De prime abord, le séjour à Salonique apparaissait bien plus agréable que les tranchées de Gallipoli ou du front occidental, et les hommes avaient l'impression de partir à la découverte d'un Orient merveilleux : « Et les arrivants disaient : c'est donc cela Salonique ! Les imaginations aventureuses de

[10] Ibid. 126.

[11] Marcel Brochard, souvenirs inédits, 19 janvier 1917.

[12] Les premiers départs pour Salonique s'effectuèrent à l'automne 1915 et les hommes étaient heureux d'échapper aux rigueurs d'un hiver dans les tranchées.

[13] Edouard Divry, correspondance inédite, lettres du 15 octobre 1915, du 22 octobre 1915, du 24 octobre 1915.

[14] De surcroît, l'intensification de la guerre sous-marine en Méditerranée rendait le voyage par bateau assez dangereux et les hommes appréhendaient le naufrage.

[15] Service Historique de la Défense, Ernest Stocanne, souvenirs inédits, 5N150.

l'Armée avaient si longtemps rêvé de Stamboul ! Pour l'avoir on avait souffert aux Dardanelles. Une plus petite princesse était devenue l'héroïne de la nouvelle aventure. On approchait d'elle, tout de même, avec la ferveur et l'émoi des croisés qui découvraient les cités de l'Orient ».[16] « Dans son ensemble, au premier coup d'œil, c'est bien la ville féerique des légendes arabes, la perle de la Chalcidique, la reine de l'Egée ».[17] Ces clichés récurrents et codifiés apparaissent dans la plupart des souvenirs publiés après la guerre. Remarquons que dans plusieurs cas les soldats semblaient bien conscients qu'ils ne trouveraient pas trace du *rêve hellène*. Ils se préparaient à débarquer dans une ville de culture encore ottomane et espéraient davantage nourrir leur imaginaire orientalisant que leur imaginaire hellénisant.

Toutefois, dès le débarquement, la déception s'empara des hommes. En premier lieu, l'architecture de certains quartiers s'apparentait à celle des villes d'Europe occidentale. C'était le cas du centre-ville, près de la mer et du port. Cette analogie avec la ville occidentale était à la fois réconfortante et décevante. « L'on pénètre en ville par l'avenue Counderitis *(sic)*, large artère mais bordée d'immeubles médiocres (…) le coin vert de la Tour Blanche surprend agréablement et le quartier de Kalamaria enchante. Mais tout cela c'est encore le *chez nous*, ce sont là maisons, rues, visages à l'européenne ou presque, et l'on brûle de connaître l'autre Salonique ».[18] Ainsi certains soldats furent déçus de ne pas avoir la sensation d'arriver au cœur d'une ville orientale. Cependant, dès qu'ils s'éloignèrent du centre pour se diriger vers des quartiers à l'architecture plus traditionnelle, qui auraient pu de ce fait satisfaire leur soif d'exotisme, la déception sembla parfois encore plus grande. Ce monde qu'ils venaient d'aborder présenta rapidement pour eux des caractères répulsifs et les mots ne furent pas assez durs pour le décrier. « L'aspect extérieur [de Salonique] est aussi beau que l'intérieur de la ville est lamentable ».[19] La ville apparaissait comme « une agglomération lépreuse de masures et de cabanes serrées au bord d'un golfe putride, un ghetto malsain ; en somme un cloaque baigné de lumière ».[20] La déception toucha également les soldats plus cultivés, qui se référaient à leur culture d'helléniste. Passant en bateau au large de la Thessalie, l'abbé Louis Cadoux décrivit le paysage et s'intéressa particulièrement aux hauts lieux de l'Antiquité. « Voici le mont Pelion, puis le mont Ossa. Vraiment, ce n'est que cela ! et les poètes grecs disaient qu'il suffirait de transporter le mont Ossa sur le mont Pelion pour atteindre le

[16] Étienne Burnet, *La Tour Blanche* (Paris : Flammarion, 1921), 6.

[17] H. Libermann, *Face aux Bulgares. La Campagne française en Macédoine serbe* (Paris : Berger-Levraut, 1917), 47.

[18] Pol Roussel, *Impressions d'Orient au temps de la Grande Guerre* (Paris : E. Chiron, 1925), 93.

[19] Capitaine F.-J. Deygas, *L'armée d'Orient dans la guerre mondiale 1915–1919* (Paris : Payot, 1932), 179.

[20] Roussel, *Impressions d'Orient*, 92.

ciel ! Et nous, pauvres élèves qui avons peiné à traduire ces choses, nous avons naïvement pensé qu'elles avaient au moins quelque vraisemblance avec la réalité. Hélas ! nous qui regardons ce matin même Ossa et le Pélion avec nos yeux d'alpins, nous ne voyons que des cônes insignifiants ».[21]

La majorité des hommes semblèrent terriblement déçus. « Quel Orient !, lit-on dans la préface du livre de Julien Arène, et que nous sommes loin de ces splendeurs orientales que nous nous figurions, d'après des lectures plus ou moins romanesques ».[22] Les hommes retournèrent alors leur ressentiment sur ceux qui étaient considérés comme responsables de leurs désillusions : les orientalistes, à la tête desquels on retrouve Pierre Loti, auteur le plus attaqué dans tous les commentaires. « Le tendre mensonge de Loti chantait dans toutes les mémoires (…). Tous, tous, tous et même les plus raisonnables, ils se laissaient aller, vertigineusement, vers le mirage le plus radieux, mais aussi le plus faux, le plus fuyant de tous ! Les mensonges des poètes avaient intoxiqué toute l'armée d'Orient ».[23] Sur un mode plus humoristique et moins lyrique, on peut lire dans un journal de tranchées : « Aussi pourquoi diable ces farceurs d'Orientalistes nous avaient-ils dépeint l'Orient sous de si chatoyantes et si captivantes couleurs ? »[24]

Quelques hommes dans leurs souvenirs retracèrent de façon positive leur rencontre avec l'Orient en ajoutant dans leur récit un peu de couleur locale : « On peut se représenter facilement l'arrivée dans ces charmantes oasis [les fontaines] des femmes aux robes voyantes, portant sur leurs épaules les cruches élégantes de terre rouge ».[25] Mais remarquons que notre témoin ne voyait pas ces femmes, il les imaginait seulement. Une fois de plus, les représentations engendrées par l'imagination vinrent dénaturer le contact avec les réalités. Cependant, les commentaires positifs sont rares et la plupart des récits révèlent un grand désenchantement. Celui-ci est si constant dans les souvenirs publiés pendant et juste après la guerre qu'on assiste à l'émergence d'un véritable *topos*. Le dénigrement des orientalistes, la dépréciation systématique de la Grèce, l'exhibition de ses déconvenues devinrent des éléments incontournables dans les témoignages publiés.

Soulignons toutefois que, bien souvent, le poilu de l'armée d'Orient ne connaissait pas les notions d'Orient ni d'orientalisme. Une petite nouvelle de

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[21] Abbé Louis Cadoux, *Et la foudre tomba* (Paris : Debresse et Rennes : Impr. réunies, 1959), 144.

[22] Julien Arène, *En Macédoine. Carnet de route d'un sergent de l'armée d'Orient* (Paris : Crès, 1916), 3.

[23] G. C. Richard, « L'Amour à l'armée d'Orient », *Les Œuvres libres* 133 (juillet 1932), 238–239.

[24] « Les désenchantés : Impressions d'un poilu d'Orient », *La Bourguignotte* 15 (1917), 2. Le titre de l'article parodie le livre d'un ouvrage de Pierre Loti, *Les désenchantées*, paru en 1906.

[25] Dr. Pierre Maridort, *En Macédoine 1915–1917* (Paris : Fischbacher, 1918), 8.

la *Revue franco-macédonienne*, écrite à la manière de Loti, imagine un dialogue entre Aziyadé et Lidoire, soldat français.[26] Entre les deux personnages, l'incompréhension est totale. Lidoire, paysan « rustique », ignorant tout du philhellénisme et de l'orientalisme, ne connaît pas la charmante héroïne et il ne la comprend pas lorsqu'elle tente de lui décrire les charmes de l'Orient. Il lui explique qu'il est complètement dérouté par la ville de Salonique et qu'il n'aspire qu'à une chose : rentrer en France et retrouver les siens.[27]

Profondes semblent ainsi les désillusions de ces soldats-voyageurs malgré eux. Ils ont en vain cherché en Macédoine des éléments venant conforter leurs rêves fabuleux. Les admirateurs de l'Antiquité ne songeaient qu'à retrouver les traces de Homère et de Périclès. Ils se trouvèrent confrontés à une Grèce contemporaine transformée par l'influence ottomane. Face à la distorsion déroutante entre le mythe hellène et la réalité, la première réaction de ces hommes fut de plonger dans un mishellénisme virulent.[28] Pour les autres, la déception fut peut-être encore plus rude, puisque chacun avait développé son propre imaginaire oriental qui évidemment ne pouvait correspondre à la réalité. Le contact avec la population locale ne permit pas d'atténuer ce jugement.

Premières confrontations avec la population

L'espace macédonien, sur lequel l'armée d'Orient se déploya, avait été l'enjeu de multiples rivalités nationales. Les guerres balkaniques et plusieurs années d'insurrection terroriste en avaient fait un territoire désorganisé, fragilisé et appauvri.[29] La configuration ethnico-linguistique de Salonique était tout aussi composite que celle de son *hinterland*. Elle était à la fois un reflet de cette région balkanique, mais aussi le souvenir de certaines contingences historiques.[30] En

[26] *Aziyadé* est le titre du premier roman de Pierre Loti. L'intrigue se passe en Turquie et met en scène une histoire d'amour entre une jeune turque, Aziyadé, et un officier français. Ce roman est emblématique du courant orientaliste qui a marqué la littérature et les arts en France durant tout le XIX^{e} siècle.

[27] Jean de Tournes, « Lidoire et Aziyadé », *Revue franco-macédonienne* 1 (Salonique, 1916), 26–29.

[28] Ce mishellénisme rejoint celui des voyageurs français qui se rendirent en Grèce à partir des années 1830 et qui furent également déçus par la découverte de la Grèce contemporaine.

[29] Depuis 1897, l'ORIM, mouvement autonomiste bulgare, avait mis sur pied une insurrection locale – à l'encontre des autorités turques mais aussi des communautés grecques et serbes – qui agita la Macédoine pendant plus de 10 ans. À partir de 1904, la Grèce et la Serbie commanditèrent elles-aussi dans la région des bandes armées pour combattre l'ORIM et limiter l'influence bulgare.

[30] En effet au XV^{e} siècle, avec l'expulsion des juifs d'Espagne, 20 000 séfarades s'étaient installés dans la ville en apportant leurs coutumes et leur langue, le judéo-espagnol. Cette importante communauté participa très largement au grand essor commercial de Salonique.

1913, près de 40 % de la population salonicienne était ainsi constituée de Juifs sépharades, les 60 % restant représentaient les Grecs, Turcs, Arméniens, Slaves, Tsiganes. Cette disparité, habituelle dans l'empire ottoman, allait à l'encontre de l'évolution politique en Europe occidentale, où des États-nations forts étaient censés être ethniquement et linguistiquement homogènes.

Le cosmopolitisme et l'interpénétration d'une multitude de nationalités et d'une multitude de langues furent causes de stupéfaction pour ces soldats français habitués à un système référentiel simple et clair en la matière. La remarque d'Édouard Julia illustre ce sentiment : « Et les Saloniciens ? Que sont les Saloniciens ? Personne ne saurait le dire. Grecs, Turcs, Juifs, amalgamés sans se fondre ni se confondre ont donné les Saloniciens. »[31] Cette situation inédite désorienta fortement les soldats, comme le note l'auteur d'un article paru dans *La Revue franco-macédonienne* : « l'armée française est étrangement impressionnée par ces pays nouveaux pour elle, malgré les auteurs anciens dont on a imprégné l'esprit et le cœur des écoliers français. »[32] Les hommes cherchèrent vainement, à leur arrivée, à identifier *les Grecs* en tant que ressortissants. Appliquant leurs critères occidentaux, ils pensaient que Salonique, ville grecque, devaient logiquement et nécessairement être peuplée par une majorité de Grecs, ce qui n'était pas le cas. De ce fait, ils confondirent souvent les Grecs et les Juifs, ce qui rend d'ailleurs l'analyse des témoignages parfois un peu délicate. Ainsi, l'absence de caractère national clair au sein de la population macédonienne fut l'un des éléments les plus déconcertants pour les hommes de l'armée d'Orient, élément auquel se greffa la confusion qui existait entre religion et identité nationale.[33]

La présence importante de musulmans fut un autre facteur d'incompréhension. Pour les soldats français, la Grèce était un pays orthodoxe, les musulmans ne pouvaient qu'être sujets ottomans et donc ennemis des troupes alliées. Ce schéma de pensée rudimentaire correspondait à leur connaissance limitée de la région et de son histoire récente. En débarquant à Salonique, les hommes furent confrontés à une société plurielle où trois religions cohabitaient : le judaïsme, le christianisme et l'islam. Les soldats ne comprenaient pas la présence des musulmans dans la région, musulmans qui furent d'ailleurs souvent qualifiés de *Turcs* dans leurs souvenirs, entretenant ainsi la confusion entre religion et nationalité. Plusieurs études s'attachèrent à expliquer et justifier la présence de cette population à Salonique, voulant démontrer que ces musulmans étaient des *Dönme*, Juifs convertis à l'islam au XVIIe siècle mais qui avaient conser-

[31] Édouard Julia dans *L'Illustration*, 17 février 1917.

[32] « Impressions d'Orientaliste », *Revue franco-macédonienne* 1 (1916), 34.

[33] En effet, le système ottoman du millet, en vigueur dans la région jusqu'en 1913, donnait à l'affiliation confessionnelle une dimension qui excédait la simple religion et qui fondait l'identité nationale.

vé secrètement leurs traditions juives.[34] Marcelle Tinayre précisa qu'ils étaient certes musulmans, « au moins en apparence » mais qu'ils n'étaient pas Turcs, et elle rajouta qu'il n'y avait presque plus de « vrais Turcs » à Salonique (sans préciser d'ailleurs ce qu'est un « vrai Turc »).[35] Ces articles sur les *Dönme* furent très certainement écrits dans un souci pédagogique mais aussi avec une volonté d'apaisement face aux sentiments d'inquiétude des soldats. Un autre article de la *Revue franco-macédonienne*[36] rapproche les musulmans de Macédoine de ceux des colonies d'Afrique du Nord, analogie qui permettait de les dissocier de l'Empire ottoman et de les faire accepter par les troupes qui auraient pu s'inquiéter de voir les supposés *Turcs* aussi nombreux. En s'appuyant sur l'histoire de la région, l'auteur de cet article insista sur la présence positive de l'islam et rappela la tolérance turque en Macédoine. Il ne distingua pas musulman et Turcs mais souhaita désamorcer la méfiance des soldats français en insistant sur leurs présumés « amour de la France » et désintérêt de la politique.[37]

Les soldats de l'armée d'Orient se retrouvèrent ainsi confrontés à une société multi-ethnique et multi-linguistique au sein de laquelle il était impossible de déceler un quelconque sentiment d'appartenance nationale. Au début de la guerre, une vision ethnique, ou plutôt raciale, du conflit s'était développée dans les pays occidentaux, mais ce schéma mental ne correspondait pas à la réalité macédonienne et, une fois sur place, les repères occidentaux des soldats volèrent en éclat.[38] La pluralité de la dimension ethnique et l'absence de dimension nationale de la population macédonienne provoquèrent certainement une véritable commotion dans l'esprit des soldats français.

Du rejet au mépris

La confrontation avec l'altérité fut trop brutale pour des soldats français qui vivaient déjà l'expérience éprouvante du déracinement ainsi que l'immersion au

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[34] Notamment un article intitulé « Les Deunmés ou Sabetaïstes » dans la *Revue franco-macédonienne* 1 (1916), 48–59. Bien sûr vivaient aussi à Salonique des musulmans qui n'étaient pas d'origine juive.

[35] Marcelle Tinayre, « Un été à Salonique : avril-septembre 1916 », *La Revue des deux mondes*, 15 janvier 1917, 334.

[36] « Impressions d'Orientaliste : L'âme musulmane en Macédoine », *Revue franco-macédonienne* 2 (1916), 49–60.

[37] Cette attitude doit être rattaché à la turcophilie qui s'était développée au sein de l'armée française dans le courant du XIX[e] siècle.

[38] Cette vision raciale fut développée et entretenue par les savants occidentaux. Elle autorisait un manichéisme primaire et la segmentation des pays belligérants entre « barbares » et « civilisés ». Voir Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau et Annette Becker, *14–18, retrouver la Guerre* (Paris : Gallimard, 2000), 164–181.

sein d'une situation politique et militaire confuse et préoccupante. La majorité de ces hommes ne tentèrent pas de comprendre l'histoire troublée et complexe de la région. Ils ignoraient que le principe des nationalités n'avait émergé que depuis peu dans les Balkans, et que la Macédoine venait juste de passer dans les mains d'un nouvel État, sans d'ailleurs que sa population n'ait été consultée. Un sentiment de mépris à l'égard de cette population jugée incapable de se définir selon les critères occidentaux naquit alors au sein de l'armée. À ce mépris s'ajouta un sentiment de supériorité, engendré par l'exacerbation du nationalisme liée au conflit, ainsi que par le sentiment, issu de l'impérialisme colonial, d'appartenir à une civilisation supérieure.[39] Cette certitude, sans doute en latence au moment du départ, fut dévoilée et renforcée après la rencontre avec la population locale. Cet état d'esprit était également subordonné à la déroute des rêves orientaux et l'amère déception qui en découla.

Sous ses formes les plus extrêmes, ce mépris se révèle plutôt dans les correspondances et journaux inédits ou publiés longtemps après la fin de la guerre et la mort de leur auteur, même si on en trouve aussi traces dans le livre du général Sarrail.[40] Ainsi Jean Leymonnerie évoqua dans son journal ses rapports avec la population salonicienne. Le 30 octobre 1916, il était de garde avec d'autres sentinelles sur la route qui menait au camp retranché de Zeitenlik afin de stopper les marchands qui voulaient vendre de l'alcool dans le camp militaire : « Il y a aussi les mercantis. Ceux-là, on les arrête ; on leur fait mettre leur bazar sous un marabout, on leur colle un balai dans les mains, et on leur fait faire la corvée de quartier. S'ils ne veulent pas on leur flanque des coups de pieds au derrière. C'est la manière forte mais c'est la seule qui soit effective, et de plus, on a une excuse, ce sont des Grecs. C'est ainsi que je me fournis en allumettes, en briquets et papier à lettres. »[41] Cette anecdote illustre parfaitement l'arrogance d'un certain nombre de soldats et leur irrespect à l'égard de la population locale. Dans les témoignages publiés pendant la guerre, le sentiment de supériorité trouva son illustration à travers une critique des modes de vie et de l'économie du pays. Le système agricole de la Macédoine paraissait au soldat français très insuffisant ; la terre, bien que riche, leur semblait mal cultivée, avec des moyens considérés comme inadaptés.[42] Marcelle Tinayre rapporta également une anecdote à ce sujet : un soldat français s'émerveillant devant la terre et blâmant la population locale, incapable, selon lui, de lui donner le meilleur rendement[43].

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[39] Sur ce sujet, voir l'étude toujours d'actualité de Raoul Girardet, *L'idée coloniale en France de 1871 à 1962* (Paris : La Table ronde, 1972.

[40] Général Sarrail, *Mon commandement en Orient* (Paris : Flammarion, 1920).

[41] Jean Leymonnerie, *Journal d'un poilu sur le front d'Orient* (Paris : Pygmalion, 2003), 192.

[42] Divry, correspondance inédite, Lettre du 15 novembre 1915.

[43] Tinayre, « Un été à Salonique : avril-septembre 1916 », 347.

L'attitude dédaigneuse du général Sarrail fut, quant à elle, liée à la politique. Dès son arrivée en Grèce, il se positionna dans une attitude de méfiance, puis d'hostilité à l'égard du gouvernement royal, attitude dont il ne se départit jamais. Il n'acceptait pas que la Grèce pût rester neutre et refusait de prendre en compte les réalités matérielles du pays. Épuisée après les deux guerres balkaniques, l'armée grecque était mal équipée et ne disposait pas de l'encadrement nécessaire pour instruire les soldats. De surcroît, le gouvernement n'avait pas les moyens financiers de renouveler les équipements de base. Malgré cela, l'état-major français à Salonique faisait preuve d'un parti pris systématique contre la Grèce et développait une vision très anxiogène de la situation de l'armée d'Orient dans le pays. En dépit des appels à la modération de plusieurs bons connaisseurs de la situation locale, les opinions radicales du commandant en chef de l'armée d'Orient finirent toujours par s'imposer. L'attitude de défiance et d'hostilité à l'égard des populations locales fut en partie tributaire de la situation politique : la neutralité grecque apparut pour beaucoup comme une traîtrise et suscita tout d'abord incompréhension et déception, puis indignation.

Les tensions politiques eurent des répercussions importantes sur l'attitude des hommes de troupe. Du fait de la neutralité grecque, la population ne pouvait être considérée ni comme amie ni comme ennemie, les soldats s'en méfièrent et développèrent un sentiment d'insécurité assez prégnant. « On ne cantonne pas dans les villages car l'on se méfie de la population qui nous est plutôt hostile car elle n'est composée que de Turcs », écrivit Edouard Divry à l'un de ses correspondants.[44] Albert Masson, quant à lui, se souvient qu'au nord du pays les hommes se méfiaient des *comitadjis* bulgares, « et surtout des Grecs, surtout des Grecs ».[45] Par ailleurs, la déficience du ravitaillement des troupes dispersées sur le front macédonien rendait la question des vivres à la fois fondamentale et lancinante pour les soldats.[46] Elle les incita à considérer le territoire macédonien comme un territoire ennemi pour pouvoir se servir sur place, volant les denrées qui leur faisaient défaut. Brochard relata, son journal, que ses soldats avaient volé un poulet pour le manger, ainsi que le chaume d'une ferme habitée pour faire de la paille de couchage. Pour tenter de justifier ce comportement, il concluait

[44] Divry, correspondance inédite, Lettre du 15 novembre 1915.

[45] Jean-Noël Grandhomme, *Ultimes sentinelles : Paroles des derniers survivants de la grande guerre* (Strasbourg : La Nuée bleue, 2006), 84. Les *comitadjis* sont des insurgés terroristes partisans du rattachement de la Macédoine à la Bulgarie. Pendant la guerre, ils s'en prirent aux troupes de l'armée d'Orient.

[46] Marcel Brochard et Edouard Divry, lors de leur séjour en premières lignes, se plaignaient continuellement de la faim dans leur correspondance : « La famine est ici beaucoup plus à craindre que les Bulgares », écrivit Divry le 18 novembre 1915. Une grande partie de ses lettres est d'ailleurs uniquement consacrée à ses plaintes sur la nourriture et à ses demandes de colis.

sa lettre ainsi : « nous les laissons faire tellement ils sont malheureux. »[47] De manière plus allusive, Divry raconta que ses camarades furent contraints, par manque de nourriture, « de tuer les chèvres qu'ils avaient capturées » et qu'ils gardaient pour leur lait.[48]

Il est possible de trouver, chez certains de nos voyageurs, quelques tentatives de dépasser la déception de l'arrivée et de s'intéresser au pays dans sa réalité multiple. Ainsi l'abbé Louis Cadoux, après avoir décrié l'Ossa, le Pélion et l'Olympe, sembla regretter son attitude très négative : « avec mon imagination de Savoyard, j'avais eu la maladresse de comparer mes montagnes altières et mes glaciers inaccessibles aux dimensions relativement médiocres du séjour de Jupiter. »[49] La *Revue franco-macédonienne* participa aussi de cet effort : il apparaît très clairement qu'un de ses principaux objectifs était d'expliquer aux soldats français certaines coutumes et traditions locales, ainsi que de leur apprendre à découvrir et respecter le fonctionnement de cette société dont ils ignoraient tout et qu'ils n'avaient pas la curiosité de découvrir. Dès le premier numéro de la revue on peut lire : « concluons qu'il faut voir un orientalisme beaucoup plus moderne dans toute chose et chez tous les gens qui nous entourent, sans chercher par trop à renouer la chaîne du passé. »[50] Marcelle Tinayre, elle aussi, tenta de rectifier aux yeux de son lectorat l'image négative véhiculée sur Salonique et la population macédonienne. Elle cherchait systématiquement l'explication d'un comportement ou d'une situation donnée. Rapportant la remarque d'un soldat qui reprochait aux habitants de ne pas savoir cultiver leurs terres, elle rajouta ce commentaire : « opinion simpliste qui ne tient pas compte du climat […], de l'insécurité qui, depuis des siècles, paralyse l'effort du cultivateur, en ces malheureuses contrées balkaniques. »[51] Marcelle Tinayre poursuivit sa démarche analytique en proposant à ses lecteurs d'accepter la Grèce contemporaine dans sa réalité et dans sa complexité, sans se laisser « éblouir par les plus beaux fantômes ».[52] Cette attitude d'ouverture à la Grèce contemporaine reste cependant exceptionnelle et ne se trouve que très rarement dans les souvenirs publiés par les soldats.

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[47] Brochard, souvenirs inédits, janvier-février 1917.

[48] Divry, correspondance inédite, Lettre du 12 avril 1916.

[49] Cadoux, *Et la foudre tomba*, 198.

[50] « Impressions d'Orientaliste », 36–37.

[51] Tinayre, « Un été à Salonique : avril-septembre 1916 », 347.

[52] Ibid. 340.

Conclusion

Pour la plupart des soldats de l'armée d'Orient, l'attirance vers la Grèce antique et l'Orient mystérieux fut remplacée par un sentiment de déception, voire de rejet, doublé d'une rancœur à l'égard des orientalistes qui, à l'instar de Pierre Loti, furent rendus responsables de ce désenchantement. Cette expérience de l'altérité fut pour eux bien décevante. De plus, la vision des soldats français sur la Grèce fut largement tributaire de la situation politique internationale. La plupart des hommes restèrent prisonniers d'impressions subjectives et de réactions émotionnelles, sans entamer aucune démarche étiologique pour comprendre ce pays tellement différent de la France. Les soldats ont découvert une guerre menée selon une configuration culturelle très différente du front occidental. En Grèce, leurs repères étaient brouillés : comment savoir qui est grec, qui est juif, qui est turc, qui est neutre, qui est ennemi ou allié ? C'est cette polyculturalité qui a fourni aux soldats français leur véritable expérience de l'interculturalité. Cette expérience ne fut pas menée selon un mode binaire, mettant en rapport un peuple avec un autre, mais dans une relation déséquilibrée confrontant la culture homogène française à une pluralité de cultures. Immergés dans cette région déjà fortement interculturelle, le soldat français y perdit non seulement ses repères, mais aussi son identité : il n'était plus qu'un élément parmi beaucoup d'autres.

Paradoxalement, alors que le soldat français se trouvait face à une Macédoine indéfinissable car polysémique, il contribua malgré lui à transmettre et faire perdurer la mythologie de la Grèce orientale à la Loti, vision qu'il considérait pourtant comme erronée. En effet, comme l'a montré Francine Saint-Ramond-Roussane,[53] les cartes postales envoyées par les hommes à leur famille véhiculaient certains clichés de type exotique : femmes en costume d'apparat, monuments locaux (églises, restes archéologiques), représentations de certains quartiers de Salonique. Alors que les cartes postales envoyées par les soldats du front occidental représentaient des villes françaises ruinées, les cartes envoyées depuis la Grèce ne reflétaient pas la guerre, mais présentaient un Orient pittoresque, identique à celui des orientalistes français. De ce fait, elles associaient les soldats à des voyageurs et ne rendaient pas compte des conditions réelles d'existence de l'armée en Grèce. C'est ainsi que les familles des soldats ont eu une perception très faussée du front d'Orient et ces soldats furent dévalorisés après la guerre, leur front considéré comme secondaire, et leur guerre mésestimée au point d'être parfois considérée presque comme une expédition touristique. L'ambition des témoignages publiés dans l'immédiat après-guerre fut de restaurer l'image des poilus du front d'Orient en démontrant que le rêve oriental n'était qu'un phantasme d'occidental et que la réalité avait été, pour eux, beaucoup plus décevante.

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[53] Francine Saint-Ramond Roussane, « La campagne d'Orient 1915–18, Dardanelles, Macédoine, d'après les témoignages de combattants, des premiers vers les Dardanelles à l'armistice bulgare » (Thèse Lettres, Paris I, 1997), 613–615.

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Franchet d'Espèrey et la politique balkanique de la France 1918–1919

Résumé : L'arrivée du général Franchet d'Espèrey à Salonique, en tant que commandant des troupes alliées sur le front d'Orient, en juin 1918 a créé les conditions pour que les armées alliées, menées par les divisions serbes et françaises, réussissent à percer la ligne du front le 15 septembre et obligent la Bulgarie à signer l'armistice le 29 septembre. La victoire alliée à Salonique fut à l'origine de la décision de l'État-Major allemand d'exiger la fin des hostilités vu que l'écroulement du front dans les Balkans avait rendu vains tous les efforts pour gagner la guerre. Or, le gouvernement de Georges Clemenceau se refusa d'exploiter les fruits de la victoire au-delà de ses retombés sur les affaires balkaniques. L'armistice avec l'Empire Ottoman et la libération de la Serbie furent ses objectifs principaux. La rentrée de la Roumanie dans la guerre fut, en revanche, l'objectif d'une portée plus grande, car à travers elle fut prévue de rétablir les contacts avec les forces anti-bolchéviques en Russie.

Mots-clés : Franchet d'Espèrey, les Balkans, la Serbie, front d'Orient

Lors de la réunion du cabinet allemand, le 3 octobre 1918, Paul von Hindenburg, chef de l'État-major allemand, exige qu'il soit mis fin aux hostilités : « L'État-major maintient sa requête du lundi, le 29 septembre de l'année en cours d'envoyer à l'ennemi une demande de conclusion de la paix. Comme conséquence de l'échec du front en Macédoine qui a eu pour conséquence l'affaiblissement de nos forces dans l'Ouest et compte tenu de l'incapacité de compenser les pertes graves encourues ces derniers jours, notre seule conclusion est qu'il n'existe plus la possibilité d'obliger l'ennemi, par la puissance d'armes, à conclure la paix. »[1]

Hindenburg, chef de l'État-major allemand et l'homme fort de l'Allemagne au cours des deux dernières années de la guerre, a qualifié, sans ambiguïté, la victoire des Alliés au front de Salonique comme décisive pour l'issue de la Grande guerre. En contraignant la Bulgarie à demander l'armistice et à se retirer de la guerre, les forces alliées ont remporté une victoire définitive dans les Balkans et elles ont ouvert une brèche sur le front des Puissances centrales,

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[1] Erich Ludendorff, *My War Memoirs 1914–1918* (London: Hutchinson & Co, 1919), 729.

désormais impossible à combler.[2] Dans les Balkans il n'y avait plus de divisions austro-hongroises et allemandes pour la combler, et celles envoyées du front occidental et de l'Ukraine n'ont fait que ralentir l'avancement des Alliés. Les voies vers Constantinople et Vienne étaient ouvertes, ce qui contraindrait d'abord la Turquie et ensuite l'Autriche-Hongrie à demander l'armistice. Mathias Erzberger, le ministre des Finances du Reich, fut appéllé à réaliser les prévisions de Hindenburg et de signer, avec le maréchal Ferdinand Foch, le 11 novembre 1918, l'armistice qui mit fin à la Grande guerre.

La voie qui menait à l'armistice de Rethondes commence le 29 juin 1918 sur la ligne du front de la IIe armée serbe de Voïvode Stepa Stepanović, dans les hauteurs de Flok (à 2 300 mètres d'altitude). Le nouveau commandant en chef des forces alliées sur le Front d'Orient, le général français Franchet d'Espèrey, ce jour-là a fait le tour des positions de l'armée serbe. La stratégie victorieuse fut élaborée suite à cette reconnaissance du front et aux consultations de Franchet d'Espèrey avec l'État-major serbe. Le commandant en chef allié dans les Balkans la décrivait ainsi dans ses notes journalières :

« Au lieu d'une opération locale ce sera une attaque décisive à laquelle participera toute l'armée serbe renforcée de deux divisions françaises qui briseront la croûte. Quand j'annonce aux Serbes que je relèverai leurs escadrons à pied, leur détachement de Prilep : les divisions Morava et Timok, et qu'indépendamment de toute l'artillerie lourde française disponible, je leur donnerai deux divisions françaises, ils sont emballés. Mišić me demande si les deux divisions françaises seront sous leurs ordres. Sur ma réponse affirmative, le Prince se lève et, sans mot dire, vient me serrer la main. L'accord est complet. »[3]

L'accord conclu rapidement entre le chef de l'État-major serbe, le général Živojin Mišić et le Prince - régent de Serbie, Alexandre, d'une part et le général français de l'autre, fut rendu possible grâce à l'intérêt que d'Espèray démontra pour les Balkans dès le début de la guerre. Lors de la visite au front en France de Raymond Poincaré, président de la République française, en octobre 1914, Franchet d'Espèrey lui présente le plan d'une offensive décisive dans les Balkans, avec le point de départ à Salonique.[4] Quatre ans plus tard, en qualité de général commandant en chef du front d'Orient, Franchet d'Espèrey pouvait mettre en œuvre son plan. Il décida d'attribuer le rôle principal dans la future offensive aux armées serbes, en dépit du terrain difficile et montagneux sur leur ligne de front, convaincu de l'importance capitale de leur désir de libérer définitivement leur patrie. L'État-major serbe était favorable à une grande offensive décisive capable de mener à la libération de la Serbie après trois années d'exil.

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[2] Ibid. 712–721.

[3] Mémoires du Maréchal Franchet d'Espèrey, Département historique de l'armée française à Vincennes, microfilm, (Kmi 44), 30.

[4] Ibid. 1–3.

Franchet d'Espèrey avait l'esprit vif, le sens de l'action et les convictions fermes, ce que lui permit d'imaginer une action courageuse de grande envergure dans les Balkans. La guerre des tranchées n'était pas conforme au tempérament et l'expérience personnelle du Franchet d'Espèrey. Depuis les débuts de sa carrière, chaque fois lorsque l'occasion s'y prêtait, il choisissait de servir dans les territoires d'outre-mer et colonies françaises. L'homme de grande culture et de curiosité intellectuelle encore plus importante, il chercha toujours les nouvelles expériences plutôt que de bâtir sa carrière dans les garnisons en France où dans les couloirs de l'État-major de l'armée et des ministères à Paris.

En suivant les traces de son père, militaire de carrière, Franchet d'Espèrey s'inscrit à l'académie militaire française à Saint-Cyr, qu'il termine comme 6e de classe, choisissant, en 1876, conformément à la tradition familiale, de servir en qualité de sous-lieutenant au 1er régiment d'infanterie coloniale (tirailleurs africains), stationné à Alger. En 1881, Franchet d'Espèrey est admis à l'École de guerre à Paris. Cependant, son 1er régiment d'infanterie coloniale étant désigné à participer dans la campagne en Tunisie, d'Espèrey demande d'être admis à l'École de guerre l'année suivante, en 1882, pour pouvoir participer avec son régiment dans les combats en Tunisie, qui donnent lieu à l'établissement du protectorat français. Après la première année à l'École de guerre, d'Espèrey tente de revenir dans son régiment pour participer à l'expédition en Asie du Sud-Est. Cette tentative échoua et il revint à l'École de guerre où il fréquente les cours ensemble avec Maurice Sarail, son futur prédécesseur à la position du général allié commandant en chef au front de Salonique.[5] Il arrive pourtant en Asie du Sud-Est, en 1885, au terme des études à l'École de guerre, faisant partie des renforts envoyés à son 1er régiment d'infanterie coloniale qui lutte au Tonkin contre des troupes chinoises. À la fin du séjour de deux ans en Asie du Sud-Est, d'Espèrey demande à revenir à la métropole, obtenant antérieurement une permission pour voyager en Chine.[6]

À son retour en France, d'Espèrey est affecté au 4e bureau de l'État-major, chargé des transports, mais après deux ans de séjour à Paris, il demanda à revenir dans son régiment d'infanterie coloniale, avec le grade de capitaine. Fort des bonnes évaluations par ses supérieurs, d'Espèrey continue ensuite sa carrière d'abord au cabinet du ministre de la Guerre de Fressinet et ensuite dans les garnisons dans l'est de France, où il se trouve, en 1899, à l'État-major du 69e régiment d'infanterie à Nancy, avec le grade de lieutenant-colonel.[7] Vif d'esprit, d'Espèrey demanda, cette année, là, permission de visiter l'académie militaire italienne à Modène et l'école de cadets à Trieste, ce qui lui servit de prétexte

[5] Paul Azan, *Franchet d'Espèrey* (Paris : Flammarion, 1949), 12–17.

[6] Dossier personnel de Franchet d'Espèrey, Département historique de l'armée française à Vincennes, GR 9 YD 534.

[7] Ibid.

pour visiter la côte dalmate, la Bosnie-Herzégovine, le Monténégro et l'Albanie. Pendant son voyage, il s'intéresse aux questions militaires, mais aussi au système scolaire, l'humeur des habitants, l'histoire et la géographie des régions qu'il traversait et il visite Zagreb, Sarajevo, Dubrovnik, Kotor, Cetinje et Shkodër.[8] L'expérience acquise en voyage était l'un des avantages qui le qualifie pour la nomination à la fonction de l'adjoint au commandant de l'académie militaire à Saint-Cyr. Après seulement trois mois passes à l'académie, pendant lesquels il part encore en voyage, cette fois en Allemagne, en août 1900 il fut nommé au corps d'expédition en Chine, pendant que le soulèvement des boxeurs battait son plein.[9] Après un an de séjour en Chine, d'Espèrey ajoute à la liste de ses voyages les États-Unis aussi, parce qu'il choisit cette voie pour revenir en France.[10]

Pendant la première décennie du XXe siècle, d'Espèrey se trouve dans les garnisons à l'Est et au Nord de France. À cette époque, en 1906, il est en mission en Espagne et au Maroc pendant la conférence d'Algésiras. En 1910, il visite l'Autriche et la Grèce, où il rencontra, entre autres, le colonel Danglis, le futur commandant de l'armée grecque au front de Salonique. L'année suivante il se rend en Allemagne.[11] Avec seulement 55 ans, en mars 1912, Franchet d'Espèrey est nommé commandant de la 28e division alpine, stationnée à Chambéry, avec le grade de général.[12] Cependant, quelques mois plus tard, il est nommé au poste de commandant des troupes au Maroc occidental. Le protectorat français est établi en mars 1912 et d'Espèrey reçoit l'ordre de supprimer l'insurrection des tribus marocaines, qui refusent de l'accepter. Sa mission au Maroc durait 18 mois et elle eut une importance particulière pour d'Espèrey. Il mena les campagnes audacieuses et déterminées luttant contre le manque d'effectifs et des moyens. Outre la responsabilité militaire, il assume aussi celle politique, en un mot, il acquiert des expériences précieuses qui lui seront très utiles pendant son séjour dans les Balkans.[13] Après avoir réussi à calmer l'insurrection des tribus marocaines, de retour en France, en octobre 1913, d'Espèrey devient le commandant du 1er corps d'armée, et, en septembre 1914, pendant que la Grande guerre battait son plein, il devient le commandant de la Ve armée.[14]

D'Espèrey participe en qualité de commandant du 1er corps dans les batailles des frontières en août 1914 et en qualité de commandant de la Ve armée dans la bataille de Marne, où il lui revient le mérite pour le tournant grâce au

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8 Azan, *Franchet d'Esperey*, 35–38.

9 Dossier personnel de Franchet d'Espèrey.

10 Azan, *Franchet d'Esperey*, 35–38.

11 Ibid.

12 Dossier personnel de Franchet d'Espèrey.

13 Azan, *Franchet d'Esperey*, 51–76.

14 Dossier personnel de Franchet d'Espèrey.

lequel l'offensive allemande est repoussée. Il est nommé commandant du groupe d'armées de l'Est, en 1916. En octobre 1917 il gagne la bataille de Malmaison. Vers la fin de 1917, d'Espèrey apprend que du Président du Conseil, Georges Clemenceau veut l'envoyer dans les Balkans en qualité de commandant en chef du front de Salonique. N'étant pas prêt à reprendre le commandement à l'insu de son ami de classe de l'École de guerre, le général Sarail, d'Espèrey soutint que le remplacement d'un général d'orientation gauchiste, telle que Sarail, par un royaliste et catholique de souche comme lui, aurait des sérieuses conséquences politiques, car les radicaux et les radicaux-socialistes de l'Assemblée le considéreront comme une nomination politique. Après cette déclaration de d'Espèrey, Clemenceau envoie à Salonique le général Adolphe Guillaumat.[15]

Le groupe d'armées nord, sous le commandement de Franchet d'Espèrey, subit le revers important lors de la bataille du Chemin des Dames (27 mai – 3 juin 1918), permettant aux Allemands, tout comme en 1914, d'arriver à la Marne. La défaite soulève la question de la responsabilité personnelle de Franchet d'Espèrey. Lorsque le 6 juin déjà il est relevé de son commandement et nommé le commandant en chef du front de Salonique, Franchet d'Espèrey cette fois accepte la nomination. Il s'empresse d'expliquer à Clemenceau, qu'il ne s'agisse pas de dégradation, comme cela pouvait sembler au premier égard, mais de la promotion, vu l'autonomie décisionnelle dont bénéficie le commandant en chef du front de Salonique.[16] D'Espèrey arrive à Salonique avec le désir d'apporter sa pleine contribution aux efforts de guerre des Alliés, sans que le commandement supérieur lui fasse entrave. Son expérience d'officier de l'armée d'Afrique et ses qualités personnelles lui donnent des raisons de croire que les Balkans sont l'endroit où il pourra réaliser sa conception stratégique.

Franchet d'Espèrey appartenait à l'armée d'Afrique, ce qui était le synonyme pour les officiers français qui avaient passé la plus grande partie de leur carrière dans les troupes coloniales. Pour ce groupe d'officiers était caractéristique l'autonomie dans la prise des décisions, l'expérience dans les situations diplomatiques complexes, la capacité d'agir dans un environnement international, le penchant pour la guerre en mouvement, c'est-à-dire, toutes les qualités nécessaires pour pouvoir commander les troupes autant diversifiées que celles qui étaient rassemblées au front de Salonique. Il faut souligner qu'outre les unités serbes, grecques, italiennes, russes, britanniques et françaises, au front de Salonique combattaient aussi, au sein de l'armée française et de l'armée britannique, des unités sénégalaises, indiennes et vietnamiennes. Les nombreux voyages de d'Espèrey témoignaient de l'étendue des domaines qui l'intéressaient, de la disposition de connaître les expériences d'autrui et, avant tout, de la capacité à les interpréter et évaluer sans idées préconçues, ce qui lui permit de confier à l'armée

[15] Franchet d'Espèrey, *Mémoires* (Novi Sad : Prometej, 2018).

[16] Ibid. 35.

serbe le rôle-clé dans la rupture du front de Salonique. Son prédécesseur à Salonique, Guillaumat, à la différence de d'Espèrey, était d'avis que seules les unités françaises et britanniques avaient la qualité nécessaire pour effectuer la frappe principale, tandis que les autres armées nationales ne pouvaient jouer que le rôle des troupes auxiliaires. À la différence de son prédécesseur, d'Espèrey accepta sa nouvelle position sans idées préconçues, mais aussi sans instructions précises, ne les ayant pas obtenus ni à l'État-major ni au gouvernement, car le gouvernement de Clemenceau et l'État-major français étaient concentrés sur les batailles en cours sur le front occidental.

D'Espèrey arrive à Salonique le 18 juin, sans rencontrer son prédécesseur, le général Guillaumat, qui quitte Salonique, quelques jours auparavant. Il ignore tout sur la nature des relations entre les armées des nationales sous son commandement. Il n'était pas non plus conscient de l'existence des conflits territoriaux existants, par exemple, entre les Italiens et les Serbes en Albanie. Privé de tout objectif politique, il pouvait se consacrer exclusivement à son devoir principal, c'est-à-dire, l'organisation d'une offensive à grande échelle.[17]

Dès son arrivée à Salonique il s'empressa à connaître personnellement l'étendue de la ligne du front ainsi que les États-majors des nations alliées présentes sur le front d'Orient. Lors de sa visite à l'État-major serbe, le 29 juin, il rencontre le Voïvode Živojin Mišić et le Prince-Régent Alexandre. Monarchiste convaincu, il s'est immédiatement entendu avec le Prince-Régent.[18] Il est impressionné par la détermination et la combativité des Serbes. À la différence de son prédécesseur, il établit des bonnes relations avec les Serbes. Le recent remplacement du chef de l'Etat-major serbe rend cette coopération plus facile.

Le voïvode Mišić remplace le général Bojović à la tête du Commandement suprême serbe en juin 1918. Après les grandes victoires de la seconde moitié de 1916 et la libération de Bitola, des désaccords survinrent entre le L'État-major serbe et le commandement des forces alliées à Salonique. Les généraux français, commandants en chef au front de Salonique, d'abord Maurice Sarail et ensuite Adolphe Guillaumat, étaient partisans de la stratégie visant à épuiser l'ennemi par une série d'attaques à portée et les objectifs limités. Le chef de l'État-major serbe, le général Petar Bojović, qualifiait une telle stratégie d'erronée et particulièrement dangereuse pour l'armée serbe. Les résultats réalisés ne pouvaient pas justifier les pertes importantes d'effectifs que les armées serbes ne pouvaient pas compenser. Ce type d'opération détériorait sérieusement le moral de son armée. Les soldats serbes arrivaient même à croire que les Alliés ne voulaient pas organiser une offensive générale, qui leur permettrait de revenir dans leur

[17] Azan, *Franchet d'Esperey*, 176–180.

[18] Sur le front de Salonique voir Petar Opačić, *Srbija i Solunski front* (Belgrade : Književne novine, 1984); Gérard Fassy, *Le Commandement français en Orient (octobre 1915 – novembre 1918)* (Paris : Economica, 2003).

patrie. En revanche, ils obtinrent l'impression qu'ils mourraient pour des objectifs limités sans conséquences visibles. Bojović constata une réduction alarmante des troupes. L'armée serbe fut la seule armée alliée sans possibilité d'obtenir des renforts, sans prendre en considération les volontaires yougoslaves. Le général Guillaumat exigea en 1918 que l'arme serbe elargisse l'étendue du front sous son contrôle afin de créer une réserve générale des troupes alliés. Bojović dans un prémier temps refusa, évocant le manque des effectifs, pour ensuite se plier aux ordres de Guillaumat à la demande explicite du gouvernement serbe.[19] Les rapports entre Bojović et Guillaumat devinrent tellement tendues que le ministre français auprès du gouvernement serbe, le vicomte de Fontenay demandait à plusieurs reprises le remplacement de Bojović.[20] En juin, finalement, il prit la place de Mišić à la tête de la première armée serbe.

Le voïvode Živojin Mišić, le nouveau chef de l'Etat-major serbe et l'auteur de la victoire dans la bataille de Kolubara en 1914, fut privé de toute ambition politique. D'où les bonnes relations entre lui et d'Espèrey. Leurs entretiens se limitaient exclusivement aux questions militaires. Le ton des entretiens fut donné par le général français, venu examiner les possibilités de l'attaque dans le secteur serbe. Il apporta la réponse favorable à la seule demande serbe – l'organisation d'une offensive générale. En plus, il donna à l'armée serbe le rôle le plus important, mais aussi ingrat de percer le front ennemi dans le secteur montagneux de Dobro Polje, dont les cimes dépassaient l'altitude de 2000 mètres. Finalement, il a assuré l'aide à l'armée serbe avec deux divisions françaises et l'artillerie lourde française presque dans sa totalité. Il confia à Mišić le commandement de ce groupe de divisions. Mišić et le prince-régent n'attendaient qu'une telle proposition pour mobiliser toutes les ressources de l'armée serbe, pour une dernière attaque qui les mènerait vers Belgrade.

Le plan d'offensive des Alliés prévoyait l'attaque dans le secteur tenu par les Serbes, dans le domaine de Dobro Polje. La chaîne de montagnes Moglena et Kozjak dominaient sur la vallée de Crna reka et la plaine où sont situées Kavadarci, Gradsko et Prilep. La victoire des Serbes devait ainsi permettre au groupe franco-serbe, prêt pour l'attaque, de descendre dans la vallée de Vardar au niveau de Gradsko et de couper le front ennemi en deux. Le but était de séparer la XI^{e} armée allemande (il s'agissait, en fait, de l'armée bulgare, sous le commandement des officiers allemands), concentrée autour de Bitolj de la I^{e} armée bulgare, qui se trouvait dans la vallée de Vardar. La simplicité du plan et la confiance en soi de l'armée serbe convainquirent d'Espèrey de la bonne perspective de sa réussite. Non seulement d'Espèrey se décida pour l'attaque dans un secteur presque inaccessible, mais il prévoyait aussi une offensive générale visant à éliminer la Bulga-

[19] Opačić, *Srbija i Solunski front*, 96, 97.

[20] La lettre de Fontenay à Pichon, Salonique, le 4 juin 1918, Les Archives du Ministère français des Affaires étrangères (par la suite, AMAE), Série Z, Yougoslavie, vol. 44, p. 4.

rie de la guerre et à permettre aux armées alliées à parvenir jusqu'aux frontières de l'Autriche-Hongrie. Ce projet ambitieux demandait un grand nombre de troupes, d'un côté et le soutien diplomatique de l'autre. Tous les deux éléments manquaient au nouveau commandant des alliés.[21]

À son arrivée à Salonique, le général d'Espèrey dut faire face aux demandes de réduction des troupes alliées. Après le début de l'offensive allemande d'avril, l'État-major britannique demandait le retour de 12 bataillons d'infanterie du front de Salonique. Suite à la retraite des divisions britanniques en août 1917, il fut convenu à la conférence à Londres qu'une telle décision ne pouvait pas être prise sans un accord avec la France. Ainsi, le Conseil supérieur de guerre allié, réuni le 1er mai à Abbeville, décida d'envoyer une commission, composée des généraux Gramat et Woolcombe, pour examiner, avec le général Guillaumat, les possibilités de réduction des troupes alliées à l'Orient. À la réunion du 31 mai, les trois généraux décidèrent d'accepter le retrait des 12 bataillons britanniques. Leur retour à la patrie commença en juin et se termina le 8 juillet.[22]

À la conférence à Londres, le 28 mai, l'armée française se vit accorder le droit de retirer une ou deux divisions du front de Salonique. Clemenceau soutenait une telle solution et il ordonna le 22 juin à d'Espèrey d'augmenter le nombre de soldats qui reviennent au pays à 5 000 par semaine, ajoutant que même si certains d'entre eux souhaitaient rester dans les Balkans, cela ne devrait pas leur être permis.[23] Il s'agissait des soldats qui servaient plus de 18 mois dans les Balkans. D'après la loi Mourier du 18 août 1917, en raison du climat difficile, tous les soldats ayant passé 18 mois dans les Balkans avaient le droit de retourner en France.

À son retour en France, Guillaumat s'opposa à l'affaiblissement de l'armée qu'il venait de quitter. Rappelant la possibilité d'offensive en octobre, il demanda, le 29 juin, de limiter le nombre de soldats revenant dans le pays à 2 500 par semaine, de sorte que la France a 200 000 personnes à l'Orient à partir du 1er août.[24] Finalement, il réussit à limiter le nombre de soldats retournés dans le pays à 5 000 par mois. De cette manière, entre le 1er juin et le 1er octobre, l'armée française à l'Orient diminua de 232 000 à 209 000 personnes.[25] C'est ainsi qu'intervint la modification du nombre respectif des soldats Alliés sur le front oriental. Les armées française et britannique réduisirent le nombre d'hommes sous armes de 35 mille, tandis que l'armée grecque augmenta le nombre de sol-

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[21] Azan, *Franchet d'Esperey,* 188–190.

[22] Voir *Les Armees francaises dans la Grande guerre* (par la suite AFGG), t. VIII, vol. 3, 17–24.

[23] Lettre de Clémenceau à d'Espèrey, Paris, le 22 juin 1918, *AFGG*, t. VIII, vol. 3, Annexes vol. I, 521–522.

[24] Le rapport de general Guillaumat, Paris, le 29 juin 1918, *AFGG*, t. VIII, vol. 3, Annexes vol. 1, 592, 593.

[25] Voir *AFGG*, t. VIII, vol. 3, annexes vol. 1, tableau 8, 921.

dats de 50 000. Ainsi, en dépit des changements de rapport de forces entre les armées alliées, d'Espèrey disposait des forces nécessaires pour l'organisation de l'offensive désormais souhaitée par l'État-major français aussi.

Les offensives allemandes se succédant en mai et juin 1918 au front d'Ouest incitèrent l'État-major français à essayer de réduire la pression par l'organisation d'une offensive dans les Balkans. Le général Guillaumat et le maréchal Foch embrassèrent cette idée sans réserve. Par le télégramme du 23 juin, Clemenceau ordonna à d'Espèrey d'entamer les préparatifs pour l'offensive, sur la base du projet laissé par Guillaumat et les instructions arrivant de Paris, fondées sur une série d'attaques se transformant, avec le temps, en une offensive générale. Des instructions détaillées dans ce sens arrivèrent à Salonique le 2 juillet. Cependant, le 13 juillet, d'Espèrey envoya à Paris son projet d'offensive dans le secteur serbe du front. Il se prononça comme partisan d'une offensive décisive qui contraindrait la Bulgarie à se retirer de la guerre.[26] Outre le Haut commandement des Alliés, il avait besoin de l'accord des gouvernements Alliés. Les Britanniques accueillent avec l'indignation le projet français de l'offensive dans les Balkans.

Les Alliés ne sont pas revenus à la question du front de Salonique depuis la conférence à Abbeville. Alors était confirmée la conclusion des représentants militaires permanents au Conseil supérieur de guerre, du 23 décembre 1917, prévoyant une stratégie défensive au front de Salonique. L'utilisant comme prétexte, le représentant militaire, général Sackville-West, demanda, le 13 juin, d'examiner en détail la possibilité de la retraite totale des Balkans. L'État-major suprême britannique ne cachait pas son intention de réduire sa présence sur le front de Salonique, voire à l'abandonner complétement. Guillaumat critique fermement la demande britannique, qui fut finalement rejetée par Clemenceau. Les optiques différentes des alliés concernant le front de Salonique s'exacerbèrent lorsque Sackville-West apprit l'existence du plan français de l'offensive dans les Balkans,[27] ce qui provoqua un débat vif entre Lloyd George et Clemenceau pendant la session du Conseil supérieur de guerre allié qui eut lieu du 2 au 4 juillet à Paris.

Le Premier ministre britannique remarqua que la décision d'entreprendre l'offensive fut prise sans consultation avec son État-major. Il se plaignit également de ne pas avoir été consulté lors de la nomination de général d'Espèrey, pour accuser ensuite le gouvernement français de mener une politique autonome dans les Balkans. Lloyd George et Arthur Balfour, secrétaire d'État britannique s'opposèrent, en principe, à l'offensive générale dans les Balkans. Cette question

[26] Voir *AFGG*, t. VIII, vol. 3, 74–77.

[27] Ibid. 152–154.

fut finalement reportée tant que ses aspects militaires et diplomatiques n'avaient pas examiné en détail.[28]

Pendant la réunion à Versailles le 11 juillet, quand il était débattu des aspects diplomatiques de l'offensive dans les Balkans, lord Robert Cecil, adjoint au secrétaire d'État britannique chargé des affaires étrangères, a dévoilé la cause de l'opposition britannique. Il s'est exprimé en faveur des négociations, dont l'objectif serait de conclure une paix séparée avec la Bulgarie.[29] Balfour fut partisan d'une paix séparée avec la Bulgarie. Il essaya de convaincre les États-Unis de déclarer la guerre aux Bulgares, afin de les contraindre à conclure la paix séparée avec les Alliés. Il n'hésitait même pas à leur offrir des concessions territoriales, au détriment de la Serbie et de la Grèce.[30] Il était nécessaire que le ministre français des Affaires étrangères, Stéphane Pichon confirme que le gouvernement français s'était déjà engagé envers ces deux gouvernements Alliés afin que Cecil accepte de laisser la décision sur l'offensive aux soldats. Leur devoir était de calculer la probabilité suivant laquelle l'offensive générale contraindrait la Bulgarie à sortir de la guerre. Ainsi, le général Guillaumat, déjà présent à Versailles, dut défendre le projet de son successeur par une série de mémorandums et en personne devant les représentants des armées alliées. Finalement, le 3 août, les représentants militaires alliés au Conseil supérieur de guerre décidèrent d'approuver le plan de d'Espèrey, lui laissant le soin de déterminer le moment propice pour son lancement.[31]

Avec le temps, et laissant sa vanité de côté, le général Guillaumat accepta et défendit le plan d'offensive de d'Espèrey sur la partie serbe du front. Il a réussi d'abord à obtenir l'approbation de l'État-major français, sous condition que l'offensive soit accompagnée par l'attaque des troupes françaises et britanniques sur la ligne Vardar-Dojran. À Paris, on croyait toujours en la supériorité des troupes françaises et britanniques.[32] Il était nécessaire ensuite d'obtenir l'approbation des gouvernements britannique et italien et le gouvernement français envoya, début septembre, Guillaumat à Londres et à Rome. Pendant la réunion du 4 septembre à 10, Downing Street, il réussit à convaincre les Britanniques de la justesse du plan de d'Espèrey. Son argument principal était qu'une victoire potentielle rendrait possible la retraite des Balkans. Ensuite, il exposa le

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[28] Procès-verbal des reunions du conseil superieur de la guerre, Versailles, les 2–4 juillet 1918, AMAE, Serie Y Internationale, vol. 13, 133–145.

[29] Procès-verbal de la reunion de la conference diplomatique, Versailles, le 11 juillet 1918, AMAE, Serie Y Internationale, vol. 13, 66–82.

[30] Victor H. Pothwell, *British War Aims and Peace Diplomacy 1914–1918* (Oxford : Clarendon Press, 1971), 215–221.

[31] Le rapport des représentants militaires près le Conseil supérieur de guerre, Versailles, le 3 août 1918, AMAE, Serie Y Internationale, vol. 13, 157–159.

[32] Fassy, *Le Commandement francais en Orient*, 499–501

plan de l'offensive au gouvernement de Vittorio Orlando. Enfin, le 10 septembre, Clemenceau informa d'Espèrey qu'il pouvait entamer les opérations lorsque ses armées seront prêtes.[33]

L'offensive longuement attendue sur le front de Salonique commença le 15 septembre, par l'attaque des forces unies, serbes et françaises, sur les positions bulgares dans le massif des montagnes de Dobro Polje. Seulement douze jours plus tard, les émissaires bulgares apparurent devant les lignes anglaises dans l'ouest du front des Alliés, demandant la mise à fin des hostilités. Le succès fulgurant des armées alliées sous commandement du général Franchet d'Espèrey a ouvert la porte des Balkans aux Alliés. Pour cette raison, le général d'Espèrey à Salonique et le Premier ministre Georges Clemenceau avec l'État-major général durent alors décider de la direction des opérations suivantes dans les Balkans. La voie vers Niš et Belgrade était ouverte, ce qui leur permettait de menacer la double Monarchie du côté sud. Dans le même temps, l'avancement des alliés vers Constantinople et les détroits leur permettait de compter sur la neutralisation de la Turquie.

Après de courtes hésitations, Clemenceau choisit la troisième solution. Il ne croyait pas que la guerre pouvait être remportée dans les Balkans. Pour lui, le succès initial des Alliés représentait la possibilité pour le retrait des troupes françaises des Balkans, en laissant le front de Salonique aux alliés des Balkans, les Grecs et les Serbes. Déjà lorsque l'armée serbe traversa Vardar, se rapprochant de Štip (le 24 septembre 1918), Clemenceau craignait que l'offensive sur Sofia n'empêche les troupes françaises de revenir chez eux.[34] Afin d'arrêter la progression de l'armée de Franchet d'Espèrey, il pensait envoyer en un moment envoyer de nouveau le général Guillaumat à Salonique, en qualité de commandant en chef, avec l'ordre d'examiner les modalités suivant lesquelles les opérations pourraient être arrêtées afin de pouvoir faire retourner les divisions françaises et anglaises sur le front Occidental.[35] L'arrivée des parlementaires bulgares élimina la crainte sur la faisabilité de l'offensive contre le territoire bulgare et le général d'Espèrey obtint l'ordre de poursuivre son avancement vers Sofia, dans le cas où la Bulgarie n'accepterait pas les conditions françaises de l'armistice.

Après la signature de l'armistice avec la Bulgarie, le 29 septembre à Salonique, la stratégie balkanique de Clemenceau obtint des contours plus précis. Le 30 septembre, le général d'Espèrey reçut l'ordre du Ministère de la Guerre d'interrompre tout approvisionnement de l'ennemi à travers le Danube et d'apparaître, sans délai, avec son armée sur la Mer noire, plus précisément, près de

[33] Ibid. 538–540.

[34] Raymond Poincaré, *Au Service de la France. Victoire et armistice 1918*, vol. X (Paris : Plon, 1933), 357.

[35] Ibid. 359.

Constanța.[36] Dans le même temps, Clemenceau l'informa qu'il enverra le général Berthelot à Yashi pour réorganiser l'armée roumaine.[37] Donc, le but fondamental de la stratégie de Clemenceau était de faire revenir la Roumanie dans la guerre.

Avant de communiquer à d'Espèrey, sa stratégie pour les Balkans, Clemenceau lui demanda de l'informer sur la suite des plans des armées alliées, après la conclusion de l'armistice avec la Bulgarie.[38] Les intentions de général d'Espèrey étaient décidées immédiatement après la signature de l'armistice. Il prévoyait une grande offensive, qui visait d'abord à libérer la Serbie et ensuite d'attaquer l'Autriche-Hongrie du côté sud. C'est ainsi qu'il ordonna, le 30 septembre à la Première armée serbe de se diriger rapidement vers Niš.[39] La Deuxième armée serbe fut transférée dans la région de Kumanovo et de Vranje, avec l'ordre d'avancer vers le nord-ouest.[40] Les instructions obtenues de Paris, lui ordonnant de diriger les armées sous son commandement vers le Danube et la Roumanie, n'avaient pas changé son plan. Continuant à concentrer ses troupes pour l'offensive contre l'Autriche-Hongrie, il répondit au Ministère que l'état actuel des chemins de fer bulgares ne permettait pas l'envoi des troupes sur le Danube.[41] Sa marge de manœuvre fut augmentée par des ordres parfois contradictoires venant de Paris. Par exemple, à une occasion, le Ministère de la Guerre le dirigeait vers la Turquie.[42]

En essayant d'harmoniser les instructions et les ordres qu'il obtenait de Paris avec son projet d'offensive contre l'Autriche-Hongrie, Franchet d'Espèrey conçut le 5 octobre le plan de l'offensive générale dans les Balkans sur quatre fronts – vers l'Autriche-Hongrie, la Turquie, la Roumanie et l'Albanie. La disposition des troupes témoignait de l'importance primordiale qu'il accordait à l'offensive contre l'Autriche-Hongrie. Les armées serbes (six divisions), l'armée d'Orient française (quatre divisions françaises, une Italienne et trois grecques) ainsi que l'armée britannique (trois divisions) étaient prévues pour le front du Nord, avec le but de libérer la Serbie et de menacer l'Autriche-Hongrie. Les forces prévues pour les autres fronts étaient considérablement inférieures. Seulement une division française fut envoyée au front roumain pour couper la com-

[36] La lettre de Clémenceau à d'Espèrey, Paris, le 30 septembre 1918, *AFGG*, t. VIII, vol. 3, annexes 2, no. 1244, p. 1000.

[37] La lettre de Clémenceau à d'Espèrey, Paris, le 30 septembre 1918, ibid. no. 1245, p. 1000.

[38] La lettre de Clémenceau à d'Espèrey, Paris, le 1er octobre 1919, ibid. no. 1246, p. 1001.

[39] Franchet d'Espèrey, L'ordre aux armées, Salonique, le 30 septembre 1918, ibid. no. 1254, p. 1010.

[40] Franchet d'Espèrey, L'ordre aux armées, Salonique, le 1er octobre 1918, *AFGG*, t. VIII, vol. 3, annexes 3, no. 1275, p. 7.

[41] Voir *AFGG*, t. VIII, vol. 3, p. 362.

[42] Ibid. 369.

munication entre les Puissances centrales et la Turquie. Les forces désignées pour le front turc consistaient en une division française et une division anglaise et leur but était de rendre possible l'entrée de la flotte alliée dans les détroits. Enfin, l'opération contre les forces austro-hongroises en Albanie, l'aile droite des forces alliées, fut confiée à une division française et les détachements serbes et grecs.[43]

Le projet d'offensive de d'Espèrey fut largement contesté à la réunion du Conseil supérieur de guerre, qui a eu lieu les 7 et 8 octobre 1918 à Paris. Les Alliés reprochèrent au général d'Espèrey que son plan tenait compte exclusivement des intérêts français. Lloyd George protesta contre la décision de d'Espèrey d'attribuer le commandement des troupes alliées sur tous les quatre fronts aux généraux français. Encore plus important, il s'opposa à la stratégie de d'Espèrey, car elle prévoyait, n'ayant pas obtenu au préalable l'accord du gouvernement britannique, de transférer les divisions britanniques du front turc, où elles étaient stationnées dès le début de la campagne des Balkans, au front serbe. Il la percevait comme l'intention des Français de rendre impossible à son armée de cueillir les fruits de sa lutte contre la Turquie, qu'elle menait depuis trois ans en Palestine et dans les Balkans. Lloyd George accusa même d'Espèrey que grâce à son plan d'opérations, le gouvernement français se servait tacitement des troupes des Alliés pour réaliser ses objectifs politiques dans les Balkans. Pour cette raison, il menaça de retirer les troupes britanniques qui étaient sous le commandement de d'Espèrey. De son côté, Orlando protestait contre l'intention de d'Espèrey d'envoyer les troupes françaises, à la place des Italiennes, en Albanie, compromettant ainsi les intérêts vitaux italiens dans les Balkans.[44]

Clemenceau fut appelé à défendre les intérêts français et le plan de d'Espèrey, mais comme il les voyait différemment, il lui était d'autant plus facile de renoncer au plan de l'offensive. Afin de préserver l'unité des Alliés, il accepta d'ordonner à d'Espèrey de laisser les forces alliées dans la partie de front où elles se trouvaient depuis le début de la guerre.[45] C'est ainsi que les Britanniques préservaient leur primauté sur la partie du front vers la Turquie et les Italiens en Albanie.[46] Les positions des gouvernements allies, exposées au Conseil supérieur de guerre permettaient de conclure, sans aucune ambigüité, que la seule voie ouverte pour les troupes françaises menait vers le Nord. Cette conclusion stratégique fit objet des interprétations différentes au sein du gouvernement français.

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[43] L'ordre aux armées, Salonique, le 5 octobre 1918; la lettre de Franchet d'Espèrey à Clémenceau, Salonique, le 6 octobre 1918, *AFGG*, t. VIII, vol. 3, annexes 1347, 1351.

[44] Procès verbal de la réunion du Conseil Supérieur de la Guerre, Paris, le 7 octobre 1918, AMAE, Serie Y, vol. 14, 85–90.

[45] Ibid.

[46] La lettre de Clémenceau à d'Espèrey, Paris, le 7 octobre 1918, *AFGG*, t. VIII, vol. 3, annexes 3, doc. 1381, 126.

Stéphane Pichon était convaincu qu'il a été créé une opportunité pour l'attaque sur l'Autriche-Hongrie et, à travers elle, sur l'Allemagne aussi. Selon lui, l'arrivée des armées alliées sur le Danube, créeraient les conditions pour le rétablissement du front roumain ou l'incitation des troubles intérieurs en Hongrie, et pour aider ainsi le front italien, en forçant l'Autriche-Hongrie à retirer les divisions du front pour établir l'ordre à l'intérieur du pays.[47]

D'après Clemenceau, la possibilité de rétablissement du front roumain constituait l'avantage principal de la victoire des Alliés. Le jour même de la réunion du Conseil supérieur de guerre, il établit enfin la stratégie des opérations alliées dans les Balkans et le projet de l'expédition en Roumanie. Clemenceau ordonna au général d'Espèrey de poursuivre d'abord avec la libération de la Serbie, d'établir ensuite le contact avec la Roumanie et la Russie du sud, mettant en place progressivement une ligne défensive depuis l'Albanie jusqu'au Danube et la Mer noire, en créant une barrière à l'expansion allemande. Il ordonna d'isoler la Turquie sur la terre et la mer et il envisagea la possibilité d'une opération militaire contre elle dans le cas où l'armistice ne serait pas rapidement signé. Clemenceau confia alors au général Berthelot le commandement de l'expédition en Roumanie, avec le devoir d'introduire la Roumanie dans la guerre et de réorganiser l'armée roumaine, et ensuite de prendre contact avec les forces anti-bolcheviks en Russie et d'examiner les possibilités d'une coopération.[48] À son arrivée à Salonique, le 13 octobre, Berthelot informa d'Espèrey de la nouvelle stratégie française dans les Balkans. D'Espèrey ne reçut pas jusqu'alors des nouveaux ordres, sauf de céder le front turc aux Britanniques, le front albanais aux Italiens et de continuer à préparer l'offensive en Serbie, cette fois seulement avec les troupes serbes, français et une division britannique.[49] Son activité en qualité de commandant allié dans les Balkans fut désormais sujette au contrôle strict, parce que son esprit vif et sa capacité de concevoir les projets d'offensive de manière autonome étaient contraires aux stratégies strictement nationalement orientées des gouvernements des Alliés. Dans le futur, il avait l'obligation d'informer régulièrement Paris de la mise en place des troupes alliées et de leur mouvement.[50] Ce n'est qu'après l'arrivée du général Berthelot à Salonique que le projet de l'offensive de l'armée alliée fut transformé conformément aux idées de Clemenceau. D'Espèrey informa Clemenceau qu'il avait renoncé à l'intention d'attaquer l'Autriche-Hongrie et soulever sa population. En respectant les instructions qu'il a obtenues, il précisa que les forces alliées en Serbie se limitaient

[47] La note de Stéphane Pichon, Paris, le 8 octobre 1918, AMAE, Serie Y, vol. 14, 4.

[48] La lettre de Clémenceau à d'Espèrey, Plan des operations militaires dans les Balkans, Paris, le 7 octobre 1918, *AFGG*, t. VIII, vol. 3, annexe 3, 1378, 120–124.

[49] Franchet d'Espèrey, L'ordre aux armées, Salonique, le 10 octobre 1918, ibid. no. 1429, 168–170.

[50] La lettre de Clémenceau à d'Espèrey, Paris, le 8 octobre 1918, ibid. no. 1393, 137

désormais à sa libération et à la constitution du front de défense sur la Save et le Danube. Dans le même temps, il mit à disposition au général Berthelot trois divisions pour les opérations en Roumanie.[51]

Clemenceau était convaincu que le front d'Orient ne mènera pas à une victoire générale dans la guerre et c'est pour cette raison, qu'il lui accordait l'importance secondaire. Selon lui, la défaite de la Bulgarie a ouvert les portes de Bucarest et de la Russie, tandis que la voie vers Berlin commençait en France et non pas à Salonique. La stratégie de Clemenceau et la conception étroite des intérêts nationaux des gouvernements alliés ont rendu impossible à d'Espèrey de mettre en œuvre son plan d'offensive globale dans les Balkans.

Le gouvernement de Clemenceau non seulement n'avait pas de politique définie pour les Balkans, mais ne considérait pas, en fait, que les Balkans revêtaient quelque importance que ce soit pour l'issue de la Grande guerre. Pour cette raison, non seulement qu'aucune importance ne fut accordée à la victoire sur le front Salonique, mais la presse de Paris et les rumeurs dans les couloirs des ministères attribuaient les mérites pour la victoire aux autres généraux, et, en un moment, d'Espèrey risquait même d'être remplacé. À son retour de Salonique, le général Guillaumat fut nommé gouverneur militaire de Paris, après la défaite dans la bataille de Chemin des dames, lorsqu'on pensait que Paris était menacée comme, en 1914. C'est pour cette raison que Clemenceau le fit venir des Balkans. Cependant, ce danger s'étant estompé rapidement, sa position perdit l'importance, parce qu'elle se situait dans l'arrière-plan du front.

La victoire dans les Balkans donna à Guillaumat une occasion pour revenir dans le focus de l'attention, et il s'y employa à le faire en tant que censeur suprême de la presse dans la capitale. En présentant cette victoire comme la conséquence du travail et du plan qu'il a laissés derrière lui à Salonique, Guillaumat préparait le terrain pour son retour dans les Balkans. Il profitait du désir du Premier ministre d'éviter que la rupture du front de Salonique ne soit le début d'une longue offensive qui bloquerait les troupes françaises dans les Balkans. Selon Clemenceau, il fallait les faire revenir, une fois le travail exécuté, sur le front d'Occident, où se jouait le sort de la guerre. Dans cette perspective, le devoir de Guillaumat consistait à limiter justement ces opérations et à rendre possible le retour des troupes, tout en cédant les Balkans aux armées balkaniques. L'armistice avec la Bulgarie rendit inutile la mission de Guillaumat, mais ne proclama pourtant pas d'Espèrey vainqueur dans les Balkans, sans même parler de l'issue de la Grande guerre.

La décision de Clemenceau réduisit les Balkans au champ de bataille d'ordre secondaire, sur lequel la France n'avait pas d'intérêts particuliers et, par la suite, de politique définie non plus. L'attention du gouvernement et de l'opinion

[51] La lettre de Franchet d'Espèrey à Clémenceau, Salonique, le 18 octobre 1918, ibid. no. 1541, 285–287.

publique britannique était concentrée sur Constantinople et les détroits, tandis que le gouvernement italien dirigeait son énergie vers l'Albanie. D'Espèrey, en tant que commandant des armées alliées, n'avait ni les instructions ni les moyens pour mener une politique particulière et les défis ne manquaient pas.

Il fut appelé à représenter l'autorité alliée dans les parties orientales de la défunte Double Monarchie après la conclusion de l'armistice de Villa Giusti le 4 novembre 1918. Les termes de l'armistice ont été définis lors du Conseil supérieur de guerre tenu à Versailles du 29 octobre à 4 novembre 1918. Or, l'application des termes de l'armistice vu la disparition de l'administration de l'Autriche-Hongrie posa des énormes problèmes. Par exemple, on attendait de lui qu'il applique en Hongrie les conditions de l'armistice conclu avec les représentants de l'Autriche-Hongrie. En conséquence, un armistice fut signé sous son égide avec le nouveau gouvernement hongrois de Michail Karolly, ce qui provoqua le mécontentement du Quai d'Orsay. Selon Stéphane Pichon le gouvernement de Karolly n'avait aucune légitimité pour signer un armistice particulier, et qu'il fallait simplement appliquer l'armistice de Villa Giusti. Or, d'Espèrey ne reçoit aucune instruction dans ce sens.[52]

D'Espèrey ne reçut pas d'instructions sur ce qu'il devait faire au sujet des ambitions territoriales des états voisins de l'Autriche-Hongrie qui grandissaient au fur et aux mesures que l'état austro-hongrois disparaît. Ainsi, il fut appelé à régler le conflit potentiel entre la Serbie et la Roumaine dans le Banat, sans rien savoir des dispositions territoriales du traité conclu par la Roumanie avec les alliés avant l'entrée en guerre de cette dernière en 1916. Il fut témoin de la politique italienne agressive sur la côte Est de l'Adriatique et du conflit survenu à ce propos avec le gouvernement serbe et les autorités locales, sans, pour autant, connaître, les dispositions du traité de Londres.

Son devoir se limitait à assurer l'approvisionnement des Balkans et l'ordre intérieur. Il fut chargé de prendre soin des communications et des prisonniers de guerre, de maintenir la discipline dans les unités qui avaient hâte de revenir à la métropole après plusieurs années passées dans les Balkans. Il fut obligé de jouer le rôle d'arbitre entre les intérêts particuliers des armées nationales qui relevaient de son commandement et qui revenaient, l'un après l'autre, sous le commandement direct de leurs gouvernements. Une fois sous commandement nationales les alliés d'hier devenaient les ennemis potentiels dans la lutte pour le partage de l'héritage des Habsbourg. La visite de d'Espèray à Paris en 1919 ne changea pas sa position. Ce fut une série de visites de protocole, tandis que Clemenceau, Poincaré et Foch n'avaient aucune instruction pour lui, parce que les Balkans ne les intéressaient pas vraiment, ou, au moins, pas dans la mesure de s'y engager d'une manière active.

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[52] Clemenceau à Franchet d'Espèrey, Paris, le 1er décembre 1918, AMAE, Série Z, Hongrie, vol. 109.

L'accord conclu sur les hauts de Flok permit aux armées serbe et française de mener les forces alliées dans la bataille pour la libération des Balkans, mais ne leur accorda pas le prestige des vainqueurs de la bataille décisive de la guerre. L'importance de la bataille de Dobro Polje ne réussit pas à dépasser le cadre du champ de bataille des Balkans, c'est-à-dire, un champ de bataille d'importance régionale. Le constat d'Hindenburg que la guerre fut perdue dans les Balkans resta imperceptible à l'époque et même après la publication de ses mémoires. Accorder aux Balkans le rôle décisif dans la victoire alliée signifia mettre en retrait l'énorme effort et les millions de victimes qui ont péri sur le front français, ce qui fut inconcevable. La Grande guerre n'éclata pas dans les Balkans et ne s'y termina pas non plus, mais l'étincelle qui déclencha les évènements prit feu dans les Balkans, de même que la victoire, qui rompit durablement l'équilibre des forces dans la Grande guerre, eût lieu dans les Balkans.

Dans la conscience des contemporains et des générations qui les succédèrent, le front de Salonique connut le sort des nations balkaniques qui y combattaient. Des petites nations qui le plus souvent apparaissent sur la scène internationale comme coupables de leurs faits, sans que les mérites ne leur soient jamais reconnus. Leur histoire eut le même destin que le front sur lequel leurs ancêtres combattaient, c'est-à-dire, elle resta régionale. La célébration du centenaire de la victoire au front de Salonique fut objet des célébrations seulement régionales. Les mérites de la victoire de Franchet d'Espèrey et de ses alliés serbes lors de la bataille de Dobro Polje restaient même aujourd'hui peu connus dans les Balkans victimes de la successive relecture de l'histoire de la Grande guerre dans l'optique des histoires nationales. La Grande guerre n'apporta pas la paix dans les Balkans, mais signifia le commencement d'une longue période de réorganisation territoriale et nationale.

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Eleftherios Venizelos, British Public Opinion and the Climax of Anglo-Hellenism (1915–1920)

Abstract: The paper analyses the construction of a more than favourable image of Eleftherios Venizelos in Britain in 1915–1920. Although Venizelos was highly praised and popular in Britain since at least 1913, his effort to bring Greece to the side of the Entente in 1915 made him exceptionally popular in Paris and particularly in London. Traditions of British philhellenism have been analysed, particularly the influence of two associations: the Hellenic Society founded in 1879 and, especially, the Anglo-Hellenic League established in 1913. The latter helped boost Venizelos's image in Britain, but it also paved the way for Anglo-Hellenism, the belief of some influential Britons that the fate of modern Greece is inseparably linked with Britain. *The Times* leaders/editorials and key articles on Venizelos in 1915–1920 have been analysed to demonstrate the level of support and admiration that Venizelos gradually attained. The role of Ronald Burrows and the group of experts around *The New Europe* is particularly analysed in terms of how the image of Venizelos and Venzelist Greece was constructed. The degree of admiration for Venizelos in Britain has been dealt with through a number of periodicals and newspapers published in Britain during the Great War and through Venizelos's biographies published in Britain with an aim to show how he became a widely respected super-celebrity. The views of leading British statesmen and opinion makers also indicate a quite high degree of identification with both Venizelos and Greek war aims in Britain in 1915–1920. The climax and the collapse of Anglo-Hellenism in 1919–20 are analysed at the end of the paper. When Venizelos lost the elections of November 1920, Anglo-Hellenism disappeared as a relevant factor in British politics, journalism and diplomacy.

Keywords: Eleftherios Venizelos, Ronald Burrows, Anglo-Hellenism, Anglo-Hellenic League, *The Times*

During the Great War the Kingdom of Greece was one of the small countries for which the British public showed great enthusiasm, especially in the period of 1915–1920. This kind of sympathies did not characterise the preceding period in which philhellenes were many but unable to dominantly shape British public opinion.

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What was Greece's image in Britain at the beginning of the twentieth century? There were many influential philhellenes in Britain on the eve of the First World War, gathered particularly around the Hellenic Society, but there was also an opposite trend, especially observable in the works of David George Hogarth. Arnold Toynbee came to believe, in 1912, in "the soundness of racial prejudice" and began to "religiously preach mishellenism" to any philhellene he came across, although his real aversion to modern Hellenism arose only in 1920.[1]

Modern British philhellenism was at its peak in 1915–1920. What was peculiar about this phenomenon was that it did not come as a result of affection for a modern Greek writer or an artist, but for a politician. The politician was Eleftherios Venizelos. His political rise was meteoric. In August 1910, he entered the Hellenic Parliament, in October, he was prime minister of Greece. He immediately enforced new elections and in December 1910 won a landslide victory having secured 307 out of 362 seats in the Hellenic Parliament, as head of a new party – the Liberal Party.[2] From then on, he remained an unavoidable factor in Greek politics. He headed Hellenic governments six times (Oct. 1910 – Mar. 1915; 23 Aug. – 5 Oct. 1915; June – 20 Nov. 1917; 24 Jan. – 19 Feb. 1924; July 1928 – May 1932; and Jan. – Mar. 1933).

Although he demonstrated no bellicose inclinations whatsoever on the eve of the Balkan Wars, once the Great War proved to be a world conflict Venizelos looked for a chance to bring the Hellenic Kingdom into the war on the side of the Entente. This, naturally, made him popular in London and Paris. He had already been noticed and highly praised for his integrity during the London Conference of 1913. When the Ottoman Empire joined the Central Powers in November 1914, the Entente was compelled to strike back by launching, in February 1915, the Dardanelles Expedition. This encouraged Venizelos to attempt to bring Greece into the war. The opposition he met from King Constantine resulted in his resignation on 6 March 1915.[3]

In June 1915, however, Venizelos won the parliamentary election, taking 184 out of 317 seats, and was back in power before the end of August. How good his reputation was in Britain at that time may be seen from the cartoon "The Return of Ulysses" published in the *Punch* of 23 June 1915 in which he was depicted as a new Odysseus. Upon Bulgaria's entry into the war, Venizelos de-

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[1] Cited in Richard Clogg, "The British School at Athens and the Modern History of Greece", Journal of Modern Hellenism 10 (1993), 95.

[2] Helen Gardikas Katsiadakis, "Venizelos's Advent in Greek Politics, 1909-1912", in P. Kitromilides, ed., Eleftherios Venizelos: the Trials of Statesmanship (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), 99–100.

[3] See Richard Clogg, A Concise History of Greece (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 85; N. Petsalis Diomidis, Greece at the Paris Peace Conference (1919) (Thessaloniki: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1978), 34.

cided that the 1913 Military Agreement with Serbia became enforceable. King Constantine, however, considered that Greece was under no obligation to Serbia since a world war was in progress, and the Agreement of 1913 could not have envisaged such a course of events. Faced with the resistance not only of the King but also of the General Staff, by early October Venizelos had decided to resign again, which caused dissatisfaction in the Entente camp.

The most important consequence of the dispute between Venizelos and King Constantine was that the Allies accepted his suggestion to send in troops, and their disembarkation near Salonika began on 3 October 1915. That was the basis for the subsequent Salonika or Macedonian Front.

Venizelos, British pro-Hellenic sentiments and the Anglo-Hellenic League

Pro-Hellenic societies had substantial pre-WW1 traditions in Britain. On 16 June 1879, the Hellenic Society was formed at Freemason's Tavern in London. It had 112 original members and additional fifty who joined at the founding meeting. Although it was a society interested in Hellenic antiquities, it also promoted modern Greece. Among the Society's five aims number 2 and 3 were: "(2) To be a medium for the publication of Memoirs on all things Greek, both ancient and modern. (3) To promote the study of the ancient and modern Greek language and literature."[4] The first governing body of the Society elected in January 1880 included the Bishop of Durham as its president, the Earl of Morley, J. Gennadios and the Master of Trinity College among its vice-presidents. Among its Council's members were a bishop, several clergymen and Oxbridge professors, four MPs, including A. J. Balfour, and Oscar Wilde.[5] Among forty-three officers of the Society only one was ethnic Greek: J. Gennadios. The Society supported very much the establishment of the British School at Athens in 1886, and later.

At least since the time of Byron there was a line in British public opinion that connected ancient with modern Hellenes, and the same was the case in other European countries. During the Greek War of Independence in the 1820s Western publics sympathised with the Greek rebels, and they were joined by 1,100 foreign volunteers. Among them more than a hundred were Brits, and at least twenty-one of them lost their lives.[6] Arnold Toynbee aptly summarised the connection of modern Western civilisation with ancient Hellas:

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4 George A. MacMillan, "An Outline of the History of the Hellenic Society", Part 1, Journal of Hellenic Studies 49/2 (1929), ii.

5 Ibid. iv.

6 William St. Clair, That Greece Might Still Be Free. The Philhellenes in the War of Independence (London: OUP, 1972), 355–356.

> That portion of contemporary humanity which inhabits Western Europe and America constitutes a specific society, for which the most convenient name is 'Western Civilization', and this society has a relationship with Ancient Greek society which other contemporary societies – for instance, those of Islam, India, and China – have not. It is its child.[7]

This kind of perception was certainly not restricted to Britain. Cultural elites in other centres of Western civilisation (Munich, Vienna, Berlin, Paris or Washington) felt the same way since the age of Classicism. What gave additional flavour to British identification with Hellas was the Oxbridge system of education with very developed classical studies and very wide knowledge of Homer, Thucydides and Plutarch among its students. To identify with modern Hellenism was therefore not theoretically too difficult. What prevented this to happen between the 1830s and 1880 was Britain's Turkophile policy. Once it was abandoned, after Gladstone's electoral victory in 1880, there was more understanding in Britain for Greece and other Balkan Christian states and increasingly less for the Ottoman Empire. The very establishment of the Hellenic Society came just after the Agitation, a movement in British society that identified with the liberation of Balkan Christians and against the positions of the Disraeli government, which had been in office in 1876–1880.

A part of the same stream was the Anglo-Hellenic League. In 1963, on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Anglo-Hellenic League, Sir Steven Runciman properly echoed feelings of British philhellenes: "For many centuries, even before the days of Lord Byron, the British have felt a special sympathy and debt to Greece, the mother of our civilization and the inspiration of our poets."[8] The League was an important pro-Hellenic association which was to play a major role in the pro-Hellenic and pro-Venizelist propaganda efforts during the Great War. It was founded in 1913 in London. Its main initiator was Ronald M. Burrows (1867–1920), principal of King's College London in 1913–1920. In this capacity Burrows "became powerhouse of academic propaganda in favour of national self-determination for the peoples of Eastern Europe."[9] The League whose aim was to defend the "just claims and honour of Greece" assisted in boosting a wave of Hellenophilia that developed in Britain during the Great War.

To change Greece's image one needed to personalise it. Burrows and other British philhellenes found a hero symbolising both ancient Hellas and modern Greece who was suitable for being presented to the British public. He

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[7] Arnold Toynbee, "History", in R. W. Livingstone, ed., The Legacy of Greece (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1924), 289.

[8] Sir Steven Runciman, "Foreword", in Views of Greece by James Skene (London: Anglo-Hellenic League, 1963), 3. In 1962 the League had about 500 members.

[9] Richard Clogg, "Politics and the Academy: Arnold Toynbee and the Koraes Chair", Middle Eastern Studies 21/4 (Oct. 1985), 3.

was Eleftherios Venizelos. His participation at the London Conference in 1913 earned him a good reputation and provided him with the opportunity to establish good connections in Britain. His personality and diplomatic abilities were noticed both by British statesmen and by other Balkan politicians and diplomats. Chedomille Miyatovich/Čedomilj Mijatović, who joined the Serbian delegation semiofficially, observed:

> Of all the Balkan delegates, Greece's first delegate, Mr. Venizelos, made the best impression in diplomatic circles and in London Society. He looked a born gentleman, of fine manners, consideration for others, dignified, yet natural and simple.[10]

Some British journalists were equally impressed:

> I recall that famous dinner given to the Balkan delegates in London in the midst of the First Balkan War when all our hopes were so high and I remember how the personality of the man [Venizelos] stood out from the commonplace figures of his colleagues.[11]

How high was Burrows's esteem for Venizelos may be seen from his poem in 42 lines entitled "Song of the Hellenes to Veniselos the Cretan", published in *Manchester University Magazine in January 1913. The song was prompted by the First Balkan War, the liberation of Aegean Greek islands and the entry of Greek army into Salonika*:

> Veniselos, Veniselos,
> Do not fail us! Do not fail us!
> Now is come for thee the hour,
> To show forth thy master power.
> Lord of all Hellenic men,
> Make our country great again.[12]

At the end of the song Burrows likened Venizelos to Pericles:

> Great in war and great in peace,
> Thou art second Perikles![13]

The Anglo-Hellenic League was focused primarily on British Greeks. Ever since its inception in 1913, one of the leading things that the Anglo-Hellenic League was doing was actually promoting Venizelos in Britain. Between 1913 and the end of 1918 the Anglo-Hellenic League published 37 pamphlets

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[10] Chedomille Mijatovich, The Memoirs of a Balkan Diplomatist (Cassel and Co., 1917), 237.

[11] A G. G., "M. Venizelos and his Conflict with the King", The Daily News and Leader, 17 Apr. 1915.

[12] George Glasgow, Ronald Burrows: A Memoir (London: Nesbit & Co., 1924), 161.

[13] Ibid. 162.

and in most of them Venizelos was mentioned and celebrated and four of them were exclusively dedicated to Venizelos.[14]

The Anglo-Hellenic League defined its five aims in Article 3 of its rules:

1) To defend just claims and honour of Greece.

2) To remove existing prejudices and prevent future misunderstanding between the British and Hellenic races, as well as between the Hellenic and other races of South Eastern Europe.

3) To spread information concerning Greece and stimulate rest in Hellenic matters.

4) To improve the social, educational, commercial and political relations of the two countries.

4) To promote travel in Greece and secure improved facilities for it.[15]

Burrows offered the shortest possible definition of the League's goals, calling it "a fighting society of keen friends of Greece" in a letter written in April 1919.[16]

A list of officers of the League from 1915 indicates that the patron of the League was Prince Nicholas of Greece, its chairman William Pember Reeves, director of the London School of Economics, and among members of the Executive Committee were, in addition to Reeves, Dr. Ronald Burrows, Principal of King's College, and Prof. Gilbert Murray of the University of Oxford. In the very process of the League's establishment main initiators were also two Anglo-Hellenes, D. J. Cassavetti and A. C. Ionides. The League had a special branch in Athens, established in December 1914,[17] and a Ladies Committee. The list of the League's members published in 1915 takes up sixteen and a half pages containing 613 names, including 36 life members who paid subscription for this distinction in the amount of 10 pounds.[18] The next list published for 1916 covers 577 members, including Arnold Toynbee.[19] By the end of the war the number of members remained stable (580), with some new prominent members such as Sir Arthur Evans.[20]

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[14] Pamphlets of the Anglo-Hellenic League: Pamphlet no. 19, "Eleftherios Venizelos and English Public Opinion" (1915), 29 p.; no. 28, "Speech of Mr. E. Venizelos to the people delivered in Athens on Sunday, August 27, 1915 [Greek and English]" (1916), 15 p.; no. 30, "Venizelos and his fellow countrymen, by P. N. Ure" (1917), 14+1 p.; and no. 35, "England's Welcome to Venizelos" (1917), 20 p.

[15] Rules of the Anglo-Hellenic League, 3.

[16] Quoted in Richard Clogg, "The 'Ingenious Enthusiasm' of Dr. Burrows and the 'Unsatiated Hatred' of Professor Toynbee', Modern Greek Studies Yearbook IX (1993), 79.

[17] Statutes of the Anglo-Hellenic League. Athens Branch, 1914.

[18] The Anglo-Hellenic League. List of Members, 1915, 1–17. Rules of the Anglo-Hellenic League (s. l., s. a.), 7 p.

[19] The Anglo-Hellenic League. List of Members, 1916, 1–16.

[20] The Anglo-Hellenic League. List of Members, 1919, 1–18.

The League's members were mostly British Greeks. Among 36 life members in 1915 one finds the most prominent Greek families in the Isles including: Calvocoressi, Embricos, Eumorfopoulos, Ionides, Pallis and Ralli. Greeks from Greece accounted for only about two per cent of the membership. The fact that the League was very much an organisation of Greek diaspora in Britain was not something that boosted its influence. It, however, strengthened the claims that Greeks overwhelmingly supported Venizelos. If the most influential British Greeks supported overwhelmingly Venizelos, then the claim of Burrows and *The Times* that most of Greeks in Greece did the same persistently during the Great War seemed very plausible. The League served to support the rising star of Venizelos. But his star was not created by the League. It emerged as a sentimental response based on long traditions of classical scholarship in Britain, but also from the need to personalise the allies.

Unavoidable British comparisons between the modern Greeks and the Hellenes did not always produce very favourable results for the former. Ancient Roman satirical writers produced a comic version of Greeks, the so-called *graeculi* (little Greeks), an image that was still in the air on the eve of the Great War and occasionally (mis)used by comparing the modern with the ancient Hellenes.[21] Venizelos, however, could easily be imagined as a modern copy of Odysseus, and had a typically Hellenic beard known to British admirers of antiquity from the busts of the Antonine era. His manners and education were within the best standards of Victorian England and he himself displayed Anglophile sentiments. Taken together his physical appearance, his way of conduct and manners, and his openly displayed Anglophilia, made an excellent combination for the creation of his public image in Britain. Through the activities of the Anglo-Hellenic League as a kind of his PR agency, his positive image was easily strengthened and disseminated in the British press.[22]

The membership of the League was mostly Greek, but its British members were quite influential and it was them that launched something that could be termed Anglo-Hellenism: the belief that the fate of modern Greece was inseparably tied to England and that England had a mission to support the revival of modern Hellenism. During the Great War, when the activities of the League and of *The New Europe* magazine overlapped, Anglo-Hellenism influenced this

[21] See e.g. D. G. Hogarth, "The Eastern Mind", The Monthly Review 15 (Apr. 1904), 113–128. David G. Hogarth, A Wandering Scholar in the Levant (London: John Murray, 1896). In the latter text (p. 191) Hogarth compares the Greek Cypriots with the ancient Hellenes and finds them to be similar to graeculi who passed down "the road of racial decay these two thousand years."

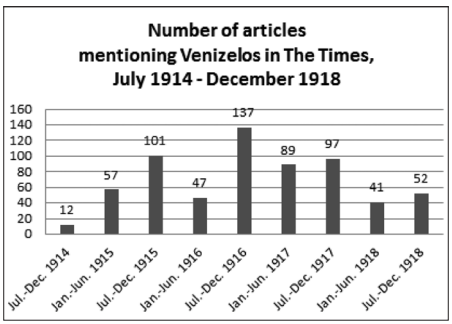
[22] Slobodan G. Markovich, "Anglophiles in Balkan Christian States (1862–1920)", Balcanica XL (2009), 127.

weekly as well. This meant that several relevant opinion and even decision makers got imbued with the spirit of Anglo-Hellenism.

The Times on Venizelos

The leading British quality daily played a very important role in the establishment of an excellent image of Venizelos in Britain. The Cretan had been known to the readers of *The Times at least since* 1901, when the newspaper began reporting on his Cretan activities. The Times Digital Archive records that by the end of June 1914 the London daily had mentioned him in at least 406 articles.[23] Between July 1914 and the end of 1918 Venizelos was mentioned in additional 633 different articles in *The Times*. In terms of quality rather than quantity, he was mentioned twenty-nine times in leaders and editorials, all of which depicted him in superlatives in the period between March 1915, when he was mentioned for the first time in a leader during the Great War, and the end of the war, and in some twenty letters mostly written by members of the Anglo-Hellenic League, particularly by Burrows and Sir Arthur Evans.

As early as 1901 *The Times* mentioned Venizelos as "a man of remarkable ability".[24] When in December 1910 he won elections for the Revisionary Chamber, J. D. Bourchier, correspondent of *The Times*, called him "master of the situation in Greece", and noticed that he was welcomed "as the saviour, the regenerator of Greece, and has even been compared with the long expected Messiah", concluding that a "gigantic task" was laid "before the Cretan Hercules".[25]



[23] Using four different spellings: usually Venezelos, less frequently Venizelos, three times as Venezelo, and only once as Veniselos. The numbers of articles mentioning Venizelos in The Times in the chart contain all four spellings. This number is not the same as the actual number of articles, which is higher. This is due to the system of optic character recognition which is still not fully efficient for articles from the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth century. The same goes for the British Newspapers Archives.

[24] "Crete", The Times, 5 Apr. 1901, p. 3 e.

[25] "M. Venezelos" (From Our Correspondent in the Balkan Peninsula)", The Times, 13 Dec. 1910, 5.

However, special interest in Venizelos developed, as the chart above suggests, only in the winter of 1915, with the Dardanelles Expedition. Venizelos's readiness to enter the war on the side of the Entente made him very popular in Britain. When he failed to do that, he resigned, and *The Times* was disappointed at the downfall of "the great Minister who saved the country and the Monarchy five years ago", but concluded: "all the news available tends to show that Mr. Venezelos will be supported by the whole force of national opinion."[26] The question that then appeared was what his next move would be. In April, a leader in *The Times* encouraged his re-activation: "The character and the history of the only great statesman whom modern Greece has yet produced forbid us to imagine that he can prefer his own tranquillity and ease to the public good", and expressed hopes that in the coming elections "the nation whom he has saved" would "reaffirm the confidence they showed him in the great constitutional crisis of 1910".[27] The previous analysis was confirmed by William Knight's letter to the editor informing the readers that the late King of the Greeks George likened Venizelos to Pericles.[28]

The Greek elections held in June 1915 were followed with huge attention. One should bear in mind that *The Times* had appreciation for King Constantine and just before elections it stated in its leader: "King Constantine, it need hardly be said, understands the duties and the position of a Constitutional Monarch in a highly democratic State too well not to bow to the considered will of the country."[29] When the news appeared that Venizelos won another landslide victory, satisfaction was openly displayed: "For Great Britain and her Allies the chief cause for satisfaction lies in the knowledge that the destinies of Hellenic people will again be controlled, in so far as any one man can control them, by an experienced patriot of proved ability and farsightedness."[30] He was called "a statesman with insight into the real issues of the European struggle", as someone who will work for Greece "and for Europe".[31]

Venizelos took up the position of Prime Minister of Greece again in August 1915. In early October a new conflict with King Constantine emerged. On 4 October, Venizelos addressed the Hellenic Parliament and said that Greece might automatically implement the stipulations of its military alliance with Serbia from 1913 "without any necessity for waiting a declaration of war by

[26] "The Crisis in Greece", The Times, 10 Mar. 1915, 11.

[27] "M. Venezelos in Retirement", The Times, 10 Apr. 1915, 9.

[28] "M. Venezelos", The Times, 13 Apr. 1915, 9.

[29] "The Greek Elections", The Times, 14 June 1915, 9.

[30] "The Decision of Greece", The Times, 17 June 1915, 9.

[31] "M. Venezelos and his Rivals", The Times, 22 June 1915, 9.

the Central Powers in accordance with the precedent set by Italy".[32] His pro-Entente attitude encouraged France and Britain to begin the landing of Allied troops at Salonika, although Venizelos made a formal protest. His resignation on 6 October 1915 prompted the London daily to publish his character sketch of a man "of irresistible charm in conversation". He "wielded a personal influence that went far to secure recognition for his high moral character and steadfastness of purpose". Yet, a man of such qualities was forced to resign, and *The Times* claimed in a rather worried tone that the sequel could show if his patriotic efforts would "remain solely as an isolated episode to remind future generations of Hellenes what their country might have been".[33]

In early November *The Times* summarised the situation in Greece where King Constantine had "twice over baffled British diplomacy and compromised British military schemes", and assessed it as notorious that "in Greece, as in other Balkan kingdoms, Governments depend more on the Sovereign than on the Parliament."[34] In December both King Constantine and Venizelos addressed the British public. On 5 December 1915, special correspondent of *The Times* had an audience with King Constantine who gave him an interview.[35] Two days after the publication of the interview Venizelos also gave an interview to the same correspondent.[36] Reaction of *The Times*, published at the same page with Venizelos's reply, indicated that the Greek king was still held in esteem in Britain, and the British daily somewhat naively put a question: "If Sovereign and statesman can collaborate in contributing to our columns important declarations upon the position and policy of their common country, is it too much to hope that they may even now find some way to work together for the welfare of the Hellenic cause, which we believe them, each in his separate way, to have equally at heart?"[37]

It became obvious very soon that there would be no joint policy of the Greek king and Venizelos. In April 1916, *The Times* mentioned "renewed activity of the Venizelists".[38] It also reported that the new organ of the Liberal Party *Kirix* reached "an unprecedented circulation for Athens".[39] The surrender of strategically important Fort Rupel to the Bulgarians on 26 May 1916 provoked

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[32] "Allied Troops at Salonika", The Times, 6 Oct. 1915, 9.

[33] "M. Venezelos. A Character Sketch", The Times, 7 Oct. 1915, 11.

[34] "A Deplorable Ambiguity", The Times, 4 Nov. 1915, 9.

[35] "Attitude of Greece. The King on his Policy. Special statement to The Times", The Times, 7 Dec. 1915, 9.

[36] "M. Venizelos. A reply to King Constantine", The Times, 11 Dec. 1915, 9.

[37] "King Constantine and M. Venizelos", The Times, 11 Dec. 1915, 9.

[38] "M. Venizelos's Return to Public Life", The Times, 21 Apr. 1916, 3.

[39] "Late War News. A Venizelist Campaign", The Times, 4 Apr. 1916, 7.

the blockade of Greek ports by the Entente and the Greeks were warned: "Their friends in the West may only hope that they will weigh well the consequences of their decision before it is too late."[40] Relations to the King cooled in June when a "significant incident" was reported. On that occasion rioters in Athens attacked Venizelists and their newspapers and Greek secret police attacked an employee of the British Legation in Athens.[41]

In late August 1916, *The Times* reported on "Great Athens Protest Meeting" against the Bulgarian invasion, and it offered a chance to Venizelos to address the protesters and to repeat his pro-Entente positions and as it was reported his appearance provoked "a tremendous outburst of cheering."[42] Several days later correspondent of *The Times* for the Balkans expressed hopes that Romania's entry into the war on the side of the Entente lent "confidence to the party of M. Venizelos", and that it would "hasten the inevitable participation of that country in the war on the side of the Entente."[43] It is characteristic of Venizelos that just before leaving Athens with Admiral Condouriotis to lead the movement that would secure Greece's alliance with Britain, France and other allies, he sent a special message to the British public through *The Times*. The newspaper called the message "a supreme appeal". It was actually a statement written by Venizelos and given to "the well informed correspondent at Athens" who had already been known for his pro-Venizelist stance. In the statement he wrote:

> It has long been known that my policy as head of the Liberal Party aimed at the intervention of Greece on the side of the Entente Powers against their attacking enemies. I have always maintained that the interests and fortunes of Greece were dependent upon her traditional friendship with the Entente Powers.

Then he repeated the history of his efforts to bring Greece into the war, mentioned the betrayal of Kavala and the loss "of the greater part of Greek Macedonia", and claimed that he urged the king to rescue his country and even offered to retire. Obviously aware of the deep distrust in Britain of antimonarchical and revolutionary movements, he insisted: "Do not think that I am heading a revolution in the ordinary sense of the word. The movement now beginning is in no way directed against the King or the Dynasty." He tried to assure the British public that everything was to induce the King to "come forth as King of the Hellenes" and, once he had done it, "all of us, shall be only too glad and ready at once to follow his Flag as loyal citizens…" At the end of the statement he revealed the real purpose of this "supreme appeal": "I feel sure that we may count on the

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[40] "The Bulgarians in Greece", The Times, 30 May 1916, 7.

[41] "A Significant Incident", The Times, 16 June 1916, 9.

[42] "King Constantine's Policy. Great Athens Protest Meeting", The Times, 30 Aug. 1916, 6.

[43] From Our Correspondent in the Balkan Peninsula, "Nearing a Climax in the Balkans", The Times, 5 Sep. 1916, 9.

sympathy and good will of the free English people towards us in the mission we are setting out to accomplish."[44]

The next day *The Times* published Reuter's news from Canea (Chania) in Crete about the Proclamation of the Provisional Government by Venizelos and Condouriotis.[45] Some ten days later G. Ward Price informed the readers of the leading London daily that Venizelos arrived in Salonika, that the crowd shouted "zito" ("long live"), and that "M. Venizelos was engulfed by his admiring fellow-citizens directly he landed, and he was borne along in the heart of the jostling throng".[46] On 21 November, four weeks after the first message of Venizelos, *The Times* published another one in which it called the Greek statesman "leader of the National Defence movement". In this second statement Venizelos thanked the Allies and expressed his "sincere gratitude to the Allied Press and peoples who have been so ready with their keen and sympathetic support of our national struggle". Again he was careful not to make impression of any anti-dynastic policy. At the end of the letter he defined Greece's national aims:

> We wish to fight of our national interests side by side with our natural and traditional friends.
> We wish to make good, as far as we can, the harm that we did to heroic Serbia by the nonfulfillment of our obligations.
> We wish finally to ensure in the future the right to be a free people, the masters of our own destinies.
> In a word, we are struggling for precisely those principles, for the triumph of which over Prussian militarism the Allied Powers are waging their great war.

Venizelos's message ended with an appeal to the great powers to grant Greece "that material and moral support of which we are in need to enable us to bring our struggle to a successful conclusion".[47]

Britain and British opinion makers found themselves in an awkward position. Since March 1915 they had campaigned for Venizelos to be head of government, but of the government in Athens. Instead they got him as the head of a government in Salonika that gathered pro-Allied Greek officers and politicians, but who were all hostile to the official government in Athens, the only one in Greece that Britain officially recognised. This duality could not last long.

On 1 and 2 December 1916, incidents with casualties took place in Athens when Allied troops disembarked upon the refusal of the Athens government to accept the ultimatum of French Admiral Dartige du Fournet. Even a century later it is not easy to know what exactly happened on the ground in central Athens. For the purposes of this text it is not of prime importance who deceived

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[44] "M. Venizelos. Message to The Times. A Supreme Appeal", The Times, 27 Sep. 1916, 9.

[45] "Greek Provisional Government", The Times, 29 Sep. 1916, 6.

[46] G. Ward Price, "M. Venizelos's Arrival at Salonika", The Times, 11 Oct. 1916, 8.

[47] "M. Venizelos", The Times, 21 Nov. 1916, 9.

whom and who provoked the shooting around the Zappeion. What is more important is how the events in Athens were perceived in the Entente capitals. The events of 1 and 2 December were described as "treacherous attacks made by King Constantine's troops".[48] They were seen in such light by all the sections of British public opinion, "and the last vestiges of respect" for the Greek king were destroyed in London and Paris.[49] *The Times* later summarised the events as they were seen in Britain: "Dec. 1, 1916. – Allied troops landed at Athens fired on by King Constantine's troops; several killed. Reign of terror at Athens. Venizelists tortured."[50]

Burrows was very explicit after the events of 1 and 2 December, offering his answer to the question, "What should we do?" He demanded, first, that the Isthmus of Corinth be seized, second, that all of Greece north of the Peloponnesus be evacuated by the Athens government, and third: "to recall Venizelos to Athens, with or without a Regency, and to acknowledge his government fully and absolutely as a Sovereign Power."[51]

In December 1916 the friends of Hellas, in a letter to *The Times*, demanded action in favour of Venizelos, essentially the dethronement of King Constantine. Their letter appeared ten days after the formation of the new British government headed by David Lloyd George. It was signed by Lord Cromer and nine scholars, who apologised for not passing it on to be signed by other scholars due to the urgency of the situation. Among the signatories were Ronald Burrows, J. B. Burry, Arthur Evans and James Frazer. It starts in a sentimental vein: "We, whose love of Greece, is founded in gratitude for all that Europe owes to Greek literature, art, and history…" That lyrical introduction is followed by a clear political programme defined for Greece. To them, Venizelos "represents the views and wishes of a sound majority of the Greek people at home and abroad. We have therefore sympathised most keenly with him, as patriot and statesman, in his heroic endeavour to maintain the leadership, rightfully his, in face of a Court cabal… We feel the strongest indignation and disgust at the barbarity with which his followers have been maltreated." Since the king and his advisors "have sinned beyond reparation… the Protecting Powers should take the one course which justice, honour, and prudence alike dictate, of insisting on such changes in the political arrangements of Greece as shall once more place the direction of affairs in the hands of M. Venizelos."[52] This was an appeal of crucial importance. It was not Venizelos that demanded his own reinstatement or

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[48] "Another Note to King Constantine", The Times, 2 Jan. 1917, 9.

[49] Alan Palmer, The Gardeners of Salonika (London: Andre Deutsch, 1965), 106.

[50] "End of Greek Crisis", The Times, 13 June 1917, 7. For a more balanced view see Palmer, Gardeners of Salonika, 104–107.

[51] Ronald M. Burrows, "The Greek Rebuff", The Times, 4 Dec. 1916, 10.

[52] Letter to the Editor, "M. Venizelos and Great Britain", The Times, 16 Dec. 1916, 8 e.

Constantine's dethronement. Very respected Brits who enjoyed the reputation of regional experts asked for it. From that moment the removal of the Greek king was not a less than polite suggestion in Britain, but rather something that could be championed openly.

A *de facto* recognition of Venizelos's provisional government by Lloyd George followed only three days later, and *The Times* leader was quick to support the prime minister emphasising that it was "the best step that could have been taken, and the one most closely in accordance with public feeling in this country".[53]

Prior to the recognition, Ronald Burrows acted as Venizelos's public relations officer. He persistently supplied the British press, particularly *The Times*, with details from the cables he received from Venizelos and was instrumental in creating the atmosphere in Britain that the situation in Greece was critical and that all pro-Entente action would be ruined unless the Allies took immediate action in Greece on behalf of Venizelos. "Two cables have just reached me from M. Venizelos", or "I had just had a cable from Mr. Venizelos" were typical phrases in Burrows's letters and in that way he created the impression in the British public that he was the best informed person in the world on what was happening not only with Venizelos but with the whole Venizelist movement in Greece. As his biographer G. Glasgow noticed: "those cables were sent almost daily from the beginning of Venizelos's revolutionary movement in 1915 till the settlement of the terms of the Treaty of Sèvres just before Burrows died."[54]

Unsurprisingly, when Venizelos's Provisional Greek Government was established in Salonika, Burrows was asked to become a "semi-official representative" of Venizelos in London, the "logical outcome of an already existing situation".[55] He indeed was an unofficial representative of Venizelist Greece in Britain from October 1915 until at least December 1916, when the official diplomatic envoy of the Hellenic Kingdom in London, Joannes Gannadios, submitted his resignation to join the Venizelist camp.[56]

For Burrows the *de facto* recognition of the Provisional Government was only the beginning of his activities. He wanted to see Venizelos as prime minister back in Athens already in his letter of 4 December 1916. In the spring of 1917 he informed the British public about the activities of the royalist government with a clear aim to encourage Britain to depose the king. On 5 May he

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[53] Editorials, "The Allies and M. Venizelos", 20 Dec. 1916, 9 b.

[54] Glasgow, Ronald Burrows, 237. Burrows died in May 1920, a few months before the Treaty of Sèvres was signed (10 August), but just after the San Remo conference in April 1920.

[55] Clogg, "The 'Ingenious Enthusiasm' of Dr. Burrows", 81; Glasgow, Ronald Burrows, 238.

[56] "M. Gennadius Resigns", The Times, 5 Dec. 1916, 8. Cf. Donald M. Nicol, Joannes Gannadios – The Man. A biographical sketch (Athens: American School of Classical Studies at Athens, 1990), 21–22.

warned: "bands of irregulars, organized and financed by the Royalist Party, terrorize Thessaly, and threaten our line of communication." Therefore, he championed "a drastic solution of the Greek question". He insisted: "Popular feeling in both England and France is overwhelmingly strong against the King. There is, indeed, no one living man who has done so much to check and thwart our plans." He also urged that all twenty torpedo boats taken from the Athens government be given to Venizelos.[57]

Finally, Constantine fell in June 1917 and left Greece for Switzerland. *The Times* was happy to inform its readers in its editorial that the new king, Alexander, Constantine's son, was understood "to be free from the Potsdam conceptions of monarchy". As far as the Protecting Powers (Britain, France and Russia) were concerned, *The Times* was confident that: "a statesman with a large views and the devoted patriotism of M. Venizelos will gladly work with them and with the new king for the unity and the liberty of the Greek nation."[58] When Venizelos arrived in Athens, *The Times* enthusiastically reported on the impression he had made on his supporters. People of Piraeus came out into the streets to greet their leader and "scenes of almost religious enthusiasm which M. Venizelos always evokes were renewed".[59]

Lloyd George's Hellenophilia and England's welcome to Venizelos

Positions of Burrows and Venizelos were strengthened when a British Hellenophile, David Lloyd George, took the office of prime minister on 6 December 1916. He remained in office until October 1922, throughout the period of crucial events for Greece. Relations between the two statesmen had been established during Venizelos's first visit to Britain in December 1912, and they "served as the basis of his [Venizelos's] policies for the next eight years"[60]. It has been assessed that Lloyd George's "romantic radicalism had been fired by the image of Venizelos".[61] Good relations between the Welshman and the Greek culminated during the talks on Smyrna in 1919, when Lloyd George supported Greek and Venizelos's aspirations.[62]

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[57] Ronald M. Burrows, "The Situation in Greece", The Times, 8 May 1917, 5.

[58] "King Constantine's Fall", The Times, 14 June 1917, 7 a.

[59] "M. Venizelos Acclaimed", The Times, 25 June 1917, 6.

[60] Michael Llewellyn Smith, "Venizelos's Diplomacy, 1910–23: From Balkan Alliance to Greek-Turkish Settlement", in Kitromilides, ed., Eleftherios Venizelos, 148.

[61] Palmer, Gardeners of Salonika, 24.

[62] The two statesmen had dinner together on 19 May 1919. Frances Stevenson, Lloyd George's personal secretary, noted: "The two have a great admiration for each other, and D.[avid] is trying to get Smyrna for Greeks, though he is having trouble with the Italians

One of the closest associates of Lloyd George was Sir Arthur Crosfield (1865–1938), a liberal MP. He was married to Domini (nee Elliadi/Iliadi), herself "a dear personal friend of Madame Veniselos."[63] When Arthur Crosfield was created a baronet in 1915, she became Lady Domini. She was known for entertaining the most prominent liberal politicians in her home.

Lloyd George held Venizelos in high esteem and he expressed it on several occasions. On 8 August 1917, at the meeting of the Serbian Society of Great Britain, Lloyd George greeted the prime minister of Serbia:

> It is not without note that two of the greatest statesmen in Europe at the present moment have been produced by two comparatively small nations of the East – M. Pashitch and M. Venizelos, to whose far-seeing patriotism we owe so much at the present moment and far more than it is possible for us even to reveal as to the prospects of the future. His steadfastness, his courage, and his insight have kept the soul of Greece alive under most trying conditions.[64]

Venizelos's image in Britain saw a shiny moment during his visit to London in November 1917. Two months earlier *Punch* had made a tribute to Venizelos, portraying him and Kerensky as liberators in the style of *Ex oriente lux*. To a worried Kerensky, Venizelos said with determination: "Do not despair, I too went through sufferings, before achieving unity."[65] Venizelos was finally able to visit Britain in his capacity as prime minister of the country that joined the Entente powers. On 13 November 1917, he came from Paris with Lloyd George. There was no time to organise a public welcome, but *The Times* wanted to assure him that "the people of this country think it no small thing to have him in their midst", and that "in M. Venizelos they recognize a singleness of mind that appeals to their profoundest instincts".[66] The next day *The Times* published the Anglo-Hellenic League's announcement of a public meeting to be held at Mansion House. It was topped by huge letters: "WELCOME TO VENIZELOS (Prime Minister of our Ally Greece)."[67]

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over it." Cf. A. J. P. Taylor, ed., Lloyd George. A Diary by Frances Stevenson (New York and London: Harper & Row, 1971), 183.

[63] Frank Owen, Tempestuous Journey. Lloyd George his life and times (London: Hutchinson, 1954), 196. Crosfield was also very active in the Anglo-Hellenic League. "Madame Veniselos" referred to in the quotation was Venizelos's second wife, Helena nee Stephanovitch Schilizzi, whom he married in 1921. She came from a wealthy Anglo-Hellenic merchant family. She had supported the establishment of the Venizelos Fund in London in the spring of 1917: "Venizelos Fund", The Daily Mirror, 5 Apr. 1917.

[64] "The Freeing of Serbia. Mr. Lloyd George's declaration", The Times, 9 Aug. 1917, 4.

[65] "Liberators", Punch or the London Charivari, 5 Sep. 1917.

[66] "M. Venizelos in London", The Times, 14 Nov. 1917, 7.

[67] "Welcome to Venizelos", The Times, 15 Nov. 1917, 10.

On 16 November 1917, the public meeting in Venizelos's honour took place in the Egyptian Hall of Mansion House. It was "crowded to the doors and hundreds of people were unable to enter".[68] The meeting was organised under the auspices of the Anglo-Hellenic League. Apart from the lord mayor, it was attended by leading British politicians such as Arthur James Balfour (foreign minister), Lord Curzon and Winston Churchill (minister of munitions), by Mr and Mme Gennadius, Mr and Mme Burrows, and many other distinguished figures. At the beginning Ronald Burrows read the message of the archbishop of Canterbury and then the lord mayor yielded the floor to A. J. Balfour:

> Mr. Venizelos has now been travelling through Allied countries for some time. He has seen Rome, he has seen Paris, ha has finally come to London; and I do not think that in any Entente capital will he find a warmer welcome than he will find in the capital of the British Empire. [cheers.] And that is not merely because he has shown qualities greatly admired by our race – moderation, courage, love of liberty – but also because he has, from the very beginning of these hostilities, seen with a sure and certain intuition that the cause of nationalities and the cause of international freedom lay in the keeping of the Entente Powers. [Cheers.][69]

Venizelos knew how to approach Britain's highest classes and to win their hearts for the Greek cause. It can be seen from an excerpt from his speech:

> What, therefore, I ask of you, the people of this great country, is not to judge the Greek nation as responsible for the personal policy of the dethroned king, nor to consider the violation of treaty with Serbia as reflecting upon us. [Cheers.] I can assure you that during that protracted and painful crisis, the great majority of the Greek people never approved of that treacherous policy. The good opinion of your great Empire is a precious asset for the Greek people. Ever since their resuscitation to a free political existence, the Greeks have looked for guidance to the great and splendid lessons which British political life offers. In it we have found harmoniously blended personal liberty with that order which ensures progress. All the public men of modern Greece, worthy of that name, have been unanimous in their belief that the edifice which has been reared by the genius of the British people, and which is known as the British Empire, or the British Commonwealth, is the grandest political creation in the life of man. [Cheers.][70]

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[68] "London Welcome to M. Venizelos", The Times, 17 Nov. 1917, 5.

[69] AHL Pamphlet no. 35, England's Welcome to Venizelos (London: the Anglo Hellenic League, 1917), 3, 5–6.

[70] Ibid. 15.

Opinions on Venizelos as statesman in the British public

In January 1915 Venizelos addressed two letters to King Constantine explaining why Greece should join the Allies. Reactions in Britain were more than enthusiastic. Such eulogies were written on the Greek prime minister that the Anglo-Hellenic League felt it appropriate to issue a special publication titled *Eleftherios Velizelos and English Public Opinion*. The editors of this pamphlet were so overwhelmed by positive feelings about Venizelos in Britain that they wrote:

> The appreciation shown by the English Press for Greece's great statesman has amounted to an outburst of admiration quite unusual in this country. It would not be easy to recall the name of any foreign statesman to whom such a tribute has been paid in England during his lifetime. A spontaneous and quite independent display of respect so marked and unanimous is not to be passed over lightly, and must afford some consolation to the friends of M. Venizelos for the loss of his country and race caused by his withdrawal.[71]

Naturally, when he was forced to resign the British press wrote very positive of him but expressed some doubts about modern Hellenes. A characteristic article was published in *The Manchester Guardian*: "Now the Greece of to-day owes more to M. Venizelos than to any single man, and if she cannot recognise her debt and her need and insist on his return to power no one from outside can help her."[72]

When the Hellenic Kingdom failed to join the Entente Powers twice, in March and in October 1915, its image immediately deteriorated. The whole thing with the image of Greece in Britain was not merely geostrategic but also contained emotional overtones. As Ronald Burrows pointed out in 1916: "From the moment the war began, there was not a doubt in either country [France and Great Britain] that Greece was a friend, a good friend, and a brave friend… There was no question then in the Western mind of anyone in Greece being pro-German. Up to the beginning of 1915, there was no nation more trusted and believed in than Greece."[73]

Yet, there was one exception to this general trend. Venizelos's efforts throughout 1915 to bring Greece into the war on the side of the Entente strengthened his good reputation in Britain. The following paragraph is characteristic:

> For Greece knows that in him she has touched greatness, and that through him she has caught a vision of a nobler destiny than has been hers since the Turk brought his blight upon the Balkans. Venizelos is for the Allies for no mean

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[71] AHL Pamphlet no. 19, Eleftherios Venizelos and English Public Opinion (London: The Anglo-Hellenic League, 1915), 1.

[72] "M. Venizelos", The Manchester Guardian, 13 Apr. 1915.

[73] Ronald Burrows, "Philhellenism in England and France", Contemporary Review (July 1916), 163.

> thing. He is for them because he knows that with all their deficiencies they stand for freedom, for the moral law in the world against the law of Krupps and that in their triumph is the hope of liberty, of democracy and of the small nationality all over the world.[74]

By the time of his parliamentary victory in 1915 Venizelos had become so popular in Britain that journalists began a search for his noble ancestors, tracing his origin back to the famous fifteenth-century family of Benizeloi (Venizeli).[75] When he took the office of prime minister, the British press was even more sympathetic. The periodical *World* reminded its readers that it had described Venizelos as "one of the most striking personalities among European statesmen" on the occasion of his visit to London in January 1914. In August 1915, it went even further:

> No one, however, then thought that all Europe would be watching with painful anxiety the line of policy he might elect to pursue in the course of a great international struggle. Eighteen months ago, therefore, he was a celebrity; now he is almost a super-celebrity.[76]

When he established the provisional government in October 1916, the mood was revived, and this was very much supported again by Ronald Burrows. He praised Venizelos in several articles and championed him through his many and influential private contacts and in frequent letters to all major London dailies, *The Times* in particular. Many others soon followed suite. Burrows, of course, had paved the way, writing as early as May 1915:

> The one thing that can be said with certainty is that in the eyes of Europe Venizelos is the greatest asset Greece has possessed since she became a kingdom, and that it will be many years before his successors win, as he has done, the implicit confidence of the statesmen and the people of England and France.[77]

To Britain's monarchist public, however, the legitimate government was in Athens as long as there was a legitimate king in the Hellenic capital, and they naturally tended to assume the subjects' loyalty to their sovereign. Only one day before Venizelos was forced to submit his second resignation to the King, Crawfurd Price, expecting that Greece was just about to enter the war on the side of the Entente, wrote in *The Pall Mall Gazette*: "There are a great many writers in England today who owe a profound apology to King Constantine of Greece. No personality has been more persistently maligned and misrepresent-

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74 A G. G., "M. Venizelos and his Conflict with the King".

75 A letter signed by "A Greek" as a reaction to the previous text of Guardian's correspondent, The Manchester Guardian, 21 June 1915.

76 "Celebrities at Home", The World no. 1787, 24 Aug. 1915.

77 Ronald M. Burrows, "Venizelos and the Greek Crisis", The Contemporary Review (May 1915), 552.

ed in this country throughout the duration of the war."[78] He repeated similar points in mid-November.[79] Crawfurd Price was one of the British journalists who changed sides in line with official British policy. Once a champion of King Constantine, he completed a book on Venizelos in November 1916 and called for Allied action in support of Venizelos:

> If we are sincere in our devotion to the cause of freedom, justice and righteousness, then this Venizelist movement is one which ought to receive our unstained support and full official acknowledgment. If we are determined in our intention to crush militarism in Europe, then it is illogical to us to support any offshoot of it in the Balkans.[80]

The very existence of a royal government reluctant to take any decisive step towards Greek participation in the war produced in some sections of British public opinion an unfavourable image of the Greeks as a nation,[81] which not even Venizelos's arrival in Athens to take the office of prime minister of a unified Hellas could change. Burrows criticised some British journalists:

> No Philhellene can fairly complain of the attitude of the English Press as a whole. There has been a tendency, however, natural enough, to throw Venizelos into high relief by contrasting him with his fellow countrymen. It is a left-handed compliment to one who is Greek of the Greeks, and, above all men, stands for the solidarity of the race. So able a war correspondent as Mr. Ward Price found nothing in the welcome given to the Allied troops by the population of Thessaly, but a proof that 'the Greek mind has little consistency, and no shame at suddenly renouncing one allegiance to embark on the opposite'.

Burrows was just as displeased with the *Daily Chronicle*'s interpretation of the shift of allegiance from King Constantine to Venizelos as a development that "does not impress one with the strength of Hellenic character. The nation … has shown, on the whole, more resemblance to the Greeks of Juve-

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[78] Crawfurd Price, "Why Greece Held Back. King Constantine's Answer to the Kaiser", The Pall Mall Gazette, 4 Oct. 1915.

[79] "King Constantine was not pro-German; he was before everything pro-Greek. His failure to agree with M. Venizelos was due to the fact that King Constantine is a military man, able to appreciate the situation, while the former is a politician." "Greek King not pro-German", The Evening Standard, 15 Nov. 1915.

[80] Crawfurd Price, Venizelos and the War. A Sketch of Personalities & Politics (London: Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent & Co. Ltd, 1917), 9.

[81] In a letter to Burrows of 17 November 1916, Venizelos noted that the Entente powers had warned his movement that it "must not assume an anti-dynastic character". Venizelos believed that "the preservation of the dynasty should be thought a sufficient concession to the 'sentiments très respectables des Souverains des Alliés de la France.'" Glasgow, Ronald Burrows, 243, 246.

nal than to those of Pericles!"[82] The same ambiguous attitude can also be seen from an article of the famous anthropologist Sir James George Frazer, who described the anathema on Venizelos by the archbishop of Athens as a "barbarous ritual" common to "savages all over the world".[83] This article was intended to portray monarchists in the most unsympathetic way, but it did not help the image of Greeks.

Another important element in pro-Hellenic, pro-Czech and pro-Serbian propaganda was the launching in 1916 of the journal *The New Europe* by R. W. Seton Watson, Ronald Burrows, T. Masaryk and two influential journalists of *The Times*, Henry Wickham-Steed and Harold Williams.[84] It supported the cause of small nations in Europe and, in the Balkans, the war efforts of the Kingdom of Serbia and Venizelist Greece. A. W. A. Leeper wrote, in November 1916, an Allied portrait of Venizelos for *The New Europe*, describing him as "the man who was to prove the most stalwart opponent to Prussianism in S. E. Europe", and "in truth, a prophet".[85] In December Leeper warned about "the growth of anti-Venizelism" in Greece, denouncing the Athens government: "There can be no further compromise with such a Government."[86]

Leeper's opinion carried additional weight since he was placed in charge of the Balkans in the Intelligence Bureau of the Department of Information. He also wrote for *The New Europe* under the pseudonym "Belisarius", mostly on Bulgaria. Since May 1917 R. W. Seton-Watson and Lewis Namier were in charge of Central and Eastern Europe in the same department.[87] In that way contributors to *The New Europe* got a special role in shaping public opinion in Britain, particularly the opinion of decision makers. Not infrequently, however, their points favoured the small nationalities of Central and South-East Europe, including Greeks and Serbs, much more than the Foreign Office was in a position to accept.

Harold Nicolson, explaining later what contributors to *The New Europe* had in mind when promoting small nationalities, admitted that he himself "was overwhelmingly imbued" with the ideas of this journal. Old European states seemed obsolete concepts, new small nationalities were concepts that their emotions were centred on. Speaking of the peacemakers of the Paris Peace Confer-

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[82] Ronald M. Burrows, "Venizelos in Athens", The New Europe, 5 July 1917, 373.

[83] Sir J. G. Frazer, "The Cursing of Venizelos", The New Europe no. 19, 22 Feb. 1917, 174.

[84] Glasgow, Ronald Burrows, 198–199.

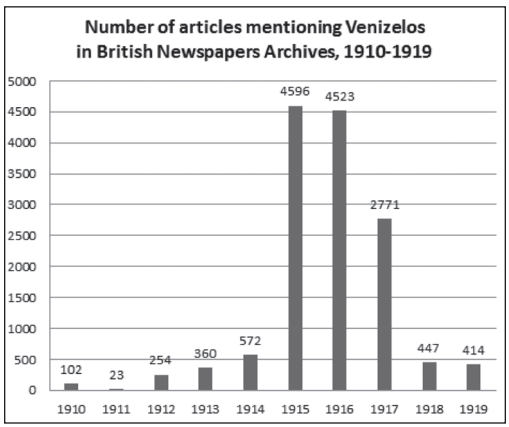
[85] A. W. E. Leeper, "Allied Portrait: (I) Eleftherios Venizelos", The New Europe no. 6, 23 Nov. 1916, 183, 186.

[86] A. W. E. Leeper, "The Growth of Anti-Venizelism", The New Europe no. 10, 21 Dec. 1916, 314.

[87] Hugh and Christopher Seton-Watson, The Making of a New Europe. R. W. Seton-Watson and the Last Years of Austria-Hungary (London: Methuen, 1981), 207.

ence he remarked "that the concepts 'Germany,' 'Austria,' 'Hungary,' 'Bulgaria,' or 'Turkey' were not in the forefront" of their minds. "It was the thought of the new Serbia, the new Greece, the new Bohemia, the new Poland which made our hearts sing hymns at heaven's gate." He admitted that among the writers of *The New Europe* "bias there was, and prejudice", but added: "But they proceeded, not from any revengeful desire to subjugate and penalise our late enemies, but from a fervent aspiration to create and fortify the new nations, whom we regarded, with maternal instinct, as the justification of our sufferings and of our victory."[88]

The British Newspaper Archive digitises British historical newspapers and makes them available online. Throughout the 2010s its content grew monthly. The chart below shows the number of articles available at the end of 2017 in which Venizelos was mentioned. This rather incomplete list indicates that Venizelos was mentioned in nearly 13,000 British newspaper articles in the period 1914–1918. Only if one reads at least a few hundred of virtually thousands of articles on Venizelos published in the British press of 1915–1920 can one gain some insight into the admiration showered on him by the British press in that period.



One can only offer a selection of characteristic comments about Venizelos, and an article in *The War Budget* collected several of them:

> "The greatest living statesman in Europe" is a colossal claim to make for a man who was almost unknown out of his own country a few years ago. But the claim has been made for Eleftherios Venezelos by a far-sighted English journalist, who has seen and tested samples of all the diplomatic schools.
> Another writer, who knows this man even more intimately, says that no other single character has inspired so many of the events which have been written permanently in the history of modern Greece as has M. Venezelos, who first

[88] Harold Nicolson, Peacemaking (London: Methuen, 1964), 32–33.

> planned and then strove with zealous patriotism and most remarkable ability to carry them through.
>
> He is a quiet, reserved, dignified lawyer, who hates war and despises the petty politics beloved of the modern Greek. But as a patriot he has few equals, and certainly no superior in any hand.
>
> Another great title earned unconsciously by this unassuming loyalist is "the Man of the Twentieth Century," a title that sounds too big for any mortal mixture of earth's mould to wear. [89]

As has already been mentioned, the Anglo-Hellenic League did its best to promote Venizelos. The League's annual meetings could not go without expressions of admiration for Venizelos, often pronounced by very prominent Brits. In July 1918 the main speaker was Gilbert Murray, Regius Professor of Greek at the University of Oxford. His speech was reproduced in the League's last wartime pamphlet. He could not fail to mention the Hellenic prime minister, likening him to Themistocles:

> It is a remarkable thing and curiously characteristic if other points about Greece that at this moment, when on the whole European statesmanship has not shown very brilliantly… that at a time like that such a small State as Greece should have a statesman quite obviously of the first rank, a statesman whom the greatest Nations in the world would be proud to possess as a leader. [Hear, Hear.] It reminds one of the story of Themistocles, that for the really great career of a statesman you want both the great man and the great nation. It is a hard thing when the great man has not a corresponding strength and extent of territory behind him.[90]

In April 1920, Bonar Law, the leader of the Conservative Party at the time, echoed the opinion about Venizelos created among British politicians during the Great War when he said in the House of Commons: "No single statesman has supported the Allied cause through good report and ill so strongly as M. Venizelos."[91]

Venizelos was so popular in Britain that the other Balkan statesmen who wrote their recollections at the time his popularity was at its peak found it appropriate to include a chapter of admiration devoted to him. Thus, Take Jonescu, a leading Anglophile among Romanian politicians during the Great War and Venizelos's personal friend, thought that the Greek statesman was very much

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[89] "Venezelos the Statesman. A Prophet in the Mantle of the Great Athenians", The War Budget, 12 Oct. 1916.

[90] AHL pamphlet no. 37, "Annual General Meeting of the Anglo-Hellenic League, Thursday, 11 July 1918. Address of Gilbert Murray, Regius Professor of Greek in the University of Oxford..." (1918), 15.

[91] S. B. Chester, Life of Venizelos (New York: George H. Doran Co., 1921), 202.

like Shakespeare, and considered him "a true example of human greatness, and of a greatness such that one may unreservedly admire it".[92]

British biographies of Venizelos and a novel

Within a span of only six years during and immediately after the First World War, 1915–1921, four biographies of Venizelos appeared in Britain, an unprecedented gesture of honour not only to a Hellenic statesman but to any Balkan statesman of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The first biography, from the pen of C. Keroflas, was completed in Greek in August 1915 and then translated into English. Keroflas's sympathies for Venizelos were more than open, as shown by his preface: "Carlyle would assuredly have included him among his 'Heroes,'" since he is a man "who, finding his country in the throes of a military revolution, restored it and raised it to the highest triumphs of victory."[93] Take Jonesco's admiration for Venizelos was shown in his foreword to the book. *The Morning Post commented:* "It is, indeed, one of the romances of history that the Near East should have produced such a man," and expressed regret that England did not have a man of such quality: "…What would we not give in England for a statesman who could tell his fellow-countrymen the truth and the whole truth and be prepared to lay down power without regret."[94]

Venizelos even became the model for a character of a book of adventure fiction. In October 1915 the writer and politician John Buchan, who wrote war propaganda pieces during the Great War, published his novel *The Thirty-nine Steps*. The hero of the novel, Richard Hannay, feels "almost debilitating spleen and like Byron, contemplates a cure in the Balkans".[95] Hannay read in newspapers about the Greek Premier Constantine Karolides, his incarnation of Venizelos. Karolides "played a straight game too, which was more than could be said for most of them. I gather that they hated him pretty blackly in Berlin and Vienna, but that we were going to stick by him, and one paper said that he was the only barrier between Europe and Armageddon".[96] The novel is about a German-sponsored conspiracy to assassinate Karolides. In the last months of 1915 alone the novel sold 25,000 copies.[97] Given the wide coverage of Venizelos

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[92] Take Jonescu, Some Personal Impressions (London: Nisbet and Co. Ltd, 1919), 239–240.

[93] Dr. C. Keroflas, Eleftheriois Venizelos. His Life and Work, transl. by Beatrice Barstow (London: John Murray 1915), xv.

[94] "Venizelos. (Published to-day)", The Morning Post, 15 Oct. 1915.

[95] Vesna Goldsworthy, Inventing Ruritania. The Imperialism of the Imagination (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998), 88.

[96] Ibid.

[97] Ibid. 89.

in the British press of that time, the readers could have hardly failed to grasp whom Buchan used as a model for Karolides. The novel confirms the assessment of *The World* that by August 1915 Venizelos became "almost a super-celebrity" in Britain.

The second biography, from the pen of Crawfurd Price, a strongly pro-Hellenic and pro-Serbian British journalist, was completed in mid-November 1916. Its publication in January 1917 took place at the time when the national schism in Greece was at its height but with Crawfurd Price who changed sides and became a supporter of Venizelos. Inspired by Venizelos's departure from Crete to Salonika, it was an attempt to strengthen pro-Venizelist feelings in Britain. In conclusion to his preface Price noted: "If we are sincere in our devotion to the causes of freedom, justice and righteousness, then this Venizelist movement is one which ought to receive our unstinted support and full official acknowledgement."[98]

The other two biographies, published shortly after the First World War, were written by Vincent J. Seligman and S. B. Chester. Seligman's biography was intended as a study of Greek politics from 1910 to 1918, and it is a clear eulogy of Venizelos. In his dedication of the book to Eleftherios Venizelos Seligman stated that it was meant as "a small tribute of the author's respect and admiration".[99]

Finally, Chester's book was published after Venizelos had lost his premiership. It is prefaced by his hero's letter and its last paragraph also includes a reference to Carlyle:

> Napoleon thought that in a country of large population a man would always be found to meet any national emergency. Since 1914 all the principal nations have been passing through a series of upheavals, but few leaders have come to light, either in the council chamber or in the field, for posterity to rank with the great. In Venizelos the Greeks had at their head one who has given new colour to the principle *de la carrière ouverte aux talents*, or, as Carlyle paraphrased it, "the tools to him who can wield them."[100]

It speaks a lot about Venizelos's ability to understand the importance of public relations that he found time to discuss issues of his life with his biographers who were all naturally very thankful to him for that.

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[98] Price, Venizelos and the War, 9.

[99] Vincent J. Seligman, The Victory of Venizelos. A Study of Greek Politics, 1910–1918 (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1920), 5.

[100] S. B. Chester, Life of Venizelos (New York: George H. Doran Co., 1921), 321. One should also add a very sympathetic American biography of Venizelos by Herbert Adams Gibbons, Venizelos (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1920).

Anglo-Hellenism on trial in 1920

British sympathies for Venizelos and the Hellenic Kingdom were particularly helpful during the negotiations in Paris in 1919. At the negotiations the Greek statesman "emerged as one of the giants of the Conference".[101] It was at the very end of the Great War that philhellenic sentiments of some British diplomats mattered. This Anglo-Hellenism was felt in the new Political Intelligence Department (PID), established in March 1918. It included Sir Eyre Crowe, Allen Leeper, Harold Nicolson and also, at that stage, Arnold Toynbee. Their goals in the Eastern Mediterranean seemed to correspond with those of Venizelos; in other words, the establishment of a Greece of two continents and five seas. The PID team was of crucial importance during peace negotiations in Paris in 1919. Needless to say, Leeper, Nicolson and Toynbee were all affiliated with Seton-Watson's *New Europe*. The philhellenes reverted to the British Turkophobia of the age of Gladstone, which developed in the 1880s, was the dominant force in British foreign policy until 1908 and was only paused in 1908–1912 when Britain supported the Ottoman governments after the Young Turks took power.

As in London in 1913, so in Paris in 1919 Venizelos was again the star of the conference. He presented Greek claims on 3 February 1919, and his presentation was received so well that Allen Leeper remarked: "We all thought it was the most brilliant thing we've ever heard, such amazing strength and tactfulness combined."[102] In Paris British delegates sometimes acted almost as direct representatives of Venizelos and in championing Hellenic aims clashed with Italy and, to their surprise, they came quite frequently into direct collision with American delegates. However, the main supporter of Greek claims was British Prime Minister Lloyd George or, as Llewellyn Smith, put it: "The Lloyd George factor was crucial in assigning to Greece the mandate to occupy Smyrna."[103] Greek troops began the occupation of Smyrna on 15 May 1919, and that was the climax of Venizelos's foreign policy. The Treaty of Sèvres gave Greece almost all of Thrace including the whole Gallipoli Peninsula, the Aegean islands including Imbros and Tenedos, and a mandate over the zone of Smyrna, Tireh, Odemish, Magnisa, Akhissar, Berghama and Aivali. It was stipulated that this zone could become Greek after a five-year period. The Dodecanese, with the exception of Rhodes, were transferred by Italy to Greece.[104]

Harold Nicolson wrote an early analysis of how peacemaking was conducted in Paris in 1919. It was unavoidable that he should mention Venizelos,

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[101] Eric Goldstein, "Great Britain and Greater Greece 1917–1920", The Historical Journal 32/2 (1989), 344.

[102] Quoted in Goldstein, "Great Britain and Greater Greece", 345.

[103] M. Llewellyn Smith, "Venizelos's Diplomacy", 161.

[104] Chester, Life of Venizelos, 319–320.

whose diplomatic abilities were usually cited as something that contributed very much to the success of the Greek delegation in Paris. Nicolson believed that there was objectivity in decision making in Paris, but had to acknowledge Venizelos's special qualities. "Far be it from me to diminish in anyway the legend of M. Venizelos' consummate mastery of diplomatic technique, or in any way to underestimate the triumph which the personal magnetism of that statesman achieved." Comparing him with Romanian Prime Minister Bratianu, who had all the qualities opposite to Venizelos, Nicolson used the example of Romania to claim that the decisions of the Supreme Council were made "on wholly impersonal grounds".[105] Bearing in mind the special affection of Lloyd George and some other Brits imbued with Anglo-Hellenism for Venizelos and Greece, Nicolson's claim does not seem justified. It should be noted that *The Times* obituary of Venizelos called him "a dominant figure" of the Paris Peace Conference, and added: "it sometimes seemed that his personal influence was such that he had but to ask and all would be given to him."[106]

It was widely expected that after such diplomatic performance of Britain on behalf of Venizelos the Greek statesman would remain a hero of the Greek masses and that he would rule for many years enabling Britain to exert a strong influence in the Eastern Mediterranean with Venizelist Greece as her strategic and chief ally. Venizelos's victory in the 1920 election was taken for granted. The fact was overlooked that he was absent from Greek politics for too long from the end of 1918 until the Treaty of Sèvres was finally signed in August 1920, and that the mobilisation of Greeks for various military operations was not very popular. Also conducive to Venizelos's defeat were the assassination of Ion Dragoumis by Venizelists on 13 August and the death of King Alexander on 25 October 1920.[107]

The news of Venizelos's electoral defeat on 14 November 1920 caused shock and disappointment both in London and in Paris, and was even seen as offensive. The Liberal Party won only 118 out of 369 seats in the Hellenic Parliament.[108] *The Times* in its leader claimed: "We cannot recall since the days of Aristides a more signal example of popular ingratitude or a popular folly." The London daily believed that the Greek voters had had a clear choice between two men of opposite qualities. Venizelos – "the man who saved nation, dynasty, and army in 1910", "the enlightened champion of constitutional freedom at home and of the principles of the Allies and Associates abroad" – was the one they rejected. Instead, they chose the ex-King, "whose long continued treachery and

[105] Nicolson, Peacemaking, 136–137.

[106] "Venizelos", The Times, 19 Mar. 1936, 19.

[107] Thanos Veremis and Helen Gardikas-Katsiadakis, "Protagonist in Politics, 1912–20", in Kitromilides, ed., Eleftherios Venizelos, 129–130.

[108] Ibid. 130–131.

flagrant disregard of the Constitution… compelled the Allies to insist upon his resignation".

The message of *The Times* to the Greek electoral majority was more than clear. The Allies "did not sanction the creation of a Greater Greece for a benefit of a brother-in-law or a nephew of the ex-Keiser." It was openly admitted: "The confidence of the Allies has received a rude shock. They were quite unprepared for such an exhibition of unsteadfastness, unwisdom and ingratitude." A clear warning was sent to the Greeks: "If the Greeks ratify the course they have chosen at the polls, they must take the consequence on their own shoulders."[109]

As has already been observed, "Venizelos's guiding principle was to associate Britain with his main goals".[110] Similarly, Britain associated her goals in the eastern Mediterranean with Venizelos's expected long tenure as prime minister of Greece. His electoral defeat therefore signalled the end of Britain's staunch commitment to a Greater Greece.[111] Once the new Odysseus, Pericles and Themistocles was no longer prime minister of Hellas, British regional plans which counted on new Greece as a key ally in the eastern Mediterranean collapsed.

Both Britain and Venizelist Greece won twice in 1918–20: on the battlefield and at the end of the Great War, at the Paris Peace Conference. But in 1920–22 they both were defeated in their aspirations in the Eastern Mediterranean. In the early 1920s Britain had to face the following situation in the Balkans and its vicinity: 1) the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, the creation of which Britain had very much helped at the end of the war, was abandoned to the French sphere of influence; 2) a disillusioned Bulgaria saw the results of the peace treaties as the final abandonment of the Gladstonian admiration for Bulgarians and therefore could not look at Britain in a friendly way; 3) an offended and nationalistic Turkish Republic emerged and its creation was undermined by Britain in every possible way; and 4) the country that was supposed to be the British main regional ally, Venezelist Greece, found itself heavily defeated by Turkey, abandoned by Britain, with its pro-British liberals now in the Opposition, and with the British new Odysseus, Venizelos, in exile in 1920–22.

Ronald Burrows died on 14 May 1920. *The Times* titled his obituary quite appropriately "a champion of Greece".[112] By the end of the same year Venizelos would leave Greece. Thus, in 1920 the great British enthusiasm for modern Hellenism suffered two major blows. Anglo-Hellenism, so prominent among British intellectuals, journalists, diplomats and politicians in 1916–1920, suddenly evaporated, and the strong and prominent interest in the fate of mod-

[109] "The Greek Elections", The Times, 17 Nov. 1920, 13.

[110] Robert Holland and Diana Markides, The British and the Hellenes. Struggles for Mastery in the Eastern Mediterranean 1850–1960 (Oxford: OUP, 2008), 180.

[111] Cf. Goldstein, "Great Britain and Greater Greece", 356.

[112] "Death of Dr. Burrows. A champion of Greece", The Times, 17 May, 1920, 16.

ern Hellenism displayed in Britain during the Great War and its immediate aftermath was eclipsed by other domestic and foreign issues. That interest was concentrated on the person of Venizelos, and without the main protagonist in command it disappeared even quicker than it had emerged.

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The Great War and the Kingdom of Yugoslavia
The Legacy of an Enduring Conflict

Abstract: The Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, officially named Yugoslavia after 1929, came into being on the ruins of the Habsburg Empire in 1918 after the immense war efforts and sacrifices endured by Serbia. The experience of anti-Habsburg struggle both before and after 1914 and the memory of some of the most difficult moments in the Great War left a deep imprint on the minds of policy-makers in Belgrade. As they believed that many dangers faced in the war were likely to be revived in the future, the impact of these experiences was instrumental to their post-war foreign policy and military planning. This paper looks at the specific ways in which the legacy of the Great War affected and shaped the (planned) responses of the Yugoslav government to certain crises and challenges posed to Yugoslavia and the newly-established order in the region. These concern the reaction to the two attempts of Habsburg restoration in Hungary in 1921, the importance of the Greek port of Salonica (Thessaloniki) for Yugoslavia's strategic and defence requirements, and military planning within the framework of the Little Entente (the defensive alliance between Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia and Romania) in the early 1930s. In addition, it is argued here that the legacy of Serbo-Croat differences during the war relating to the manner of their unification was apparent in the political struggle between Serbs and Croats during the two decades of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia's existence.

Keywords: Great War, Yugoslavia, legacy, Habsburg restoration, Salonica (Thessaloniki), military planning, Serbo-Croat conflict

The Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (officially called Yugoslavia after 1929, although the Yugoslav name was used even earlier for both the state and the South Slavs) was one of the successor states that rose from the ashes of the Habsburg Monarchy at the end of the Great War.[1] Essentially formed by victorious Serbia, although it included former parts of Austria-Hungary, the newly-fledged country rested on the Serbian tradition of anti-Habsburg struggle that preceded the Great War. However, Yugoslavia was perhaps the most

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[1] For a long view of the creation of Yugoslavia see M. Ekmečić, *Stvaranje Jugoslavije 1790–1918*, 2 vols (Belgrade: Prosveta, 1989); D. Djordjević, ed., *The Creation of Yugoslavia* (Santa Barbara: Clio Books, 1980); D. T. Batković, "The Balkan Piedmont. Serbia and the Yugoslav Question", *Dialogue* 10 (1994), 25–73.

complex country in Europe in terms of her ethnic and religious structure, as well as cultural and economic diversity. This was the legacy of the two vanquished empires, the Habsburg and the Ottoman, in whose place Yugoslavia emerged in the Balkans. The vestiges of Austria-Hungary, together with the precarious international situation in interwar Europe, in which Yugoslavia was especially exposed as it was surrounded with the revanchist neighbours, ensured that the long shadow of the Great War was cast on the Yugoslav Kingdom throughout its existence. This was equally true in the realm of foreign policy, military planning and internal politics, especially in relation to the Serbo-Croat conflict, in which the memory of the war and the lessons it offered left a deep imprint. It is the purpose of this paper to look more closely at the ways in which the legacy of the war haunted Yugoslav, particularly Serbian, policy-makers and how they dealt with the challenges it posed.

The most obvious danger to Yugoslavia and the newly-established order in Danubian Europe came from the possibility of a Habsburg restoration, which did not seem altogether unrealistic in the wake of the war. This peril was linked with Hungarian irredentism and revanchist aspirations. The Treaty of Trianon was not signed before 4 June 1920 and the Hungarian ruling circles denounced the dismemberment of the lands of the Crown of St. Stephen. Yugoslavia was unsettled with sizeable Magyar and German national minorities that would be naturally attracted to a Habsburg monarchy to which, after all, they had pledged their allegiance for centuries. All other malcontents, especially separatists in Croatia, could also rally under the Habsburg banner to further their aims.[2] In the spring of 1919, the Yugoslav delegation at the Paris peace conference refused the demand of the Entente Powers to contribute troops to suppress the Bolshevist revolution in Hungary, since they suspected a plot to restore the Habsburgs and revive some sort of a dual Austro-Hungarian state. Nikola Pašić, the most prominent Serbian statesman and head of the delegation, was adamant that to assist such a development in Hungary would be a "colossal sin that would destroy our unity and freedom".[3] In early 1920, there seemed to be a real danger of an attempt to reinstate the Archduke Joseph Habsburg, and Belgrade and Prague joined forces to bring pressure to bear on the Entente Powers to prevent it. On 2 February 1920, the Allied Ambassadors in Paris accepted the resolution

[2] B. Hrabak, "Frankovačka emigrantska secesionistička organizacija i Hrvatska legija u Madjarskoj (1919–1921)", *Zbornik Matice srpske za istoriju* 56 (1997), 97–123.

[3] M. Milošević and B. Dimitrijević, *Nikola Pašić – Predsedniku vlade, strogo poverljivo, lično, Pariz, 1919–1920: Pašićeva pisma sa konferencije mira* (Zaječar: Zadužbina "Nikola Pašić," 2005), doc. 20. Delegation to Prime Minister, str. conf. no. 13, 14 April 1919; for a discussion of the Habsburg problem see A. Mitrović, *Jugoslavija na konferenciji mira 1919–1920* (Belgrade: Zavod za izdavanje udžbenika, 1969), 186–192.

stating that the restoration of the Habsburg dynasty would be "neither recognised nor tolerated" by the Allied Powers.[4]

The ex-emperor of Austria-Hungary, Karl I Habsburg – who had reigned in Hungary as King Károly IV – was in exile in Switzerland and he intended to reclaim his throne. It was with a view to preventing a Habsburg restoration and safeguarding the *status quo* that Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia signed on 14 August 1920 a defensive treaty directed against Hungary, thus initiating the alliance which came to be known as the Little Entente. Italy and Yugoslavia concluded their own anti-Habsburg convention which formed part of the Rapallo Treaty, setting down the frontiers between the two countries.[5] The Little Entente soon came to be tested when on 24 March 1921 Karl Habsburg sneaked out of his exile and reached Hungary via Austria. The escapade was met by a firm attitude on the part of Pašić who embarked on an energetic action in order to evict Karl from Hungary. He immediately proposed to Czechoslovakia, Romania and Italy to make a joint demarche in Budapest to the effect that their ministers would be recalled from Hungary if Karl did not leave the country; to jointly request from France and Britain to support their action in Budapest; and to lodge a protest in Bern because it allowed Karl to endanger European peace.[6] However, the Hungarian Regent, Miklós Horthy, persuaded the ex-emperor to leave Hungary, which the latter eventually did under the protection of officers of the Entente Powers.

Karl's adventure had an important and lasting consequence insofar as Romania joined the Little Entente: she signed an agreement with Czechoslovakia just eighteen days after Karl's expulsion from Hungary (23 April). On 7 June 1921, Pašić and the Romanian Prime Minister, Take Ionescu, concluded an agreement on the same lines in Belgrade. As Pašić put it to Beneš, this was "a significant accomplishment the purpose of which is to maintain peace and secure the peace treaties which are the foundation of the future of our coun-

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[4] *Documents on British Foreign Policy*, ed. E. L. Woodward and R. Butler (London: HMSO, 1946–), ser. I, vol. XII, no. 80, Derby to Curzon, Paris, 2 February 1920; the text of the resolution is appended.

[5] C. Sforza, *Diplomatic Europe since the Treaty of Versailles* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1928), 101–102; I. Lederer, *Yugoslavia at the Paris Peace Conference: a Study in Frontier-making* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963), 307.

[6] Arhiv Jugoslavije [Archives of Yugoslavia; hereafter AJ], Belgrade, London Legation, 341, folder I, confidential archive for 1921, Pašić to Prague, Rome and Bucharest Legations [forwarded to London Legation], 2 April 1921, conf. no. 4130; for an account of the Habsburg restoration attempts see Dj. Knežević, "Kraljevina Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca i dva neuspela pokušaja restauracije Habsburga 1921. godine", *Vojnoistorijski glasnik* 18/1 (1967), 117–138, and V. Vinaver, *Jugoslavija i Madjarska 1918–1933* (Belgrade: Institut za savremenu istoriju, 1971), 153–160.

tries".[7] However, on 21 October 1921, Karl and the ex-empress Zita flew to Hungary, gathered some loyal troops and again descended on Budapest. Horthy reacted with force and stopped him after a minor skirmish on the outskirts of the capital. The Little Entente reacted even more decisively than in March and mobilization was ordered and implemented in Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia, though not in Romania. The Conference of Ambassadors struck a balance between Hungary and her neighbours: Budapest was requested to declare all the Habsburgs barred from wearing the crown of St. Stephen and the Little Entente to refrain from military measures. In early November, the Hungarian National Assembly passed a law that excluded the House of Habsburg from the throne. Karl was removed from Hungary on a British vessel and later interned on the Portuguese island of Madeira where he died in April 1922. But the prospect of a Habsburg restoration not just in Hungary, but also in Austria continued to daunt Yugoslavia and her allies. As late as December 1936, the Yugoslav government suspected that preparations for that purpose were underway in Vienna under the aegis of Italy and Vatican.[8] Indeed, the Habsburg issue was regularly discussed in foreign ministries of the Great Powers and remained a matter of diplomatic exchanges for the rest of interwar period, but it never again created such an acute crisis.

Another controversy in Yugoslav foreign and military policy that essentially derived from the painful experience of the Great War concerned the relations with friendly Greece. Athens was anxious that Yugoslavia might seek an outlet to the Aegean Sea by taking from her the port of Salonica (Thessaloniki), whether alone or in conjunction with Bulgaria. The Yugoslav demand for a free commercial zone in Salonica with extensive rights that infringed on the Greek sovereignty was a major theme behind Belgrade's denouncing the 1913 pact of friendship with Greece in 1924 – it would be resumed five years later. In reality, Yugoslav interest in Salonica was grounded in strategic considerations rather than economic necessity and it concerned defense requirements unrelated to any alleged plans for territorial aggrandizement. The importance of Salonica in Yugoslav strategic thinking stemmed from the retreat that the Serbian Army had had to undertake in the fall of 1915 after having been exposed to the combined offensive of the much stronger Austro-Hungarian, German and Bulgarian forces. As it became clear that the army would have to retreat from Serbian territory or capitulate, the plan was to withdraw southwards down the Vardar valley and join the Franco-British troops which had occupied Salonica and its sur-

[7] AJ, London Legation, 341, folder 1, confidential archive for 1921, Pašić to Gavrilović, 8 June 1921, conf. no. 7222; also Pašić to Gavrilović, 31 May 1921, str. conf. no. 486; Gavrilović to Pašić, 3 June 1921, no number.

[8] AJ, London Legation, 1936, I-4 (Austria, Hungary), Stojadinović to Grujić, 25 December 1936, str. conf. no. 2063/V.

roundings.[9] The Bulgarian attack in the rear cut off the envisaged fallback route and compelled the Serbian army, accompanied by considerable number of civilians, to retreat over the inhospitable Albanian mountains under difficult winter conditions. The Serbs suffered horrific losses until they had reached the coast and had been transported by the Allied shipping to the island of Corfu. This traumatic collective memory was termed the "Albanian Calvary" and remained alive in the minds of policy-makers after the war. The recuperated Serbian Army launched, along with its French and British allies, an offensive from Salonica which ended not just in the liberation of Serbia, but was also a decisive campaign of the war as it forced both Bulgaria and Austria-Hungary to capitulate.

The prominent Yugoslav diplomat and later minister at the Court, Milan Antić, succinctly explained the importance of the fighting at Salonica for both the past and the future: "The Salonica front in the First World War left such a deep impression … in our army that it became an integral part of our struggle for liberation and unification and its history. Salonica entered into strategy and became an integral part of operational necessity of our army in defence of the country."[10] Such an impact was amplified by the strategic position of the new Yugoslavia which was surrounded from the west, north and east by hostile or potentially inimical revisionist neighbours. The only frontiers that seemed safe were those with the allied Romania and Greece. In addition, as early as during the Paris Peace Conference, Italy, the most dangerous neighbour, made sustained efforts, later to be continued and crowned with success, to entrench itself in Albania at Yugoslavia's flank.[11] From the strategic point of view the Yugoslavs were frightened of the peril of the Italians linking from Albania with the Bulgarians across the Vardar valley in Serb Macedonia, thus cutting off the vital Belgrade–Salonica railway in much the same fashion as the Bulgarian army had done in 1915. This consideration was central to Yugoslav military planning. At the time of considerable tension in relations with Rome, Major Antoine Béthouart, French military attaché in Belgrade, was told by the assistants of the chief of the Yugoslav General Staff that neutralisation of Bulgaria would be a primary goal of the army in case of a general war, even at the price of a temporary withdrawal at the western front against Italy. Another military attaché, Colonel Moritz von Faber du Faur from Germany, was of opinion on the eve of the Second World War that Yugoslavia viewed Greece as a bridge to Britain

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[9] A. Mitrović, *Srbija u Prvom svetskom ratu* (Belgrade: Srpska književna zadruga, 1984), 252–253.

[10] Arhiv Srpske akademije nauka i umetnosti [Archives of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts; hereafter ASANU], Belgrade, Milan Antić Papers, 14387/8662, undated Antić's note.

[11] D. Bakić, "The Italo-Yugoslav Conflict over Albania: A View from Belgrade, 1919–1939", *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 25/4 (2014), 592–612.

which she did not want to burn and it was this consideration that informed the attitude towards Salonica.[12] He was no doubt accurate in his assessment of the Yugoslav frame of mind. Aleksandar Cincar-Marković, Yugoslav foreign minister, argued in mid-February 1941 that it was better for Yugoslavia to fight the Germans than to let them have Salonica in which case they would "strangle us completely".[13] It was Belgrade's strategic preoccupation with the Greek port that lay behind negotiations with Germany about Salonica in 1941 with a view to preventing other powers to take it from Greece and block Yugoslavia's access to the Aegean Sea.

The notion of another general European war modelled on that of 1914–1918, which seemed increasingly likely to Belgrade in the 1930s, was also central to military planning against Hungary - and Bulgaria - within the framework of the Little Entente. On 11 May 1931, the Little Entente countries concluded a new tripartite military convention at Bucharest, which replaced all previous conventions and their annexes and modifications.[14] This document also introduced a substantial change in the planned reaction of the Little Entente to potential Hungarian aggression. While heretofore no preparatory measures had been contemplated prior to a Hungarian attack on a member-state, the new convention went so far as to call for mobilization in anticipation of military action on the part of the enemy. This change was brought about by a new frame of mind in which the Hungarian danger was perceived in an entirely different context. Whereas during the 1920s conflict with the Magyars was considered a local affair, the grim outlook in Europe in the early 1930s suggested the possibility of a European war. Should that be the case, Hungary would naturally be expected to come down on the side of a German-led revisionist bloc but she would not present the main threat to the Little Entente. She would rather be a nuisance launching an attack to the rear of the Little Entente forces, the vast majority of which would be engaged elsewhere. In the view of the Little Entente's military planners, such a contingency dictated a rapid full-scale attack that would knock Hungary out of war and enable the three allied countries to concentrate all their available troops against other more powerful enemies.

Simultaneously with the tripartite military convention, a new military convention between Yugoslavia and Romania dealing with the Bulgarian danger was concluded and annexed to the former instrument (ratified on 14 October 1932).[15] The conventions were supplemented with operational plans designed to

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[12] D. Bakić, "The Port of Salonica in Yugoslav Foreign Policy, 1919–1941", *Balcanica* XLIII (2012), 197.

[13] Ibid. 211–212.

[14] M. Vanku, *Mala Antanta 1920–1938* (Titovo Užice: Dimitrije Tucović, 1969), 358–361.

[15] Vojni arhiv [Military Archives; hereafter VA], Belgrade, register 17 [Army of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia], box 105, folder 4, doc. 12.

meet different contingencies. The first plan was devised to respond to a Hungarian attack on Romania while the other two allies were not engaged elsewhere; the second one, between Yugoslavia and Romania, provided for coordinated action against Bulgaria were she to menace either country.[16] In addition, a detailed plan was drawn up in case of a combined attack on the part of Hungary and Bulgaria on Romania.[17] Once again, the assumption was that the conflagration would become a general one, and the aim was to defeat first the Magyars and then the Bulgarians, thus allowing a free hand for action on other fronts. The urgency of preparation for armed conflict seemed to be all the greater in light of the erroneous conviction that the other side had already reached a formal understanding for joint action. The Yugoslav military attaché in Budapest assured his superiors in Belgrade that a military alliance of some sort had been concluded between Hungary and Italy following Dino Grandi's, Italian foreign minister's, visit to Budapest and the return visit to Rome of General Gyula Gömbös, the Hungarian Defence Minister, in 1929.[18] This assumption was commonly held to be true among the diplomatic corps in Budapest because close relations existed between the two General Staffs. The latest preoccupations of the Little Entente's military commanders reached their logical denouement at the Prague meeting of 14 December 1931 in the drafting of the first war plan for a full-blown general conflict on the pattern of the Great War.[19] The work of the General Staffs' representatives was continued in Belgrade where another two versions of general conflict plans were adopted on 17 November 1932. The worst-case scenario for Belgrade envisaged a simultaneous attack on Yugoslavia by Italy, Hungary, Albania, and Bulgaria, together with Soviet and Bulgarian aggression on Romania and an Austro-German offensive against Czechoslovakia. Another plan assumed Bulgarian neutrality, while Hungary would attack Yugoslavia instead of Czechoslovakia.[20] All this meticulous contingency planning eventually amounted to nothing, but it clearly demonstrated that the military leadership of

[16] VA, register 17, box 105, folder 4, doc. 14 and 15 respectively. Both scenarios were deemed highly unlikely except as an attempt to provoke a wider conflict.

[17] VA, register 17, box 105, folder 4, doc. 16.

[18] AJ, Bucharest Legation, 395-22-220, confidential no. 22389, subject: Checking news of a military alliance between Italy and Hungary, Political Department of the Foreign Ministry to Minister, 12 November 1930.

[19] VA, register 17, box 105, folder 4, doc. 20. Hypothetical situation presaged in "Projet No 1 CG [Conflit Generale]": Czechoslovakia was being attacked by Germany, Austria and Hungary, while Yugoslavia was being invaded by Italy, Albania and Bulgaria, and Romania by the Soviet Union and Bulgaria.

[20] VA, register 17, box 106, folder 1, doc. 6, "Projet No 3 CG" and doc. 7, "Projet No 2 CG" respectively. See doc. 2 in the same folder for a protocol on delimitation of the three occupation zones that were to be used to carve Hungary up in case of war.

Yugoslavia, just like those of Czechoslovakia and Romania, regarded the repetition of an armed conflict with their former enemies highly likely and spared no effort to meet it prepared.

As for the internal struggle between the Serbs and Croats in Yugoslavia, it has been noted that it was essentially "an issue of the Jacobin state versus the old Habsburg constitutional complexity of historic units".[21] The Serbs had lived in their independent national and unitary state for decades before the First World War (since the 1878 Congress of Berlin) and saw no reason to change that in a new state which was predicated on the national unity of South Slavs (Serbs, Croats and Slovenes) expressed through slogans "one people with three names" or "the three tribes of the same [Yugoslav] nation", reflecting their common ethnic origins and language - as opposed to religious differences. For them, the complex constitutional solutions advocated by Zagreb smacked too much of the hated and dismantled Austria-Hungary and were not compatible with the notion of a strong and powerful state. In contrast, the Croats had been part of the multinational Habsburg monarchy for centuries and used to having their status arranged through negotiations and contracts such as that of 1868 concluded between them and the Hungarians (*Nagodba*) on the pattern of the Compromise between the Austrians and Hungarians concluded a year earlier. In their dealings with Budapest and Vienna, the Croats had based their autonomous status on the concept of Croatian state right, an equivalent of the Hungarian historical claim to the lands of St. Stephen that took no account of ethnic structure of the territories that Hungary comprised. Regardless of the fact that much of Croatian historical and state rights were, in fact, nominal and that the Croatian Diet (*Sabor*) had dissolved itself prior to the creation of Yugoslavia, political elites from Zagreb clung to their concept of Croatia's status in a common state with the Serbs.

A cleavage in the vision of a prospective Yugoslav state was apparent during the First World War and it was reflected in a clash between the Serbian government headed by Pašić and the Yugoslav Committee, an organization of the Yugoslav exiles from Austria-Hungary. It was Pašić who initiated the formation of the Yugoslav Committee, which he envisaged as a purely propaganda bureau that was supposed to facilitate the achievement of a Yugoslav union, Serbia's proclaimed war goal after December 1914. He also financed the activities of émigrés gathered in the committee, with the notable exception of two Croat politicians from Dalmatia, Frano Supilo and Ante Trumbić. However, these two Croats were the leading members of the Yugoslav Committee and held their own distinct views on the constitutional arrangement of a prospective Yugoslav state that was supposed to preserve the autonomous rights of Croa-

[21] S. Trifković, "The First Yugoslavia and Origins of Croatian Separatism", *East European Quarterly* 26/3 (1992), 355.

tia.[22] Although Supilo died during the war, Trumbić was the president and most influential member of the committee, and he gradually came to oppose the official Serbian policy embodied in Pašić. In July 1917, the Serbian government and the Yugoslav Committee held a conference on the Greek soil and issued the well-known Corfu declaration that confirmed their dedication to the formation of a Yugoslav state, whereas details of constitutional arrangement were left to be resolved later by a constitutional assembly. This glossed over the differences that existed between Pašić and Trumbić for the sake of presenting a united front against Italian pretensions on the Slovene- and Croat-populated lands and impressing the Entente Powers.[23] It is interesting to note that even the name of Yugoslavia was a matter of contention, since the Croats favoured it on the grounds that it emphasised the Yugoslav as opposed to an exclusively Serb character of a future state. Pašić and his Radicals, on the contrary, took a dim view of the Yugoslav name as it echoed the Austrian concept of Yugoslav unity within the trialist framework of the Habsburg Monarchy. This practically meant that the unification of Yugoslavs in Austria-Hungary would be carried out contrary to Serbia's ambitions and goals, even in respect of the Serb population outside Serbia. Therefore, the Serbian Radical government frowned upon such name as being an Austrian brainchild "directed against the Serb name".[24] Fearing Serbia's predominance, Trumbić and his supporters came into open conflict with Pašić in 1918 and advocated something of a dual confederation under the Karadjordjević dynasty, in which pre-war Serbia and the Yugoslav lands of the former Habsburg Monarchy would be two equal constituent units. This was the background against which the Geneva declaration was made in November 1918 resulting from a conference between Pašić and the representatives of the newly-formed National Council from Zagreb, a revolutionary government of the Yugoslav-populated Habsburg lands, Serbian opposition parties and the Yugoslav Committee. Having been isolated, Pašić was forced on that occasion to accept the requests of the Yugoslav Committee in order to preserve the appearance of Yugoslav unity before the Entente Powers and European public opinion. He accepted the principles of an essentially confederal constitution, which was a negation of his own unitary conceptions.[25] But ministers in his government re-

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[22] A. Dragnich, *Serbia, Nikola Pašić and Yugoslavia* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1974); Dj. Stanković, *Nikola Pašić i jugoslovensko pitanje*, 2 vols (Belgrade: BIGZ, 1985).

[23] D. Janković, *Jugoslovensko pitanje i Krfska deklaracija 1917. godine* (Beograd: Savremena administracija, 1967).

[24] *Krfska konferencija* (Belgrade: Štamparija "Skerlić", 1934), 82, 84.

[25] B. Krizman, "Ženevska konferencija o ujedinjenju 1918. godine", *Istorijski glasnik* 1–2 (1958), 3–32; D. Janković, "Ženevska konferencija o stvaranju jugoslovenske zajednice 1918. godine", *Istorija XX veka* 5 (1963), 225–262, and "Još o Ženevskoj konferenciji o stvaranju

signed in protest and thus invalidated the Geneva agreement. It was the Serbian military victory and the prospect of annexation of large parts of Croat territory by Italian troops that decided the matter and brought about the Yugoslav unification on 1 December 1918 under the Serbian terms.

During the peace conference in Paris, the Serbs and Croats in the Yugoslav delegation presented a united front, despite their occasional frictions, in order to secure the best possible territorial settlement. The conflict continued nevertheless with the Croat opposition to the centralist St. Vitus (*Vidovdan*) constitution of 1921 both before and after its adoption. The Croat opposition took the shape of passive resistance of the Croat Peasant Party (CPP), which became a virtual Croat national movement led by mercurial Stjepan Radić, to the very existence of a unitary Yugoslavia.[26] In 1925, Radić came to an agreement with the Pašić government and it seemed that Serbo-Croat internecine strife had been finally brought to an end. However, Radić's death at the hands of a Serbian member of parliament in 1928 led to Croats' abandoning state institutions and disputing once again the legitimacy of a unitary Yugoslavia. The introduction of King Alexander's dictatorship next year and the imposition of integral Yugoslavism, an ideology aimed at supressing Serb, Croat and Slovene national identity alike, only exacerbated the situation in the country. Radić's successor, Vladimir Maček, refused any cooperation with the government in the existing constitutional framework: he wanted a highly autonomous status of Croatia within Yugoslavia, or alternatively an independent Croatia.[27] On 7 November 1932, the Croat opposition issued the Zagreb Points (*Zagrebačke punktacije*) that called for the return to the pre-constitutional situation of 1918 from which a negotiated settlement between the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes would determine the internal composition of the country. The resolution vaguely mentioned "the association of interests" based on the freely expressed will of the constituent units. Trumbić, the author of the text and now formally a member of the CPP, claimed that such a state would not be a federation, "even such as Switzerland".[28] Clearly, the Croat demands increased radically and surpassed those made by Trumbić and Supilo during the war; they most resembled a kind of personal union in which constituent parts of the country would be nearly independent and only

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jugoslovenske zajednice 1918, godine", *Zbornik radova Pravnog fakulteta u Novom Sadu* 3–4 (1966), 247–264; M. Stefanovski, "Nikola Pašić na Ženevskoj konferenciji 1918. godine", in *Nikola Pašić: život i delo* (Belgrade: Zavod za udžbenike, 1997), 331–354.

[26] B. Hrabak, "Stjepan Radić i HPSS 1918–1920. godine", *Zbornik Matice srpske za istoriju* 59/60 (1999), 71–105.

[27] Lj. Boban, *Maček i politika Hrvatske seljačke stranke, 1928–1941: iz povijesti hrvatskog pitanja*, 2 vols (Zagreb: Liber and Rijeka: Otokar Keršovani, 1974).

[28] Lj. Boban, "Geneza, značenje i odjek Zagrebačkih punktacija", *Časopis za suvremenu povijest* 1 (1971), 153–209.

a few, carefully limited functions be left to the central government in Belgrade. This political platform had the air of a confederal structure of the defunct Austria-Hungary which reflected the mentality and traditions of Croat political parties. For that reason, it was deeply distasteful to Serbians who regarded it as an undoing of their military victory and a request to abandon the Serbs of Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina to Zagreb. To be true, the Serbian-dominated governments never showed themselves capable of at least trying to initiate some compromise solution with the CPP. The Serbian opposition parties did reach an understanding with CPP in 1937 and formed the election coalition, but they failed to appreciate that for Maček, unlike for themselves, the national question was far more important than restoring democratic rule in the country.

Following King Alexander's assassination in Marseilles in 1934, the regime of Prince Paul, Regent of Yugoslavia, had to deal with the Croat opposition in the increasingly volatile international situation. It was Prince Paul's anxiety to consolidate the country at the outbreak of the Second World War that led him to give way and reach an agreement with CPP, which resulted in the formation of *Banovina Hrvatska*, a Croat province with extensive autonomy, in 1939.[29] This was the realisation of Croat demands, including their rather excessive territorial ambitions, and it also meant that considerable number of Serbs found themselves within the Croatian province. The views of Trumbić and other Croat leaders grounded in the experience of a confederal union of Austria-Hungary appeared to have triumphed twenty years after the Great War and the demise of the Habsburg Empire. A Serbian legal expert remarked that the Croats "imagine the relationship between Banovina Croatia and the [Yugoslav] state as a relationship between two equal authorities which constantly make agreements".[30] This description of the Croats' attitude of mind regarding their status in Yugoslavia clearly shows that they perceived it as stemming from another compromise (*nagodba*) on the pattern of those that had constructed Austro-Hungarian political edifice. With such solution of the Croat question, it turned out that Serbia failed to achieve even the integral unification of all the Serbs, despite the preserved Yugoslav state. It seemed that Serbo-Croat relations came full circle: while there had been a consensus in 1918 that the Serbs and Croats (and Slovenes) constituted a single Yugoslav nation, which had served to justify the creation of Yugoslavia on the nationality principle, the formation of Croatian *banovina* was a return to the notion that they were two separate nations. The Yugoslav interwar experience with nationalities conflict proved to be reminiscent of Austria-Hungary's difficulties to put its house in order. The 1939 Serbo-Croat agreement offered a prospect for Yugoslavia to settle her thorniest

[29] Lj. Boban, *Sporazum Cvetković-Maček* (Beograd: Institut društvenih nauka, 1965).

[30] M. Konstantinović, *Politika sporazuma: dnevničke beleške 1939–1941: londonske beleške 1944–1945* (Novi Sad: Agencija "Mir", 1998), 42, 551, 564.

issue, but such hopes were not fully justified immediately after establishing of the Croatian province due to somewhat provisional character of the settlement. What its long-term effects would be, however, can only remain a matter of speculation, since Yugoslavia's involvement in the war brought about the destruction of that country.

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A Ten Years' War
Aspects of the Greek Historiography on the First World War

Abstract: This article tries to provide an evaluation of the Greek historiography on the First World War (WWI) and to illustrate its various research stages and trends. It is argued that the Greek historiography mainly approaches WWI and Greece's involvement not as an international, but as a domestic phenomenon. Greek involvement in WWI has been looked at through the lens of the Asia Minor Catastrophe in 1922, an episode of the ten-year war of the Greek army starting with the triumphant Balkan Wars and ending with the defeat in the Asia Minor Campaign in 1922.

Keywords: historiography, Greece, National Schism, Eleftherios Venizelos, King Constantine, Entente, Central Powers

In 1962, the Greek historian Polychronis Enepekidis, professor at the University of Vienna, published his book *Η Δόξα και ο Διχασμός 1908–1916* (Glory and Discord 1908–1916), which was mainly based on Austrian archival sources. Enepekidis argues that the period of 1909–1918 was dramatic for Greece because the country suffered a lot as a result of the National Schism, and the failure to establish a liberal state such as those of Western Europe.[1] Enepekidis begins his account with 1909, the year when a military coup d'état led to the arrival in Athens of a young Cretan lawyer, Eleftherios Venizelos, who soon emerged as the most inspired political leader on the Greek political scene. Venizelos saw national integration as the main goal of Greek foreign policy at the beginning of the twentieth century. According to Enepekidis, he was a man who was able to realize the Greek "Great Idea", i.e. Greece's territorial expansion and incorporation of territories – such as Asia Minor, Constantinople, Eastern Thrace, etc. – where thousands of Greeks had been living for centuries. Through the pages of his book, Enepekidis unrolls his line of thought clearly, approaching historical events through a spectrum of national expansionist priorities. Therefore, he considers the resignation of Venizelos in 1915 to have been a disaster,

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[1] Πολυχρόνης Ενεπεκίδης, *Η Δόξα και ο Διχασμός. Από τα μυστικά αρχεία της Βιέννης 1908–1916* (Athens: Mpiris, 1962), 11.

arguing that the "great national dreams for a resurrected Greek Asia Minor and a Constantinople in the hands of the Greek army were destroyed".[2] Enepekidis goes one step further when he makes a clear correlation between the expulsion of the Greek Christian population from Asia Minor and the political debates in Athens, accusing Berlin of having designed the persecutions.[3] He also accuses King Constantine and the anti-Venizelist politicians of national betrayal leading to the occupation of Greek eastern Macedonia by the Bulgarian army in1916.[4]

Enepekidis was not the only scholar to make such observations. In this article, I shall try to point out that the participation of Greece in the First World War (WWI) has been perceived by most Greek historians not as a distinctive period in its own right, but rather as an episode in Greek expansionist policy, which reached its peak during the first two decades of the twentieth century. Moreover, Greek historiography focuses on Greek involvement in the Great War more in relation to national ambitions, much less with regard to its European dimensions and perspectives. The National Schism arose in 1915 as a result of the conflict between Venizelos and Constantine over the orientation of Greek foreign policy. This dispute has been considered to be the main reason behind the Greek catastrophe in Asia Minor in 1922, and still remains the main criterion for evaluating all political developments during these years.

Greek historians began to explain Greek involvement in WWI through the lens of the National Schism as early as during the war itself. The roots of this tendency may be found in the necessity to respond to the propaganda mechanisms of the opponents. During the interwar period, historiography was turned into a "propaganda weapon", and a "vehicle to justify" the policies of the Venizelists or the royalists. Moreover, the trauma caused by the execution of six leading officials belonging to the anti-Venizelist camp who were found guilty for the Asia Minor Catastrophe in November 1922 enriched the so-called "war of historians" with a moral pressure on pro-royalist historians to work intensively for the vindication of the "innocent victims". In addition, the Asia Minor Catastrophe and the refugee issue facilitated the consolidation of the period 1908–1923 as a domestic issue in terms of modern history.

Georgios Ventiris, an editor at the time of the Great War and a close friend of Eleftherios Venizelos, published in 1931 a two-volume work on the events of 1910–1920.[5] Ventiris compares the 1910–1920 period to that of 1820–1830, when the Greek War of Independence led to the creation of the first Modern Greek nation state. Like Enepekidis and all historians supporting

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[2] Ibid. 231.

[3] Ibid. 305.

[4] Ibid. 332.

[5] *Η Ελλάς του 1910–1920. Ιστορική μελέτη* [Greece 1910–1920. Historical Study], 2 vols. (Athens: Pyrsos, 1931).

Venizelos, he argues that the second decade of the twentieth century was crucial because it was for the first time in Greek history that a fully independent and homogenous state was achieved. It is easy to understand the innermost thoughts of Venizelist authors. The policy of national expansion and the twofold increase in Greek territory after consecutive wars was the result of a foreign policy designed by Eleftherios Venizelos himself. But the architect of the Greek "Great Idea" or the "Greece of two continents and five seas" lost the 1920 elections to the royalists, despite military success. These election results proved disastrous for Greece since the royalists who formed the new government failed in the Asia Minor Campaign and were held responsible for its disastrous outcome in 1922.

During the National Schism and the catastrophe of the Greek Army in Asia Minor, as well as during the interwar period, the controversy between royalists and Venizelists continued in the field of historiography. With recent tensions still high, the vast majority of the Greek bibliography on WWI was nothing more than propaganda leaflets and pamphlets or memoirs written by supporters of the Entente or the Central Powers. Representing the Venizelist camp, in 1916, the Anglo-Hellenic League, led by some of closer friends of Venizelos, published a pamphlet in English which included reproduced newspaper articles in an effort to support the goal of Venizelos to join the Entente. In 1917, Crawfurd Price, a British war correspondent during the Balkan Wars, focused his analysis on the personality of Venizelos and described him as a "remarkable" politician.[6]

Turning to the royalist camp, we have to mention the French historian Edouard Driault, who was the most eminent historian supporting the policy of King Constantine. In 1936, Driault published a volume on the reign of King Constantine, in which he likened the king to a hero and a martyr.[7] Driault's sympathy for the king was also clear in the fifth volume of his *Greek History*, where he presented and analyzed the events from the Young Turk Revolution (1908) to the Treaty of Lausanne (1923). The publication of this book was banned by the Venizelist interwar governments and it was published in Greek only in 2000.[8] But the aforementioned events aroused suspicions that the Venizelists had something to hide. In this book, Driault argues that King Constantine was stable and sincere in his policy of neutrality and that it was Venizelos himself who pressed for Greece's immediate entry into the war without any substantial offer from the Entente Powers. Spyridon Fokas Kosmetatos was also a strong supporter

6 Crawfurd Price, *Venizelos and the War. A Sketch of Personalities and Politics* (London: Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent & Company, 1917), 17.

7 Edouard Driault, *Le Basileus Constantin XII. Héros et Martyr* (Paris: Recueil Sirey, 1936).

8 Edouard Driault, *Histoire Diplomatique de la Grèce de 1821 à nos jours*, vol. 5 (Paris: Les Presses universitaires de France, 1926).

of King Constantine. Since 1921, Kosmetatos published three monographs to refute the claims that the king was responsible for the National Schism.[9]

As a result of such publications, the dispute between royalists and Venizelists concerning the orientation of Greece continued in the literature. It was a transformation of the National Schism into a historiographical schism, where the focus of most publications was on propaganda mechanisms used by the two main Greek political parties. A highly emotional approach also prevailed, with the use of phrases such as "martyr" or "diablo" prohibiting moderate approaches.

The evaluation of WWI started to change shortly after the end of the Second World War; understandably so because the historical archives holding documents from WWI gradually opened their treasuries during the Cold War. It was also a period when WWI generation started to withdraw, so historians were able to proceed without any conscience-related reservations. Historiographical production began with the presentation of the military operations of the Greek army on the Salonika Front, which have been analyzed in an official two-volume edition by the Greek General Staff.[10]

Despite an intensification of the historiographical production at the beginning of the Cold War, it is during the last thirty years that interest in WWI has undoubtedly increased. The main reason has been that historians and other experts have been allowed access to previously closed archives. Alexander Mitrakos published a pioneering work on France's policy in Greece during WWI, using French and Greek archives.[11] The Institute for Balkan Studies in Thessaloniki was probably the most active Greek centre with regard to this issue. In 1983, the Institute organized, in cooperation with King's College, a conference on relations between Greece and Great Britain during WWI.[12] Four years later, another conference focused on the relationship between Greece and Serbia during WWI.[13] The last such conference was organized in 2002 by the Institute and

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[9] S. Cosmin, *Diplomatie et presse dans l'affaire grecque* (Paris: Société mutuelle d'édition, 1921); *L'Entente et la Grèce pendant la Grande Guerre*, vol. 2 (Paris: Société mutuelle d'édition, 1926); *Dossiers Secrets de la Triple Entente. Grèce (1914–1922)* (Paris: Nouvelles éditions latines, 1969).

[10] Γενικόν Επιτελείον Στρατού/Διεύθυνσις Ιστορίας Στρατού, *Ο Ελληνικός Στρατός κατά τον Πρώτον Παγκόσμιον Πόλεμον* [Greek Army during WWI], vol. 2 (Athens: Greek Army General Staff, 1958), 1961.

[11] Alexander S. Mitrakos, *France in Greece during World War I: A Study in the Politics of Power* (New York: Boulder, East European Monographs, 1982).

[12] *Greece and Great Britain during World War I*. Papers read at the First International Symposium organized in Thessaloniki by the Institute for Balkan Studies and King's College (December 15–17, 1983) (Thessaloniki: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1985).

[13] *Proceedings of the Fifth Greek-Serbian Symposium, 1. Serbia and Greece during the First World War. 2. The Ideas of the French Revolution, the Enlightenment and the Pre-Romantic Period in the Balkans, 1780–1830*. Organized by the Institute for Balkan Studies and the Serbian

the National Research Foundation "Eleftherios K. Venizelos" and devoted to the Salonika Front.[14] Most speakers came from Balkan countries and described the Salonika Front in all its diplomatic dimensions and in relation to the political priorities of the Balkan nation states. Moreover, the Provisional Government which settled in Thessaloniki in 1916, and the role of Eleftherios Venizelos, was the general topic of a series of lectures organized by the National Bank of Greece.[15]

The Institute for Balkan Studies in Thessaloniki also provided a forum for scholars to publish their work. For instance, Ch. Theodoulou published a book on the relations between Greece and the Entente Powers,[16] while G. Leon continued in the same context.[17] Professor Leon used a variety of sources, and conducted extensive research in the historical archives of the Greek, French, English and German foreign ministries. He was also the main author of a chapter on Greece and WWI in the multi-volume *History of the Greek Nation*.[18]

The number of related works has increased in recent years. A new generation of Greek historians has searched for different answers in the documents. New historiographical trends represent a systematic effort to evaluate the consequences of political events in Greek society at the crucial time when the Entente Powers violated Greek sovereignty.[19] Moreover, they highlight some previously ignored aspects of the dispute between royalists and Venizelists. Historians George Mavrogordatos and Ioannis Mourelos, two of the most eminent Greek experts on WWI, describe the dramatic events of the *Noemvriana*, when the

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Academy of Sciences and Arts in Thessaloniki and Volos, 9–12 October 1987 (Thessaloniki: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1991).

[14] *The Salonica Theatre of Operations and the Outcome of the Great War*. Proceedings of the International Conference organized by the Institute for Balkan Studies and the National Research Foundation "Elefterios K. Venizelos" in Thessaloniki, 16–18 April 2002 (Thessaloniki: Institute for Balkan Studies, 2005), 446.

[15] National Bank of Greece, *ο Ελευθέριος Βενιζέλος στη Θεσσαλονίκη. Η προσωρινή Κυβέρνηση 1916–1917* [Eleftherios Venizelos in Thessaloniki. The Provisional Government] (Thessaloniki: National Bank of Greece, 1994).

[16] Christos Thedoulou, *Greece and the Entente, August 1, 1914 – September 25, 1916* (Thessaloniki: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1971).

[17] George B. Leon, *Greece and the Great Powers, 1914–1917* (Thessaloniki: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1974); *Η Ελλάδα στον Πρώτο Παγκόσμιο Πόλεμο 1917–1918* [Greece in WWI 1917–1918] (Athens: Morfotiko Idryma Ethnikis Trapezis, 2000).

[18] *Ιστορία του Ελληνικού Έθνους* [History of the Greek Nation], vol. 15 (Athens: Ekdotiki Athinon, 1978), 8–46, 52–55.

[19] A. Tounda-Fergadi, "Violations de la neutralité grecque par les Puissances de l'Entente durant la Première Guerre mondiale", *Balkan Studies* 26/1 (1985), 113–129.

tension between the Entente Powers and King Constantine reached its peak,[20] while D. Portolos focuses on Greek foreign policy.[21] Gerasimos Alexatos, on the other hand, explains a controversial issue, the surrender of the Greek Fourth Army Corps to the Germans in 1916 and its transportation to Görlitz in Upper Silesia.[22] Turning to a more recent generation of Greek historians, Elli Lemonidou discusses aspects of the relationship between Greece and France.[23]

The centenary of WWI gave a new impetus to the historiographical production in Greece. It can be described as close to an explosion since interest in WWI has not been restricted to the community of historians but also reached the public sphere. Conferences,[24] colloquia,[25] public debates and articles in newspapers[26] added to the Greek contribution to the commemoration of the events. It is true that public debates in Greece did not have the same intensity as in other countries, and expectedly so because Greece had not been involved in the outbreak of WWI and its more widely debated aspects. But Greece followed

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[20] Γ. Μαυρογορδάτος, *Εθνικός Διχασμός και Μαζική Οργάνωση. Οι επίστρατοί του 1916* [National Schism and Mass Organization. The Reservists of 1916] (Athens: Alexandreia, 1996); Γιάννης Μουρέλος, *Τα 'Νοεμβριανά' του 1916. Από το αρχείο της Μεικτής Επιτροπής Αποζημιώσεων των θυμάτων* [Noemviana of 1916. From the Archives of the Joint Committee for the Compensation of the Victims] (Athens: Patakis, 2006).

[21] D. Portolos, "Greek Foreign Policy from September 1916 to October 1918" (PhD thesis, University of London, 1974).

[22] Γεράσιμος Αλεξάτος, *Οι Έλληνες του Γκαίρλιτς 1916–1919* [Greeks in Görlitz 1916–1919] (Thessaloniki: Ekdoseis Kyriakidi, 2010).

[23] Elli Lemonidou, "Les volontaires grecs au service de la France pendant la Première Guerre mondiale", *Revue Historique des Armées* 240 (2005), 112–122; Elli Lemonidou, "Des écrivains grecs engagés durant la Première Guerre mondiale", *La Lettre R* 2-3 (2005), 160-169; Elli Lemonidou, "Entre information et propagande: la Grèce dans la presse britannique et française de la Première Guerre mondiale", *La Revue LISA* IV/3 (2006), 17–28, accessible at: http://lisa.revues.org/1982 (24/2/2018); Elli Lemonidou, "La politique britannique en Grèce durant l'année 1916", in *1916. La Grande-Bretagne en guerre*, eds. Henry Daniels and Nathalie Collé-Bak (Nancy: Presses Universitaires de Nancy, 2007), 45–61; Elli Lemonidou, "Propaganda and Mobilizations in Greece during the First World War", in *World War I and Propaganda*, ed. Troy Paddock (Leiden – Boston: Brill, 2014), 273–291; Elli Lemonidou, "La Marine alliée en Grèce pendant la Première Guerre mondiale", in *Making Waves in the Mediterranean*, eds. Michela d'Angelo, Gelina Harlaftis and Carmel Vassallo (Messina: Istituto di Studi Storici Gaetano Salvemini, 2010), 139–143.

[24] See e.g. https://www.imxa.gr/ebooks/Thessaloniki%20government_volume.pdf (accessed 24/2/2018).

[25] See e.g. https://www.britishcouncil.gr/sites/default/files/salonika-remembers-presentation-programme.pdf (accessed 24/2/2018).

[26] See e.g. http:// www.tovima.gr/opinions/article/?aid=556115, http:// chronosmag.eu/index.php/sl-p-g-e-ths-pgs-pl.html; http:// www.tovima.gr/culture/article/?aid=62136, http://www.tovima.gr/culture/article/?aid=654750 (accessed 24/2/2018).

these debates and new historiographical narratives through Greek translations of the best known books, such as *The Sleepwalkers* of the Australian historian Christopher Clark.[27] In October 2015, the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki in collaboration with the University of Macedonia and the Institute for Balkan Studies in Thessaloniki organized an international conference under the title "The Salonica Front in World War I". Historians and other experts from involved countries presented their work on the Macedonian Front.[28] As stated by the President of the Organizational Committee Ioannis Mourelos, the conference tried to restore the Salonica Front into the general framework of the other military fronts. This conference was actually the most systematic effort to focus on the participation of Greece in WWI as an international, and not a domestic/local issue. In the same direction, in December 2014 the Kalliopi Koufa Foundation for the Promotion of International and Human Rights Law organized an interdisciplinary colloquium, "World War I – Centenary", in order to evaluate the causes of the war and discuss its legacies and memories.[29] Some aspects of Greek involvement and the memory of the Great War were also discussed in a colloquium organized by the Institute of International Relations in Athens.[30] The public interest in WWI is also evident in public history. In this respect, the most noteworthy work is "Thessaloniki during the First World War", a continuing publication series with more than 15 titles thus far.[31] In the same framework, we may also mention the book '*Η Θεσσαλονίκη στον Α' Παγκόσμιο Πόλεμο και η γενικότερη ελληνική εμπλοκή* (Thessaloniki in the First World War and Greek Intervention).[32] In December 2015, the Greek journal *Archeiotaxio* devoted an issue to WWI and the participation of Greece in it.[33]

But despite the aforementioned fresh approaches, the memory of WWI in Greece is still mostly associated with the National Schism and the catastro-

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[27] Christopher Clark, *Οι υπνοβάτες. Πώς η Ευρώπη πήγε στον πόλεμο το 1914*, Greek translation (Athens: Alexandreia, 2014).

[28] For more details see http://www.hist.auth.gr/en/macedonianfrontconference (accessed 24/2/2018).

[29] See http://www.koufafoundation.org/december-wwi/ (accessed 24/2/2018).

[30] See http://www.idis.gr/?p=4654 (accessed 24/2/2018).

[31] https://www.ebooks.gr/gr/%CF%83%CE%B5%CE%B9%CF%81%CE%B1-%CE%B7-%CE%B8%CE%B5%CF%83%CF%83%CE%B1%CE%BB%CE%BF%CE%BD%CE%B9%CE%BA%CE%B7-%CF%83%CF%84%CE%BF%CE%BD-%CE%B1-%CF%80%CE%B1%CE%B3%CE%BA%CE%BF%CF%83%CE%BC%CE%B9%CE%BF-%CF%80%CE%BF%CE%BB%CE%B5%CE%BC%CE%BF-11816 (accessed 24/2/2018).

[32] Γαβριήλ Ν. Συντομόρου, *Η Θεσσαλονίκη στον Α' Παγκόσμιο Πόλεμο και η γενικότερη ελληνική εμ πλοκή* (Thessaloniki: Zitros, 2016).

[33] *Αρχειοτάξιο* 17 (Decem ber 2015).

phe of the Greek army in Asia Minor.[34] Focusing on the National Schism, Professor Mourelos argues that WWI was only the peak of it, describing it also as a conflict between the traditional Greek elites loyal to King Constantine and the newly emerged bourgeoisie led by Venizelos.[35] Generally, Greek participation in WWI is being seen as a compact period which started with the triumphant Balkan Wars and ended with the dramatic events in Smyrna. This interpretation seems to be inevitable. Since the Great Idea policy was dominant, it is easy to understand that national integration seemed more appealing than any other option – especially because Greece's involvement in WWI was short, actually lasting less than one and a half years. The country declared war against the Central Powers in June 1917, shortly after King Constantine's dethronement and the establishment of Venizelos's government in Athens. Only the troops loyal to Venizelos had joined the operations of the Entente on the Macedonian Front from the middle of 1916, but even in this case the military operations in Macedonia cannot be compared to what was happening on other fronts, especially the Western Front. The "gardeners of Salonika", as the soldiers of the Entente Powers sent to the Salonika Front were known, became famous more for their achievements in the Macedonian countryside during a peaceful period than for their military feats.

The trend to evaluate Greece's involvement in WWI through the lens of the National Schism is clear even in recent works. The sixth volume of the *History of New Hellenism* covers the period 1909–1922 under the title "The National Integration". In this volume, Greek participation in WWI is included in the same chapter as the Balkan Wars and the Greek military campaign in Ukraine.[36] Moreover, John Koliopoulos and Thanos Veremis, two leading Greek historians, in their book *Greece. The Modern Sequel*, include WWI in the ten years' war (1913–1923).[37]

The First World War proved to be a great catastrophe for almost all of the participants. It was not only the loss of lives on battlefields; it was also the legacy of this war, the collapse of ideals, Europe's lost generation. Greece remained on the margin of the events in 1914–1918. The Great Powers did not consider Greece to be as important as the other Balkan states. But in 1919, when

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[34] Γιώργος Μαυρογορδάτος, *1915. Ο Εθνικός Διχασμός* [1915. The National Schism)] (Athens: Patakis, 2015), and Αθηνά Κακούρη, *Τα δύο Βήτα* [The two B] (Athens: Kapon Editions, 2016). Both books. presenting interpretations of the Venizelists and of the supporters of King Constantine respectively, have become bestsellers in Greece.

[35] Μουρέλος, *Τα Νοεμβριανά*, 18.

[36] *Ιστορία του Νέου Ελληνισμού (1770–2000)* [History of New Hellenism 1770–2000], vol.16 (Athens: Ellinika Grammata, 2003).

[37] Θάνος Βερέμης & Γιάννης Κολιόπουλος, *Ελλάς. Η σύγχρονη συνέχεια από το 1821 μέχρι σήμερα* [Greece. The Modern Sequel from 1821 onwards] (Athens: Kastaniotis, 2006), 328-362.

the rest of the world entered a short, twenty-year period of peace, Greece faced its real war in Asia Minor. The Asia Minor campaign proved a real catastrophe for the Greek Army. On the outskirts of Ankara, Greeks experienced their own havoc like the other Europeans had on the Somme and in Verdun. Paying tribute to its own lost generation, Greek historiography has included the period of 1914–1918 into its own national historical narrative which started with the triumphant Balkan Wars in 1912 but closed dramatically in the ashes of Smyrna in 1922.

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What Exactly did Romanian Post-War Nationalism Mean?

Abstract: In the last century nationalism as a spiritual element – according to the 1919 statement of the historian, archaeologist and philosopher Vasile Pârvan – was a blessed plant grown on Romanian soil during the '48 revolution, the '59 union under Prince Cuza, the '77 war of independence and the preparation of such a national project as the Union with the Romanian Kingdom of several Romanian-speaking provinces dominated by two empires – the Austrian and the Russian – epitomized by Transylvania which came finally to the motherland on the 1st of December 1918, the same day when the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes was born. In the nationalism project, the Union Transylvania was a political priority. But we must add immediately that in the events of 1914–1916 in the neighbourhood of Romania a symbol of the national struggle became what Nicolae Iorga, in a famous lecture of 1915, called "the heroic and martyr Serbia".

Keywords: nationalism, Romania, Transylvania, Nicolae Iorga

Used for the first time on the 4th of July 1892 by Maurice Barrès in his article "La querelle des nationalistes et des cosmopolites" in *Le Figaro*, the word "nationalism" was employed by the interwar and post 1945 dictatorship regimes of Central and Eastern Europe on several occasions in the twentieth century. The same word, becoming a concept, reappeared in national enthusiasm in the former communist countries after the collapse of so-called "proletarian internationalism". After 1990 this "nationalism" was quickly denounced in a superficial if not malevolent manner by West-European print and audio-visual media, which entirely ignored an important body of academic literature, from Ernst Gellner's *Nations and nationalism* (Oxford 1983) to Michel Winock's *Le XXe siècle idéologique et politique* (Paris 2009).

In that way politicians and journalists of the West – obsequiously imitated by some politicians and journalists of the countries in question – ignored "nationalism" as a positive and patriotic doctrine including in its history the Italian and German "unifying nationalism" of the time of Cavour and Bismarck, the "republican nationalism" of General de Gaulle, the Jewish, Armenian and Greek "diaspora nationalism", completely different from "populist nationalism" which has recently emerged in France, the Netherlands, England and Austria, from

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Fascist and Nazi nationalism or from the "totalitarian nationalism" of the Iron Guard in Romania.

In the last century nationalism as a spiritual element – according to the 1919 statement of the historian, archaeologist and philosopher Vasile Pârvan – was a blessed plant grown in Romanian soil during the 1848 revolution, the 1859 union under Prince Cuza, the 1877 war of independence and the preparation of such a national project as the Union with the Romanian kingdom of several Romanian-speaking provinces dominated by two empires – the Austrian and the Russian – epitomized by Transylvania which finally came to the motherland on the 1st of December 1918, the same day when the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes was born.

In the nationalist project, the Union Transylvania was a political priority. But we must add immediately that in the events of 1914–1916 in the neighbourhood of Romania a symbol of the national struggle became what Nicolae Iorga, in a famous lecture of 1915, called "the heroic and martyr Serbia".

The struggle of the South-Slav people of the West Balkans against the invasion of the Austro-Hungarian Empire – the same that dominated the Romanians in Transylvania, Banat and Bucovina – was, from the 28th of July of 1914, when Serbia was attacked, followed with sympathy and solidarity by the Romanians led by the already mentioned professor Nicolae Iorga.

The list of Iorga's lectures and articles devoted to Serbia is most impressive. On 10 November 1913 – not many months before the outbreak of the world war – he spoke at the Royal Serbian Academy about historical relations between Serbs and Romanians.[1] "Les deux nations serbe et roumaine sont particulièrement faites pour s'entendre et se soutenir" was the statement of Iorga who, a year later, on 21 November 1914 – when Belgrade was on the verge of being seized by the Austro-Hungarian army – delivered a speech at the Institute of South-East European Studies about the history of the Hungarian and Austrian pretensions towards the Balkan Slavic world, from the Anjou dynasty to the Peace of Karlowitz.[2]

A week later, on 28 November, at the Romanian Academy, Iorga evoked again the Romanian-Serbian contacts and underlined the fact that "our relations with the Serbs in fear and hope are closer than ever".[3] The place of national culture in Serbia was commented in a lecture at the "Casa Şcoalelor" (The House of Schools) in Bucharest,[4] and the dual face of the same Serbia – "the Adriatic"

[1] Nicolae Iorga, *Relations entre Serbes et Roumains* (Vălenii de Munte 1913).

[2] Nicolae Iorga, *Politica austriacă față de Serbia* (Bucharest: institutului Sud-Ost-European, 1915).

[3] Nicolae Iorga, "Din legăturile noastre cu Serbia, Corespondența românească a voievozilor din Cladova", Bucharest 1915, 3.

[4] Nicolae Iorga, "Pagini despre Serbia de azi", Bucharest 1914.

and the "Rascian" Serbia – was the topic of another lecture at the Romanian Academy on 9 October 1915.[5]

Two weeks later, on 24 October, at the Romanian Athenaeum, amidst an overflowing enthusiasm, Nicolae Iorga gave his famous lecture devoted to Serbian courage and martyrdom,[6] greeting the "sublime unfortunate heroism in the face of the triumphant impudence of a stronger enemy".

A month later, in Craiova, Iorga gave a charity lecture for the benefit of "Serbian refugees" about the contacts of the Romanian province of Oltenia with Serbia,[7] whose "noble people" was living through a tragic moment, and exclaimed: "Serbia can live only undivided… I believe, gentlemen that Serbia cannot die."

Even in more general debates on such a moment of European tensions, Iorga, speaking about the Balkan peoples at the Romanian Athenaeum on 13 December 1915, or about the ongoing war on 21 December, constantly proved his friendly feelings for the Serbs "who are the enemies of our enemies".

The symbolic meaning of Serbian resistance in the struggle for the national idea was turned by Iorga into a symbolic Romanian meaning.

If Serbian nationalism confronted with Austro-Hungarian imperialism became a major impulse for the completion of Romanian nationalism embodied at a highest level by the "national teacher" Nicolae Iorga, the main nationalist project of the Union of Transylvania was the absolute priority in the neutrality years, during the war and – once the project was carried out – a recurrent theme in the national debate to a certain extent. The reason was that, twenty years after 1918, the Transylvanian tragedy (August 1940) made the intra-Carpathian space the main topic of reflection for several Romanian historians, men of letters, thinkers and politicians.

Again and again Nicolae Iorga spoke with a strong and decisive voice, when he evoked (8 September 1914) "the unifying vision of Transylvania"[8] or when he spoke (December 1915) about "a part of our nation which is bleeding today in Transylvania".

The Union achieved, Iorga welcomed on behalf of the Romanian Academy, on 31 May 1919, the return of Bessarabia and Transylvania to the national body and remarked the perfect geographical unity between the Dniester and the Tisza, "the two great rivers from East and West running in the same direction

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5 Nicolae Iorga, *Sârbi, bulgari și români în Peninsula Balcanică în evul mediu* (Bucharest 1915), 8.

6 Nicolae Iorga, *Serbia eroică și martiră* (Vălenii de Munte 1915).

7 Nicolae Iorga, *Oltenia și Serbia* (Vălenii de Munte: Neamul Românesc, 1915).

8 Nicolae Iorga, Războiul actual și urmările lui pentru viața morală a omenirii (Vălenii de Munte 1916), 36.

like the rivers flowing between, compose one of the most perfect geographical configurations in the world, imposing a political unity without fail."[9]

In the year of the Romanian national triumph, the young Eugen Lovinescu, destined to become a prominent literary critic and historian and dramatically opposed to Iorga in the following period, saluted the national victory with an explanatory sentence: "The Carpathian mountains disappeared", from a separating wall they became the backbone of our space, virtually chairing "the great feast of the Romanian nation, gathered from everywhere in a commanding Latin unity".[10]

Even before the war, some European studies issued from the so-called "Völkerpsychologie" inspired Romanian scholars and, above all, the future president of the Romanian Academy, Constantin Rădulescu-Motru. As early as 1910 he wrote that the Romanian people as seen by others was a "religious and nationalist people"[11] and later, in 1924, that the State itself must favour the doctrine of nationalism "grown from the soil of the country".

Ten years after 1918, Iorga's article "What Transylvania received and what it gave" commenced the work on the book in three volumes and 1600 pages, with several Romanian and foreign contributors, devoted to the western provinces incorporated into Romania.[12] Twenty-two years after the moment of jubilation in Alba Iulia, the Vienna Dictate caused a national trauma by the rape of northern Transylvania. That is why the Romanian intellectuals once more, from 1940 to 1944, made Transylvania the main topic of the nationalist debate and movement, where we find side by side such outstanding personalities as the Transylvanian priest-academician Ioan Lupaș and the philosopher Vasile Băncilă, born in a Danubian town.

The former, in a lecture – initially forbidden – in November 1940, with the provocative title "To whom does Transylvania belong?"[13] – and three years later (after his *La Transylvanie, cœur de la vie roumaine*, 1942), in his fundamental study devoted to Transylvania as the vital centre of the Romanian spirit,[14]

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[9] Nicolae Iorga, "Drepturile românilor asupra teritoriului lor național unitar", Bucharest 1919, 4.

[10] Eugen Lovinescu, *În cumpăna vremii. Note de război* (Bucharest 1919), 5–6.

[11] Constantin Rădulescu-Motru, "Sufletul neamului nostru. Calități bune și defecte" (1910), 14.

[12] *Transilvania, Banatul, Crișana, Maramureșul. 1918–1928* (Bucharest: Cultura Națională, 1929), among foreign authors being Emmanuel de Martonne and R. W. Setton-Watson.

[13] Published six years later: Ioan Lupaș, "Cui aparține Transilvania? O conferință nerostită", *Revista Economică* 24–25 (1946).

[14] Ioan Lupaș, *Importanța istorică a Transilvaniei ca centru vital al românismului* (Sibiu 1943).

considered the troubled province as "the cradle of the Romanian people", a kind of a "beehive" from where Transylvanians swarmed, from school teachers to shepherds, and concluded: "Transylvania ... is the most essential part of the territory and ethnic capital of the Romanian State, which is the basis of the existence and future of the State."

The latter was a thinker whose place in the cultural history of Romania is assured with his essay *The Significance of Transylvania* (Semnificația Ardealului) written in 1936–1939 and published in 1944. It is a text which I compare with the final chapter of George Călinescu's *History of Romanian Literature* of 1941 devoted to the "national specificities", where the famous critic evoked the "specific primordial note of the writers from Transylvania", just after an important statement he made in 1940: "my idea is that the centre of our literature is Transylvania" and "I prove that Romanian literature has its headquarters especially in occupied Transylvania".[15] Returning to Vasile Băncilă, I think that *The Significance of Transylvania* is an outstanding text of Romanian nationalism, writing about "the mystic of Transylvania", about the medieval origins where "Wallachia and Moldavia became the delegates of Transylvania in history"; saying that "Transylvania is history", "Transylvania is a Romanian essential form", that "Moldo-Wallachian heroism in 1916–1918 ... is a quite normal tribute of gratitude to Transylvania, is a result of our love and appreciation for the province which was for us the beginning of history", because "at the basis of the Union of Transylvania with Romania lies the most profound thing in human life: pain. And the most beautiful: youth".[16]

Certainly, wars and revolutions were, in the twentieth century, a catalyst of European nationalism. For sure, in the Romanian case, the attack on Serbia was, at the outbreak of the First World War and in the neutrality years, an impulse for the Romanian national idea. But – more than Bessarabia, more than Bucovina – with the tradition of the Memorandist movement at the end of the nineteenth century Transylvania became the stimulus of Romanian nationalism and, in the age of the Vienna Dictate, the supreme issue of struggle and debate.

In a way, it is the last such topic in Romanian history. Because a theme involving national projects and aspirations was entirely missing in the totalitarian age and, unfortunately, is entirely missing in post-communist period too.

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[15] *Corespondența lui G. Călinescu cu Al. Rosetti (1935–1951)*, ed. Al. Rosetti (Bucharest, Eminescu, 1977), 134, 142.

[16] Vasile Băncilă, *Semnificația Ardealului* (Bucharest 1944), 10, 16, 23, 33, 59, 61.

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— "Pagini despre Serbia de azi". Bucharest 1914.
— *Sârbi, bulgari și români în Peninsula Balcanică în evul mediu*. Bucharest 1915.
— *Serbia eroică și martiră*. Vălenii de Munte 1915.
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The Serbian Heritage of the Great War in Greece

Abstract: During the First World War Serbian soldiers were encamped or fought in different parts of Greece. Many of them died there of diseases or exhaustion or were killed in battle. This paper looks at the issue of cemeteries of and memorials to the dead Serbian soldiers (primarily in the area of Corfu, Thessaloniki and Florina) in the context of post-war relations between Greece and the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (Yugoslavia), at the attitude of post-Second World War Yugoslavia towards them, and the Serbs' revived interest in their First World War history. It also takes a look at the image of Serbs in the memory of local people.

Keywords: First World War, Serbia, heritage, Greece, Corfu, Thessaloniki, Aridea, Vidos, Zeitenlik, monuments

During the First World War, Serbia and Greece were allies fighting against the Germans and the Bulgarians. But after the war ended their governments parted ways. Serbia managed to unite the Southern Slavs in a new state, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (SCS), which dominated the Balkan region during the interwar period. Greece, on the other hand, was defeated in the Greek-Turkish War in Asia Minor and became the recipient of the largest part of the Christian population of Asia Minor. Greece and Serbia may have had shared common interests during the interwar period, but the Kingdom of SCS looked at Greece not as its equal, but as a minor ally.[1]

In 1923, the Kingdom of SCS tried to raise all the issues its government was concerned with, such as the issue of a Serbian free trade zone in the port of Thessaloniki,[2] the use of the Thessaloniki–Gevgelija railway line and the recog-

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[1] A. Koulas, "Οι Ελληνογιουγκοσλαβικές σχέσεις από το 1923 έως το 1928" [Greek-Jugoslav Relations 1923–1928] (Ph.D. thesis, Thessaloniki 2007), 17; E. Hatzivasileiou, *Ο Ελευθέριος Βενιζέλος, η ελληνοτουρκική προσέγγιση και το πρόβλημα ασφάλειας στα Βαλκάνια 1928–1931* [Eleftherios Venizelos, Greek-Turkish approach and security issues in the Balkans 1928–1931] (Thessaloniki: Institute for Balkan Studies 1999), 38, 39.

[2] For the Serbian Zone at Thessaloniki Harbour see Diplomatic and Historical Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Greece (DIAYE), 1923, f. 52 s,f. 5; 1928, f. 7, s.f. 1; *Εφημερίς*

nition of the Slavic-speaking minority in Greek Macedonia as a Serbian minority, utilizing its authority as a regional power.[3] The Greek state made extensive concessions to Serbia over the Serbian free trade zone in the port of Thessaloniki, since its goal was to join the Little Entente, but the foreign minister of the Kingdom of SCS did not accept the Greek request at the conference of the Little Entente held at Sinaia, Romania.[4]

When Greece recognized the Slavic-speaking inhabitants of Greek Macedonia as ethnic Bulgarians and guaranteed their protection (pursuant to the Politis-Kalfoff Protocol of 29 September 1924), the government of the Kingdom of SCS expressed its strong opposition. The Kingdom of SCS claimed that the Slavic-speaking residents of Greek Macedonia were, in fact, Serbs rather than Bulgarians, and that only Serbs lived in Serbian Macedonia. On 2 February 1925, the Greek parliament refused to ratify the protocol, because of strong pressure from the Kingdom of SCS (which threatened to renounce the Greek-Serbian alliance treaty signed in 1913). The negotiations lasted several months, until 10 June 1925, when the League of Nations nullified it.[5]

Throughout the interwar period, the Kingdom of SCS would continue to regard the Slav Macedonians in Greece as Serbs, thus raising the Greek government's suspicion of Serbian intentions in Greek Macedonia. All of the above conclude the historical context of that time dictating the nature of relations between the two nations.

In the subsequent years, after the First World War, the Serbian authorities, war veterans and civilian organizations wished to visit the locations where the Serbian Army had achieved glory in battle. They fulfilled their wish by visiting the cemeteries of fallen Serbian soldiers. The sites of interest to the Serbs were Corfu, Thessaloniki, the geographical line from Mt Dzena, through Dobro Pole, to Kaimakchalan and Florina. Descendants of Serbian fallen soldiers visited the cemeteries quite often and used to replace the wooden crosses on their ancestors' graves with tombstones.

Individuals and the Serbian press, especially the daily *Politika*, published articles claiming that the Serbian cemeteries located between Thessaloniki and

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της Κυβερνήσεως [Government Gazette] no. 317, 2 Nov. 1923, ch. A.

3 Koulas, "Οι Ελληνογιουγκοσλαβικές σχέσεις".

4 DIAYE, 1923, f.89, s.f. 2, Royal Hellenic Legation in Bucharest to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Sinaia, 29 July 1923.

5 For the protocol Politis-Kalfoff and its impact, see A. Τούντα-Φεργάδη, *Μειονότητες στα Βαλκάνια. Βαλκανικές διασκέψεις 1930–1934* [Minorities in the Balkans. Balkan conferences 1930–1934] (Thessaloniki: Paratiritis, 1994); K. D. Kentrotis, "International status of minorities: The case of the Balkans", *Balkan Studies* XXXVIII/2 (1997), 355–377; I. D. Michailidis, "Traditional Friends and Occasional Claimants: Serbian claims in Macedonia between the wars", *Balkan Studies*, XXXVI/1 (1995), 103–108.

Florina had suffered severe damage. Authorities of Kingdom of SCS submitted verbal notes to the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs concerning this issue.[6] However, most of the damage had been the result of the passage of time and exposure to harsh winter conditions, in addition to low-quality materials used for constructing temporary cemeteries (wooden crosses, stone and barbed wire).[7]

The issue was a complicated one, since there were 213 temporary cemeteries in Greek Macedonia and another 27 on Corfu, according to the authorities of the Kingdom of SCS.[8] The constantly arising difficulties in supervising the maintenance of and taking care of such a large number of cemeteries, most of which were located in mountainous regions, led the government of the Kingdom of SCS to think of having the remains of deceased soldiers relocated and two permanent central cemeteries and ossuaries constructed, in Thessaloniki and Corfu respectively. In 1924, the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Kingdom of SCS set up a special commission whose purpose was to visit the Serbian cemeteries in Greece, make inquiries and decide whether the construction of two permanent cemeteries was the most appropriate solution.[9]

In late 1926, the government of the Kingdom of SCS decided and announced that a mausoleum and ossuary were to be created in Zeitinlik (City of Thessaloniki) to hold the remains of 7,000 Serbian soldiers who either had remained unburied or had been buried in temporary cemeteries in Greek Macedonia.[10] The Greek government was officially informed of that decision in July 1927[11] and raised no objections.[12] The amount of material (cement, steel, marble, granite) imported from Serbia for the construction of the mausoleum and

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[6] DIAYE, 1932-1934, A/5/3, Mavroudis to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Belgrade, 4 Apr. 1924, no. 51; DIAYE, 1932–1934, A/5/3, Légation du Royaume Serbes, Croates et Slovenes en Grèce, Note Verbale, Athens, 12 Jan. 1926, no. 88/3; DIAYE, 1932–1934, A/5/3, Légation du Royaume des Serbes, Croates et Slovenes en Grèce, Note Verbale, Athens, 28 Mar. 1926, no. 308.

[7] DIAYE, 1932–1934, A/5/3, P. Sarigiannis, Head of the Greek Army to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Athens, 11 Mar. 1926, no. 2563/563.

[8] DIAYE, 1932–1934, A/5/3, Légation Royale de Yugoslavie en Grèce to Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Note Verbale, Athens, 12 June 1930, no. 24156.

[9] DIAYE, 1932–1934, A/5/3, Royal Hellenic Legation in Belgrade to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Belgrade, 30 May 1924, no. 884; DIAYE, 1932–1934, A/5/3, Deputy Governor of Macedonia to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Thessaloniki 31July 1924, no. 15247.

[10] "Spomenik-kapela u Zejtinliku kod Soluna. Projekt g. A.Vasica", *Politika*, 17 Nov. 1926; Vlasis Vlasidis, "Τα στρατιωτικά νεκροταφεία του Α' Παγκόσμιου Πολέμου στη Μακεδονία" [First World War cemeteries in Macedonia], *Θεσσαλονίκη* VIII (2013), 332–333.

[11] DIAYE, 1932–1934, A/5/3, Légation du Royaume des Serbes, Croats et Slovenes en Grèce, Note Verbale, Athens 27 July 1927, no. 467.

[12] DIAYE, 1932–1934, A/5/3, G. Vrontamitis, Deputy Head of the Greek Army to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Athens 30 Nov. 1927, no. 6359/150, conf.

the mausoleum's large size caused worries and aroused questions,[13] but careful investigation showed that all of the material was indeed used for the construction of the mausoleum.[14]

In 1930, the Yugoslav Legation requested Greek permission to have the remains of 6,000 Serbian soldiers transferred from 213 sites between Florina and Thessaloniki to the Zeitinlik cemetery; the Greek government granted permission without delay.[15] After the inauguration of the mausoleum, the remains of Serbian soldiers kept in other locations were transferred to the ossuary-crypt. The transfer took place during the first months of 1931.[16] A year earlier, in 1930, the remains of Serbian soldiers had been gathered from various temporary cemeteries on Corfu and transferred to the island of Vidos, where a mausoleum was to be constructed.[17]

The ownership of the land on which temporary Serbian cemeteries in Greek Macedonia had been established was a complicated issue, since in some cases it belonged to local communities and in some to private owners, in which case the owners were compensated. This is why the Governor General of Greek Macedonia, Stylianos Gonatas, recommended that the now vacated land be returned to communal and privates owners without any publicity. If monuments existed there, their maintenance was to be the landowners' responsibility.[18]

The construction of a similar memorial ossuary for Serbian soldiers on Corfu was not such a simple matter. As early as 1916, the Serbian authorities requested of the Greek government to be allocated a large tract of land on the

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[13] DIAYE, 1927–1938, A/5/3 (A26), Ministry of the Economy to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Athens, 25 June 1932, no. 4688; DIAYE, 1927–1938, A/5/3 (A26), General Staff of the Army, 2nd Dept. to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Athens, 9 Aug. 1934, no. 2793/237.

[14] DIAYE, 1927–1938, A/5/3 (A26), General Staff of the Army, 2nd Dept. to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Athens, 3 Dec. 1934, no. 3342/405, conf.; DIAYE, 1927–1938, A/5/3 (A26), General Staff of the Army, 2nd Dept. to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Athens, 11 Jan. 1935, no. 25/33, conf.

[15] DIAYE, 1932–1934, A/5/3, Légation du Royaume des Serbes, Croats et Slovenes en Grèce to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Athens, 13 May 1930, no. 433; DIAYE, 1932–1934, A/5/3, Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Légation du Royaume des Serbes, Croats et Slovenes en Grèce, Athens, 12 June 1930, no. 24156.

[16] For the exhumation and transfer of the Serb soldiers from the villages of Florina district, see DIAYE, 1932–1934, A/5/3, Report of the Head of Sitaria village, Sitaria, 1 Dec. 1931; DIAYE, 1932–1934, A/5/3, Report of the Head of Vevi village, Vevi, 1 Dec. 1931; DIAYE, 1932–1934, A/5/3, Report of Antoniadis, Head of Achlada village, Achlada, 29 Nov. 1931; DIAYE, 1932–1934, A/5/3, Report of the Head of 3rd Army camp, Meliti, 2 Dec. 1931.

[17] DIAYE, 1932, A/45/9, Jokovic, Yugoslav military attaché to Corfu Prefect, Corfu, 2 Sep, 1930, no. 103.

[18] DIAYE, 1932–1934, A/5/3, Stylianos Gonatas, Governor-General of Macedonia to Ministry of War, 2nd Dept. Thessaloniki, 28 Mar. 1932, no. 39215.

island of Vidos for a cemetery and a memorial.[19] Prime Minister Eleftherios Venizelos had agreed to the creation of a memorial on Vidos.[20] The government of the Kingdom of SCS restated its request for a memorial on Vidos in 1920. The Greek government accepted it and recommended to the Legation of the Kingdom of SCS that technical staff should be sent from Serbia to Corfu to negotiate with the Prefect of Corfu.[21] Nevertheless, the agreement remained unfulfilled due to obstructions by the Kingdom of SCS.

In 1925, the government of the Kingdom of SCS decided that it was necessary to exhume and transfer all the remains from the temporary cemeteries on the islands of Corfu and Lazareto to Vidos, where a mausoleum with an ossuary was to be built.[22] The Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs disagreed mainly because the requested area was too large.[23] Local societies and the Municipality of Corfu also protested strongly.[24]

The Greek government offered to allocate an area of 1,600 m² on the island of Vidos for the creation of a memorial,[25] but the government of the Kingdom of SCS requested a tract of 12,000 m² in the area of the already existing military cemetery.[26] In order to apply more pressure on Greece and to show the importance of Vidos for the Serbian nation, the fleet of the Kingdom of SCS paid two friendly visits to Corfu, in 1929[27] and in 1934 respectively. In fact, on its second visit a delegation set up a 3.85-m-high cross on Vidos. The delegation setting up the cross was accompanied by 114 members of the lower and upper

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[19] DIAYE, 1932–1934, A/5/3, Légation de Serbie to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Athens, 15 Oct. 1916, no. 1237.

[20] DIAYE, 1932–1934, A/5/3, Petmezas to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Corfu, 10 Nov. 1917, no. 8799.

[21] DIAYE, 1932–1934, A/5/3, Ministère des Affaires Etrangères to Légation du Royaume des Serbes, Croates et Slovènes en ville, Athens, 9/22 Oct. 1920, no. 30466.

[22] DIAYE, 1932–1934, A/5/3, Légation du Royaume des Serbes, Croates et Slovènes to Ministry of Naval Affairs, Athens, 23 Oct. 1925, no. 654.

[23] DIAYE, 1932–1934, A/5/3, Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Corfu Prefect, Athens, 13 Nov. 1925, no. 35823/35714, conf.; DIAYE, 1932–1934, A/5/3, Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Légation du Royaume des Serbes, Croates et Slovènes, Athens, 20 Jan. 1926, no. 38422/1297.

[24] DIAYE, 1932–1934, A/5/3, Telegram to all Greek authorities, Corfu, 26 Dec. 1925; DIAYE, 1932–1934, A/5/3, Garrison Headquarters of Corfu to General Staff of the Army, Corfu, 2 Jan. 1926, no.1.

[25] DIAYE, 1932–1934, A/5/3, Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Légation du Royaume des Serbes, Croates et Slovènes, Athens, 20 Jan.1926, no. 38422.

[26] DIAYE, 1932–1934, A/5/3, Légation du Royaume des Serbes, Croates et Slovènes to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Athens, 3 Aug. 1928, no. 443.

[27] DIAYE, 1932–1934, A/5/3, Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Corfu Prefecture, Athens, 25 Apr. 1929, no. 4662, conf.

chambers of Yugoslav Parliament, along with the former finance minister Milan Stojadinović and twelve journalists.[28] Eventually, the mausoleum was designed by the Russian-born Serbian architect Nikolai Krasnov and built under the supervision of the local engineer Joseph Cohen. Construction began in 1936 and was completed in 1939.

Apart from taking care of the cemeteries, the Kingdom of SCS tried to organize a series of events in commemoration of the First World War on Greek soil, but without success. More important was the request for an official commemoration of the 10th anniversary of the Battle of Kaimakchalan under the auspices and in the presence of King Alexander of Yugoslavia at the top of the mountain. The Greek state was cautious about the request of Kingdom of SCS, but the harsh weather put an end to such concerns, preventing the commemoration from taking place.[29]

Corfu

Memories of the Serbian wartime presence were preserved by local people, in addition to the official preservation of the memory by the Kingdom of SCS itself through the erection and maintenance of numerous monuments on the locations where the Serbian Army had been encamped or fought. These locations were the regions of Corfu, Thessaloniki, Aridea and Florina. Initially, the locals of Corfu did not perceive the exhausted and starved Serbian soldiers, who had crossed Albania, as a regular army.[30] But the discipline shown by the Serbian soldiers and their kind behaviour towards the locals changed their impressions of them completely. That resulted in many mixed marriages and the vital assistance of several locals to the Serbian Army and administration during the war. The Serbian government, which remained in the city of Corfu until the end of the war using various public buildings, made a good impression on local communities. An expression of good faith of the local people and authorities towards the Serbian refugees was the allocation of schools for their children's education, in 1917 and 1918, and of three churches for worship.[31] The plays by

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[28] DIAYE, 1932–1934, A/5/3, Melas to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Belgrade, 12 May 1934.

[29] See *DIAYE*, 1926, f. 69 s.f. 7, Thessaloniki Press Bureau, Commemoration of the Battle of Kaimakchalan.

[30] J. Tomašević, Ο Α΄ Παγκόσμιος Πόλεμος και η Ελλάδα στα μάτια του ξενιτεμένου σερβικού στρατού [First World War and Greece in the eyes of the Serbian army abroad] (Thessaloniki: MA, 2013), 23. N. Randjelović, *Srpski parlament na Krfu 1916–1918* (Niš: Zograf, 2003), 61–63, 161.

[31] D. Janković, "Serbian pupils in Greece during the First World War", *Η Καβάλα και τα Βαλκάνια: από την αρχαιότητα μέχρι σήμερα* 2 [Kavala and the Balkans: from Antiquity until the present] (Kavala: ILAK, 2004), vol. II, 545–562.

the Serbian author and actor Brana Cvetković, the Serbian songs composed and sung in Corfu and the Serbs' participation in local festivities created an even better image in the eyes of the Corfiots.[32] The Serbian Army's rapid transfer from Corfu, commenced in April 1916, left only good memories. It is reasonable to assume that the situation would have probably been different had the Serbian Army remained in Corfu for a longer time.

As a result, the positive impression the Serbs made amongst the locals lasted for years to come. Mixed marriages contributed to this by strengthening family ties. They were also conducive to Serbian officials, journalists and families paying visits to Corfu to commemorate their dead in the subsequent years. On the occasion of King Alexander's visit, in May 1922, he inaugurated the first memorial to the dead Serbian soldiers, a stone cross set up by the Navy of the Kingdom of SCS.[33] The local people of Corfu saw very positively any Serbian reaction to the Tellini incident, the bombardment and short occupation of Corfu by the Italians, or so interpreted the attitude of the Serbs.[34]

During the next few years, the Greek authorities and some local organizations were worried about the motives underlying the request of the Kingdom of SCS for permission to build a huge memorial on Corfu, although the Corfiots did not share their reservations. Contrary to what happened in other parts of Greece, the memory of the Serbs remained alive there after the Second World War. Perhaps it faded away elsewhere because Socialist Yugoslavia was not interested in preserving this kind of memory.[35] The most important issue at that time was Socialist Yugoslavia and the Partisans. Indeed, when Tito visited Corfu in 1954, he himself reportedly removed the symbols of interwar Yugoslavia from the ossuary on Vidos.[36] Between 1950 and 1990 visitors were few.

In the 1900s the Municipality of Corfu donated a downtown building for the Serbian House. Every year more and more Serbs come to Corfu to visit the Serbian House and the ossuary on Vidos. More and more of them are going to Corfu in order to find their own Serbian identity. In 2001, Corfu and

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[32] Tomašević, Ο Α΄ Παγκόσμιος Πόλεμος, 36–37.

[33] V. Vlasidis, *Μεταξύ μνήμης και λήθης. Μνημεία και κοιμητήρια του Μακεδονικού Μετώπου* [Between memory and forgetfulness. Monuments and Cemeteries of the Macedonian Front] (Thessaloniki: Museum of the Macedonian Struggle, 2016), 161.

[34] Koulas, "*Οι Ελληνογιουγκοσλαβικές σχέσεις*", 44–45. For the Corfu incident see I. Papafloratos, *Η ελληνοϊταλική κρίση του 1923/Το επεισόδιο Tellini/Κέρκυρας* [The Greek-Italian crisis of 1923. The Tellini/Corfu incident] (Athens: Sakoulas, 2009).

[35] V. Vlasidis, "Rediscovering the First World War Serbian Monuments in Greece – From Ignorance to Consideration of the Cultural Heritage", in *Zbornik radova sa medjunarodne konferencije Arhiv, mediji i kultura sećanja u Prvom svetskom ratu, Novi Sad, 29–30. oktobar 2014*, ed. Dragana Ćiraković and Miroslav Jaćimović (Novi Sad: 2014), 310.

[36] Interview with Ljubomir Saramandić, Corfu, 18 Apr. 2018.

Vidos were visited by 4,000–5,000 Serbs, and in 2017–2018 the number rose to 30,000–40,000 visitors. Some of them come as tourists but become pilgrims and some Serbs even perceive Vidos as their own Jerusalem.[37]

Thessaloniki

The situation in Thessaloniki was different. After the Second World War the Yugoslav consular authorities did not show much interest in the preservation and presentation of the First World War monuments on Greek soil; as a matter of fact, they did exactly the opposite. As a result of neglect, most monuments either were completely gone or fell in ruin. Memory of the war was preserved by veterans, who continued taking trips to Thessaloniki and to the battlefields in Yugoslavia.[38]

Serbian First World War veterans, popularly known as *Solunci* (Salonikans), never stopped visiting the tombs of their dead fellow soldiers in Thessaloniki, with one exception: the period of 1940–1953. Even when the last of the veterans died, their children and grandchildren continued to come. However, by the time the last veteran died, that is to say, the late 1980s, the Macedonian (Salonika) Front became well known in Serbia once more, through the books of Milivoje Alimpić and Petar Opačić. Many Serbs started to travel to Greece in order to visit the Serbian monastery of Hilandar on Mount Athos, the Zeitenlik cemetery in Thessaloniki and the one on Vidos. In fact, the Zeitenlik cemetery keeper, Djordje Mihailović, the descendant of a *Solunac*, would always welcome them wearing the Serbian army uniform. During the Yugoslav wars of the 1900s, Zeitenlik became even more important to the Serbs, as shown by the fact that many communities, associations and individuals leaf there flags, hats, uniforms and photographs of Serbs killed in the wars fought in Croatia and Bosnia.

Today hundreds of people from Serbia visit Zeitenlik every week, where the new keeper, Predrag Nedeljković, serves as their guide. Each year, at the end of September, major events take place, with the participation of many veteran associations and many visitors from Serbia and the Republika Srpska.[39]

Local authorities have always had reservations about these numerous visits to Zeitenlik, often seeing them as Serbia's display of power and of its interest in Thessaloniki and its hinterland. However, they have always been more concerned about the issue of the Serbian zone in the port of Thessaloniki than about the veterans' visits.[40] The local inhabitants never cared about Allied cemeteries.

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[37] Ibid.

[38] Interview with George Mihailović, Thessaloniki, 18 Mar. 2013.

[39] Interview with Predrag Nedelković, Thessaloniki, 27 July 2017.

[40] E. Kofos, "Ελληνικό κράτος και μακεδονικές ταυτότητες (1950–2005)" [The Greek state and Macedonian identities 1950–2005], in *Μακεδονικές ταυτότητες στο χρόνο. Διεπιστημονικές*

They had more important problems to deal with. Thessaloniki was completely destroyed by the Great Fire of 1917 and then underwent great population changes. During the interwar period Bulgarians and Muslims left the city and its large Jewish community was exterminated during the Second World War. On the other hand, many Greek refugees from the Black Sea, Eastern Thrace and Asia Minor settled in Thessaloniki, mostly in the western part of the city, some near or around Zeitenlik. But they were always more interested in their own lost homeland than in Serbian, French and British soldiers of the First World War.[41] After the Second World War, most of them did not even know that the Allied cemeteries were the last resting place of the dead of the First and not the Second World War. This situation has changed a lot in recent days.

Aridea (former Subotsko) District

Until the 1930s there were in this region many monuments and cemeteries dedicated to the First World War, including Kaimakchalan, Vetrenik, Golo Bilo, Dzena, Dobro Pole. Some monuments are still standing, such as those in Exaplatanos and the city of Aridea.[42] However, the monument by the French sculptor Marcel Canguilhem set up by the French and Serbian Association d'Anciens Combattants du Front de Macédoine at Dobro Pole in 1938 was destroyed by the Bulgarians in 1942.

The region of Aridea was inhabited also by Muslim populations until 1924, when they departed for Turkey as part of the population exchange dictated by the Treaty of Lausanne. Before leaving, several Muslims had buried their gold near or under Serbian monuments, mainly drinking fountains and tombstones. When their descendants began to return in the late 1970s and early 1980s, the locals suspected that they were digging for the gold. As a result, many Serbian monuments were destroyed, because the locals themselves began digging for the Muslim gold. The most significant were the demolition of the Serbian fountain and the Timok Memorial in the village of Slatina (now Hrysi) in Aridea.[43]

προσεγγίσεις [Macedonian Identities through Time] ed. Ioannis Stefanidis, Vlasis Vlasidis and Evangelos Kofos (Athens: Patakis, 2008) 365–380; K. Katsanos, *Το ανύπαρκτο ζήτημα. Οι ελληνογιουγκοσλαβικές σχέσεις και το Μακεδονικό* 1950–1967 [A non-existent issue. Greek-Yugoslav relations and the Macedonian Question] (Thessaloniki: Epikentro, 2013).

[41] V. Vlasidis, "This is not our War. Salonika Front War Memory", in *World War I in Central and Eastern Europe: Politics, Culture and Society*, Conference proceedings, School of History and Archives, University College of Dublin, Dublin, May 9–10, 2014, ed. Judith Devlin (Dublin, in press).

[42] Vlasidis, *Μεταξύ μνήμης και λήθης*, 113, 114.

[43] Ibid. 110.

The region's inhabitants nowadays are both natives and refugees. No one remembers Serbian soldiers of the First World War. By contrast, there is a memory of Tito's Partisans supporting the Greek Communist guerrillas during the Greek Civil War (1946–1949). Therefore, their impression of the Serbs is similar to what their stance was during the Greek Civil War. However, in recent years, after many personal visits to the area and the discovery and identification of monuments and cemeteries, the locals have a very positive view of the Serbs' fighting on the Macedonian Front to reclaim their homeland and they respect the ruins and monuments.

Florina

In Florina, where the headquarters of the French Armée d'Orient was located in the period of 1916–1918, there was a substantial Serbian presence throughout the war. As a result of its close proximity to the border with Serbia, many Greek residents from Monastir and the surroundings came to Florina as refugees in 1912, after the First Balkan War, and in 1915, after the Serbian Army's retreat and the capture of Monastir by the Bulgarians. Therefore, there was a significant refugee population in the city. Thus, a Serbian civilian administration was created and a French-Serbian school was established in 1918/19, in which all the refugees' children from Monastir were compulsorily enrolled.

At the same time, many postcards were printed showing a cityscape of Florina and the name Florina or Lerin (in Serbian) on the front side and various sentences in the Cyrillic alphabet on the back.[44] All this indicates that, had the war not ended successfully for the Serbs, some of them would have claimed residence in Florina.

The presence of Serbs in Florina, as French allies, was not welcome by the Greek local authorities and inhabitants. Florina was an area where pro-King Constantine and anti-Venizelos sentiment prevailed. In 1915, Ion Dragoumis was elected as the anti-Venizelist party's deputy for Florina.[45] Therefore, the inhabitants of Florina regarded Greece's participation in the war as a hostile act of the Venizelists and the presence of the French and Serbs in the city as an act of French domination or even occupation. After the war and the offensive of the French and Serbian troops towards Belgrade, the situation changed. The French-Serbian school was shut down. The postcards continued to circulate, but the word "Serbie" was erased. The Greek administration, education and

[44] D. Mekasis, "Το πέρασμα των Σέρβων από τη Φλώρινα" [The passage of Serbs from Florina], *Florineanews*, 9 Nov. 2013, http://florineanews.blogspot.gr/2013/11/blog-post_9846.html (downloaded 20/4/2017).

[45] For more information see The American School of Classical Studies in Athens Archives, Ion Dragoumis Processing History, Parliamentary Activities-Exile.

banking systems and all the institutions expanded not only to Florina but to the surrounding villages as well. However, the French and the Serbs left a cultural imprint on the local population. Many of those who had attended the French-Serbian school recalled the Serbian Army, along with the French, and even more so the visits of Alexander of Serbia, and in many cases, passed on the same feelings to their children.[46]

Also, during the interwar period, several Slavic-speaking people residing in the region defined themselves as Serbs in order not to be considered as Bulgarians by the Greek authorities. Therefore, there was a vivid memory of the Serbian army and administration in Florina. That changed radically after the Second World War and the Greek Civil War. At that time, Tito's Yugoslavia and his support to the Greek Communist Party was the main and only collective memory, which wiped out any recollection the local people had of the Serbian Army and Serbia in the First World War and the interwar period.[47]

The population of Florina has only in recent years begun to learn about the French and Serbian presence in the region during the First World War. In fact, a photographic exhibition pertaining to the presence of French and Serbian armies in Florina took place there in 2013, and some articles were published in academic journals and local newspapers.[48] But the memory of the Great War is not strong even now and most researchers and residents are much more interested in the Second World War and the Greek Civil War.

Conclusion

This is, in general, the Serbian First World War legacy in Greece. In spite of Serbia and Greece traditionally having friendly relations in the Balkan region, their goals in the interwar period and after the Second World War diverged, causing tension in their relations more than once. Nevertheless, Greece agreed to the founding of monumental Serbian cemeteries in its territory and the visits of Serbs throughout the interwar period. The impact of the Serbian heritage

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[46] Interview with Theodoros Vosdou, Florina, 16 Nov. 2007; Interview with Nikos Tolios, Florina, 16 Nov. 2007; Interview with Thanasis Georgoulas, Florina, 23 Jan. 2008.

[47] Kofos, "Ελληνικό κράτος", 360–380; I. Manos, "Σύγχρονες εκδοχές της μακεδονικής ταυτότητας στην περιοχή της Φλώρινας" [Current aspects of Macedonian identities in the Florina region], in *Μακεδονικές ταυτότητες στο χρόνο. Διεπιστημονικές προσεγγίσεις* [Macedonian Identities through Time], ed. Ioannis Stefanidis, Vlasis Vlasidis and Evangelos Kofos (Athens: Patakis, 2008), 419–436.

[48] Exposition photographique "Première Guerre Mondiale. L'Armée d'Orient à Florina", 27 photos from the French Ministry of Culture; 25 from the War Museum collection; 4 from the Thessaloniki History Centre; and 13 recent photos, Vlasis Vlasidis City of Florina, Consulat Général de France à Thessalonique, Florina, 7 Jan. 2013, and War Museum, Athens, 6 Mar. 2013; Mekasis, "*Το πέρασμα των Σέρβων από τη Φλώρινα*".

varies from one region of Greece to another. Where there was no other kind of contact and no conflict of interests, such as on Corfu, the image of the Serbs remained positive and vivid. In Greek Macedonia, where Tito was involved or even interfered in the Greek Civil War by helping the Communist guerrillas, the memory of Serbia's role in the Great War was extinguished and replaced by that of the Yugoslav involvement. In Thessaloniki, where people had to deal with many problems involved in the settlement of refugees, the frequent visits of Serbian veterans were sometimes looked at with suspicion and indifference, but they were never a major event for the city and its inhabitants.

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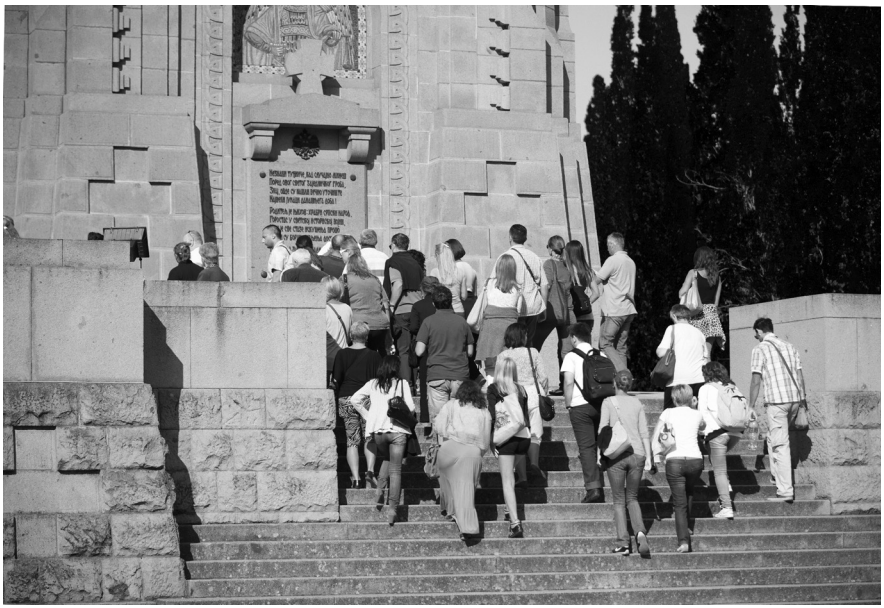

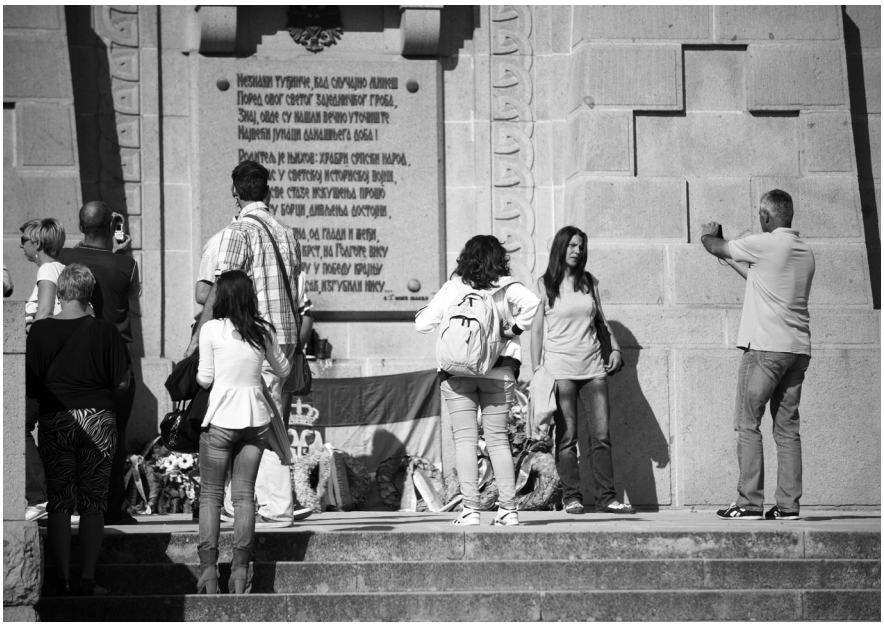

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Turtucaia/Toutrakan 1916 : la postérité d'une défaite dans la Roumanie de l'entre-deux-guerres

Résumé : La défaite subie à Turtucaia, la tête de pont roumaine sur la rive sud de Danube, en septembre 1916, a laissé une marque indélébile dans l'opinion publique roumaine dans l'entre-deux-guerres. Les tentatives d'expliquer cette défaite sans appel au tout debout de l'engagement roumain dans la Grande guerre se succédaient en ajoutant son lot de rumeurs sur les atrocités commises par les troupes bulgares victorieuses. La question de la responsabilité pour la défaite fut une question brulante aux niveaux politique et militaire déjà pendant la guerre et notamment après les retours des officiers et soldats roumains après la signature de la paix séparée en mai 1918. La victoire et la création de la Grande Roumaine créa les conditions pour les enquêtes officielles, mais aussi pour la transposition du sujet dans la littérature, témoignage poignant de son importance et de son actualité. Défaite emblématique et difficile à évacuer de la mémoire collective, défaite porteuse d'un permanent avertissement sur la fragilité de la victoire finale et de ses acquis, défaite convertible en réquisitoire sur une scène politique en pleine transformation à partir de 1918, Turtucaia, ne devait s'effacer de la conscience publique roumaine qu'après l'instauration du communisme.

Mots-clés : Roumanie, Turtucaia, Grande guerre, défaite

Entre le 1er et le 6 septembre 1916, l'armée bulgare, secondée par un détachement allemand, infligeait une défaite sans appel aux troupes roumaines composant la garnison du camp retranché de Turtucaia/Toutrakan sur la rive sud du Danube. Il s'agissait d'une bataille d'entrée en guerre : la Roumanie venait de rejoindre le conflit le 27 août 1916. Une bataille qui devint pour longtemps synonyme de traumatisme de la défaite pour l'armée et pour l'opinion publique roumaine.

Ce que l'on appelait à l'époque la « tête de pont » de Turtucaia se trouvait dans la Dobroudja méridionale, annexée par la Roumanie par le traité de Bucarest de 1913. Le camp retranché était constitué par deux lignes de défenses formant des demi-cercles concentriques dont le diamètre était formé par le Danube. La ligne secondaire de défense se trouvait à quelques 4 km de la ville tandis que la principale ligne de défense, éloignée de 6 à 7 km de la ville, formait un front d'environ 30 kilomètres. Elle était jalonnée par 15 ouvrages fortifiés en terre avec des tranchées et des abris renforcés. Ces « centres » fortifiés, distants

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de un à deux kilomètres les uns des autres et reliés par des tranchées profondes, était complétés par d'autres positions de tir pour l'artillerie et l'infanterie, des abattis et des réseaux de barbelés. Certains des centres étaient dotés de tourelles blindées dont plusieurs ne sont pas achevées quand la guerre éclate. La garnison comporte environ 26 000 hommes dépourvus de toute expérience au combat et l'effectif montera jusqu'à 39 000 pendant la bataille. L'artillerie de la place forte compte quelques 160 pièces de différents calibres dont à-peu-près une vingtaine sont inutilisables. S'y ajoutent 66 mitrailleuses.

A la fin de cette bataille épique pour l'armée bulgare, les pertes sont lourdes, des deux côtés : 2546 militaires bulgares morts, quelques 7800 blessés, tandis que du côté roumain on dénombre, avec moins de précision, autour de 7000 morts et blessés.[1] Pour les Roumains, le choc vient, avant tout, du grand nombre de prisonniers capturés par les Bulgares : plus de 28 000, dont 480 officiers.[2] Quelques 2200 militaires roumains se sont sauvés, parfois dans des embarcations de fortune ou à la nage, sur la rive opposée du Danube ou en prenant, sous le feu des mitrailleuses bulgares, la direction de la ville de Silistra, en aval de Turtucaia.[3] Parmi eux, le commandant de la garnison, le général Teodorescu, qui a traversé le fleuve sur un monitor roumain[4] en abandonnant ses troupes quelques heures avant l'arrêt des combats.

« La souffrance serre mon cœur, note peu après, dans son journal, le général Alexandru Averescu qui allait devenir un des commandants célèbres de la campagne de 1916–1917. Nous commençons la guerre en écrivant une page affreuse, qui demeurera à jamais. »[5]

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[1] Petur Boychev, *Geroite na Tutrakanskata epopeia* (Sofia : IK Gutenberg, 2016), 15.

[2] G. A. Dabija, *Armata română în Războiul Mondial (1916–1918)* (Bucarest : I. G. Hertz [s.d.]), t. I, 246–247. Dans ses mémoires, l'homme politique roumain Ion G. Duca, membre du gouvernement au moment de l'entrée en guerre, parle de 6160 morts et blessés du côté roumain (Ion G. Duca, *Amintiri politice*, t. II [Munich : Jon Dumitrescu Verlag, 1981], 14). A peu-près 350 militaires roumains seraient morts des suites de leurs blessures dans l'hôpital de Turtucaia après l'occupation de la ville par l'armée bulgare, voir Colonel Constantin Zagoriț, *Turtukaia* (Ploiești : Institutul de Arte Grafice Concurența, 1939), 523.

[3] Constantin Kiritescu, *Istoria războiului pentru întregirea României 1916–1919*, t. I, 2e éd. (Bucarest : Cartea romaneasca, 1925), 398 ; Dabija, *Armata română*, 246. L'histoire militaire officielle de la participation de la Roumanie à la Grande Guerre retient un nombre différent de prisonniers roumains capturés à Turtucaia : 500 officiers et 22 000 soldats, voir Ministerul Apărării Naționale [MAN], M.St. Major – Serviciul Istoric, *România în Războiul Mondial 1916–1919*, t. I (Bucarest : Monitorul Oficial și Imprimeriile Statului, 1934), 552.

[4] 42 officiers et 2166 soldats de la garnison se seraient sauvés, voir MAN, M.St. Major – Serviciul Istoric, *România în Războiul Mondial*, 552, n. 1. Le général Dabija, *Armata română*, 247, évoque 3500 militaires roumains qui se seraient sauvés de Turtucaia.

[5] Gen. Constantin Teodorescu, *Turtucaia. Studiu tactic și cauzele înfrângerii* (Brașov : Tipografia Unirea, 1922), 123. Le général Teodorescu aurait quitté la garnison en vertu d'un

Comment est-ce que cette bataille que l'historien américain Glenn Torrey appelait « an embarrassing tactical defeat but in itself of little strategic importance »[6] a pu produire tout de suite une impression si profonde dans les rangs des élites et de l'opinion roumaine ? Et pourquoi cette forte impression initiale a-t-elle engendré par la suite des ondes de chocs mémorielles – mais aussi politiques – avant même la fin de la guerre mais aussi après ?

Plusieurs observateurs contemporains, comme le général Dabija, ancien attaché militaire de la Roumanie à Sofia à l'époque des guerres balkaniques et officier d'Etat-Major sur le front du Sud en septembre 1916, privilégient la dimension psychologique des effets de la défaite : « …La défaite de Turtucaia, écrivait-il dans les années 1930, fut grave non pas du point de vue stratégique, mais du point de vue moral. […] Après Turtucaia, le moral du commandement supérieur a subi une chute qui s'est transmise de manière fulgurante aux échelons inférieurs jusqu'aux troupes. »[7]

Bien que dans les premiers jours la presse roumaine ait cherché soit à investir la chute de Turtucaia de l'aura d'une défaite glorieuse soit à calmer le public en relativisant les conséquences du désastre,[8] ce qui s'est fortement imposé dans l'opinion fut un mélange de stupéfaction et d'humiliation. « L'impression dans la capitale est désastreuse. Etre battu par les Allemands n'est pas une honte, mais être battu par les Bulgares… », note un avocat bucarestois du haut de ses préjugés ethniques partagés par nombre de ses compatriotes.[9] Le journaliste Constantin Bacalbașa dénonçait, en 1921, cet état d'esprit lorsqu'il écrivait qu'en 1916 « il n'y avait que très peu, très peu de Roumains qui pouvaient s'imaginer que l'armée roumaine pouvait être battue par les Bulgares » ce qui ne l'empêchait pas de croire qu'à Turtucaia « le mérite des Bulgares a été médiocre » car ils avaient combattu là-bas dans une coalition commandée par le général von Mackensen où entraient des Allemands, des Austro-Hongrois et des Turcs.[10] A un autre niveau d'analyse, l'homme politique Ion G. Duca, confirme cette cécité collective devant le potentiel militaire du voisin sud-danubien : « Certains, ha-

ordre reçu du Grand Quartier Général [GQG] Roumain, voir MAN, M.St. Major – Serviciul Istoric, *România în Războiul Mondial*, 550 ; Glenn Torrey, *The Romanian Battlefront in World War I* (Lawrewnce :University Press of Kansas, 2011), 72). Le général Teodorescu, *Turtucaia*, 122–123, ne mentionne pas dans ses souvenirs un tel ordre qu'il aurait eu intérêt à invoquer en sa défense mais seulement l'approbation que son geste a reçu ultérieurement de la part du GQG roumain.

6 Gen. Alexandru Averescu, *Răspunderile* (Ligii Poporului, 1918), 32.

7 Torrey, *Romanian Battlefront*, 74.

8 Dabija, *Armata română*, 258.

9 Nicolae Iorga, « Lupta de la Turtucaia », *Războiul nostru în note zilnice*, t. II (Craiova : [s.d.]), 105 ; Constantin Mille, « Fleoarțe », *Adevărul*, 27 août/9 septembre 1916.

10 Vasile Th. Cancicov, *Jurnal din vremea ocupației*, t. I, (Bucarest : Humanitas, 2015), 49.

bitués aux succès faciles de la campagne de Bulgarie [de 1913, n.n.] concevaient difficilement l'idée d'une défaite immédiate et notamment d'une défaite provoquée par les Bulgares que nous avions tellement l'habitude de mépriser. »[11]

Le lieu même de la défaite brouillait une solide carte mentale collective qui faisait des contrées sud-danubiennes un espace où la Roumanie avait joué à deux reprises – en 1877–1878 et 1913 – le rôle de puissance victorieuse et aussi celui d'arbitre mettant fin à la 2e Guerre Balkanique. Les Bulgares n'avaient-ils pas évité de se battre contre l'armée roumaine qui envahissait leur pays en 1913 en se rendant même en grand nombre à plusieurs occasions aux troupes du roi Charles Ier ? Le nord de la Bulgarie était devenu une terre de récits d'héroïsme et de succès militaires placés au cœur même du processus de construction nationale, qu'il s'agisse des victoires contre les Turcs en 1877–1878 ou de la campagne contre la Bulgarie en 1913. « Quel malheur fut pour nous la facilité de la campagne de 1913, les riches présent qu'elle nous a apporté ! » s'exclame l'historien Nicolae Iorga le lendemain de la défaite.[12]

A la confusion et à l'humiliation d'une débâcle infligée par un ennemi qui avait été manifestement sous-estimé s'ajoutent très vite les rumeurs sur les atrocités subies par les prisonniers roumains, les exécutions en masse ou des mutilations dont une partie d'entre eux auraient été victimes.[13] Ces rumeurs confortent l'opinion roumaine au moins sur un point – l'image de l'infériorité fondamentale, définitive, de l'ennemi aujourd'hui victorieux – et constitue un antidote, très imparfait, au sentiment collectif d'humiliation. Les rumeurs rejoignent aussi les rangs de l'armée roumaine qui combat en Transylvanie, comme le note, une semaine après la bataille de Turtucaia, le jeune officier Grigore Romalo lors de la discussion d'un plan d'attaque avec ses camarades : « Sur beaucoup de visages se lisent certaines émotions. Ce qui les émeut le plus […] je crois, c'est le massacre de Turtucaia, le massacre des prisonniers. Et ils ont raison. »[14]

Ces rumeurs n'étaient pas complétement dépourvues de fondement. Plusieurs cas où des militaires roumains grièvement blessés avaient été achevés par les soldats bulgares victorieux furent consignés par des survivants[15] tandis que

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[11] Constantin Bacalbaşa, *Capitala sub ocupaţia duşmanului 1916–1918* (Brăila : Alcalay & Calafeteanu, 1921), 6–7.

[12] Duca, *Amintiri politice*, 18.

[13] Iorga, « Lupta de la Turtucaia », 107.

[14] Regina Maria a României, *Jurnal de război*, t. I (Bucarest : Humanitas, 2016), entrées du 25 août/7 septembre et 26 août/8 septembre 1916 ; Grigore Romalo, *Carnete de război 1916–1917* (Editura Corint, 2017), 26, 35 et 39 ; Vasile Th. Cancicov, *Impresiuni şi păreri personale din timpul războiului României*, t. 2 (Bucarest : Atelierle Societăţii Universul, 1921), 426 ; Arabella Yarka, *De pe o zi pe alta. Carnet intim 1913–1918* (Bucarest : Compania, 2010), 96; Iorga, *Războiul nostru în note zilnice*, 112 et 122.

[15] Romalo, *Carnete de război*, 35.

l'assassinat de certains prisonniers, fraîchement capturés – comme celui, devenue emblématique, du major Ioan Dervescu, tué devant des centaines d'autres camarades d'infortune pour avoir refusé de se laisser dépouillé de sa montre – devaient frapper les esprits et entrer dans la narration historiographique et littéraire.[16] Il n'y eut pas, cependant, d'exécution en masse « à la mitrailleuse » des prisonniers roumains comme l'a voulu une croyance vite répandue dans les rangs de l'opinion roumaine et dont s'est fait l'écho avec une certaine prudence, dans son journal, la Reine Marie.[17] L'origine de cette dernière rumeur réside vraisemblablement dans les exécutions simulées auxquelles furent soumis certains des prisonniers par les militaires bulgares immédiatement après la capitulation de la place forte.[18] Cette rumeur d'exécution en masse ne sera partiellement démentie qu'en 1918 lorsque le retour des prisonniers roumains capturés à Turtucaia remplacera les légendes populaires avec les relations et les rapports, beaucoup plus précis, de l'expérience, souvent très dure et traumatisante, de la captivité dans les camps bulgares.[19]

Enfin, la défaite de Turtucaia ne pouvait même pas être considérée comme une défaite glorieuse – les contemporains l'ont vite compris et jamais il n'y a eu dans l'entre-deux-guerres, de tentative sérieuse d'attribuer à cette bataille l'aura d'une magnifique tragédie. Ni la résistance acharnée du 79e régiment d'infanterie qui, situé sur la direction principale de l'attaque bulgare, perdit trois quarts de ses soldats tués ou blessés, ni les actes isolés, souvent individuels, d'héroïsme ne rachetèrent dans la perception publique et dans la reconstitution historique la conviction générale d'une catastrophe honteuse. Dans la rangée de noms de batailles qui orne l'Arc de Triomphe de Bucarest, érigé en 1936, le nom d'une défaite « glorieuse » comme celle de Neajlov – déroulée du 29 novembre au 3 décembre 1916 et qui entraina la chute de Bucarest – a pu trouver sa place, chose impensable pour la bataille de Turtucaia.

« Et puis, en pleine ébullition de bravoure, quand les communiqués militaires venant du Nord étaient tellement généreux – surgit Turtucaia. […] Des rumeurs pesantes, des regards qui cherchaient, fébrilement, le dernier communiqué, devenu laconique, la foule silencieuse, la joie tuée sur les visages. »[20] L'écrivain Cezar Petrescu décrivait ainsi dans son roman de 1927 intitulé *Assombris-*

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[16] Zagoriț, *Turtukaia*, 7, 147, 159, 172, 193, 194 et 389.

[17] Kirițescu, *Istoria războiului*, 394 ; George Topirceanu, *Amintiri din luptele de la Turtucaia. Pirin-Planina (episoduri tragice și comice din captivitate)* (Bucarest : Humanitas, 2014), 79.

[18] Regina Maria a României, *Jurnal de război*, entrée du 25 août/7 septembre.

[19] Mémoire dactylographié de Constantin Zagoriț intitulé « Tratamentul ofițerilor români prizonieri în Bulgaria » et datée 1919, p. 2, Académie Roumaine, Section des manuscrits, Fond Nicolae Iorga ; Topîrceanu, *Amintiri din luptele de la Turtucaia*, 32.

[20] Cancicov, *Impresiuni și păreri personale*, 426; Zagoriț, « Tratamentul ofițerilor români prizonieri în Bulgaria », 2.

sement, le seuil psychologique franchi par une société qui ne bascule vraiment dans la guerre que sous le choc d'une débâcle militaire. Dans les mémoires du ministre Constantin Argetoianu, Turtucaia marquait aussi une ligne de partage des eaux dans l'histoire politique roumaine : « Avec Turtucaia a débuté, chez nous, la haine contre les partis politiques [car] Turtucaia a montré au grand jour l'inanité des gens auxquels le pays avait confié son sort… . Avec Turtucaia est née chez nous une mentalité nouvelle.»[21]

Sans publicité aucune – chose explicable sous le régime de la censure de guerre – les responsables militaires initient dès le mois de septembre 1916 une première enquête sur les conditions dans lesquelles une fraction de la garnison – et notamment des officiers – a pu se sauver de la ville assiégée.[22] La tension se fait sentir dans les rangs de l'armée. Les tentatives de trouver des responsables menant aux premières accusations d'abandon de poste et de désertion en présence de l'ennemi engendrent une procédure de justice militaire qui n'aura pas le temps de se développer à l'automne 1916 à cause des revers militaires et de la défaite de l'armée roumaine dans le sud du pays en novembre et décembre 1916.

Ce n'est que dans le contexte de 1918, avec le retour de la paix et des passions politiques que Turtucaia acquiert pleinement sa signification symbolique. 1918, année de la paix séparée signée le 7 mai entre la Roumanie et les Puissances centrale, année d'une importante démobilisation partielle de l'armée roumaine est aussi l'année où commence une recomposition du paysage politique qui annonce déjà l'entre-deux-guerres. Ce contexte, enrichi par le retour au pays d'une bonne partie des prisonniers roumains – y compris ceux détenus en Bulgarie – engendre une massive libération de la parole – notamment dans les rangs des militaires – qui agit comme une lentille grossissante sur le cas de Turtucaia. Afin d'en réduire les effets, un ordre émis en avril par le Grand Quartier Général interdisait formellement les discussions sur « les opérations militaires passées » et sur « les différents succès ou insuccès de nos ennemis, de nos amis et de l'armée roumaine elle-même » en invoquant les risques liés à l'espionnage.[23]

L'issue défavorable, militaire et politique, de la guerre, au début de 1918, contribue au retour du thème « Turtucaia ». Celui-ci devient un abcès de fixation mémoriel et politique, qui participe au doute, à la colère, à la demande de comptes qui se font entendre. Un de ceux qui entendaient raviver alors la mémoire de Turtucaia était le général Alexandru Averescu, héros de la guerre qui se lance en politique comme l'homme qui, à la fois, assume des responsabilités – il est brièvement premier ministre en février-mars 1918 – et qui demande pu-

[21] Cezar Petrescu, *Intunecare* (Bucarest : Litera, 2010), 207.

[22] Constantin Argetoianu, *Pentru cei de mâine. Amintiri din vremea celor de ieri*, t. III, 5e partie (Bucarest : Humanitas, 1992), 36.

[23] Archives Militaires Roumaines (AMR), Fonds « Comandamentul Capului de Pod Turtucaia », D. 6, 13, 15, 23, 44.

bliquement des comptes aux dirigeants politiques et militaires compromis par l'issue de l'engagement du pays dans le conflit.

L'explication politique du désastre de Turtucaia émerge comme un thème qui bénéficie de l'encouragement des germanophiles roumains – maintenant au pouvoir – mais aussi de certains responsables de l'armée intéressés à substituer, au moins en partie, à l'explication militaire du désastre une explication politique. Un comité d'enquête parlementaire est constitué afin d'amasser les preuves nécessaires à l'inculpation du gouvernement Brătianu pour mauvaise préparation de l'entrée en guerre. Le général Aslan, ex-commandant de la 3e armée, largement considéré comme le principal responsable pour la défaite,[24] met en cause à cette occasion l'ensemble de l'équipement de l'armée en 1916 y compris, explicitement, l'armement obsolète et la pénurie de munitions de l'infanterie roumaine à Turtucaia.[25] C'est la ligne de défense qu'adoptera son ancien subordonné, le général Teodorescu, lorsqu'il proclamera quatre ans plus tard : « Avec l'armée [roumaine] de 1916 on ne pouvait pas faire mieux, peu importe la valeur et la bravoure des généraux. »[26]

Pour le général Averescu, qui se trouve en rivalité avec d'autres hauts responsables de l'armée, la culpabilité pour l'échec de l'entrée en guerre est partagée entre les politiques et certains militaires habitués des faveurs gouvernementales. Ceci est valable aussi dans le cas de la défaite de Turtucaia. A ses yeux, à la mauvaise préparation de l'entrée en guerre s'ajoute une double absurdité : celle de la médiocre valeur stratégique de la forteresse et celle de l'ordre de résistance à outrance transmis à la garnison au plus fort des combats : « Pourquoi ? Pourquoi ? s'exclame Averescu. Qu'avions-nous à défendre à Turtucaia ? La fameuse tête de pont sans pont ? »[27]

C'est, finalement, l'écroulement des Puissances centrales à l'automne 1918 et la fin de leur emprise sur la Roumanie suivie du triomphe du projet national roumain qui reléguèrent au second plan la question des responsabilités du gouvernement Brătianu pour la défaite. Mais, comme le remarque l'homme politique Ion G. Duca, fidèle compagnon politique de Brătianu, la mémoire de Turtucaia continuera d'être associée, dans les années 1920, avec le nom du premier ministre qui avait assumé la responsabilité de l'entrée en guerre de la Roumanie : « Le pauvre Brătianu fut attaqué des années durant à ce sujet. Il avait accompli l'unité du pays et on continuait de lui jeter à la figure 'Turtucaia' ! qui était invo-

[24] AMR, Fonds « Comandamentul general al etapelor », D. 172, f. 304.

[25] Regina Maria a României, *Jurnal de război*, entrée du 25 décembre 1916/7 janvier 1917.

[26] Déposition du général de division Mihail Aslan datée du 4 octobre 1918, AMAE, Bucarest, Fonds 71-1914, E2, partea a II-a (*Judecarea Ministerelor Brătianu 1914–1924*), t. 56, f. 319–322.

[27] Gen. Teodorescu, *Turtucaia*, 140.

quée pour prouver notre impréparation militaire. »[28] Le futur premier ministre Duca, solidaire de l'*establishment* du Parti National Libéral qui s'identifiait exclusivement avec la victoire finale et la création de la Grande Roumanie, rejette dans des paragraphes entiers de ses mémoires la responsabilité sur les militaires roumains et sur l'inaction de l'allié russe en Dobroudja.[29] Le rapprochement que fait Duca entre la bataille de Turtucaia et celle de Charleroi, déroulée en août 1914 au début de l'offensive allemande sur le front de l'Ouest et soldée par la défaite de l'armée française est représentative d'une tentative subtile de dédouaner le gouvernement libéral de l'époque dont le chef était aussi ministre de la guerre. Les deux batailles sont, aux yeux de Duca, des batailles d'entrée en guerre plus susceptibles de tourner au désastre que les batailles ultérieures. « L'armée française, tellement merveilleuse et brave, fut à Charleroi en dessous de toute critique. […] Avons-nous oublié qu'à Charleroi les commandants français se sont montrés tellement incapables que Joffre fut obligé de limoger plus de 70 généraux ? »[30] Pour Duca, les équivalent roumains de ces généraux français sont les généraux Aslan, Teodorescu et Basarabescu, limogés eux-mêmes après Turtucaia et qui représentent « des manifestations d'un phénomène général » repérable dans tous les débuts de guerre.[31]

Au-delà des accusations d'ordre politique qui fleurissent en 1918 et qui ne disparaitront jamais complétement, la question de l'explication militaire de la défaite demeurait et, bien que mue par des raisons partisanes, le réquisitoire que dressait quelqu'un comme Averescu permettait le glissement de l'explication politique vers l'explication proprement militaire du désastre. Le besoin d'une telle explication était douloureusement ressenti par l'armée et ceci dès avant l'armistice du 11 novembre avec, notamment, le retour des prisonniers de Turtucaia à partir du printemps 1918. Le malaise de l'institution militaire et le besoin d'évaluer le comportement des officiers – aussi bien pendant les combats de Turtucaia qu'à l'époque de la captivité – donna naissance à deux commissions spéciales d'enquête, l'une constituée le 9 juin1918 et dirigée par le général Eremia Grigorescu[32], l'autre, qui lui succéda, entre décembre 1918 et avril 1919, sous la direction du général Istrati.

Le très grand nombre d'officiers roumains tombés prisonniers à Turtucaia – 480 sur un total de 550[33] – créait une caisse de résonance particulière pour la mémoire de la défaite. Pendant la dernière année de captivité en Bulgarie

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[28] Gen. Averescu, *Răspunderile*, 32.

[29] Duca, *Amintiri politice*, 16.

[30] Ibid. 14–17.

[31] Ibid. 16.

[32] Ibid. 17.

[33] AMR, Fonds « Comandamentul General al etapelor », D. 395, f. 1-2.

les camps de Kîrdjali, Sliven et Haskovo comptaient – en chiffres approximatifs, selon un rapport roumain – 100, 150 respectivement 470 officiers roumains.[34] Les grandes concentrations de ces officiers dans les différents camps bulgares ont favorisé les discussions, les interrogations et les mises en causes critiques du déroulement d'une bataille à laquelle la majorité de ces hommes avaient participé. Certains d'entre eux ont entrepris ce qu'un document de la commission Grigorescu appelait des « enquêtes personnelles » auprès de leurs camarades.[35] Les officiers de Turtucaia se savaient acteurs d'un moment de déshonneur collectif, intimement lié à leur condition de prisonniers, et tout en cherchant le sens de l'événement exceptionnel auquel ils avaient pris part ils réalisaient qu'au moins sur le plan moral, ils auraient des explications à fournir voir des comptes à rendre une fois de retour dans leur pays. En même temps, les quelque dizaines d'officiers rescapés du désastre faisaient tous l'objet d'un soupçon légitime à commencer par le général Teodorescu, dont la fuite de Turtucaia était devenue un véritable symbole.

Quatre mois après avoir commencé son activité – et peu avant de l'arrêter – la commission Grigorescu, avait reçu et étudié 225 dossiers d'officiers ayant combattu à Turtucaia, en remarquant que beaucoup de ceux sur lesquels planaient des soupçons ou des accusations s'étaient soustrait à l'enquête où s'y étaient soumis avec retard. Un nombre de 103 officiers furent considérés susceptibles d'une enquête approfondie à cause de leur comportement pendant la bataille ou dans les camps de prisonniers.[36]

Un des officiers qui, bien que n'ayant pas participé à la bataille elle-même avaient fait sa propre enquête sur Turtucaia parmi ses compagnons d'infortune, prisonniers des camps bulgares, était le capitaine Constantin Zagoriț qui sera aussi intégré dans la commission Grigorescu. Zagoriț, promu major peu après son retour de Bulgarie, va consacrer toute sa vie à la reconstitution de ce qui s'était passé à Turtucaia. D'après son témoignage, pendant sa captivité il aurait recueilli autour de 1000 relations de quelques 500 militaires roumains tombés prisonniers lors de la bataille. Notées d'une écriture minuscule sur des feuilles de papiers cachées soigneusement dans quelques boites de conserves, ces relations, sauvées des perquisitions des autorités bulgares, furent apportées en Roumanie et servirent de base à la rédaction, entre 1918–1923 d'un ouvrage original et important pour la reconstitution de l'événement.[37] Zagoriț a aussi visité plusieurs fois le champ de bataille pour affiner sa reconstitution et il a soumis son manuscrit à la lecture d'autres officiers. A travers sa démarche on assiste à un

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[34] Kiritescu, *Istoria războiului*, 398 ; Dabija, *Armata română*, 246.

[35] Zagorit, « Tratamentul ofițerilor români prizonieri în Bulgaria », 6.

[36] Voir plus bas, note 37.

[37] AMR, Fonds « Comandamentul General al etapelor », D. 395, Rapport daté du 12 octobre 1918, f. 135–136, 152–164, 169.

double effort. D'une part celui d'utiliser, tout en les dépassant, les différentes perspectives individuelles, forcément limitées, de la bataille en essayant d'aller outre le verdict de certaines de ses sources selon lesquelles « il sera impossible de déchiffrer quelques chose du chaos qui régnait là-bas. Car, en réalité, il n'y aurait pas eu des combats proprement-dits mais un enchevêtrement infini d'unités, dispersées et perdues dans les champs de maïs et dans les forêts ».[38] D'autre part Zagoriț associe l'effort d'explication militaire de la défaite à la tentative de rendre palpable – témoignages à l'appui – l'expérience directe du champ de bataille, l'expérience du combat, de la retraite, de la liquéfaction de toute autorité et de tout esprit de résistance. Cette expérience ne peut être ignorée lorsqu'on cherche une cohérence explicative qui doit se placer, parfois, au ras du sol du champ de bataille. D'ici découle un autre trait du travail de Zagoriț : le besoin de retrouver et de reconstituer les actes d'héroïsme, individuel ou collectif, dans les rangs des troupes roumaines – autant de moments susceptibles de servir de points d'appui pour une tentative limitée de justice mémorielle et de rédemption morale collective. Il s'agit, proclame-t-il sur la couverture même de son livre, d'un « ouvrage écrit à la gloire des soldats qui par leur bravoure et par le sacrifice de leur vie ont sauvé l'honneur de l'armée et du peuple roumain dans les combats de Turtucaia ».[39] Point de vue singulier qui nuance l'image d'une défaite unanimement abhorrée et qu'on préfère oublier, semble-t-il, à la fin des années 1930, à l'image de l'écrivain Geo Bogza, auteur, en 1939, d'un reportage sur la ville de Turtucaia où le visage souriant de la bourgade danubienne l'emporte complétement sur le souvenir, évoqué en passant, du « massacre qui lui avait conféré une si douloureuse célébrité ».[40] Pour Zagoriț, qui était maintenant colonel en réserve, l'année 1939 marque la fin, qu'il s'impose lui-même, du chemin qu'il avait commencé dans les camps bulgares en recueillant les témoignages de ses camarades sur une tragédie qui laissait, apparemment, indifférent le jeune Bogza. Sentant la nouvelle guerre approcher et afin de contribuer, selon ses propres mots, à la formation des officiers de l'armée roumaine pour le conflit à venir, il publie son ouvrage ainsi qu'un atlas des combats de Turtucaia.

Le caractère, à la fois original et marginal de l'entreprise de Zagoriț distingue d'une part, ses écrits, des brochures publiées entre 1918–1923 par des généraux comme Aslan et Teodorescu, considérés responsables de la défaite et qui mélangent explications militaires et autojustification et, d'autre part, du travail historique canonique de Constantin Kirițescu, auteur, au milieu des années

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[38] AMR, f. 5, Note datée du 14 (27) juin 1918 adressée au capitaine Zagoriț lui demandant de donner aux autorités militaire « le mémoire ou le travail que vous avez rédigé concernant Turtucaia à la suite de l'enquête personnelle que vous avez entrepris parmi les officiers prisonnier durant votre captivité ».

[39] Zagoriț, *Turtukaia*, 4.

[40] Ibid.

1920, de l'ouvrage classique, en trois volumes, sur la participation roumaine à la Grande Guerre, « which vividly portrayed both the agony and ecstasy of the war and inspired a generation of young Romanians »,[41] comme l'écrit Glenn Torrey. Dans le chapitre consacré à Turtucaia, Kiritescu évoque dans un style passionnel une « page de souffrance et de honte », une « défaite désastreuse, humiliante » qui « a eu l'effet d'une paire de gifles en faisant saigner nos cœurs », qui « nous a exposé aux sarcasmes de l'ennemi et nous a compromis aux yeux des amis ».[42] L'auteur, qui avait lu en manuscrit l'enquête de Zagoriț,[43] décrit dans un crescendo narratif bien conduit la montée inéluctable d'une tragédie en y insérant un réquisitoire auquel n'échappent ni commandants, ni simples soldats. Les épisodes de résistance ou de contre-attaques héroïques qu'il consigne avec soin, ne rachètent pas la médiocrité du commandement et la fragilité psychologique et morale d'une garnison dont le comportement est jugé par l'historien à la lumière des défaites glorieuses ou des victoires ultérieures de l'armée roumaine dans la campagne de 1916–1917. Les lamentations et les imprécations bibliques de Kirițescu, l'image qu'il donne du général Teodorescu abandonnant « sous un blizzard de malédictions » ses soldats pris au piège participent à un véritable verdict et ne manquent pas d'impressionner jusqu'à nos jours.

Mais la description la plus saisissante de ce que fut ce « Caporetto » roumain reste celle d'un témoin de première main, l'écrivain George Topîrceanu qui publia, en 1918 et en 1936, ses souvenirs de participant direct à la bataille et de prisonnier dans les camps bulgares.[44] Sergent dans l'artillerie, Topîrceanu, fait le portrait le plus vivant et le plus terrifiant de toute la littérature roumaine du phénomène de la panique collective – celle qui s'est saisie des masses de soldats vaincus, piégés sur les bords du Danube par l'avancée ennemie, incapables de repartir au combat et réduits à choisir entre la captivité et la noyade. « Tel des bêtes effrayées ils se jetèrent sur le pont, sur le ponton, ils inondèrent le bac en se pressant sauvagement, en se frayant le chemin à coup de poing et en piétinant les blessés, pris par surprise et écrasés de tous les côtés. On entendait un cri déchirant, des lamentations d'hommes à l'agonie, des gémissements de poitrines écrabouillées sous les bottes, de gens dont les têtes étaient broyées sous les talons, d'estropiés aux blessures sanglantes, incapables de se défendre. Et cette cohue grandissait continuellement…; ils se pressaient, se poussaient avec acharnement […] montaient les uns sur les épaules des autres, roulaient et revenaient à la charge avec des visages grimaçants sous l'emprise d'une unique pensée et d'une

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41 Geo Bogza, *Țări de piatră, de foc și de pământ* (Bucarest : Fundația pentru Literatură și Artă Regele Carol II, 1939), 134.

42 Torrey, *Romanian Battlefront*, 256.

43 Kiritescu, *Istoria războiului*, 362 et 403.

44 Zagoriț, *Turtukaia*, 10.

poussée instinctive : qu'il échappe, *lui*, à tout prix, qu'il attrape une place sur le pont du navire. »[45]

La valeur en tant que source historique des souvenirs de Topîrceanu – qui ne furent que discrètement republiés à l'époque communiste dans un recueil d'œuvres afin de ménager les relations « fraternelles » roumano-bulgares – est susceptible de s'accroître par un recoupement de son récit avec des documents d'archives encore très peu mis en valeur. La véridicité des scènes qu'il décrit mérite l'attention de l'historien car Topîrceanu se veut avant tout un témoin et va jusqu'à pratiquer parfois l'analyse rétrospective de l'événement. Je mentionne seulement les épisodes qui attestent la brutalité de l'armée roumaine envers les civils dans le contexte de la bataille ou la manière de surprendre la dangereuse fluidité du moment où la condition du combattant bascule dans celle de prisonnier de guerre susceptible de subir spontanément la haine de l'ennemi fraîchement victorieux et encore mû par la dynamique meurtrière du combat.

L'écrivain Cezar Petrescu, témoin littéraire d'une atmosphère bucarestoise marquée par le début de la guerre, tente de restituer, une décennie plus tard, un autre état d'esprit collectif, celui des civils en proie aux rumeurs et aux représentations dantesques de la bataille de Turtucaia. Celles-ci sont alimentées par les militaires rescapés dont la vue, dans les rues de la capitale, « serraient subitement les cœurs et faisait pleurer les passants ». Après les premiers convois de prisonniers austro-hongrois capturés au tout début de la guerre, apparaissent, faisant contraste dans le paysage de la ville, « les soldats des régiments de Turtucaia, avec leurs bras enveloppés de bandages blancs à travers lesquels montait la couleur rouge du sang, des hommes qui ne pouvaient donner aucun éclaircissement, portant dans leurs regards des visions de terreur, parlant de façon confuse de quelques chose de terrible qui s'était passé là-bas : la chair humaine écrabouillée par le canon et des chevaux jetés dans le Danube, des commandants abandonnant leurs postes, des blessés massacrés par l'ennemi, des enfants aux mains coupées, des officiers se brûlant la cervelle après avoir fait tirer le dernier obus de leur batterie… »[46] La véridicité de cette reconstitution littéraire peut être mise, au moins en partie, en question ne serait-ce qu'à cause de la présence du fantasme des « enfants aux mains coupées » par l'ennemi, un thème visiblement emprunté au répertoire des rumeurs qui circulent en France et qui sont amplifiées par la presse pendant l'exode des civils réfugiés devant l'avancée allemande d'août 1914.[47] Toujours est-il que la littérature illustre à sa manière le poids de l'obsessionnelle défaite dans la Roumanie de l'entre-deux-guerres.

On ne peut laisser de côté l'écho de la défaite dans l'art roumain à travers, notamment, les œuvres du peintre Nicolae Tonitza, capturé à Turtucaia et

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[45] Topirceanu, *Amintiri din luptele de la Turtucaia*.

[46] Ibid. 44.

[47] Petrescu, *Intunecare*, 207.

prisonnier dans le camp de Kîrdjali.[48] Les desseins et les tableaux de Tonitza, œuvres d'observation, de réflexion et de mémoire, rejoignent par le biais spécifique de l'art du peintre, les souvenirs de captivité publiés dans l'entre-deux-guerres par d'anciens prisonniers roumains en Bulgarie. Tonitza participe ainsi à un courant qui autonomise l'expérience de la captivité et lui confère ses pleins droits à la mémoire et à la compassion avec, en toile de fond, la débâcle militaire emblématique et obsédante. Tonitza est le peintre des colonnes de prisonniers dépenaillés qui prennent, le dos voûté, le chemin des camps, des blessés qui marchent, épuisés, en s'épaulant mutuellement, des morts en captivité, enterrés humblement par leur camarades. A partir des desseins et des croquis réalisés dans le camp de Kîrdjali il va peindre, après son retour en Roumanie en 1918, plusieurs tableaux dont les thèmes résonnent avec l'impression inéluctable de catastrophe humaine qu'a légué en Roumanie la bataille de Turtucaia : *Sur la route de Turtucaia*, *Convoi de prisonniers*, *Enterrement d'un prisonnier roumain en Bulgarie*.

La mémoire des victoires militaires roumaine de l'été 1917 et celle de l'accomplissement du projet national fin 1918 n'ont jamais effacé complétement le souvenir de Turtucaia dans la Roumanie de l'entre-deux-guerres. Défaite emblématique et difficile à évacuer de la mémoire collective, défaite porteuse d'un permanent avertissement sur la fragilité de la victoire finale et de ses acquis, défaite convertible en réquisitoire sur une scène politique en pleine transformation à partir de 1918, Turtucaia, ne devait s'effacer de la conscience publique roumaine qu'après l'instauration du communisme. Le statut de bataille menée contre l'armée d'un pays devenu, entre temps, un « pays-frère » à l'intérieur du « camp socialiste » ainsi que l'issue désastreuse de cet épisode ont poussé à la disparition du nom « Turtucaia » des ouvrages historiques et des manuels de l'époque communiste. L'exhumation limitée de cette bataille dans certains ouvrages publiés pendant la phase finale, la plus virulente, du national-communisme de Ceaușescu[49] ne lui a pas permis de revenir au cœur de la mémoire collective de la Grande Guerre. Cette éclipse est, vraisemblablement, irréversible car rien ne prouve, même après 1989, que le nom de la plus grande défaite subie par l'armée roumaine dans la Grande Guerre puisse redevenir un repère pour la mémoire collective des Roumains dans le postcommunisme.

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[48] John Horne et Alan Kramer, *1914. Les atrocités allemandes. La vérité sur les crimes de guerre en France et en Belgique* (Paris : Editions Tallandier, 2005), 307–310.

[49] Laura Sânziana Romanescu Cuciuc, « Nicolae Tonitza, the painter from Turtucaia », *Revista Română de Studii Eurasiatice* IX/1–2 (2013).

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Heritage and Memory of the First World War in Greece during the Interwar Period A Historical Perspective

Abstract: The memory of the First World War in Greece has suffered throughout the years a gradual decline, which is comparable to the case of many other countries, mostly in areas of Eastern and Southeastern Europe. The Great War mattered somehow for politicians, the press and public opinion in Greece only in the interwar years. During that period, discourse about the First World War included the echo of traumatic events related to Greek involvement in the war (such as the surrender of Fort Roupel to Central Powers forces and the bloody clashes of December 1916 in Athens after the landing of Entente troops) and the efforts to erect war memorials as a tribute to the sacrifice of fallen soldiers, both Greeks and foreigners. At the same time, the Greek people had the opportunity to learn a lot about the international dimension of the war through newspapers, where translated memoirs of leading wartime figures (of both alliances) were published. After the outbreak of the Second World War, interest in the previous major conflict (including the Greek role in the hostilities) significantly diminished in the country. Taking into consideration the ongoing experience of the centenary manifestations, the author proposes a codification of the main types (existing or potential) of WWI memory in Greece and suggests new ways of approaching this major historical event. The final chapter addresses some possible causes of the troublesome relation of Greeks with the First World War, which is mainly due to the very particular circumstances of Greek involvement in the war and the determining role of later historical events that overshadowed memories of the earlier conflict.

Key words: First World War memory, Greece and the First World War, National Schism, Eleftherios Venizelos, Ioannis Metaxas, Constantine, King of Greece

One hundred years after the massive catastrophe of the First World War and all the turbulent years that preceded or followed it, the whole world has turned its attention to this major milestone of world history through a lengthy list of commemorative events, publications, academic gatherings and many other types of activities. If the great interest caused by the centenary was surely to be expected in countries like France or the UK, where the Great War has always been a strong point of reference in the national memory narratives, special atten-

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tion must be paid to a number of countries where, for most of the previous century, the presence of the First World War in both public and academic dialogue had been surprisingly and disproportionately meagre. The universal focus on the First World War has constituted in such cases a unique (and perhaps unrepeatable) challenge in order to reinvigorate their overall interest in the Great War and inspire new historiographical and memorial approaches.

The case of Greece is highly indicative of the difficulties encountered in such a challenge – as the end of the quadrennium is approaching, it is difficult to arrive at a clear verdict over the real impact of this anniversary in the country. No one can claim that the First World War centenary passed unobserved; few, though, would insist that it has brought a real turnover regarding the visibility of the First World War inside Greek society. This complex reality makes it necessary to review once again the issue of the reception and thorny survival of the First World War in Greek public opinion and academic society alike, where only a very small percentage of people are aware of the full dimensions of that war and its real implications for the history of the country. This situation, as we mentioned before, is not specific to Greece; it characterizes a number of countries and nations, especially (but not exclusively) in the broader area of Eastern and Southeastern Europe. In all these cases, the impact of the First World War at social, political and academic levels does not correspond, for a variety of reasons, to the real importance of the event, which proved to be crucial even for the very existence of some of these states, created after the dissolution of old empires by the end of the war.

In the Greek case, the 1914–1918 period ranks among the most complex, controversial and decisive in the history of the modern Greek state.[1] At the military level, the direct engagement of the Greek army in the hostilities, even if materialized only in the final year of the war, is considered to have offered an important contribution to the final Allied victory on the Macedonian Front. In the diplomatic field, in the early years of the war Greece found itself in the focus of the attention of the two rival alliances, as each of them sought in multiple ways to secure Greek support for its own cause. This resulted in multiple violations of the initial neutrality of the country, in continuous threats to

[1] For the history of Greece during the First World War, see G. B. Leon (Leontaritis), *Greece and the Great Powers. 1914–1917* (Thessaloniki: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1974); G. B. Leontaritis, *Η Ελλάδα στον Πρώτο Παγκόσμιο Πόλεμο. 1917–1918* [Greece in the First World War. 1917–1918] (Athens: MIET, 2000) [revised edition of the book: *Greece and the First World War: From Neutrality to Intervention, 1917–1918* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990)]; Y. Mourélos, *L'intervention de la Grèce dans la Grande Guerre (1916–1917)* (Athens: Institut Français d'Athènes, 1983); E. Lemonidou, "La Grèce vue de France pendant la Première Guerre mondiale; entre censure et propagandes" (PhD, Université Paris IV, 2007); G. Th. Mavrogordatos, *1915. Ο Εθνικός Διχασμός* [1915. The National Schism] (Athens: Patakis, 2015).

its territorial integrity,[2] as well as to a painful schism on the domestic political scene, where King Constantine was a firm supporter of Greece's (pro-German) neutrality, while Eleftherios Venizelos, Prime Minister during the first year of the war, adopted an explicit pro-Entente stance. At the culmination of the crisis, the situation in the country was pretty much similar to that of a civil war, with many incidents of violence and bloodshed. The most significant and well-known case is the bloody clashes that erupted between Greek soldiers and Allied troops in the centre of Athens on 1 and 2 December 1916,[3] followed, in the next days, by scenes of extreme violence between supporters of the two rival camps on the Greek political scene.[4] Last but not least, a further significant aspect of the war lies in the fact that many soldiers from other countries lost their lives in various military or other violent incidents inside the Greek state or in its near periphery.

Taking all the above into consideration, it becomes clear that the limited Greek interest in the First World War in no way corresponds to its real importance for the history of the country. This is not a new finding, though. In the search for the origins and causes of this phenomenon, which includes a historical overview of the issue, it is useful to concentrate on the interwar years, the last period in which the memory of the First World War still mattered somehow in Greece. This paradigm offers useful keys to understanding the typology of the memory of the war, as well as to explaining some of the factors that contributed to the aforementioned long-standing disinterest shown by the Greeks.

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[2] A. Tounda-Fergadi, "Violations de la neutralité grecque par les Puissances de l'Entente durant la Première guerre mondiale", *Balkan Studies* 26.1 (1985), 113–129. Lemonidou, *ibid*.

[3] The events are known in Greek historiography and public discourse as "Noemvriana" ("November events"), since, according to the Julian calendar then in use in Greece, they took place in the month of November 1916.

[4] For the events which took place on 1 and 2 December 1916 see SHM (Historical Service of the French Navy – France / Service historique de la Marine nationale – France), SS X f 9, Roquefeuil to Lacaze, "Rapport sur les événements qui se sont déroulés dans les premiers jours de décembre 1916", "no. 533 of 9 December 1916; L. Maccas, "Les événements d'Athènes des 1er et 2 décembre 1916", *Revue des Deux Mondes* 38 (March-April 1917), 96–135; L. Dartige du Fournet, *Souvenirs de guerre d'un amiral (1914–1916)* (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1920), 210–273; G. Boussenot, « Le Drame du 1er décembre 1916 à Athènes", *Revue d'Histoire de la Guerre Mondiale* 1 (January 1938), 1–27; Y. Mourelos, *Τα «Νοεμβριανά» του 1916. Από το αρχείο της Μεικτής Επιτροπής Αποζημιώσεων των θυμάτων* [The "November Events" of 1916. From the Archive of the Mixed Commission for Indemnities to the Victims] (Athens: Patakis, 2007).

The First World War memory in the interwar period

In the first years that followed the end of the hostilities, the Great War was expectedly still present in a strong way in Greek public life, as evidenced by an overview of the Greek press of the time.

A large part of the references concerned the international post-war scene, which was about to take its definitive shape during the peace negotiations in Paris. The Greek claims, predominantly, but also the international dimensions of this process appeared regularly in Greek dailies. The contribution of Greece to the Allied victory was highlighted in many ways, in coordination with the efforts of the country's leadership to maximize gains in the ongoing diplomatic procedures. In the first months of 1919, articles and various references focused much more on the milestone of 14 July (and not on 11 November). In that year this important date acquired an additional symbolic dimension, as the National Day of France was directly related to the victory in the Great War that had ended a few months earlier. The particularly impressive celebration of 14 July 1919 in Paris, with the Greek Army participating in the great military parade, provided an excellent opportunity to promote the role of Greece as an indispensable member of the Entente alliance, as well as to stress the particular importance and good momentum of Franco-Hellenic relations in that period.[5]

Another important type of references concerned the domestic dimensions of the war in Greece and more precisely some highly disputed issues of the war period. A couple of trials that took place in 1919, concerning two traumatic pages in the Greek history of the few previous years, caught huge attention and coverage in the daily newspapers of that time. The first important trial, in May and June 1919, concerned the bloodshed of December 1916 in the city of Athens, and the second one, some months later, was related to the surrender of Fort Roupel (in northern Greece) to the Central Alliance forces in May 1916.

In both cases, but especially in the case related to the 1916 turmoil in Athens, the press provided extensive coverage, reporting on the trials on a day-to-day basis. This is proved very clearly by the example of the daily *Embros*, where news about the trial dominated its domestic news agenda for many weeks, with detailed reports of the court hearings on the front page. The verdict dramatically sealed the debate on this event, imposing the death penalty on four culprits. The penalty, however, would not be executed on any of the convicts, for several reasons. Similar attention was paid, a few months later, to the trial of the former members of the Army General Staff accused for the surrender of Fort Roupel. It is interesting to see that in this second trial, according to the daily reports in

[5] In the newspaper *Embros*, for example, a number of articles in the month of July 1919 are dedicated to the celebration of 14 July 1919 in Paris, to the preparations for the arrival of Prime Minister Venizelos in the French capital and to the participation of the Greek Army in the glorious parade on the French National Day.

the newspapers, one can also trace references to the aforementioned issue of the December 1916 clashes – in practice, the two issues are closely connected. Both are episodes related to the National Schism and the foreign interventions that plagued the country in the middle of the war period. It has to be mentioned that this rich material published in the daily press has still a lot to offer in the study of the period, as it can shed further light and clarify specific aspects of existing historical knowledge gathered from archival sources and other published evidence.

The work of justice concerning the December 1916 clashes did not finish with the big trials of 1919. In the early months of 1920 newspapers still published small pieces of news concerning accusations against more persons for the same issue. It is only after the middle of that year that things seem to change, with the appearance of news about amnesty granted to some of the accused and some debates regarding the extent of this act of lenience.

Despite the apparent calming of the spirits, however, the memory of the 1916 urban clashes in the Greek capital would remain vivid for the entire interwar period, as confirmed by sporadic, yet very characteristic mentions in the press, in published memoirs or in other types of written testimonies left by persons with a personal experience of the events.

It is very interesting to note that some of the press references are focused not on the post-war quest for heroes and villains inside Greece, but on another dimension of the events, which is their echo in France. The death of numerous French soldiers in the clashes shocked French public opinion and remained part of later discourse about these events in various ways.[6] Another interesting aspect regards the viewpoints of people who played an active role or simply witnessed the events. Towards the end of 1920 a couple of press references cover declarations of King Constantine and Ernst von Falkenhausen, former Military Attaché of Germany in Athens, each offering, among other things, his own version on this particular issue.[7] Besides the press, it is very interesting to examine the after-war memoirs or other types of testimonies left by leading figures having direct knowledge of the December 1916 events,

[6] On 18 November/1 December 1920 *Makedonia* newspaper publishes the news about a memorial ceremony for the French victims to be held at the port of Piraeus and attended by the Ambassador of France to Greece; a few weeks later, on 29 December 1920/11 January 1921, the Greek public learns through the same newspaper that a Greek shipowner decided to donate an important sum to the families of French victims; last but not least, in an article published in the *Makedonia* in the early 1930s (4 July 1931) it is claimed that the strong support of France for the Turks after 1921, to the detriment of Greek interests in Asia Minor, was directly linked to the negative repercussions of the 1916 events in French public opinion.

[7] Reference to the declarations of Falkenhausen is found in the *Makedonia* of 1/14 September 1920, while the same newspaper publishes a report about the declarations of King Constantine – who used the term "accidental" for the December 1916 events – on 23 December 1920/5 January 1921.

either as participants or as observers. References to what happened vary very much, according to each author and his/her political beliefs. Supporters of Venizelos are usually very harsh in their judgments about the role of King Constantine and his followers in the matter. For example, Georgios Ventiris devoted more than thirty pages to the events in his historiographical work, giving the title "The Slaughter of Athens" to the respective chapter and claiming that what happened in the days after 1 December 1916 was a "state revolt", which harmed seriously national aspirations in the following years.[8] On the other hand, Ioannis Metaxas, one of the closest consultants and collaborators of King Constantine, despite being very prolific and eloquent about many other aspects of the war – both in his diaries and in his exchange of newspaper articles with Eleftherios Venizelos in 1934–1935 – remains curiously silent about the 1916 riots in Athens. For his part, royalist Viktor Dousmanis, head of the Army General Staff until August 1916, makes only a brief mention of the events in his memoirs, implying in a clear way the joint responsibility of Venizelists and the Entente forces for the "attack against Athens".[9] Another fragmental, though important source of information about the echo of the events is the material left (and published posthumously some decades later) by the famous novelist Penelope Delta, a prominent figure in Greek social life at the time of the clashes with close family connections to both opposing sides in Greek politics – the introduction to a volume of her diary, as well as various entries in it testify to the long-standing traumatic memory of the events for the author and for people from her close social environment.[10]

A few years after the end of the hostilities, a new factor began to occupy the public sphere in Greece in relation to the Great War, influencing public opinion and the image Greeks had of this war. It was the issue of paying tribute to the fallen soldiers of the war and building war memorials in Greek territory. This issue concerned not only victims of Greek nationality but also soldiers of other countries who had lost their lives in Greece or in neighbouring geographical areas. It is important to remind that the construction of war memorials became quickly one

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[8] G. Ventiris, *Η Ελλάς του 1910–1920: Ιστορική μελέτη* [Greece in the years 1910–1920: A Historical Study], 2nd edition (Athens: Ikaros, 1970), vol. 2, 242–275. General Leonidas Paraskevopoulos, however, himself also a prominent supporter of Venizelos, remains almost silent about the events in his personal memoirs published in 1933 – see L. Paraskevopoulos, *Αναμνήσεις 1896–1920* [Memoirs 1896–1920] (Athens: Pyrsos 1933), 320.

[9] V. Dousmanis, *Απομνημονεύματα: ιστορικαί σελίδες τας οποίας έζησα* [Memoirs: Pages of History that I Lived] (Athens: P. Dimitrakos, 1946), 148–149. The book of Dousmanis, published in 1946, is a compilation of various texts written by the author during the interwar years.

[10] P. Delta, *Ελευθέριος Βενιζέλος: ημερολόγιο, αναμνήσεις, μαρτυρίες, αλληλογραφία* [Eleftherios Venizelos: Diary, Memoirs, Testimonies, Correspondence], ed. P. Zannas (Athens: Ermis, 1978), xx–xxi, 42, 237–238.

of the major issues of interest in several ex-belligerent countries during the after-war years, as the immense human losses suffered during the war required new ways of commemorative expression for the acts of heroism and sacrifice.[11]

In this context, the Greek state began efforts to build monuments, tombs or steles, though only after the end of the Greco-Turkish War of 1919–1922, in order to honour the dead not only of the First World War but of all recent wars, including the Balkan Wars of 1912–1913, the Great War and the Greco-Turkish War. Thus, after 1922 the bones of the Greek soldiers who had fallen during the Balkan Wars and had been buried in Bulgaria (in Gorna-Dzhumaya) and in Albania were transferred to Greece. A large loan was made available to the Ministry of Military Affairs for the erection of monuments, while it was ordered that each city or community should build, until the end of 1925, their own tombs or monuments at the places where Greek soldiers had fallen. Memorial columns were also erected for the Greek officers and soldiers killed in foreign territories – such as those killed during the Great War in Pirot, Serbia;[12] lastly, and only in 1932, the Greek monument to the Unknown Soldier was inaugurated in front of the Greek Parliament on Syntagma Square.[13]

At the same period, foreign governments also mobilized to build memorials to their fallen soldiers on Greek soil during the Great War. On 20 November 1918 an agreement was signed between the Governor-General of Salonica and the generals of the Allied countries on the Macedonian Front. This agreement regulated all matters concerning the military cemeteries of foreign countries in Greece. The British, French, Italian and Serbian authorities were supposed to propose the sites to be allocated as permanent burial places for the soldiers of their armies, while the Greek Government was to acquire the

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[11] In France, e.g., most of the monuments were built before 1922, mainly thanks to large state grants to local authorities. Until 1922, in France, Great Britain, Belgium and Italy monuments were also erected in honour of the Unknown Soldier, to commemorate all unidentified men fallen "for the Homeland". See F. Cochet & J.-N. Grandhomme, eds., *Les soldats inconnus de la Grande Guerre. La mort, le deuil, la mémoire* (Saint-Cloud: SOTECA - 14-18 Éditions, 2012).

[12] Diplomatic and Historical Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Greece (hereafter AYE), 1931, A/15/5, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes to Legation of Greece in Belgrade, no. 62208 of 9 December 1924; Legation of Greece in Durrës to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, no. 1380 of 3 August 1925, and Legation of Greece in Sofia to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Sofia, no. 1082 of 27 September 1925; Official Gazette, no. 68 of 19 March 1925; Greek Minister of Military Affairs to Greek Minister of Foreign Affairs, no. 11031/430 of 14 April 1926.

[13] AYE, 1931, A/15/5, Ministry of Military Affairs to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, no. 22526 of 13 February 1926. E. Lemonidou, "Le Soldat inconnu grec", in *Les soldats inconnus de la Grande Guerre. La mort, le deuil, la mémoire*, ed. François Cochet and Jean-Noël Grandhomme (Saint-Cloud: SOTECA, 14-18 Éditions, 2012), 153–169.

proposed land, in accordance with Greek laws.[14] The French government took care of the cemetery in Florina and that of Zetinlik in Thessaloniki, the Serbs of the cemeteries in Thessaloniki, Kaimakchalan and Corfu, while the Imperial War Graves Commission (created in 1917, renamed the Commonwealth War Graves Commission in 1960) took care of British cemeteries scattered in several places in Macedonia, but also in Neon Faliron (a suburb of Athens), on the islands of Lemnos and Syros, in Souda (on the island of Crete) and in Alexandroupoli.[15]

Throughout the interwar period, the press remained the main source through which Greeks could remember the war – and broaden their knowledge about it. As already mentioned, special attention must be paid to the publication – on the front page of newspapers and in instalments published over several months each time – of the memoirs of leading figures in the war from the two opposing sides and various other sources regarding further aspects of the war, either related to Greece or not. In the press of the early after-war period one can find, for example, the minutes of the sittings of the French Assembly before the Battle of Verdun or even the memoirs of the former French ambassador to Greece, Gabriel Deville,[16] both published in the newspaper *Embros*. The publication of this type of material in the Greek press would continue for most of the rest of the interwar period, offering interpretations of what the war had been for a number of leading personalities, a narrative of the Great War as seen "from the top". Thus, one could read the memoirs of Raymond Poincaré, President of the French Republic,[17] those of the German Chancellor Bernard von Bülow[18]

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[14] AYE, 1937, A/18/3, text of Law 2473 which ratifies the agreement of 7/20 November 1918 concerning the British, French, Italian and Serbian military cemeteries in Greece. AYE, 1935, A/18/3, Minister of Military Affairs to Minister of Foreign Affairs, Note no. 308294 of 22 December 1922.

[15] AYE, 1931, A/15/5, Governor of Gendarmerie in Florina to Public Security Office, Note no. 2847/8 of 21 January 1928. AYE, 1939, A/5/3, Ambassador of Greece in Belgrade to Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Undersecretariat of State for Press and Tourism), unnumbered, of 16 September 1938. AYE, 1935, A/18/3, Official Gazette of 14 April 1922 and British Embassy in Athens to Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Verbal Note no. 203 of 23 October 1928 and Note no. 81 of 14 April 1922; minutes of the 1st meeting of the Anglo-Greek Mixed Committee of the Imperial War Graves Commission.

[16] G. Deville, *L'Entente, la Grèce et la Bulgarie. Notes d'histoire et souvenirs* (Paris: Eugène Figuière, 1919).

[17] Excerpts from the first volume of Poincaré's memoirs were published from 1 March 1931 in the newspaper *Ethnos* (*Nation*), while in December the same year parts of the eighth volume were published in the same paper.

[18] In the newspaper *Ethnos*, from November 1930 to 23 July 1931; the publication of von Bulöw's memoirs was followed by that of his secret correspondence with the Kaiser in the same newspaper, from 26 July 1931.

or of German lieutenants (Max Wild and Alexander Bauermeister), who were officers of the German secret intelligence service,[19] a biography of Paul von Hindenburg, Chief of the General Staff of the German Imperial Army, written by Emil Ludwig,[20] as well as the memoirs of several other personalities. A history of the war "from below" also existed, albeit much more limited, through descriptions of life in the trenches and particularly successful short stories or novels about the underwater war, the role of pirates or the lives and actions of spies, men and women.[21] Only the *Rizospastis* (The Radical), the official newspaper of the Greek Communist Party, dared speak of peace, publishing the famous novel *All Quiet on the Western Front* as early as autumn 1929, only a few months after its publication in Germany. Through all these readings it is true that the Greeks could learn almost everything about the European version of the Great War and, conversely, almost nothing about its Greek dimension. For this to happen, one had to wait until 1934.

In October 1934 the former Prime Minister Eleftherios Venizelos took the initiative to publish a series of articles in the newspaper *Eleutheron Vima* (Free Tribune), in order to describe and explain the events of the National Schism of 1915. Ioannis Metaxas, Deputy Head of the General Staff during the First World War and one of the most emblematic figures of the Schism – the closest collaborator of King Constantine and the most active opponent of Venizelos – decided to reply by a series of articles published in the newspaper *Kathimerini* (The Daily). This newspaper duel lasted thirteen months, until November 1935. All the articles of Metaxas were published in 1935 in the editions of the newspaper *Kathimerini*, while twenty years later (in 1953) the Historical Archive of the newspaper *Ethnikos Kyrix* (National Herald) published the entire press correspondence of the two men.[22]

On 18 March 1936 Venizelos died; a few months later, on 4 August 1936, Ioannis Metaxas proclaimed his dictatorship, sanctioned by King George II, son

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[19] In the newspaper *Ethnos* between December 1932 and April 1933 for the memoirs of Wild and from 26 February 1934 for those of Bauermeister.

[20] In the newspaper *Eleutheron Vima* from February 1934.

[21] See in the newspaper *Ethnos* the following novels: "The Black Boat", which in March 1930 became "The Black Boats"; "Corsair. The Black Pirate. The Most Adventurous and Dramatic Narration on Espionage", whose publication began on 7 December 1933; "Spy Women. The Tragedy of their Lives", published on the front pages of the newspaper from June 1934; also, "The Spy. The Most Dramatic and Adventurous Narration of the Dark Scenes of the Great War", in June-July 1936.

[22] In 1994 a new edition was realized by the Greek publishing house Kyromanos in Thessaloniki, see Eleftherios Venizelos and Ioannis Metaxas, *Η ιστορία του Εθνικού Διχασμού κατά την αρθρογραφία του Ελευθερίου Βενιζέλου και του Ιωάννου Μεταξά* [The History of the National Schism according to the Articles of Eleftherios Venizelos and Ioannis Metaxas], 2nd edition (Thessaloniki: Kiromanos, 2003).

of King Constantine; this regime ended with the death of Metaxas in January 1941. The dictatorship of Metaxas was the last – and perhaps the only – period during which the Great War had a central role in the public sphere, becoming one of the most important issues of public life in the country. Of course, the issue at stake was not the European war – after all, November 11 meant nothing to the new regime, which had created 4 August as a new "national holiday". Metaxas tried to settle his accounts with the past by imposing his personal view of the National Schism. That is why in November 1936, four months after the establishment of his regime, Metaxas organized the transfer of the remains of King Constantine, Queen Sophia and Queen Mother Olga from Italy, to be buried in Greece, in the royal cemetery of Tatoi, location of the summer residence of the royal family. King Constantine had left Greece for Italy after his overthrow in 1922, for the second time after his first removal from the throne in June 1917. Metaxas, formerly a close collaborator of Constantine, forced the Greek capital – better said: the whole country – to live for five days (from 15 to 19 November 1936) in the rhythm of this transfer of royal remains. Everything was feverishly prepared for the reception of the remains, their lying in state at the Cathedral of Athens, the ceremony and the second burial of members of the royal family at Tatoi.[23] The press of those days hailed the burial of the venerated relics in the land of Greece as the liquidation of a debt of the nation to its kings; Greeks should henceforth be happy and satisfied "with regard to history and to themselves".[24]

Two years later, on 9 October 1938, a second episode of the series "Rehabilitation of Constantine" took place: the inauguration of an imposing statue of Constantine at the Champs de Mars in Athens. All public buildings, but also houses and shops were decorated from sunrise until sunset, parades and religious ceremonies were organized across all of Greece, followed by solemn addresses of mayors or other officials; it was an opportunity for the entire Greek people to celebrate.[25] The new statue was meant to symbolize, like the royal tombs, the brotherhood and union of Greeks under the new reign of George II and the governance of Metaxas.[26]

The Second World War and the Civil War that followed the dictatorship of Metaxas erased almost all traces of the Great War. Faced with the problems of post-war reconstruction and with the painful reality of a new ideological division in the place of the old National Schism, the country lost almost all interest in the earlier global conflict. For all the next decades, discourse about the First

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[23] *Ethnos*, 17 November 1936, 1 and 8. See also *Petit Parisien*, 23 November 1936, 5.

[24] *Ethnos*, 16 November 1936, 1.

[25] *Ethnos*, 10 October 1938, 8.

[26] *Ethnos*, 9 October 1938, 1.

World War has been confined to a number of historians, who have studied the most important – though not all – aspects of the Greek dimension of the war, and to rare references in the press, mainly occasioned by anniversary dates or major commemoration milestones, like the iconic handshake of the leaders of France and Germany at Verdun in 1984. In this way, the First World War has remained for Greeks a largely unexplored land, sealed with stereotype references to the trenches of the Western Front, as far as the international dimension is concerned, and to the National Schism that dictated the domestic front at the same time.

Defining existing or potential types of First World War memory in Greece

Taking into consideration the historically limited interest of Greeks in the First World War (and the ambiguous impact of the centenary), we are going to examine some of the reasons and explanation that lie behind this phenomenon. Before moving to this chapter, however, it would be useful to further outline the complexity and, at the same time, the importance of this issue, by distinguishing and codifying a number of existing or potential memory schemes about the First World War in Greece.

The first and most traditional form of remembrance regards the heroic national memory, that is the tribute to the Greek soldiers who lost their lives in military operations throughout the war. This memory is served by monuments to the fallen, erected either at their birthplaces or close to the war front; also, by special commemorative activities, usually on anniversary occasions. Even though this type of memory is inevitably restricted, due to the limited extent of involvement of Greek troops, there is space for greater public visibility of all related events or initiatives, as well as for an overall reassessment of the role of Greece in the war in the context of early twentieth-century Greek history.

A second memory line is linked to the memory of the soldiers of other nations fallen during the war and buried in Greece. An important number of monuments are scattered all over Greece, often ignored by Greeks themselves. Besides the great importance of these monuments for the concerned nations (one could mention, for example, the importance of Zetenlik cemetery in Thessaloniki for Serbs, or the highly symbolic participation of Australians and New Zealanders in yearly memorial activities at the Allied Cemetery in Lemnos), this type of memory can work efficiently also for the Greek public, serving as a bridge of awareness for the international dimension of the war and its links with the Greek case.

A third aspect concerns specific aspects of the Greek experience of the First World War, such as the National Schism and all traumatic experiences of the 1914–1918 period, including the surrender of Fort Roupel to Central

Alliance forces, the foreign occupation of Greek territories, the bloody riots of December 1916 in Athens and the dramatic consequences of the Allied blockade for the home front in Greece. A lot of work has still to be done in order to trace the memory of these traumatic events in interwar Greece, especially at local societies' level, while a further challenge for academic historiography and, at a later stage, public diffusion of historical knowledge lies in contextualizing these dramatic aspects of war in Greece (civil riots, blockade, famine) in the frame of contemporary wartime landscape in many places throughout Europe.

Another dimension concerns the glorious memory of the Allied victory and the participation of Greece in this commemorative process. This memory scheme was, as shown before, extensively present in the first years after the war; it has faded, however, over the following years because of the overwhelming impact of later major events at domestic and international level.

Finally, a very important type of memory covers the First World War in its universal dimension as a major catastrophe with horrible consequences at moral, ethical and humanitarian level. This viewpoint, now almost universally accepted in discourses about the war, first emerged in Greece during the interwar period, more or less at the same time as in the rest of Europe, mainly thanks to literature and cinema.[27] A special reference has to be made to the warm reception shown by the Greek public to the already mentioned classical novel of Erich Maria Remarque, *All Quiet on the Western Front*.[28] It would probably not be an exaggeration to claim that the Greek public – and most likely it is not a unique case – has formed over the years its knowledge and image of the First World War much more through this literary work than through any other source of academic or public history. Concerning this last point, it is very important to highlight that, unlike other countries, in Greece the presence and impact of the First World War in the fields of cinema and television has been rather scarce, especially when compared with the audiovisual presence of the Second World War and other major events of contemporary history.

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[27] J. Winter, *Remembering War. The Great War Between Memory and History in the Twentieth Century* (New Haven – London: Yale University Press, 2006), 118–134, 183–200; Christophe Gaultier et al. eds., *Une guerre qui n'en finit pas. 1914–2008, à l'écran et sur scène* (Paris: Éditions Complexe, 2008).

[28] A preliminary research on the Greek editions of this book has given convincing results both for its immediate reception in Greece, as for its lasting impact on the Greek public. Besides the two serialized publications of the novel in the daily press of the inter-war period (mentioned earlier in this text), there are no less than six single translated editions of the novel in book form, with numerous republications, in the later decades.

Why is the First World War a forgotten war in Greece?

In an effort to explain the reluctant attitude of Greeks towards the First World War, a number of factors have been examined, which can be summarized in the following three arguments:

a) Greece's involvement in the First World War – even the long, bloody and traumatic conflicts of the years 1914–1917 – constituted, as most historians have pointed out, only part of a series of important events for the Greek history that took place in the frame of a whole decade, from 1912 to 1922. This period was inextricably linked first to the apogee and the glory, then to the tragic failure and collapse of the "Great Idea" for the expansion of the Modern Greek state to all neighbouring territories inhabited mainly by ethnic Greek population. The events at both ends of this decade, that is the Balkan Wars in the early 1910s – that offered important territorial gains to the Greek state – and the defeat of the Greek Army in the Greco-Turkish War in 1922,[29] were marked by a particularly strong symbolic impact over the years. They almost completely overshadowed all intermediate events directly or indirectly linked with the participation of Greece in the Great War, no matter how important they may have been.

b) The role of Greece in the armed conflicts of the First World War was largely and for a long time indirect and distant. This resulted in a rather limited number of heroic or traumatic pages arising from purely military action. The successes of the Greek army on the Macedonian Front did find their place in the pages of Greek military history, but it was clear that they counted much less in the collective memory when compared to the Balkan Wars or the disastrous developments on the Asia Minor Front in 1922. Among the factors for this downgrading of Greek military successes, tensions on the domestic front caused by the National Schism should not be underestimated – for numerous supporters of ex-King Constantine, the war on the side of the Entente was considered an almost personal issue of Prime Minister Venizelos. Royalists also continued to feel rage and disapproval for the Entente tactics that had resulted in the removal of their beloved King in 1917. Moreover, in the years after the war Greece saw repeatedly its contribution to the Great War challenged not only by its enemies, but also by its allies[30] – this reality had lasting negative effects on the image and memory of the Greek military achievements even inside the country.

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[29] This event is known in Greek historiography as the "Catastrophe of Asia Minor", signifying the final phase of the Greco-Turkish war that culminated in the massacre or expulsion of Greeks from the provinces of the formet Ottoman Empire in Asia Minor.

[30] Until the end of the interwar period there were offensive comments in the French press about Greece's contribution to the Great War, which repeatedly provoked the reaction of the Greek authorities – see AYE, 1938, A/3, Greek Minister for Foreign Affairs to Greek Legation in Paris, no. 17633 of 12 August 1938. A similar attitude was observed from the part of Serbia – on many interwar occasions, when there was discussion about the Allied

c) Historical events in Greece during the following decades were so forceful and dramatic, that they almost erased remembrance of the Great War. The 1940s, in particular, are dominating until nowadays the field of contemporary Greek history, whether in academic research and historiography, or in terms of public interest and debate. The famine of the winter of 1941/2 and, more generally, the hardships suffered under the German and Italian occupation overshadowed the memories of the corresponding moments of 1916–1917. The urban clashes of December 1944 in Athens ousted the events of 1916 from the collective memory. The new dividing line between Right and Left, which took a clear form in a very painful way in the 1940s, rendered obsolete the conflict between Venizelists and Royalists, which was at the origin of the 1915 National Schism and remained active in various ways throughout the interwar period. It is very characteristic that in 2014, an anniversary year for many important moments of Greek history, debates, conferences and publications about December 1944 had clearly the upper hand in comparison to the centenary of the Great War or to the much more recent milestone of 1974, which meant the definitive transition to democratic rule in Greece after the fall of the military dictatorship. Even four years later, no signs of change to this tendency can be traced.

Conclusion

In our analysis, we have focused on two different dimensions of WWI memory in Greece. The first one regards the persistently troublesome reception of the First World War in both its national and international aspects. The second one is linked to the multifaceted presence of this war, in various forms of public discourse, in the sole case of interwar years. This latter dimension, though already studied in the past, has still a lot to offer in terms of academic studies and public knowledge – throughout our text, a number of issues were highlighted which can offer fertile ground for further research. This prospect becomes even more important by taking into consideration the recent rise in scholarly interest for the inter-war years. The other issue is surely much more complicated. The First World War, in all its dimensions, is deeply connected to Greece – it has been confirmed by the analysis of many particular aspects in this text. Hard work is required, though, in order to discover traces of the war in Greece, both material

contribution to the liberation of Serbia and the sacrifices suffered by the Allies in the Great War, references to Greek participation, when made, where full of contempt. All efforts to highlight and promote the role of Greece on the Macedonian Front provoked a controversy on the part of the Serbian press, which recalled the non-execution of the Greco-Serb alliance treaty in 1915 and the resulting disaster in Serbia – see AYE, 1931, A/15/5, Greek Legation in Belgrade to Minister of Foreign Affairs, no. 806 of 27 May 1925, and no. 1574 of 12 October 1925; Military Attaché at the Embassy of Greece in Belgrade to Army General Staff in Athens, no. 156 of 27 May 1925.

and intangible, and raise public awareness at all possible levels about its overall importance and its specific significance for Greek history. Even if the passage of time seems to be an obstacle, the path is still open and full of challenges for researchers and all interested people. Even in its final stages, the centenary – which, after all, in the wording of the renowned historian John Horne, must be regarded as an "open-ended" perspective[31] – and its legacy offer a vital opportunity for launching a series of initiatives which could contribute to building a new relation of Greeks with this major event of national and world history.

Abbreviations for archive sources

AYE: Diplomatic and Historical Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Greece – Athens, Greece

SHM: Service historique de la Marine nationale (Historical Service of the French Navy) – Vincennes, France

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[31] J. Horne, "The Great War at its Centenary", in *The Cambridge History of the First World War*, vol. III: *Civil Society*, ed. Jay Winter (Cambridge – New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 635.

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Du traumatisme au roman. Mémoire et représentation de la Grande Guerre dans l'œuvre de Rastko Petrović (1898–1949)

Résumé : Cet article se penche sur la relation entre la mémoire de la Grande Guerre dans la culture serbe et sa représentation dans l'œuvre de Rastko Petrović. Profondément marqué par la guerre, mais surtout par les événements de la retraite par l'Albanie, Petrović a passé presque toute sa vie à essayer de briser son silence initial et d'exprimer ce qu'il avait vécu pendant l'hiver 1915. Partant d'un long poème narratif, « Le Grand compagnon » (1926), en passant par un roman court, *Huit semaines* (1935), jusqu'à son dernier ouvrage, *Le sixième jour* (1955), une véritable fresque épique, l'écriture de Petrović porte la double trace d'un travail de mémoire intime et d'une quête artistique visant à représenter un traumatisme à la fois personnel et collectif. En décrivant les différentes étapes de ce travail, j'essaierai de démontrer les aspects dans lesquelles il correspond aux représentations officielles de 14–18, ainsi qu'à la mémoire collective de ce conflit.

Mots-clés : Rastko Petrović, 1914–1918 dans la littérature serbe, témoignage littéraire, roman de guerre, mémoire de la Grande Guerre

La relation entre la mémoire de la Grande Guerre et sa représentation dans l'œuvre de Rastko Petrović, dont je tracerai ici les grandes lignes, fut complexe et changeante. Petrović, comme d'ailleurs beaucoup d'artistes de son époque, entretenait une profonde ambivalence envers la guerre de 14–18. D'après les témoignages de ses plus proches amis, Milan Dedinac, Aleksandar Deroko et Dušan Matić,[1] la Grande Guerre marqua un épisode hautement traumatique

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[1] Voir Matić dans *Prepiska Rastka Petrovića* [Correspondance de Rastko Petrović], compilée et éditée par Radmila Šuljagić (Belgrade 2003 : édition à compte de l'auteur), 155 ; Dedinac dans Rastko Petrović, *Dan šesti*, *Dela Rastka Petrovića* [Le sixième jour, Œuvres de Rastko Petrović], t. IV (Belgrade : Nolit, 1961), 620 ; Deroko dans *A ondak je letijo jeroplan nad Beogradom. Sećanja* [Jadis un avion survolait Belgrade. Souvenirs] (Belgrade : Narodna knjiga, 1983), 157. Petrović échappa belle à la mobilisation et il quitta Belgrade comme réfugié de guerre en novembre 1915. Déjà orphelin, cette même année il perdit son frère, Vladimir, ainsi que ses deux sœurs, Dragica et Nadežda. Pendant son voyage à travers les paysages farouches du Monténégro et de l'Albanie, il vit des hommes, des femmes et des garçons de son âge mourir du froid et de la famine. Évacué avec les autres réfugiés de guerre destinés à la France, il se

dans la vie de Petrović, qu'il essaya de déguiser en adoptant une posture avant-gardiste et une philosophie vitaliste. Ses débuts littéraires furent marqués par un nihilisme joyeux dans la veine des dadaïstes et des surréalistes, couplé d'une tendance de « taire la guerre », selon l'expression d'Aragon.[2] Pourtant, dans la vie de Petrović la guerre marqua aussi un rite de passage, dont les résonances dans son œuvre dépassent de simples réminiscences biographiques. En effet, c'est par son caractère double – traumatique et initiatique – que la Première guerre mondiale s'imposa comme l'expérience cruciale à partir de laquelle Petrović formera ses positions sur l'art et la littérature.[3]

D'ailleurs, c'est précisément comme expérience initiatique que Petrović présentait la Grande Guerre dans ses textes critiques. Déjà dans ses essais des années vingt, ses réflexions sur l'expérience de la retraite par l'Albanie, et plus généralement de la guerre, rejoignent ses réflexions sur son métier de poète. C'est surtout dans un essai de 1924, « Données générales et la vie du poète », que Petrović développe cette idée d'une connexion substantielle entre l'expérience collective de la guerre et la naissance de l'impulsion créatrice chez le jeune poète. Il y raconte, à la troisième personne, ses propres souvenirs de 1915, qu'il présente comme des expériences typiques d'un artiste de sa génération :

> Il fuyait à travers l'Albanie, où il mangeait du pain moisi, où il se réchauffait appuyé adossé aux autres et où il regardait des personnes qu'il avait respectés hier et qui se disputaient maintenant un peu de place près du feu. Toutes les lois sociales avaient été abrogées ici. [...] C'était le retour aux règles du troupeau,

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retrouva à Nice, où il rentre dans le lycée et obtient son baccalauréat. De cette époque datent ses premiers vers, traitant des sujets de l'histoire médiévale à l'instar de la poésie patriotique des années 1912–1914. Un nouveau chapitre de sa vie commence à Paris, où il étudie le droit, s'enthousiasme pour la peinture moderne et fréquente les cercles d'avant-garde. De retour à Belgrade, il publie son premier roman, *Burleska gospodina Peruna boga groma* [Le Burlesque de Monsieur Péroun dieu du tonnerre, 1921] et devient vite une des plus importantes figures de la vie littéraire de l'entre-deux-guerres.

[2] « Négliger la guerre était de notre part un système, faux sans doute mais dirigé contre la guerre. Nous pensions que parler de la guerre, fût-ce pour la maudire, c'était encore lui faire de la réclame. Notre silence nous semblait un moyen de rayer la guerre, de l'enrayer. […]. Si taire la guerre nous paraissait efficace contre elle, cela ne fait que souligner la force de notre croyance en la chose écrite. Pour nous, tout écrit était une réclame, on dirait aujourd'hui propagande. Breton appelait la religion une réclame pour le Ciel. » L. Aragon. *Œuvres romanesques complètes*, t. I (Paris : Gallimard, Pléiade, 1997), 10. Cette stratégie de révolte avant-garde a été analysée notamment par Annette Becker dans « Le combat avant-garde », *14–18 aujourd'hui, today, heute* 3 (2000), 108–125.

[3] J'ai déjà abordé ce sujet en analysant l'œuvre de Petrović dans le cadre de la littérature serbe de l'entre-deux-guerres : D. Dušanić, « Esprit de cataclysme et naissance de la littérature moderne serbe. L'expérience de la Grande Guerre dans l'œuvre de Miloš Tsernianski, Ivo Andrić et Rastko Petrović », *Histoire@Politique* 28 (janvier–avril 2016), https://www.histoire– politique.fr/documents/28/dossier/pdf/HP28_Dossier_DunjaDusanic_def.pdf.

règles surgies du temps des cavernes. Il s'en était indigné mille fois, mais il voulait continuer à vivre. Ce n'était qu'à ce moment-là qu'il a commencé à écrire des poèmes, et que chaque mot qu'il prononçait lui semblait incroyablement précieux [...]. *C'est comme ça qu'ils ont grandi ensemble : lui et sa patrie ; lui et son talent ; l'un étant inséparable de l'autre.*[4]

Cette explication biographique ne suffit toutefois ni à la compréhension de la signification que la guerre a eu dans son écriture, ni au pourquoi de l'apparition des résonances de cette expérience après les années 1920 et même après la Seconde Guerre mondiale. En effet, l'écriture de Petrović porte la double trace d'un travail de mémoire intime *et* d'une quête artistique visant à représenter un traumatisme à la fois personnel et collectif.

Petrović essaya d'écrire la guerre d'abord en son nom propre, à travers un long poème intitulé « Le Grand compagnon ». Publié en 1926 à l'occasion du dixième anniversaire de la retraite, ce poème est dédié au souvenir de trente mille des plus jeunes recrues serbes qui trouvèrent la mort en Albanie.[5] Au lieu de lamenter leur disparition, le poème est focalisé sur le souvenir de la nuit de sommeil que Petrović passa dans une cabane dans les montagnes enneigées, adossé à un homme inconnu, dont la présence et la chaleur corporelle lui sauvèrent la vie :

Celu noć leđa sam grejao
Prislonjen uz tuđe pleći,
Celu noć sneg na smetove je vejao,
Po stopama mojim, po sreći.
Nit mišljah, koji je prijatelj taj koji kraj mene spava
Da često teža od sudbe na grudima mi njegova glava,
I da trudno dišem: no trpeh, jer dahom kao da zgrevaše mi grudi;
Tako prođe bolno život, dok zora ne poče da rudi! [6]

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[4] R. Petrović, « Opšti podaci i život pesnika », *Svedočanstva* 3 (1924), 4–5. (Sauf si indiqué autrement, toutes les traductions du serbe sont les miennes, DD.)

[5] Il s'agissait des plus jeunes recrues serbes, nés entre 1897 et 1898. Évacués en octobre 1915 des secteurs occupés par l'ennemi, ils ont péri faute à la mauvaise organisation de la retraite et le manque de coopération entre l'état-major serbe et les troupes italiennes pendant l'évacuation. Leur disparition fut le sujet de plusieurs enquêtes consécutives, qui n'ont pas donné de résultats. Dans la mémoire collective, le nombre des morts s'élève à trente et même quarante mille, mais il est peu probable que ce soit un chiffre exact. Voir D. Šarenac, *Top, vojnik i sećanje. Prvi svetski rat i Srbija 1914–2009* [Le canon, le soldat et la mémoire. La Première guerre mondiale et la Serbie 1914–2009] (Belgrade : Institut za savremenu istoriju, 2014), 130–151.

[6] R. Petrović, « Veliki drug », *Vreme* 1456 (1926), 21. Dans la seule traduction, littérale et dépourvue de rimes, qui existe en français, la beauté de ces vers est perdue, même si le sens est plus ou moins le même :

Toute la nuit j'ai chauffé mon dos
Appuyé contre les épaules d'un autre,
Toute la nuit la neige s'amoncelait,
Sur mes pas, sur le bonheur.

L'aube lui découvre la vérité dans toute son horreur : l'inconnu auprès duquel il dormait est mort pendant la nuit. La narration de ce souvenir est imbue d'images poétisées de la souffrance des réfugiés que le poète rencontre en voyageant – hommes, femmes et enfants affamés et défaillants qui ressemblent à des spectres – et de la nature – féroce, destructrice, impitoyable. Au fond, le poème note le ressenti d'un garçon de dix-sept ans qui, confronté à la mort en masse et à la dissolution de toutes les relations sociales connues, s'efforce à survivre. Malgré sa dédicace, « Le Grand compagnon » n'est pas une élégie pour les morts, mais plutôt un témoignage poétique sur la situation extrême dans laquelle s'est trouvée une vaste population civile.[7]

Sur le plan idéologique, certains aspects du poème correspondent aux représentations partagées de la retraite comme « Golgotha albanais » [*Albanska golgota*], c'est-à-dire comme un calvaire, dont le dénouement serait la résurrection du peuple serbe. Suivant une interprétation largement répandue, sinon officiellement propagée par les Karageorgévitch, la retraite de 1915 est souvent représentée dans la poésie de guerre comme un nouvel Exode, qui se terminerait par l'arrivée des Serbes en Terre Promise.[8] Cette terre, qui bientôt prendra la forme du Royaume des Serbes, Croates et Slovènes, serait l'incarnation même de la liberté, dans laquelle vivront les générations futures. Dans « Le Grand compagnon », le poète rencontre le regard de ces descendants heureux à travers les ventres de leurs mères, rendus transparents par la faim. Contrairement à sa réputation de jeune poète iconoclaste, Petrović inclinait en 1926 vers une interprétation qui s'inscrit dans le cadre des représentations populaires et officielles de la retraite de 1915. Cependant, son poème ne saurait être réduit à une simple élaboration versifiée de celles-ci. Non seulement y sont réunis, de façon subtile, le destin individuel du poète et celui de son peuple, mais aussi le ton et le choix d'images sont fort différents de ce qui, à l'époque, passait pour poésie commémorative. C'est surtout par la manière drastique, voire grotesque, dont la

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Je ne savais pas quel était l'ami qui dormait près de moi,
Dont la tête plus lourde souvent que le destin reposait sur ma poitrine,
Et je respirais lourdement : mais je le supportais, car, de son souffle, il réchauffait ma poitrine.
Ainsi passe douloureusement la vie, jusqu'à ce que l'aube se mette à poindre !

Voir R. Petrović, « Le Grand compagnon. En souvenir de 30 000 de mes camarades qui trouvèrent la mort en Albanie en 1915. Noël 1926 », *Les Nouvelles Yougoslaves* I/24 (1929), 5.

[7] En ce qui concerne la poésie de témoignage voir A. Rowland, *Poetry as Testimony: Witnessing and Memory in Twentieth-century Poems* (Londres & New York: Routledge, 2014).

[8] L'exemple le plus fameux de l'interprétation biblique de la retraite se trouve sans doute chez Milutin Bojić (1892– 1917). Son recueil de poésie de guerre, *Pesme bola i ponosa* [Poèmes de douleur et d'orgueil, 1917], s'ouvre par une invocation du psalmiste, suivie des poèmes dans lesquelles la souffrance des Serbes est comparée à celle du Job (« Sejači » [Semeurs]) et leur exil à celui du peuple d'Israël (« Kroz pustinju » [À travers le désert]).

chute physique et morale des réfugiés serbes y est représentée, d'habitude plus fréquente dans les témoignages en prose, que « Le Grand compagnon » se détache de la majorité des poèmes traitant des événements de l'hiver 1915–1916. Petrović ne renonce pourtant ni au paradigme biblique ni au registre pathétique : malgré leur dégradation, l'apothéose des exilés est suggérée par une vision de leur ascension au ciel.

Cependant, il sentait que quelque chose manquait à cette solution. Un article publié en 1930 dans le journal *Vreme*, cherchant à résumer les efforts littéraires de la décennie précédente, témoigne du mécontentement général que Petrović ressentait face à la production littéraire après 1918. S'interrogeant sur sa propre contribution à une plus grande compréhension de l'expérience de la guerre pour des millions de ses compatriotes, il conclut que la nouvelle littérature yougoslave n'a pas encore donné de grands ouvrages qui seraient dignes de la terrible grandeur de cette époque.[9] Une série d'articles qu'il a ensuite publiés dans le même journal, sur Henri Barbusse, Roland Dorgelès, Erich Maria Remarque, Ludwig Renn, mais aussi sur des écrivains serbes et croates tels que Stanislav Krakov, Miroslav Krleža, Miloš Tsernianski et Dragiša Vasić, approfondissent encore ses réflexions et annoncent, en même temps, les solutions qu'il apporterait à la représentation de la guerre dans le roman qu'il était en train d'écrire.[10]

À cette fin, Petrović créa un alter ego fictionnel, Stevan Papa-Katić, futur héros du roman *Le sixième jour*. Une première version de ce roman, sous le titre *Huit semaines*, devait paraître en 1935, avant que Petrović ne quitte la Yougoslavie et ne parte en tant qu'attaché diplomatique en Amérique, dont il ne reviendra jamais. Le récit de *Huit semaines* correspond en fait à la première partie du *Sixième jour*. Située en hiver 1915, elle suit Papa-Katić – un lycéen belgradois, issu d'une famille bourgeoise – en route à travers les montagnes du Monténégro et les marais d'Albanie. Séparé de sa famille et de ses amis, Papa-Katić se trouve perdu dans le cauchemar de l'Histoire, lui révélant que la guerre n'est qu'un retour à l'ordre tribal de la horde. Ce récit d'inspiration nettement autobiographique est entremêlé d'histoires secondaires dont les porteurs – soldats, ouvriers, prostitués, prisonniers, lycéens socialistes, jeunes filles à marier et même un chien – se trouvent tous dans la même situation, « obsédés » par l'« hallucinante idée » de

[9] Voir R. Petrović, « Dvanaest godina naše književnosti » [Douze années de notre littérature], *Vreme* 3185 (1930), 4.

[10] Une deuxième version élargie du poème « Le Grand compagnon », publiée après sa mort dans le recueil *Ponoćni delija* [Le héros de minuit, 1970], fut probablement écrite à la même époque. Accompagnée de commentaires qui expliquent les événements et les scènes auxquels certains vers font allusion, cette version témoigne également de son désir de rendre son expérience plus communicable.

« rester en vie, n'importe comment ».[11] Contraint malgré lui de partager leur sort, Papa-Katić devient témoin non seulement de la destruction d'un monde et d'une société mais aussi de la fragilité de la bonté humaine, de sorte que la première partie du roman se termine avec son rejet total de l'humanité entière.

En comparaison avec « Le Grand compagnon », la structure mosaïquée du *Sixième jour*, composée de différents micro-récits, permit à Petrović d'intégrer sa propre histoire à une histoire plus large – celle de la nation – sans rien perdre de l'authenticité, de « l'effet de vrai »,[12] du témoignage personnel. Si l'on compare cette structure avec celle de la *Trilogie serbe* de Stevan Jakovljević, le roman de guerre le plus populaire de l'époque, le procédé utilisé par Petrović semble presque postmoderne. À la différence des écrivains de guerre tels que Jakovljević, Petrović ne cherchait pas à imposer aux récits personnels une superstructure narrative qui correspondrait à la mémoire collective de la guerre. Au lieu de présumer que la vérité de la guerre est enclavée dans la mémoire d'un groupe particulier, comme les anciens combattants de Jakovljević, Petrović créa une histoire polyphonique, dans laquelle se croisent et se confrontent de multiples expériences de la guerre. Cependant, à ses yeux, ce procédé manquait une motivation plus profonde, voire une mise en perspective plus large des événements de 1915–1916. Autrement dit, Petrović ne pouvait pas se contenter de simplement constater, comme le fait son héros, que la guerre n'est pas une occurrence isolée dans l'histoire humaine, une exception monstrueuse et donc insensée. Il fallait aussi assimiler cette notion, la démontrer à travers la structure narrative de son œuvre. Ceci était le but principal de la deuxième partie du *Sixième jour*, dont l'action se déroule aux États-Unis, juste avant le début de la Seconde Guerre mondiale. On y retrouve Papa-Katić, devenu entretemps paléontologue célèbre, qui revient de son isolement grâce à l'amour pour une jeune fille.

Envisagée comme un homologue de la première, la seconde partie du roman cherche à démontrer comment les événements tragiques et violents de la guerre sont répétés et variés dans des conditions de paix. L'objectif de cette réécriture était de créer un canevas suffisamment étendu au sein duquel la guerre et la mort n'apparaîtraient pas comme des événements isolés, mais comme les étapes des cycles récurrents d'événements cosmiques et de l'histoire naturelle. À cet égard, la solution pour laquelle Petrović a finalement opté s'inscrit dans la lig-

[11] Petrović, *Dan šesti*, 20.

[12] Par cette expression Michel Riffaterre, « Le témoignage littéraire », *Cahiers de la Villa Gillet* 3 (novembre 1995), 38, désigne la capacité du témoignage littéraire de paraître authentique, au-delà de sa factualité : « Il ne suffit pas que le témoignage soit vrai, il faut qu'il en ait l'air. Il ne suffit pas qu'il ait l'air vrai, il faut encore qu'il contrôle notre attention et notre interprétation, qu'il nous émeuve, et le cas échéant que la cause qu'il sert fasse du lecteur un converti ou un sympathisant. Il ne suffit pas qu'il intéresse, il faut encore qu'il fasse plaisir, offrant au lecteur sous l'apparence du vrai les émotions sans risque qu'il trouve d'habitude dans la fiction ou la poésie. »

née des romans européens des années trente et quarante, dans lesquels, comme Maurice Rieuneau l'a bien constaté :

> La guerre n'est plus racontée comme une expérience limitée et achevée, formant un tout isolable, intelligible ou absurde, mais suffisant. Elle devient plutôt l'ouverture ou le tremplin vers une philosophie totale de la vie, l'expérience cruciale qui met en question l'idée du bonheur, de l'action, de l'histoire, de la société.[13]

Chez Petrović, comme chez d'autres écrivains modernistes marqués par la Grande Guerre, tels que Ford Madox Ford ou D. H. Lawrence, elle suscita la découverte d'une philosophie d'histoire, qui repose sur une vision cyclique du temps.[14] Cette vision est quasiment omniprésente dans *Le sixième jour*, mais ce n'est que grâce à la seconde partie du roman qu'elle revêt une signification universelle. Le dernier monologue d'un des amis de Papa-Katić en est un exemple typique :

> J'ai dix-sept ans et je meurs. Quand je regarde autour de moi, tant de souvenirs s'agitent instantanément, ainsi que des miasmes et des pintades et des hydres morveuses, et tant de formes extraordinaires. Je ne sais plus ce que ce corps a vraiment vécu ou non, ce que les autres ont vécu et moi appris par la suite et ce que j'ai, en apprenant, posé dans chacune de mes petites cellules, dans ma propre expérience. […] J'ai vécu en préhistoire, dans des cavernes, dans des guerres. J'ai lu l'*Histoire du développement*.[15] Si je pouvais seulement trouver encore des images qui s'y trouvaient, ici en Albanie, j'y verrai mes propres images. Nous étions tous des fœtus et nous sommes passés par des formes qui ressemblent tant aux transformations des espèces, mais nous étions en même temps toutes les étapes de ces espèces.[16]

Une métaphore autopoétique se dégage de cette image des transformations des espèces et des métamorphoses de différents « je ». Elle correspond aux transformations du même matériau autobiographique – partant d'un long poème narratif, en passant par un roman court, vers une fresque épique – et témoigne que des aspects clés de l'œuvre de Petrović sont nés de ses efforts de trouver une solution artistique apte à représenter un traumatisme personnel et collectif.

En résumant, on pourrait dire que trois étapes se dessinent dans le travail de mémoire de Petrović. Certaines facettes de ce travail coïncident avec le dével-

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[13] M. Rieuneau, *Guerre et révolution dans le roman français de 1919 à 1939* (Paris : Klincksieck, 1974), 341.

[14] Voir à ce propos L. B. Williams, *Modernism and the Ideology of History: Literature, Politics, and the Past* (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 2002).

[15] Il s'agit ici du titre de l'ouvrage de J. W. Draper, *Histoire du développement intellectuel de l'Europe*.

[16] Petrović, *Dan šesti*, 199.

oppement de la littérature de guerre en Europe,[17] ainsi qu'avec l'évolution de la mémoire de la guerre dans le contexte local de l'entre-deux-guerres[18] – même si il ne s'agit pas toujours des mêmes facettes. Après un silence initial qui correspond à la démobilisation et au déclin d'intérêt pour la littérature de guerre, la fin des années vingt et le début des années trente ont apporté un resurgissement des pratiques commémoratives partout en Europe. Dans le contexte local, ce *memory boom* prit l'aspect d'un remodelage, puisqu'il coïncidait avec la création de la Yougoslavie en 1929, qui marqua un tournant dans la représentation officielle de la Grande Guerre.[19] Par leur effort de représenter l'évènement clé de la mémoire serbe de la guerre, et non par la date de leur composition, le

[17] Voir N. Béaupré, « De quoi la littérature de guerre est-elle la source ? Témoignages et fictions de la Grande Guerre sous le regard de l'historien », *Vingtième siècle. Revue de l'histoire* 112/4 (2011), 44–46, ainsi que N. Béaupré, *Écrire en guerre, écrire la guerre. France–Allemagne 1914–1920* (Paris : CNRS Éditions, 2006), pour une analyse plus détaillée, S. Hynes, *A War Imagined: The First World War and English Culture* (Londres : The Bodley Head, 1990) ; L. Riegel, *Guerre et littérature. Le bouleversement des consciences dans la littérature romanesque inspirée par la Grande Guerre (littératures française, anglaise, anglo-saxonne et allemande) 1910–1930* (Paris : Klincksieck, 1978) ; Rieuneau, *Guerre et révolution dans le roman français* ; W. G. Natter, *Literature at War 1914–1940: Representing the "*Time of Greatness*" in Germany* (New Haven : Yale University Press, 1999) ; K. Vondung, éd., *Der Erste Weltkrieg in der literarischen Gestaltung und symbolischen Deutung der Nationen* (Göttingen : Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1980), surtout l'article de K. Prümm, « Tendenzen des deutschen Kriegsroman », 215–217. Le développement de la littérature serbe de la Grande Guerre était différent de celui de la littérature française, anglaise et allemande, surtout en ce qui concerne les œuvres en prose. Les circonstances étant peu favorables à la publication des romans durant le conflit, leur première véritable « éruption » n'eut lieu qu'en 1921–1922, quand apparaissent les ouvrages désormais classiques de la littérature de guerre en serbo-croate : le *Journal de Tcharnoïevitch* de Tsernianski (1921), les romans de Stanislav Krakov (*Kroz buru* [À travers la tempête, 1921] et *Krila* [Ailes], 1922), les histories de Dragiša Vasić (*Utuljena kandila* [Les veilleuses éteintes], 1922) et de Miroslav Krleža (*Mars, dieu Croate*, 1922). Une seconde vague, qui se produisit au début des années trente, apporta une quinzaine de romans publiés entre 1931 et 1940, parmi lesquels se trouvèrent des ouvrages volumineux tels que les trilogies de Miroslav Golubović (*Teška vremena* [Les Temps difficiles], 1932) et de Stevan Jakovljević (*Srpska trilogija* [La trilogie serbe], 1935–1937).

[18] Voir V. Pavlović, « La mémoire et l'identité nationale : la mémoire de la Grande Guerre en Serbie », *Guerres mondiales et conflits contemporains* 228/4 (2007), 51–60, et Šarenac, *Top, vojnik i sećanje*, 153–241.

[19] Pavlović, « La mémoire et l'identité », 51. En ce qui concerne les représentations visuelles, surtout les monuments, voir A. Ignjatović, *Od istorijskog sećanja do zamišljanja nacionalne tradicije. Spomenik neznanom junaku na Avali* [De la mémoire à l'invention de la tradition nationale. Le monument du soldat inconnu sur le mont Avala] (Belgrade : Institut za noviju istoriju Srbije, 2006), et O. Manojlović Pintar, *Arheologija sećanja: spomenici i identiteti u Srbiji 1918–1989* [L'archéologie de la mémoire : monuments et identités en Serbie 1918–1989], (Belgrade : Čigoja štampa, 2014).

« Grand compagnon », ainsi que le manuscrit de *Huit semaines*, s'inscrivent dans la logique de ce *memory boom*. Il ne faut pas cependant pousser cette comparaison trop loin. Le « Grand compagnon » relève, avant tout, de la poésie ; le fait que ce soit une poésie narrative le rend davantage plus original parmi les œuvres de son époque, à la fois comme témoignage et comme poésie de guerre. Par contre, le récit de *Huit semaines* se situe dans la lignée des récits autobiographiques romancés de la fin des années vingt, tels que *Good-Bye To All That* de Robert Graves (1929) ou les *Undertones of War* d'Edmond Blunden (1928), ou bien, des récits d'inspiration vaguement autobiographique, comme *À L'Ouest rien de nouveau* de Remarque (1928/1929) ou le *Voyage au bout de la nuit* de Céline (1932). La troisième phase de ce développement – celle des synthèses plus ambitieuses dans les romans de Ford Madox Ford ou de Roger Martin du Gard, par exemple – correspond au travail sur *Le sixième jour*. Pour des raisons à la fois biographiques et historiques, ce roman n'a pas vu le jour dans la Yougoslavie de l'entre-deux-guerres. Il reste toutefois un des rares exemples d'une approche décidément moderniste à la représentation de la Grande Guerre dans la littérature serbe.

Partant d'un long poème, en passant par un roman court, de nombreux essais et articles, jusqu'à son grand roman inachevé, Petrović a cherché presque toute sa vie à surmonter le traumatisme primordial placé au cœur de son écriture. Pourtant, le but de ce travail de mémoire n'était pas de revivre à maintes reprises un souvenir douloureux. Petrović ressentait qu'il était obligé, en tant qu'artiste, de « faire quelque chose pour des millions de ses compatriotes », autrement dit, de trouver de nouveaux moyens pour écrire la guerre – un nouveau langage, qui correspondrait à l'expérience de cette première guerre moderne.

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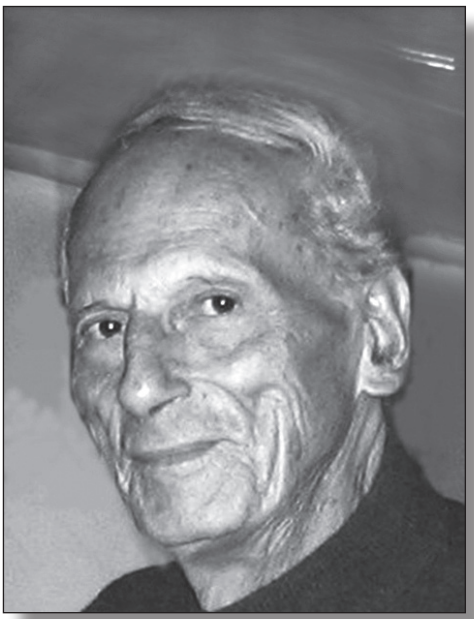

Djurica Krstić
(1924–2018)

My memory of Djurica Krstić is that of a fine gentleman, a tall, slender man in his nineties who, if seated, would get up, quite effortlessly and casually, to greet his much younger colleagues, one of them being me. Djurica Krstić was the son of Orestije Krstić, a fighter pilot of the First Serbian Squadron on the Salonika Front, a reserve Air Force major, member of the Skopje Aero-Club, editor of the aviation magazine *Naša krila* (Our Wings), founding member of the Serbian Cultural Club, advisor with the Ministry of Forestry and Mining of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and, for a while, mayor of Tetovo. In his memoirs, his son speaks of his love of nature. Djurica Krstić was born in Skopje, Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, in 1924, and his early childhood memories include Vodno, the mountain overlooking the town, and later, two other mountains, Šara and Jablanica. His mother, Zora, was an engineer of agronomy. It was much later that Djurica Krstić, now a fellow of the Institute for Balkan Studies, Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, was able to combine his interest "in the lifestyle and customs of highlanders with a penchant for spending time in nature": "I couldn't imagine that my new job would take me to the mountains, where the Shakespearean thought about business and pleasure

would become a reality to me." Most of his work at the Institute was "fieldwork aimed at tracing the relics of customary law in the last third of the twentieth century" in South-East Europe. His research began from the Serbian Kuč and Vasojević clans in Montenegro. His family history and his father's biography speak volumes about his own interests and worldview. As if his father's careers in aviation and forestry – the father authored a poetic plea "The Forest's Prayer" – were intertwined somehow within his personal and professional choices along with a particular love of freedom. Djurica Krstić travelled by plane for the first time as a four-year-old, in 1928, on the inaugural flight of the Yugoslav airline Aeroput (Airway) from Skopje to Belgrade. A lovely photograph of his getting on the plane has survived as a testimony to his first flight. A few times he was aboard the plane flown by his father as a reserve Air Force pilot. It was not an accident that Djurica Krstić took his PhD in international aviation law. At the Institute for Comparative Law, where he worked before joining the Institute for Balkan Studies, he headed the aviation law and astronautic law group. He participated in international astronautical congresses and served on the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts' Committee on Astronautics, Space Law Section. He spent a summer in London on the British Council's research grant, and then, as a grantee of the Fulbright and the Ford Foundations, went to the United States, where he began his postgraduate studies at Princeton and completed them at the University of Chicago.

During the Second World War Djurica Krstić and his brother were members of the Yugoslav Ravna Gora Youth, Avala Corps, HQ no. 501, tasked with running off copies of the paper *Glas Avale* (Voice of Avala) on a gestetner machine: "It can be said that the intellectual youth of Belgrade – with the exception of a negligible number of phoney communists, an even more negligible number of Ljotić's followers and somewhat more numerous bon vivants, mostly from above-average affluent families – had national-democratic leanings. They embraced the ideas of the pre-war Cultural Club of Slobodan Jovanović, Dragiša Vasić and other distinguished figures of pre-war Belgrade. Some of them were inspired by the Democratic Community of Ljuba Davidović, Milan Grol and others: "To us, this choice," as recorded by Djurica Krstić's brother Uglješa, "was not at all a for-or-against choice. This was simply a natural participation in the historical continuity of national-democratic and homeland-defending traditions." Speaking of his generation, Djurica Krstić recorded with regret that most best students of the Third Belgrade High School had ended up abroad: "A huge majority of the ablest students from my class went abroad to find shelter from the large cloud of totalitarianism that had begun to spread over Europe." The one-sided way of thinking that came with the new authorities was utterly alien to them. As a good analysis noted: "The Soviets were accustomed to the one-party regime and unanimity on all political issues, and it was therefore quite beyond them that anyone should care about nuances and gradations common in

parliamentary democracies. Whereas the political spectrum in a parliamentary system ranges from the red [radical left] to the dark blue [conservative] colour, the Soviet spectrum has only two colours – black and white. You're either *for* or you're an enemy spy." Unaware of this new logic, many relatives and friends of Djurica Krstić paid a price after the war.

Djurica Krstić was a fellow of the Institute for Balkan Studies from 1972 until his retirement in 1988, leading the project on customary law and self-governments in the Balkans and the countries of South-East Europe, and actively participating in the work of the Serbian Academy's Committee on the Sources of Serbian Law. He was also a member of the Association of Literary Translators of Serbia and a certified court interpreter for English.

Boris Milosavljević

REVIEWS

Pieter M. Judson, *The Habsburg Empire: A New History*. Cambridge and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2018, 567 p.

Reviewed by Anja Nikolić*

Pieter M. Judson, currently professor of nineteenth- and twentieth-century history at the European University Institute in Florence, focuses his research on Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe and, in doing so, is concerned with changing the way in which contemporary historiography tends to see the history of Central Europe. The book reviewed here is a product of such concerns. It consists of an introduction, six chapters and an epilogue. It begins with the accession of Maria Theresa to the throne and ends with the year 1918 and the collapse of the Habsburg Empire. It is the absence of a date that would mark the end of the empire that the author believes to be important for understanding the Dual Monarchy. As he himself says, the First World War destroyed the Habsburg state "by eroding any sense of mutual obligation between people and state; popular and dynastic patriotism withered away, calling into question the very raison d'être of empire" (p. 441). This statement perfectly illustrates what Judson wants to demonstrate in his book.

Facts are not of vital importance for this book even though it offers a chronological account of key events such as Maria Theresa's reforms, the Napoleonic Wars, the revolution of 1848, the Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867, the introduction of universal manhood suffrage in the Austrian part of the country in 1907, the First World War. What is important is that the author interprets the key moments of Habsburg history in a different way from the one he regards as being entrenched. That is the new history referred to in the title. Judson's book belongs to the trend in historiography that seeks to revise the history of the Habsburg Empire. Instead of the dominant understanding of the Dual Monarchy as a scene of a conflict between the empire and nations, he offers a different interpretation.

As Judson himself writes, "this book is about how countless local societies across central Europe engaged with the Habsburg

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dynasty's effort to build a unified and unifying imperial state from the eighteenth century until the First World War" (p. 4). He wants to examine how the imperial institutions and cultural programmes shaped different societies across the Empire from the late eighteenth century to the demise of the Habsburg Monarchy. He stresses that the empire itself should be made the focus of research rather than "linguistic groups or ethnically defined nations". In that way a different narrative for the history of Central and Eastern Europe emerges and a revised history of the empire is produced. What the author finds to be important is the relationship between state and society because he believes that they built the Habsburg Empire together. This is why this is, in a way, a history from below. The focus is not only on the processes started by those on the top of the hierarchy but also on the multitude that constitutes the society of the Dual Monarchy.

As a result of Judson's approach and attitude to the Habsburg Monarchy, the main antagonist in his account is nationalism and the national movements of the peoples living under Habsburg rule. The thesis the author insists on in several places is that it was the laws of the Empire that made the national movements possible, because in certain areas and certain periods it permitted the use of vernacular languages. According to Judson, it was the elites who created national identities, but he overlooks the presence of linguistic and cultural traditions that the elites drew from in their work on enlightening the people.

As far as the building of nation and national feeling is concerned, an especially interesting case is the case of Bosnia-Herzegovina under Austro-Hungarian occupation (1878). The author claims that the colonial regime established in Bosnia-Herzegovina sought to overcome the dangers of nationalism and that it failed. The Austro-Hungarian attempt to introduce a Bosnian nation aimed at overcoming the differences in the area under occupation failed. Although Judson describes it as the attempt of government bureaucrats to create "a non-national Bosnian identification for Bosnian Muslims" (p. 331), it in fact was an identity experiment which failed to take root.

Judson notes that many nationalists were happy working in Austria-Hungary. The First World War, however, changed the situation completely. The Habsburg Monarchy disappeared and was replaced with national states. The ties upon which the author insists throughout the book, especially the ties between state and society, obviously were not strong enough to keep the Monarchy together.

The purpose of this book is to re-examine the views of the history of the Habsburg state, it raises new questions and offers new ideas. The author was not primarily concerned with delving into politics or facts. His is a revisionist reading of the history of the Habsburg Monarchy. Some of his bold views are subject to debate, and some objections have been raised here, especially the specific understanding of nationalism and national movements. Nonetheless, it gives researchers some interesting ideas to think about.

Alexander Watson, *Ring of Steel: Germany and Austria-Hungary at War, 1914–1918*. London: Penguin Books, 2015, xv + 788 p.

Reviewed by Dragan Bakić*

Alexander Watson (Goldsmith, University of London) has produced a lengthy and wide-ranging book on the Great War that received much acclaim as evidenced by a number of awards - the Wolfson History Prize and Guggenheim-Lehrman Prize in Military History in 2014 and the Distinguished Book Award from the Society for Military History in 2015. It thus secured a prominent place amongst a deluge of works that emerged on the centenary of the outbreak of the war and not without good reason. The author had already explored the topic of the 1914-1918 ordeal in his previous monograph.[1] Watson has described this book himself as "the first modern history to narrate the Great War from the perspective of the two major Central Powers, Germany and Austria-Hungary" (p. 1). This is an exaggeration as Holger Herwig wrote such a study nearly two decades earlier.[2] But the two books are different in their approach: while Herwig explored traditional diplomatic and military history, Watson's work, although by no means neglecting high politics, international relations and military campaigns, pays close attention to what the experience of war meant for the populations of the two Central Powers, reflecting a more recent innovative turn in historiography. His analysis thus belongs to the thriving genre of a "history from below" and herein lies its strength. More specifically, the author addresses three main themes: "how consent for war was won and maintained", "how extreme and escalating violence … radicalized German and Austro-Hungarian war aims and actions, and … the consequences of this radicalization" and "the tragic societal fragmentation caused by the First World War", which carried on in interwar central Europe (pp. 4-5). And indeed, he delivers the goods. Watson's thorough and thought-provoking analysis is supported by impressive array of the ever growing literature and, especially relevant to his approach, archival research conducted in five countries in which individual stories and local experiences feature prominently in diaries and letters.

In discussing the war's origins, Watson comes down on the side of those who dismiss Frantz Fischer's thesis of the main German culpability. He recognizes that it was the leadership of Austria-Hungary that single-mindedly wanted and planned for a war, albeit a local one with Serbia rather than a general European conflagration, but fully aware that the latter might easily spark from aggression against Serbia. He underscores, however, that it was fear for the survival of the Dual Monarchy rather than aggressive designs that prompted its leaders to embark on a war. This is no doubt true to a great extent, but the crux of the problem is that security concerns are often the breeding ground for plans of preventive wars and Serbia was too small a country to justify the excessive Austro-Hungarian dread of South Slav (Yugoslav) irredentism. Coupled with the conspicuous lack of understanding for the position of Imperial Russia, the author seems to be too much lenient to the role played by Central Powers in the run-up to the war. It is revealing in this respect that he

[1] Alexander Watson, *Enduring the Great War: Combat, Morale and Collapse in the German and British Armies, 1914–1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

[2] Holger Herwig, *The First World War: Germany and Austria-Hungary, 1914–1918* (London: Edward Arnold, 1997).

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errs in claiming that Germany and Austria-Hungary sacrificed more than other belligerents, including Serbia which lost a quarter of her population.

But the central argument of the book is that popular consent was rallied solidly behind the Hohenzollern and Habsburg war efforts and made them possible. This was manifest in the smooth mobilization of their armies in the summer of 1914. For Germany, it was necessary to attain national consensus across the political spectrum, namely to ensure the consent of Social Democrats, and that was done in large measure due to skilful politics of the Kaiser and German government. In a multiethnic society such was the Habsburg Empire, in which the Slav part of population was politically subdued and discriminated in the south of the country, it appeared doubtful that national solidarity could be expected. But, contrary to expectations, both reservists and civil society at large readily responded to the call to arms. Watson explains this success as stemming from what he calls "double mobilization", a congruity between loyalty to the Habsburg state idea, and especially to the venerable Franz Joseph, and national aspirations of different ethnic communities, which until the late stage in the war were content to realize their ambitions within the Habsburg framework. In this strain, Watson believes that the Austro-Hungarian authorities fell victim to "the illusory nature of the government's fears that the South Slav lands were seriously tempted by a greater Serbia" (p. 60). If the suspicions of South Slavs' fidelity were unfounded, as it has been claimed, then the suspicions of Czechs, for example, must have been paranoid. The author reinforces his argument by stressing that the extraordinary feature of the war was the enduring support of Habsburg nationalities, despite the horrendous casualties at battlefields and hardships at the home front. Although there is much to be said for this contention, its validity ultimately hinges on how we define "popular consent", because that could be interpreted in a way that encompasses a range of popular attitudes, from enthusiasm to listless compliance and obedience. And of course, popular attitudes in the Habsburg Monarchy varied from one nationality to the other. Contrary to the author, the present reviewer doubts that a propaganda campaign would have raised the morale of Czech troops leaving for the front (p. 251), who had good reasons to feel alienated from the Habsburg war effort.

The real gems of this book, however, relate to the experiences of ordinary German and Austro-Hungarian soldiers, their conduct on the front and especially towards populace in the enemy territory, and civilians who did their best to cope with notorious food shortages caused by the British naval blockade and support their loved ones in the army. Especially engaging is Watson's discussion of the war crimes committed against civilians in Belgium, East Prussia, Austrian Galicia and Serbia. He shows that much of atrocities did not result from any premeditated action, but rather sprung from the affects that a new combat situation had on the still untried soldiers. For example, grossly exaggerated fears of spying and civilian irregulars prompted the occupying forces to resort to summary and brutal reprisals in breach of international law. This is in line with Gumz's account of the Habsburg troops' massacres of Serbian civilians in 1914 on which Watson heavily relies.[3] The similarities of such atrocities on both sides of the front and in different regions populated by different peoples are striking and offer considerable evidence for the author's contention. Much more controversial is Watson's interpretation of the atrocities against civilians in the eastern "bloodlands"[4] of the

[3] Jonathan Gumz, *The Resurrection and Collapse of Empire in Habsburg Serbia, 1914–1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

[4] A reference to Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe between Hitler and Stalin* (New York: Basic Books, 2010).

continent in 1914-1918 as antecedents of the Nazi campaigns of extermination in the Second World War. He singles out Russian atrocities from the opening phase of the war in East Prussia and Galicia as "the closest link between the campaigns of 1914 and the genocidal horrors of the mid-twentieth century" (p. 205). Apart from geography, it remains unclear why that would be a case given that the author concedes that the scale of violence committed by "Tsarist troops" was "no different than that of the more famous contemporaneous German atrocities in Belgium and France" (p. 171). In terms of their scale and savagery proportionately to the size of and the number of population in the invaded territory, Austro-Hungarian crimes in the north-west of Serbia were probably the worst of all during the Great War. Those also owed much to the vicious pre-war propaganda which dehumanized the "culturally inferior" Serbs, as another recent study shows and, incidentally, refutes Gumz's and Watson's insistence on the purely reactive nature of war crimes generated by fear of *comitadji* irregulars.[5] Watson seems to waver himself in his appreciation of Nazi antecedents, especially when he assesses the German occupation regime in the Baltic (Ober Ost) and the part of Polish land designated for annexation to the Reich; he finds that German plans for colonization "appear to point towards the larger, genocidal racial organization of the east desired a quarter of a century later by the Nazis" (p. 398). Further research might test the argument that the impetus for German war plans, which increasingly included radical schemes for annexation and settlement, based on racial precepts can be reduced to the trauma of experiencing Russian invasion in 1914 (p. 266).

In the way of an epilogue, Watson discusses the woeful legacy of the ordeal that more than four years of bitter fighting left to Europe, rearranged at the end of the conflict and at the Versailles peace conference. His remark that "the old continent of empires was giving way to one of imperfect nation states" (p. 535) is instructive of his lack of sympathy for the new international order. He shares this view with Margaret MacMillan, whose work he deems engaging,[6] and some other historians, but many would strongly disagree. Still, returning to his theme of social fragmentation, Watson is right in pointing out that class and racial differences, so dramatically inflamed during the war, remained to plague most societies after 1918, both in the old and successor states. It is important to remember that the existential threats of war, including hunger, crushed inter-ethnic and inter-religious tolerance within communities, such as that of Cracow for instance, with Jews being particularly exposed to violence.

Overall, Watson's painstakingly researched and highly readable book contributes most to our understanding of human suffering and day-to-day experience of the Great War with its richness in detail to which the constraints of a space in a review do little justice. A Balkan specialist should bear in mind that the discussion of Balkan and South Slav matters does not match the detailed treatment of Galicia, which is, to a great extent, conditioned by the author's research in Polish archives. With its many admirable qualities, this study is certain to generate much interest both among scholars and general readership.

[5] See Hannes Leidinger's chapter on the escalation of violence in Hannes Leidinger et al., eds., *Habsburgs schmutziger Krieg* (Vienna: Residenz Verlag, 2014); this edited volume is published in Serbian: *Prljavi rat Habzburga* (Novi Sad: Prometej, 2016).

[6] Margaret MacMillan, *Peacemakers: Six Months that Changed the World* (London: John Murray, 2009).

Dominic Lieven, *The End of Tsarist Russia: The March to World War I and Revolution*. New York: Penguin Books, 2015, 443 p.

Reviewed by Konstantin Dragaš*

The foreign policy of Tsarist Russia, its goals, scope, contradictions as well as its prominent protagonists – diplomats, ministers, advisors – and their diverse views on international relations in the decade preceding the outbreak of the First World War constitute the core of Dominic Lieven's interesting monograph on Russian history based on documentary sources – *The End of Tsarist Russia*. It is a book which seeks to answer the question of what challenges, problems and confusions the Russian Ministry for Foreign Affairs and, above all, Emperor Nicholas II, and many figures in his entourage, faced in 1900–14 in the light of Russia's defeat in the war against Japan of 1905, the creation of an alliance with France and Britain, growing Austro-Hungarian and German expansionism and the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. In other words: to what extent did personal views, inclinations and political comments of the diplomats influence the shaping of Russian foreign policy?

What makes this study original is above all the author's interesting understanding of the causes of the First World War, which include civilian society, nationalism, growing literacy (for example, among the population of eastern Europe) but also the inability of the executive branch of the autocratic regimes to control public opinion, whose influence on the shaping of political developments was not at all negligible. Another feature is reflected in the view that the Russians lost the war of 1914–17 because of the failure of Russian government (the executive and, later, the legislature – the *Duma*) to get the peasantry and most of the conscripted army to believe in what Lieven calls "abstract" war aims, such as the conquest of Constantinople or "European balance of power". The inabilty to overcome the discrepancy between the plans of the elites and the people's lack of motivation for war, i.e. the failure to achieve unity in terms of command, level of modernization and homogenization of the nation around clear goals, was one of the factors that led to the collapse of the Russian monarchy; by contrast, the wars with Napoleon or Hitler were fought with a clear internal cohesion of ideas, aims, plans and economic strength. Moreover, the author introduces the concept of the *Second World* for certain states that were insufficiently industrialized and economically competitive before 1914, among which he includes Russia, Spain, Italy.

The focus of attention, however, is on the protagonists and priorities of Russian foreign policy from the end of the nineteenth century to 1914. Russian foreign policy had to balance between two opposing parties – one inspired by the principle of loyalty to the dynastic ties between the monarchies in Europe, the other, by strong Slavophilism. Emperor Nicholas II continued his father Alexander III's Slavophile policy towards the Balkan Slavs, but paid much more attention to the Far East, Japan, expansion into Asia and the maintenance of stable relations with Germany. The primary goal of Russian diplomacy was the conquest of Constantinople, the achievemnt of economic and military dominance in the Black Sea and the strengthening of Russian presence in the broader area of Euroasia – the idea on which the Russian diplomats agreed in principle.

An important question raised by Lieven's book is whether Russian foreign policy in the period of 1900–14 was based

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on Slavophile traditions. Influential advocates of collaboration with Germany and Austria-Hungary, realistic "pragmatists" and critics of Slavophile policy were, for example, Nikolai Girs (foreign minister 1882–95), Vladimir Meshcherskii (editor of the *Grazhdanin*/Citizen), Roman Rozen (Russian ambassador to Japan 1903–1905), Alexander Girs. On the other hand, Sergei Sazonov (foreign minister 1910–1916), Alexander Nelidov or the Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolaievich Romanov were Slavophiles and advocated Russia's strong support to the Balkan Slavs. Both parties had an equal following among the ruling aristocracy; Lieven claims in his conclusion that the predictions of the "realistic" party would prove to be correct in many aspects. Many Russian diplomats, such as Alexander von Benckendorff in London or Count Nicholas von Osten-Sacken in Berlin, had sympathies for the politics of the country they served in and sought to synchronize the goals of the country they represented with it. A special place in this study is held by the politician Grigorii Trubetskoi, who believed that the Straits and Constantinople could not be taken or naval dominance in the Black Sea achieved without Russia's strong and unquestionable support to the Balkan Slavs.[1]

After the Russo-Japanese War, Russia, militarily weakened and hit by a revolution and strikes, sought to renew its armies. The poor armament, the plan for an alliance of Balkan Slav states, the insecure western border (especially with Austria-Hungary and the Ukranian population which inhabited a large part of it) and the system of bilateral agreements (with Italy, for example) made Russia back down in the Annexation crisis (1908–9) and the Balkan Wars (1912–13). As a result, the Russian government was frequently crticized by the cadet, liberal, "nationalist" and Slavophile press. Nevertheless, although stressesing the "guilt" of the Austro-Hungarian "war" party for the outbreak of the war, the author does not pay due attention to the factor of German diplomacy's long-term goals regarding the potential colonization of Russian territory.

In the period of 1900–14, and especially after 1904, Russian diplomacy was compelled to adjust to Germany's constant fear of the potential policy of encirclement. Many diplomats warned that good relations with Germany would be sacrificed in favour of a loose Anglo-Russian agreement the Germans sought to thwart. This adjustment was not an easy matter both because the Russian diplomats did not understand fully the German foreign policy plans and because they wanted to maintain good relations with both. This did not go easily because of diverging interests as regards the Ottoman Empire, Persia and Afghanistan, but also because of a good trade exchange (especially with Germany). As a result of Russian diplomacy's being anxious not to make rash moves as regards the status quo in the Balkans, it frequently yielded to German and Austro-Hungarian influence. The complaisant policy towards Germany and Austria-Hungary may also be explained by the nationalist factor in eastern Europe, notably the issue of the Ukranian population in Austrian and Russian Galicia: the nations whose fate was tied to the westernmost border of the Russian Empire were strongly disliked by the Russian autocracy and their separatism was not easy to control.

[1] D. Lieven, *The End of Tsarist Russia: The March to World War I and Revolution* (New York 2015), 130–131.

Stéphane Courtois, *Lénine, l'inventeur du totalitarisme*. Paris: Perrin, 2017, 502 p.

Reviewed by Boris Milosavljević*

Essentially a political biography of Lenin (1870–1924), Stéphane Courtois's book looks at the important theoretical and practical principles which underlay the revolutionary system ran by the main leader of the October Revolution and which justify his being considered as the architect of totalitarianism. Courtois demonstrates why the dominant idea that seeks to absolve Lenin of all responsibility for totalitarianism and lay the blame on Stalin is deeply erroneous. Based on Lenin's political beliefs put into practice, he shows the consistency of the theory and practice that produced the totalitarian system in the twentieth century. His book is one of a number of books on Lenin published in the last twenty or so years. Its goal is not to present any previously unknown sources or information about Lenin's life, nor is it to rebut some of the proposed interpretations or to check the trustworthiness of some data. Its specific goal is both to offer a political biography of Lenin's and to present the reasons behind the assertion made in the book's title that it was Lenin who invented totalitarianism.

Courtois points to Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov's unclear mixed ethnic origin (Russian, Kalmyk or Kyrgyz-Mongolian, German-Swedish (Lutheran) and Jewish (converted to Christianity) and his family's social status of nobility (*dvoryanstvo*). Lenin's father, a mathematician and physicist, was granted personal and then hereditary nobility being a deserving civil servant. He was the son of a merchant coming from a peasant serf family in the Nizhny Novgorod Governorate. The author gives an account of Lenin's privileged childhood and youth, discussing also the family and personal tragedy – the death sentence by hanging pronounced on his elder brother, a student at the University of Sankt Petersburg, found guilt for leading a "terrorist faction" of the People's Will organization (*Narodnaya Volya*) and of participating in an attempted assassination of emperor Alexander III in 1887. The sentence laid a stigma on the entire family and had a tremendous effect on Lenin personally. The author depicts the political and intellectual climate in Russia in the second half of the nineteenth century, the influence exerted by Nikolay Gavrilovich Chernyshevsky, the socialist ideologue credited with, or responsible for, the revival of the revolutionary spirit, and Sergey Gennadievich Nechaev, a hero of revolutionary violence who inspired Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoevsky, appalled by the murder of the student Ivanov who tried to leave Nechaev's group, for the character of Pyotr Verkhovensky in his novel *Demons* (pp. 53–54).

Seeking to establish the date of formation of the basic tenets of Lenin's ideology, the author points out that Lenin, while in Bern in 1914 and 1915, read with particular attention the Prussian general and military theoretician Carl von Clausewitz's book *On War*, which depicts war as an instrument of politics (p. 306).

Courtois describes as prophetic the words the former interior minister Pyotr Nikolayevich Durnovo addressed to the emperor in 1914. He spoke of the revolutionaries stirring up the masses with socialist slogans, the army that had lost its best men, the demoralized forces that were supposed to protect law, order and institutions, the intellectual opposition parties incapable of gaining popularity, all of which threatened to throw Russia into the state of anarchy and hopelessness (p. 318).

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Courtois points out that Erich Ludendorff, who served as Deputy Chief of Staff under Paul von Hindenburg at the time the United States declared war on Germany (1917), recognized the possibility of fomenting a revolution which would destroy Russia's military power and buy Germany the time (some three months) to suppress the British and French before the Americans could get to Europe (p. 324). This, Courtois suggests, led to the unnatural alliance between the German aristocracy and Russian revolutionary socialism. Revolutionaries were transported in sealed carriages from Switzerland to Russia via Germany to start a revolution, which would put an end to Russia's war against Germany. All previously set boundaries were gone, which meant that now everything was permitted because only victory counted whatever the cost. In a letter of August 1918, Lenin speaks of the coincidence of interests: "We would've been idiots not to seize the opportunity" (p. 324).

The author rightly points to Hannah Arendt's interpretation of the Bolshevik party as a party of the declassed from all classes (p. 348). Lenin set up a paramilitary organization (some 6,000–7,000-men strong) called the Red Guard, which mounted a coup and took the strategic points in the capital, Petrograd. As the author suggests, Lenin's (October) November proclamation introduced the first totalitarian regime in history (p. 349).

The book speaks of a number of rebellions that Cossacks and the peasantry raised against Lenin's revolutionary government (Bolshevik dictatorship), and of a true war of the Bolshevik party against the peasantry (pp. 397 and 398). In quelling the Cossack rebellions Lenin followed Friedrich Engels's thought that no revolution can tolerate a Vendee. In 1919 the Central Committee adopted a secret resolution on beginning a merciless struggle, massive terror against the wealthy Cossacks; they were to be physically destroyed to the last man. Despite Lenin's well-known statement that his brother Alexander, who had been sentenced to death, had not been much of a revolutionary because he had been too carried away by science and research, the author suggests that a considerable role in Lenin's decision to have the whole imperial family murdered must have been played by the emotional motive of revenge.

Lenin destroyed all proprietor classes, including the rich peasants, thereby causing the first famine in the Soviet era. Such fanatical ideological undertakings could only be carried out by a particular kind of people, the one that Dostoevsky portrayed with Nechaev in mind (p. 411).

Courtois finds that Lenin is responsible for supressing socialism committed to democratic culture in favour of communism, which is totalitarian both in essence and in practice (p. 446). Stalin simply took up where Lenin left off. In terms of efficacy, functionally speaking, the most successful politician of the twentieth century, as the author describes him, given that he spread his communist ideology over nearly one-quarter of the world. Almost one-third of the world population lived in socialist communist countries.

Apart from Lenin's political biography and his role in the world's history, Courtois takes a look, in several places in the book, at the French reception of communism and Leninism, mentioning the controversial Roger Garaudy and other writers such as, for example, Jean-Paul Sartre, but we believe that he should have offered an assessment of the even more controversial Louis Althusser and his understanding of Lenin's philosophical importance.

Marx said that "the philosophers have only interpreted the world in various way; the point, however, is to change it". As we all know, however, he left no instructions as to how. As we also know, Lenin drew on the methods of the French Revolution, the Jacobin methods. The book speaks of the French radical revolutionaries, Robespierre, Saint-Just, Babeuf nicknamed Gracchus.

Courtois draws from François Furet and refers to him in several places as well as to Mona Ozouf and Raymond Aron, but also to some writers who are not considered to be completely reliable. He indirectly points to the totalitarianism of the French Revolution, the topic addressed by some earlier writers, for example, by Jacob Talmon (*The Origins of Totalitarian Democracy*, first published in 1952). The logical question, then, is why the honour of being called the inventor of totalitarianism is conferred on Lenin and not on a French revolutionary.

Perhaps the answer to this question should be sought in the author's definition of totalitarianism. It is understood above all as the monopoly over politics of a single party headed by a charismatic leader; in that way, the party becomes the state, absorbing the state prerogatives of government and administration; it is also the monopoly of a single ideology that commands all areas of knowledge and creativity (through methodology) – from philosophy, history and science to art, as well as the media (through censorship); it is also the monopoly of the party-state over all means of the production and distribution of material goods in order to suppress private ownership; and last but not least – the terror of the masses used as an instrument of rule (p. 24). It may be assumed that the author believes that it was only with Lenin that totalitarianism achieved all the features required to fit the definition, although he refers to the French revolutionary roots of totalitarianism more than once in the book.

It is known that Courtois has drawn a parallel between the Nazi "race genocide" and what he calls, following Ernst Nolte, "class genocide", and that he has advocated the establishment of an equivalent of the Nuremberg Tribunal which would try the communists responsible.

There is also a personal touch to the book, because the author used to be a communist (like Furet, at that), and of the Leninist-Maoist type (1968). He evokes his memories and describes the feelings he had as a young man and then, much later, during his visit to Moscow in 1992. Stéphane Courtois (born in 1947) is a French historian and university professor, Director of Research at the French National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS) and Professor at the Catholic Institute of Higher Education (ICES). He specializes in the history of communist movements and regimes.

Catherine Merridale, *Lenin on the Train*. London: Penguin Books, 2016, 353 p.

Reviewed by Rastko Lompar*

Months before the centenary of one of the most influential and controversial train rides in history, the British historian and writer Catherine Merridale published her take on Lenin's trip to Russia in April 1917. The book is not aimed at fellow historians, but rather at the general public eager to learn more about the events surrounding and preceding the ascent to power of a man who left his mark on the history of the world like few others. The author followed no clear path when describing events, and therefore the book is neither chronologically nor thematically organized. The structure is quite loose and resembles much more that of a novel than of a history book. The description is also rich with author's personal observations and impressions as well as numerous hypothetical excurses. That does not, however, mean that it is not based on

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a solid foundation of historical sources and literature. It certainly is. Merridale clearly chose this manner of writing in order to make the book more appealing to the general public. That choice dictated the type of sources that were used: archival documents are overshadowed by memoirs, hard data and statistics with colorful quotes and bitter allegations. The book is impeccably written and difficult to put aside.

Although the book, as the title suggests, is about Lenin, the narration does not always follow the Russian Bolshevik in his humble exile in Zurich. The story is told by multiple historical figures, from the British spy Samuel Hoare and the French diplomat in St. Petersburg Maurice Paléologue to other Russian revolutionary figures. Little space is devoted to the "ordinary man", the worker or the soldier; he is relegated to the margins. The main protagonist is always in sight, but often in the background. Therefore the main storyline serves as scenery on which Lenin emerges triumphantly when he arrives on the Finland Station in St. Petersburg. So, what is Merridale's Lenin like? She admits she does not want to describe the complete personality of the Russian revolutionary. No space is given to his alleged love of music, young children or dogs; she does not attempt to portray him as a man of flesh and blood. "I want to find the man with the consuming, merciless cold fire," Merridale explains. The Lenin she depicts is completely devoid of petty human traits, he is ascetic and fully devoted to his cause. Sleep and food are almost a burden to him. He is a "coiled mass of energy" which is "thinking only of revolution". He is not keen on compromises and authority, as his feuds with the most notable Marxists (Plekhanov, Bebel etc.) of his time showed. His total dedication to the cause is what drives him, and what makes him take a risky and dangerous German offer of safe passage to Russia, which his compatriots from the ranks of the Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries declined.

In Merridale's portrayal of Lenin one can point out two very important characteristics of the future Soviet state. Firstly, his readiness to use violence in order to transform society, and secondly, his propensity for excessive legislation and bureaucratization. The author does a good job in pointing out why Lenin cannot be disassociated from the Soviet crimes and terror, as his apologists often do. Already in Switzerland he was absolutely committed to transforming the "imperialist war" into a civil one. If that meant the death of thousands, so be it, thought the future Soviet dictator. Merridale describes Lenin fuming at the thought of the pacifist left, which he saw as treason of the proletariat. The second point author proves whilst describing the train ride to Russia. Lenin forbade his followers to smoke in the carriages, and so they had to go to the only toilet to smoke. However, that created big problems for those passengers who wished to use the toilet, for they were forced to queue with the smokers. Lenin's solution to the apparent toilet crisis was equally confusing as it was humorous. He issued two types of tickets, one for those that actually needed the restroom, the other for smokers. This did not improve the situation greatly, but it did lead the Bolsheviks into a debate about which physical urge should have primacy.

Merridale also covers the main controversies surrounding Lenin's trip to Russia, namely how involved Germany was in the whole affair, and whether Lenin was financially supported by the Germans. The author very skillfully places Lenin's trip in the context of German wartime subversive propaganda. The German foreign ministry was convinced as early as 1915 in the value of sparking unrest in the enemy's vulnerable spots. Both the British and the Russian empires were susceptible to separatist propaganda (in Ireland, India or in the Baltic and Caucasus), while France was to pacifist ideas (Germany funded four leading pacifist French journals). Therefore, by the end of

the war, the Germans spent more than 382 million marks on various covert actions in the enemy's rear. In the Russian case, another useful tool was the left, both in the country and in emigration. The main German agent tasked with carrying out revolution in Russia was the famous Bolshevik Alexander Parvus (Israel Lazarevich Helphand). His mission was to unify all anti-war Russian leftists and topple the tsarist regime with their help. However, it proved much more difficult than Parvus had hoped. The seven million marks he received proved of little use, for most Russians (Lenin included) refused his proposal. The Germans did provide the Bolsheviks with a sizable sum, hoping to sway Russian public opinion towards peace. The train Lenin took was not full of gold, as many contemporaries alleged, but the Bolshevik leader was aware of where some of the party's financing came from. However, he could not admit it for he had already been attacked by his adversaries (both from right and left) as a German spy and a saboteur. He chose to lie. As Merridale concludes: "Instead of trusting the masses with the truth about his German funds, Lenin opted to lecture them. Instead of confiding in them, he lied." Lenin acted with the support of Germany, but he was not a German agent, their causes were complementary but not identical. When Lenin arrived in St. Petersburg a German agent sent a cheerful message to Berlin: "Lenin's entry into Russia successful. He is working exactly as we would wish." What they both wished was for Russia to exit the war, but their visions of its future were drastically different.

In conclusion, *Lenin on the Train* provides the readers with a riveting description of events surrounding the Russian Bolsheviks' ascent to power. The book is well written and hard to put aside. What it lacks in original research it makes up in compelling storytelling.

Paschalis M. Kitromilides, *Religion and Politics in the Orthodox World. The Ecumenical Patriarchate and the Challenges of Modernity*. London and New York: Routledge, 2018, 130 p.

Reviewed by Aleksandra Djurić Milovanović*

The relationship between religion and politics, church and state, in different historical periods was complex and prone to change. The newly-published book *Religion and Politics in the Orthodox World* by Paschalis M. Kitromilides, a historian specializing in particular in the Enlightenment in Southeast Europe and Professor at the University of Athens, covers these complex relationships in the Orthodox world. The book was published in 2018 in the Routledge special series Religion, Society and Government in Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet States. Foreworded by Ioannis Zizioulas, Metropolitan of Pergamon, and furnished with the author's preface and introduction, the book is divided into seven chapters. In his foreword, the Metropolitan points to the chronological coverage of the book "analyzing changes endured by the Orthodox Church in the transition from the Ottoman imperial role to the age of nationalism" (p. vii). Professor Kitromilides follows the evolution of the Church in several important historical periods, especially the period of forming new nation-states in Southeast Europe. Using the example, or the case study,

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of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, the senior Church in the communion of Orthodox Churches, the author seeks to illustrate "a dissenting view pointing to the incompatibility of Orthodoxy and nationalism" (p. 4). Chapter 1, "The Orthodox Church and the Enlightenment", is devoted to the relationship between the Orthodox Church and the movement of intellectual change and cultural secularization (p. 12). During this complex period, an example of the Enlightenment within the Church is associated with Patriarch Cyril V, who in the late 1740s founded a school on Mount Athos, and many others whose contribution was significant in developing Greek education and culture. In this chapter, Kitromilides offers examples of the interplay between Orthodoxy and the Enlightenment, including the correspondence between two important figures of the time, Ignatius of Ungrowallachia and G. P. Vieusseux.

Chapter 2, "The Orthodox Church in modern State formation in Southeastern Europe", reconsiders the role of the Church in the formation of new states in this part of Europe. It is especially important to point out that the author offers the reader a historical background to the position of the Orthodox Church in the Ottoman Empire and its transformation from an institution of the Ottoman imperial order into national churches in the newly-created nation-states (p. 29). He conducts a comparative analysis of the attitude and response of the Church to the national liberation movements in Serbia, Greece, Bulgaria and the Romanian principalities. By the beginning of the twentieth century, there had been several autocephalous national churches in Southeastern Europe. He discusses the entanglement of Orthodoxy with nationalism as part of the nationalist projects of each newly-formed state and a significant element of their respective homogenization.

The chapter "Ecumenical Patriarchate and the challenge of nationalism in the nineteenth century" deals with the challenges of modern secular thought, confrontations between the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the forces of secularization and national modernity. Kitromilides argues that "Nationalism was a force of change transforming European societies in the direction of modernity and modernity meant fundamentally secularization. *Ipso facto* therefore the nexus of modernity-secularization-nationalism involved a confrontation with the Church" (p. 45). In the period of drastic changes Southeast-European societies were undergoing between 1830 and 1880, relations with the Ecumenical Patriarchate were changing as well. The newly-established nation-states in the Balkans sought to integrate the Orthodox Church into their nation-building projects, declaring their autocephaly. The Ecumenical Patriarchate did not reject their autocephalous status, but they were struggling against the new secular states' attempt to impose their will on the Church (p. 46). Providing a detailed account of the historical development of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the governance of the Orthodox community in the Ottoman Empire, the author ends this chapter with an analysis of the Church, Orthodox identity and the Ottoman state.

The first decades of the twentieth century in the history of the Ecumenical Patriarchate are described in Chapter 4, "The end of Empire, Greece's Asia Minor catastrophe and the Ecumenical Patriarchate". This was a period of significant changes for the Church of Constantinople. In the first decade of the twentieth century, the Church of Constantinople comprised eighty-four dioceses in Asia Minor and the Balkans (pp. 60–61). "The proliferation of the number of dioceses in Asia Minor and Eastern Thrace was a clear indication of the rising Orthodox population in these regions which, after the detachment of major parts of the Balkans from the jurisdiction of the Church of Constantinople with the advent of the new autocephalous churches in the course of the nineteenth century, formed the primary

territorial basis of the Ecumenical Patriarchate," Kitromilides argues (p. 61). The revival of Orthodox Christianity was observable in church architecture even in the deep interior of Asia Minor and in re-emergence of monasticism. After the age of flowering, as the author describes the first decade of the twentieth century, the years between 1912 and 1922 brought tragedy and crisis, persecution and displacement. In these turbulent years of "the Asia Minor catastrophe and the expulsion of the largest number of Orthodox flock from Turkey", the Ecumenical Patriarchate had a significant role as a non-national Church sharing common belonging to Orthodox tradition (p. 69). In 1923, the Treaty of Lausanne ended the period of military confrontation between Greece and Turkey and a new period in the history of the Ecumenical Patriarchate began. This period was marked by the continuous struggle with "the Turkish authorities to recognize international character of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and its role as the senior see in the Orthodox Church" (p. 98).

Chapter 5, "The Ecumenical Patriarchate during the Cold War (1946–1991)", shows that under communism in Eastern Europe, the Orthodox Churches operated as national churches despite persecution and marginalization. As for the Ecumenical Patriarchate, it "by contract remained free of state entanglements and this allowed it to cultivate unconditionally its canonical conscience and to make this the basis of its primacy in the Orthodox world" (p. 89).

Chapter 6, "A Religious International in Southeastern Europe?", provides an overview of the pre-modern and modern understanding of an Orthodox "religious international". Offering clear argumentation, Kitromilides explains historical developments that had an impact on the understanding of the international element in the Orthodox Church and creation of "national Orthodoxies" which attached religion to the nation-states of the Balkans. Writing about "pre-modern forms of religious *interculturalism* in the Orthodox world", the author describes two phenomena – pilgrimage and monasticism, giving these two examples of an expression of religious life and unity. The chapter ends with an overview of contemporary initiatives towards an Orthodox International after the Cold War and the international role of the Ecumenical Patriarchate under the leadership of the incumbent Patriarch Bartholomew (1992–). The concluding chapter of the book covers very significant developments in the Orthodox world after the communist period including the rise of ethnic conflicts in the former Yugoslavia and prejudices associated with religion and conflict in the Balkans.

The book of Professor Kitromilides is a very useful source for a more profound understanding of the history of the Orthodox Church in Southeastern Europe in the modern period. Pointing to the most important historical events, it provides in-depth explanations for the issues of entanglement between Orthodoxy and nationalism in newly formed nation-states in the Balkans. This book is not just another historical monograph on the Orthodox Church. It offers an interdisciplinary understanding of the complexity of international and national relations between religion and politics, both past and present. It will make useful reading for those interested in matters of religion and church, especially the Orthodox world today and the future prospects of the Ecumenical Patriarchate.

British-Serbian Relations. From the 18th to the 21st Centuries, ed. Slobodan G. Markovich. Belgrade: Faculty of Political Sciences, University of Belgrade & Zepter Book World, 2018, 521 p.

Reviewed by Dušan Fundić*

Britannia Pacificatrix, the mural adorning the Ambassadors' Staircase at the Foreign Office depicts Britain in the guise of goddess Athena surrounded by her war allies and the imperial domains, protectively shielding with her left arm three young girls personifying Belgium, Serbia and Montenegro. The triumphant depiction of Britain and her allies can also be seen on the cover of the book reviewed here: *British-Serbian Relations: From the 18th to the 21st Centuries*. Referring to the mural, its editor, Slobodan G. Markovich, Professor at the Faculty of Political Sciences of the University of Belgrade, author of several important works in the field of British-Serbian relations,[1] writes in conclusion to his introductory study that between 1915 and 1918 Serbia indeed was "under the mantle of Britannia" (p. 104). Since the First World War is in the middle of the period covered by this book, this image is also symbolic of the road Serbia travelled from being "hardly detectable" in British public opinion (p. 28) to becoming the powerful empire's "protégée".

The book is divided into four sections: Britain and Serbia: Cultural and Political Relations; Great Britain, the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and Communist Yugoslavia; Cultural and Educational Encounters of the UK and Serbia in the 21st Century and Recent Past; British-Serbian Contemporary Diplomatic and Political Relations: Challenges and Prospects. Although a full account of a period of more than two centuries (1874–2018) is virtually impossible to squeeze into a single volume, the topics addressed by the contributions are selected in such a way as to cover as many political and cultural phenomena relevant to relations between the two countries as possible. The volume is mostly the result of an international conference held in Belgrade in January 2018 under the auspices of the Faculty of Political Sciences of the University of Belgrade, Centre for British Studies, with the support of the British Embassy in Belgrade.

The book opens with Slobodan G. Markovich's extensive and thorough overview of British-Serbian political and cultural relations from the end of the eighteenth century to 1918 (pp. 13–117). Since it makes up almost a fifth of the volume's contents it will be paid due attention here. Markovich chose to begin his analysis with Dositey Obradovich's[2] visit to London in 1784/5 because it made a crucial impact on the future work of this leading proponent of the Josephan Enlightenment among the Serbs. One of the key focuses of the study is the attempt to reconstruct the evolution of Serbia's visibility in British public opinion. Cautiously using The Times Digital Archive, Markovich finds that the British public knowledge of Serbia became wider in the 1850s and 1860s, reaching its peak in the course of the Great Eastern Crisis (1875–78). A similar conclusion is suggested by various editions of *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. The 1771 edition merely mentions "Servia" as "a province of European Turkey", and it is only the 1886 edition that gives grounds to claim that Serbia became "a known fact in Britain" (p. 21). In the following decades the British political system gained considerable currency as a model to look up to – primarily through the work of the leading Serbian Anglophiles Vladimir Yovanovitch, who promoted liberal ideas (especially

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[1] See esp. his *British Perceptions of Serbia and the Balkans 1903–1906* (Paris: Dialogue, 2000) and *Grof Čedomilj Mijatović. Viktorijanac među Srbima* [Chedomille Myatovich. A Victorian among the Serbs] (Belgrade: Dosije and Pravni fakultet, 2006).

[2] The transliteration of names in the review follows the transliteration used by the authors.

Herbert Spenser and John Stuart Mill), Chedomille Miyatovitch, a statesman and Serbia's ambassador in London, and Ljubomir Nedić, who introduced Serbia to Darwin's theories. Therefore, Markovich concludes, the 1880s marked the period of the strongest influence of British culture on Serbian culture.[3] Markovich also explores the presence of each country in the public opinion of the other, by analyzing important publications about the Serbs in Britain and vice versa, pointing in particular to the travel account of two British women, G. M. Mackenzie and A. P. Irby, *Travels in the Slavonic Provinces in Tureky-in-Europe* (1867). Published amidst the Great Eastern Crisis, its second edition (1877) prefaced by William Gladstone gained wide popularity in Britain, as did Herbert Vivian's *Servia. The Poor Man's Paradise* (1897).

In this part of the book, which in fact has the form of a shorter monograph, particular attention is paid to the British parliamentary system and to the crisis in relations between the two countries caused by the assassination of the Serbian royal couple in 1903. Markovich puts a special emphasis on the period of the First World War, dividing it into four phases based on the British attitude towards Serbia: Sympathies for Serbia (Autumn of 1914 – Summer of 1915); Glorification of Serbia (Autumn of 1915 – Winter of 1916); Pro-Serbian Euphoria (April – July 1916); Very positive coverage of "the brave little ally" (Autumn of 1916 – 1918) (p. 66), and pays due attention to the role of British medical doctors and nurses in Serbia during the Great War.

The section devoted to the period until 1918 comprises another three short contributions: by Čedomir Antić, on Serbia and Great Britain until 1875 with special reference to the arrival of the first British consul in Belgrade in 1837; by Saša Knežević, on the attitude of the British Prime Minister William Gladstone towards the Balkan Christians, and especially towards Montenegro, which benefited from the influential statesman's favour because it was owing to him that the Ottoman Empire was forced in 1880 to cede the coastal town of Ulcinj; and finally, David Norris's interesting contribution on two important British legacies to Belgrade: Francis Mackenzie's urbanization of a part of the Serbian capital and Frank Storm Mottershaw's camera recording of the day of the coronation of King Peter Karadjordjević in 1904.

The rest of the volume begins with Bojan Aleksov's interesting text on British women and Serbs (1717–1945), including the hitherto largely neglected analysis of their motives for visiting a Balkan country, and with a particular emphasis on the importance that the British political and social context has for understanding their activity within the complex tangle of British liberal ideas, Christian solidarity and Orientalist constructions, without losing sight of their wish to improve the position of women in Serbia and in the Balkans in general. The focus of Zorica Bečanović Nikolić's contribution is on the importance of the works of William Shakespeare, their translations and reception in Serbian culture. This first chronological section concludes with Slobodan G. Markovich's contribution devoted to the British ministers to Serbia and the Serbian ministers to Britain between 1837 and 1919, furnished with two useful tables containing basic prosopographical data.

The section devoted to relations between Britain and the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and then communist Yugoslavia may in fact be described as being composed of two complementary subsections. One, which discusses various aspects of political and diplomatic relations between the two countries, would comprise the texts of Dragan Bakić and Eric Beckett Weaver covering the period until 1941. The other would comprise the contributions of Vojislav G. Pavlović and Milan Ristović focused on the period of the final phase of the Second World War and afterwards. The contributions of Bakić and Pavlović provide the reader with overviews of relations between "two Yugoslavias" and Great Britain, while Beckett Weaver focuses

[3] Yovanovitch and Miyatovich sought to get the commonly used British spelling "Servia" and "Servians" replaced with the more appropriate one "Serbia" and "Serbians", but the change did not really take place until after 1914, when the two countries became war allies.

on the issue of border change in the interwar period and its influence on Yugoslavia, and also on the consequences of British indifference to the attempts to subvert Yugoslavia, especially after the assassination of King Alexander which, in his view, paved the way for the country's rapprochement with the Third Reich. For the issue to be viewed in its entirety, it is important to add the thesis put forward by Bakić that the British foreign policy makers looked with a certain measure of goodwill at the problems and challenges the Yugoslav government faced without ever giving it their full support. Pavlović points to the remarkably prominent role that Britain's foreign policy played in international recognition of Communist Yugoslavia, at first in 1944, when the Churchill government accepted Josip Broz Tito as the leader of Yugoslav resistance, then in 1951, when Anthony Eden visited Belgrade, and in 1953, when Tito visited London, his first visit to a Western country. Ristović focuses on relations within the Yugoslav-British-Greek "triangle" in the period of 1945–49, when the civil war in the southernmost Balkan country was the dominant issue.

The contribution by Dušan Babac is concerned with the development of relations between two dynasties, the Windsor and the Karadjordjević, while Radmila Radić looks at relations between the Serbian Orthodox Church and the Church of England, emphasizing the importance of their collaboration during the First World War and the negotiations about their possible union after 1918. Zoran Milutinović looks at the main characteristics of British society and culture looked up to as models by the Serbian Anglophiles of the first half of the twentieth century.

The remaining two sections of the volume are devoted to cultural and educational contacts between Britain and Serbia, and to their contemporary diplomatic and political relations, respectively. What gives the former section a touch of vividness are the authors' brief and interesting accounts of the events or processes they participated in themselves. Thus Ranko Bugarski writes about "The English-speaking Union" in Yugoslavia/Serbia as an important aspect of the two countries' cultural relations, Nenad Šebek describes his experience of working for the BBC for more than twenty years, and Vukašin Pavlović writes about collaboration with British colleagues at the time of international sanctions (1992–2000) imposed on Yugoslavia, singling out the projects on civil society in Serbia and the "Yugoslav-British Summer School for Democracy". The subject of the contribution by Boris Hlebec are English-Serbian and Serbian-English dictionaries, while Vesna Goldsworthy offers an interesting discussion on the role of her own books *Inventing Ruritania* and *Chernobyl Strawberries* in mediation between the two cultures. The section concludes with Katarina Rasulić's concise overview of the history of the Department of English Language and Literature of the University of Belgrade since its foundation in 1929.

As the previous section, the last, fourth one is devoted to the contemporary period and is marked by a strong personal imprint of the contributors. Thus Baron Randall of Uxbridge gives "an almost personal view of British-Serbian relations" (p. 407). British Ambassador to Serbia Denis Keefe looks at the events commemorating the centenary of the Great War in 2014–18. David Gowan offers the British perspective on the two countries' contemporary relations, including a look at his own term as Ambassador in Belgrade, and Ambassador Branimir Filipović offers the Serbian perspective. A more academic type of analysis is provided by Aleksandra Joksimović, whose contribution covers the period of 2000–5, while Christopher Cooker speaks of the issue of security in the western Balkans and the consequences of the geopolitical changes taking place over the last five years. Spyros Economides analyzes the consequences of Britain's participation in NATO interventions in the Balkans. In accordance with the weight that the Kosovo question has in relations between the two countries, the volume concludes with James Ker-Lindsay's text on the consequences of British policy since 1999. He finds that it is undoubtedly dominant in relations between the two countries, certainly as a result of, among other things, of Britain's decreasing importance in the region after the opening of the Brexit process.

With its twenty-seven contributors of diverse research interests and from different disciplines, the book has an interdisciplinary character, which indeed is necessary for a subject as multifaceted as this. A single volume may seem to be a limiting factor for a comprehensive coverage of relations between any two countries. For researchers in different disciplines, however, this becomes a reference book they will be able to draw on in the effort to understand British-Serbian relations in a period of more than two centuries. Last but not least, more than two hundred photographs, images, reproductions of the front covers of important books, pamphlets or posters add a remarkable visual dimension to the text, bringing the reader closer to the subject of the volume.

Studia Balkanica Bohemo-slovaca VII. Příspěvky přednesené na VII. mezinárodním balkanistickém sympoziu v Brně ve dnech 28.–29. listopadu 2016, eds. Václav Štěpánek and Jiří Mitáček. Brno: Moravské zemské muzeum – Ústav slavistiky Filozofické fakulty Masarykovy univerzity, 2017, 714 p.

Reviewed by Miloš Luković*

The volume reviewed here is the proceedings of the 7th International Symposium on Balkan Studies held in Brno, Czech Republic, on 28 and 29 November 2016 under the auspices of three institutions: the Department of Slavic Studies of Masaryk University's Faculty of Arts, the Moravian Museum and the Institute of History of the Czech Academy of Sciences.[1]

The volume opens with an introduction and the introductory words by the organizers (Tomáš Pospíšil, Ivo Pospíšil, Jiří Mitáček and Eva Semotanová) and by the President of the Czech National Committee for Balkan Studies (Miroslav Tejchman), followed by four main sections presenting the papers presented at the Symposium, and ends with a list of contributors.

The Introduction (pp. 13–22) in Czech and English, *The Tradition of Balkan Studies Symposia in Brno*, by Václav Štěpánek, head of the volume's editorial team composed of Pavel Boček, Ladislav Hladký, Pavel Pilch and Petr Stehlík, provides background information relevant to understanding the genesis and nature of the publication.

The Faculty of Arts of Masaryk University in Brno has a long tradition of Balkan Studies that dates back to its very founding in 1919. It was only in the 1960s, however, that this field saw a major boom, and thanks to Professor Josef Macůrek (1901–1992) and his colleague Josef Kabrda (1906–1968), a renowned European expert in Ottoman and Balkan Studies. It was them who founded in 1966 – at the then Department of the History and Ethnography of Central, South-Eastern and Eastern Europe of the Faculty of Arts in Brno – the Institute for Balkan and Hungarian Studies, which until 1995 coordinated research in the field of Balkan Studies at the Faculty. Although being a part of a department focused on history and ethnography, the Institute also provided instruction in South-Slavic languages and produced scholarship concerned with Balkan literatures. The Institute is

[1] See *Symposium Programme* at: http://www.hiu.cas.cz/cs/download/konference/2016/program-balkanisticke-sympozium-brno2016.pdf

* Institute for Balkan Studies SASA

closely tied to the history of Balkan Studies symposia as well. At first these meetings were envisaged as nationwide, that is Czechoslovak-wide events, and therefore their published proceedings were titled *Studia Balkanica Bohemoslovaca*. Their primary initial objective, which, in fact, has not changed, was to recapitulate the state of Czech and Slovak scholarship in the field of Balkan Studies and to outline possible future research focuses and activities. The first symposium held in December 1969 laid the groundwork for and the structure of all future symposia. The Fifth Balkan Studies Symposium, held in May 2001, differed from the previous four in many respects. All five of the Balkan studies symposia were organized or co-organized by Professor Ivan Dorovský (Professor Josef Kabrda's successor), and all five proceedings bear his editorial imprint. All reflect his great erudition and scope in the field, and the proceedings of the Third, Fourth, and Fifth symposia are also revealing of how rich his network of scholarly friendships was. For this and other reasons, an entire section of the Sixth Balkan Studies Symposium was devoted to his scholarly activities in the field. This symposium, held in April 2005, was the largest to date both in the number of participants and in costs, and is not likely to be outdone any time soon. The papers were given by 115 scholars from the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Austria, Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro, Macedonia and Bulgaria. The objective was to present the academic and methodological shifts that had occurred in all four areas of Balkan Studies since the demise of the bipolar world, during which the Balkans underwent tumultuous changes. The proceedings were published in a two-volume nearly 1,200-page monograph edited by a group of middle-generation researchers.[2] The Seventh Balkan Studies Symposium followed in this tradition. Held in Brno on 28 and 29 November 2016, it brought together sixty-five scholars from the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Bulgaria, Croatia, Macedonia, Poland and Serbia, working in three sections: on history, ethnology and political science; on linguistics; and on literature and cultural studies. The first of these sections was further broken down into subsections focused on the history of the Balkans until the end of the nineteenth century; the Balkans in the twentieth century; and Czech-Slovak-Balkan relations. In the plenary session, the attendees had the opportunity to hear reports on the state and results of each Balkan Studies discipline in the Czech Republic and Slovakia since 2005, i.e. since the Sixth Balkan Studies Symposium. Most of the papers have been included in this publication.

In the Introductory Words in Czech (pp. 23–32), Ivo Pospíšil, Head of the Department of Slavonic Studies, Faculty of Arts, Masaryk University, Jiří Mitáček, Head of the Moravian Museum, Eva Semotanová, Director of the Institute of History, Czech Academy of Sciences, and Miroslav Tejchman, President of the Czech National Committee for Balkan Studies point to the long tradition and importance of Balkan Studies among the Czechs, and to Brno as growing into their main centre over the last few decades. The complex history and the present reality of the Balkans remain the lasting inspiration for researchers in different disciplines in the Czech Republic, and the field has good prospects.

The first section of the volume, *Results and tasks of Balkan Studies* (pp. 33–136), contains 12 contributions: Ivan Dorovský (Brno, Czech Republic), Some basic theoretical and methodological questions on Balkan studies in the Czech Republic; Ladislav Hladký (Brno, Czech Republic),

[2] Pavel Boček, Ladislav Hladký, Pavel Krejčí, Petr Stehlík and Václav Štěpánek, eds., Václav Štěpánek, red., *Studia Balcanica Bohemo-Slovaca*, vol. VI/1–2 (Brno 2006), 1164 p.

Czech historical Slavic Studies in the years 2005–2016; Martin Hurbanič (Bratislava, Slovakia), Historical Balkan Studies in Slovakia in 2006–2016; Damir Agičić (Zagreb, Croatia), Research on Balkan/Southeastern European history in Croatian historiography after 1991; Mira Radojević (Belgrade, Serbia), The temptations of contemporary Serbian historiography; Zdeněk Uherek (Prague, Czech Republic), Czech ethnology and anthropology in the Balkans in the years 2006–2016; Pavel Krejčí (Brno, Czech Republic), Czech linguistic Balkan Studies 2006–2016; Petr Stehlík (Brno, Czech Republic), Czech and Slovak Slavic Studies on South Slavic literatures in the last decade; Konstantin Tsivos (Prague, Czech Republic), Modern Greek Studies in Czechoslovakia: their role in constructing the national identity of Greek immigrants; Orkida Backus Borshi (Prague, Czech Republic), The Albanian language: present viewpoints and perspective; Vladimir Penčev (Sofia, Blagoevgrad, Bulgaria), The instruction of Slavic Studies, ethnological, and anthropological disciplines at Bulgarian and Czech universities in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The second section, *History, Ethnology and Political Science* (pp. 137–495), divided into four subsections, A, B, C and D, comprises 26 papers.

Subsection A, *Theoretical Bases*, consists of one contribution: Helena Bočková (Brno, Czech Republic), The Balkans as an ethnological area in a Central European perspective: a contribution to European cultural diversity.

Subsection B, *The history of the Balkans until the end of the nineteenth century*, contains six contributions: Soňa Hendrychová (Brno, Czech Republic), The study of early medieval jewelry in the Balkans; Martin Hurbanič (Bratislava, Slovakia), "*Expurgate vetus fermentum graecorum...*": the religious dimension of Bohemond of Tarento's campaign against Byzantium of 1107–1108; Petra Melichar (Prague, Czech Republic), "Eternal be the memory of our lady": the Synodikon of Orthodoxy and the piety of the late Byzantine empresses; Đjura Hardi (Novi Sad, Serbia), "Balkan forces" in the Czech offensives of Hungarian King Bela IV; Miloš Luković (Belgrade, Serbia), Shepherds' organizations in the Balkans and in Carpathian regions in the late medieval and early modern period; Maroš Melichárek (Košice, Slovakia), Exaggeration and controversy: Serbian migration in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in the context of modern historiography.

Subsection C, *The Balkans in the twentieth century*, contains 11 contributions: Mihad Mujanović (Prague, Czech Republic), Muslims, not Muhammadans! the roots of the Bosniak national movement in 1878–1918; František Šístek (Prague, Czech Republic), The Battle of Mojkovac, 1916–2016: narratives of World War I in Montenegro; Hana Dvořáková (Brno, Czech Republic), Ethnographers behind the front line: the Great War in the Balkans from the perspective of contemporary scholars; Miroslav Tejchman (Prague, Czech Republic), Collaboration in the Balkans during World War II: different perspectives and assessments; Karin Hofmeisterová (Prague, Czech Republic), Jews in Socialist Yugoslavia: a quest for a new Jewishness; Jan Pelikán (Prague, Czech Republic), Ethnic relations in the Socialist Republic of Serbia in 1971 as reflected in the daily *Politika*; Magdalena Najbar Agičić (Koprivnica, Croatia), Difficulties in research on the socialist period in Croatia demonstrated on the example of research on the history of journalism; Lukáš Vomlela (Opava, Czech Republic), Political changes in Bosnia and Herzegovina before the 1990 elections; Richard Stojar (Brno, Czech Republic), The deployment of Czech troops as part of the UNPROFOR and UNCRO missions in the Republic of Serbian Krajina in the context of the development of this entity; Ondřej Žíla (Prague, Czech Republic), The exodus of Serbs from Sarajevo after the end of the conflict in Bosnia

and Herzegovina; Barbora Machová (Brno, Czech Republic), Bulgarians in Macedonia: possibilities for ethnological research on the "business with identity".

Subsection D, *The Czech-Slovak-Balkan Relations and Contacts*, contains eight contributions: Pavel Zeman (Brno, Czech Republic), Czechs in Sofia in the 1880s and their social composition; Jaroslav Vaculík (Brno, Czech Republic), Czechs in Bulgaria after World War I; Kateřina Kalářová (Brno, Czech Republic), The activities of the Czechoslovak-Yugoslav League in south Moravia in the interwar period; Eva Škorvánková (Bratislava, Slovakia), Slovak-Yugoslav relations in 1939–1941; Lubomíra Havlíková (Prague, Czech Republic), "Always first woman": feminism in congratulations sent to Czech historian Milada Paulová; Milan Sovilj (Hradec Kralove, Czech Republic), Two nearly forgotten figures in intelligence and resistance activities in Czechoslovak-Yugoslav relations during World War II: František Hieke and Aleksandar Gjurić; Ondřej Vojtěchovský (Prague, Czech Republic), Yugoslav workers in Czechoslovakia during normalization, 1969–1989; Samuel Jovankovič (Bratislava, Slovakia), The Association of Slovaks from Yugoslavia, 1945–1949.

The third section, *Literature and Cultural Studies* (pp. 497–606), contains 9 contributions: Miroslav Kouba (Pardubice, Czech Republic), An unknown nephew: Dr. Vasil Beron and a network of intergenerational inspiration in the Bulgarian national revival; Marcel Černý (Prague, Czech Republic), On the underappreciated Bulgarian studies works of František Rut Tichý, also known as Zdeněk Broman (1886–1968); Vladimir Martinovski (Skopje, FYR Macedonia), Re-actualizations of medieval culture in contemporary Macedonian poetry; Jarmila Horáková (Prague, Czech Republic), Romanian literature as a political instrument; Erika Lalíková (Bratislava, Slovakia), Presentation of autobiographical memory in the literary and philosophical texts of contemporary Slovak authors; Aljaž Koprivnikar (Prague, Czech Republic), An examination of Nietzsche's impact on Slovenian and Czech literature: the case of Ladislav Klima's *The suffering of Prince Sternenhoch* and Vladimir Bartol's *Alamut* and *Al Araf*; Zvonko Taneski (Bratislava, Slovakia), Slovak novelists Jana Beňova and Juraj Šebesta in the Macedonian cultural context; Alica Kulihová (Bratislava, Slovakia), The tricky task of translating Zvonimir Balog; Nora Nagyová (Bratislava, Slovakia), The poetics of Marija Havran's costume design for Slovak and Czech stage and her collaboration with director Dino Mustafić.

The fourth section, *Linguistics* (pp. 607–704), contains eight contributions: Miroslav Dudok (Bratislava, Slovakia), Disappearing South Slavic languages and their revitalization in diasporas; Katarina Mitrićević Štěpanek (Belgrade, Serbia), Verbal prefixal derivatives in the Serbian language in comparison with Czech; Snežana Popović (Belgrade, Serbia), Phraseological Collocations in Czech and Serbian; Nikola Košćak (Zagreb, Croatia) & Paulina Pycia-Košćak (Katowice, Poland), Figures of writing in Croatian and Polish advertising discourse; Przemysław Fałowski (Krakow, Poland), The status, frequency, and function of some Turkish loanwords in modern Croatian; Helena Stranjik (Prague, Czech Republic), The quantity of Czech vowels within words in the speech of members of the Czech minority in Croatia; Kristina Đorđević (Bratislava, Slovakia), Error analysis of Slovak native speakers at the basic level of learning Serbian as a foreign language; Marina Protrka Štimec (Zagreb, Croatia), Critical pedagogy in teaching (national) literature.

To sum up, apart from four introductory texts, this two-volume publication contains fifty-five contributions in different areas of Balkan Studies and Slavistics presented at the Symposium. Most are in Czech (31) and this language was also used by some foreign participants and foreigners temporarily or permanently employed in Czech scholarly

institutions. Eight contributions are in Slovak, nine in Serbian or Croatian, two in Macedonian, one in Slovenian, one in Polish, and two in English.

The List of Contributors (pp. 705–712) contains 59 names and their affiliations. Most come from the Czech Republic (36), but some are foreign citizens working in the Czech Republic or are of Balkan origin. Eighteen contributors come from Prague (10 from Charles University, six from the Czech Academy of Sciences, one from the Czech National Committee for Balkan Studies, and one is a freelance translator); 16 contributors come from Brno (12 from Masaryk University, one from the Czech Academy of Sciences, Brno Department, two from the Moravian Museum, one from the University of Defence); and one comes from each of the universities in other Czech cities: Pardubice, Hradec Králové and Opava. All of this speaks of a broad interest in Balkan Studies in the Czech Republic. Nine contributors come from Slovakia (two of them being foreign nationals), mostly from Bratislava (six from Comenius University, one from the Theatre Faculty, one from the Association of Slovaks from Yugoslavia) and one from the University of Košice. Five authors come from Serbia, of whom four from Belgrade (three from the University and one from the Institute for Balkan Studies, Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts). Four authors come from Croatia: three from Zagreb University, one from Koprivnica University. One author comes from Bulgaria (Bulgarian Academy of Sciences in Sofia), and one from Macedonia (University in Skopje). Two come from Poland: one from Jagiellonian University and one from Katowice University. Such a composition of participants in the Symposium suggests well-developed ties between the Czech organizers and scholarly institutions in the Balkan and other countries where there is research in the field of Balkan and Slavic Studies.

Among the contributors residing temporarily or permanently in the Czech Republic or Slovakia, seven are originally from South-Slav or Balkan countries, including the doyen of Czech Balkan Studies Professor Ivan Dorovský, who arrived in Czechoslovakia as a child together with refugees from northern Greece, i.e. Aegean Macedonia, fleeing from the civil war of 1946–49. In a way, this is an illustration of the openness of Czechs and Slovaks towards people from the Balkans.

The Czechs' long-standing interest in the countries and peoples of South-East Europe was transparently shown by the book *The Czechs' Relations with the Nations and Lands of Southeast Europe* published in 2010.[3] The proceedings of the 7th Balkan Studies Symposium held in Brno – which have been presented here – confirm the continuity of this old scholarly and cultural tradition in the Czech Republic.

[3] Ladislav Hladký et al., *Vztahy Čechů s národy a zeměmi jihovýchodní Evropý* (Prague: Historický ústav, 2010), 367 p. See also my review of the volume in *Balcanica* XLIV (2013), 463–464.

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