

THE GREEKS AND THE TURKS ON THE EVE OF THE BALKAN WARS

A FRUSTRATED PLAN

This article touches some aspects of Greco-Turkish relations, at the beginning of this century, which occupied the time, the imagination and the relentless energy of two Greek statesmen and caused a profound impression at the time. Athanasios Souliotis-Nikolaidis and Ion Dragoumis ("Idas"), envisioned and worked hard for a common ideal among the peoples in this part of the world, for the success of a Greco-Turkish rapprochement, and for the united opposition of all the peoples of the Balkans and Asia Minor to the menace which threatened the region from outsiders.

The work of these two men on this subject is almost unknown although it is of great importance. What Ion Dragoumis has published — and which will be reviewed in this article—is not sufficient. Even less has been published from Souliotis' work. Their manuscripts still remain unpublished. What follows does not necessarily exhaust the subject, for I had only Souliotis' archives and the publications of Ion Dragoumis at my disposal. Nevertheless, it is hoped that the reader will grasp the magnitude and importance of their work.*

* *Athanasios Souliotis Nicolaidis* [Ἀθανάσιος Σουλιώτης Νικολαΐδης] born in the island of Syros, 1878, died in Athens, 1945. He was officer of the Army, but he also served as special counsellor of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. From 1906 to 1909, disguised as merchant under the name of Athanasios Nicolaidis, he took an active part in the Macedonian Struggle as the head of a secret defensive Organisation in Thessaloniki. From 1910 to 1912 he was in Constantinople as an informal liaison between the Greeks and the Young Turks. The *Institute for Balkan Studies* in Thessaloniki has already published two volumes of his memoirs 1) 'Ο Μακεδονικός Ἀγών. Ἡ «Ὁργάνωσις Θεσσαλονίκης» 1906-1908 [*The Macedonian Struggle. The Organisation of Thessaloniki*] Thessaloniki 1959, pp. 102 and 2) *Ἡμερολόγιον τοῦ Πρώτου Βαλκανικοῦ πολέμου* [*Diary of the First Balkan War*] Thessaloniki 1962, pp. 52. His memoirs from Constantinople are still unpublished.

Ion Dragoumis (Ἴων Δραγούμης), Athens, 1878-1920, is one of the most important intellectual personalities of Modern Greece. Member of a distinguished family from Vogatsico, Western Macedonia, he served with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as consul in various cities in Macedonia, counsellor of the Greek Embassy in Constantinople, Vienna, Berlin, and Ambassador in St Petersburg. He

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With the decay of the Ottoman Empire, many big Powers attempted, directly or indirectly, to occupy certain of its lands or to secure economic advantages. A fierce competition commenced among many peoples along the northern Ottoman frontiers to be the first to reach the Mediterranean waters. Thus, the Eastern Question which was formally opened by Russia in 1821, came to international prominence once again. At approximately the same time the subject peoples of the Empire launched a series of revolts to obtain their national independence. Very shortly thereafter Macedonia became the center of disturbances. All major foreign powers became deeply involved in what was going on in that region. Finally, Macedonia became the theatre of the first armed clashes between the subject peoples. The Bulgarians who made the beginning, were motivated by their ambition to create a Greater Bulgaria. When the Greeks moved on a little later, the Macedonian Struggle — as that conflict came to be known in history — began. The attempts of the European Powers to bring peace to the region failed, while the Sultan's promises for liberal reforms proved to be empty words. Moreover, the interests of the Great Powers were irreconcilable.

It is not difficult to understand that the objectives of the fighting Bulgarians were primarily against the Greeks. In vain did the Greeks solicit the help of the Great Powers. The later were caught in a conflict of their own interests and they could hardly be called upon to examine objectively the interests of the small Balkan states.

On the face of the Bulgarian designs the Greeks rose to a man. Among them were Souliotis and Dragoumis. Souliotis worked in Thessaloniki where he had founded and directed the Organization of Thessaloniki (1906 - 1908) while, at the same time, Dragoumis served in various Greek consulates in Macedonia.¹

The Macedonian Struggle was among the most violent. Soon, however, certain Greeks, among them Souliotis and Dragoumis, realized that the armed conflict between the subject nationalities could not bring peace and tranquillity to the region. On the contrary, it invited even greater foreign intervention, and fanned the expansionist designs of certain major

has written several books dealing with cultural and political problems of Modern Greece which had and still have a strong impact on Modern Greek intellectual life. For a concise study with good bibliography see Θ. Παπακωνσταντίνου, *Ἰων Δραγούμης καὶ Πολιτικὴ Πεζογραφία* [*Ion Dragoumis and Political Prosa-writing*] Athens 1957. See also Δ. Εὐρυγένη, *Ὁ Ἰων Δραγούμης καὶ ὁ Μακεδονικὸς Ἀγὼν* [*Ion Dragoumis and the Macedonian Struggle*] ed. of the *Institute for Balkan Studies*, Thessaloniki 1961.

Northern powers. The subject peoples and the Turkish state both ran the risk of been subjugated to the foreigners from the North. Dragoumis calls the Ottoman state "a bridge and a fence" against the Slavs.² Both Souliotis and Dragoumis began to worry and to search for a way to pacify the country. Their daily preoccupation, however, with the anti-Bulgarian struggle left them little time. They were searching for something different, something which still they had not concretely grasped. "Our ideas", wrote Dragoumis, "were not well-defined... perhaps they were not even original... others probably had similar ones, even better... but we two had a treasure within us, we had a will power which transforms words into action".³ In Thessaloniki, Souliotis one moment is enthusiastic with the results of his work, the next he is depressed by the brutalities. Once, when he saw a Bulgarian *commitadji* hung by the Turks he wrote: "I felt something like shame and agony, something which seemed to take everything back and start in a different way".⁴ On another occasion, viewing the similarities among the inhabitants of the region, he falls into deep thought and writes: "These similarities focus my thoughts back into the past".⁵ Dragoumis also entreats with the past:

Had they taught me my history... I would have known how to bring back more of the souls of the past... it is imperative that I know my former life, that I do not forget the old moulds which Hellenism found when it became a state among other states... so that I find the type which the Nation will adopt in order to become a powerful state⁶...

And Souliotis writes:

There were moments when from the depth of the ages a rich harmony sprang within me, telling me in vague, though wonderful ways... to make something better, more humanitarian and wider than the Macedonian struggle.⁷

And elsewhere:

In Constantinople more and more there were moments when I could be moved by nothing else but by the close relationship and the common misery of all of us, the nations of the Balkans and of Asia Minor, and then I would think that our only way to survive was to unite against external pressure.⁸

Both of them kept this danger continuously before their eyes and occupied their thoughts daily. They envisioned what the dynamism of Hellenism may mean within the Turkish state, they recalled what Greek civilization had offered to this region and they believed in its present dynamism and in the fact that again it could offer many services if properly

employed and directed. What they learned from history was not merely knowledge; they felt it was "a goad which prodded them to action".⁹ They made a clear distinction between State and Nation, realizing that Hellenism outside the Greek state was larger than within and they turned their attention to the former. Wrote Dragoumis :

The dilemma is: Will the Greek Kingdom pursue a purely state policy or will it primarily follow a national policy and only secondarily a state policy. We are obliged to follow the second alternative . . . We advocate that the present state in order to sustain itself is, above all, in dear need of a national consciousness for the individuals which compose it. The state seeks the enosis (union) of the race, but not with imperialistic schemes.¹⁰

Similarly Souliotis wrote many times that the state cannot possibly survive without the nation. Their basic motivating idea was to achieve the union of Hellenism against the Slavic menace.¹¹

They had more opportunity to deepen more on these ideas when both of them moved to Constantinople in 1908. Dragoumis served in the Greek Embassy while Souliotis headed the Organization of Constantinople which was formed for the purpose of combatting the Bulgarians in Thrace. From then on they were bound together for the rest of their lives. Of their association Souliotis wrote: "We are two, but we think as one". Together or seperately they frequently shared the same ideas.¹² "We are close collaborators and not simply friends" wrote Dragoumis.¹³ They were not similar in the conduct of their policies; rather, they supplemented each other. When one would get tired and disheartened, the other would encourage him.¹⁴ Souliotis illustrates this point well when he wrote to Dragoumis: "Do you know how I am? I think I am a horse yoked together with you in an old cart . . . We have not yet lost our breath, we move step by step".¹⁵ When Souliotis was away from Constantinople for a while, Dragoumis wrote. "I was anxious that he returns . . . he would have done certain things better".¹⁶ For this reason the events which are described below cannot be attributed with right to one of them only.* Their only difference was that Souliotis was more violent and more determined. Dragoumis paid more attention to the difficulties. In the end, however, they would agree with each other.¹⁷

In Constantinople they realized better the danger that the Greeks and the Turkish state ran from internal conflicts and, more so, from the Slavs.

* For this reason instead of mentioning either one of them by name I refer to the Organization of Constantinople (cited here as O.C.) which Souliotis headed until 1912.

They thought that they should change the role of the Turkish state from that of a "bridge and a fence" into a fence only against the Slavs. They thought of a sincere rapprochement with the Turks which would save Hellenism and the Ottoman Empire. In doing so they were reviving, in a more systematic way, Tricoupis' idea, namely, that it is not to Greece's interest to unite with the small Balkan states against Turkey, because these states are dangerous to Hellenism. Instead, it was thought better to conclude an agreement with Turkey to counterbalance the Slavic peril.¹⁸ They concluded that all previous attempts had failed on account of conflicting foreign interests.

While in Constantinople, Souliotis and Dragoumis realized that in the Balkans and in Asia Minor there was something special; a civilization which was different from Western civilization. The site of this civilization they called "Anatolia", or «*ἡ καθ' ἡμᾶς Ἀνατολή*», "our own East". Wrote Souliotis:

We, who have always inhabited this geographical unit which is composed of the Balkans and Asia Minor, are divided in small nations and states... we fight constant wars among us... and do not see that with these wars we incite the appetite of the foreigners for our land... that is why none of us can stand on his feet... I was thinking more frequently about this at Constantinople... and I could see no other way to save ourselves but to form an association against foreign pressure.¹⁹

They now make this association their primary objective which they hope to put into effect utilizing the initiative of the Greeks of Turkey. To achieve this it was necessary first to unite all the Greeks. In the beginning they discussed the idea with the Greek members to the Ottoman Parliament from Constantinople, who gave their consent. They also convinced the Ecumenical Patriarch to follow their policy. Then they came in contact with all the centers of subject Hellenism through many branch offices of the O.C. They also communicated their thoughts and actions to the Greek Government which concurred.

The Young Turks Revolt (July 10, 1908), and the Proclamation of the Constitution which was enthusiastically received by all subject peoples alike was a turning point which allowed these two men to systematize their thoughts and objectives. "Officers and people, Christians and non-Christians rejoiced and all hoped that better days would come... all the nations... sang and expressed in many ways their love, good understanding and comradeship".²⁰ The O.C. rejoiced also and maintained high hopes for the future although it had its reservations. It did not share the Turks'

opinion, with whom many Greeks had cooperated, that the Empire could be saved by a mere constitutional change.²¹ What was needed was something more drastic; it was the great need for granting equal rights to all nationalities. Until now the O.C. had attempted and succeeded in uniting Hellenism against the Bulgarians. Now, without abandoning that struggle, it set out a new, wider program. Having as their basis the achievements of the Greeks in Turkey in all levels, and the power with which they were invested, they aimed at bringing together all the nationalities in close co-operation against the dangers which threatened all of them from the outside. Souliotis' idea, according to Dragoumis was:

As in the case of the Roman state, when equality of rights was accorded to all peoples, the Greeks had succeeded gradually in turning the eastern part of the Empire into a Greek state . . . so with the Turkish state . . . now that equality of rights is granted to all peoples, the Greeks will take over the political power . . . This is the only way to save ourselves. The ideal was an Eastern Empire encompassing all nations . . . And he said: Oh! if the millions of Slavs and Germans would only delay for a few more years their descendance. . . anything can happen if the Slavs and Germans allow us . . . these other plunderous beasts . . . if we continue to fight each other in such a way . . . the Great Powers will swallow us all up.²²

Typical of how the union and cooperation of Greeks and Turks was viewed, is what Souliotis said to Dragoumis:

I just feel like mounting beautiful horses with silver . . . and with curving, sparkling swords to enter the Dolma Bachtse Palace to install a Greek king, to marry him to the prettiest Turkish lady and get drunk . . . Alexander the Great was a true king of the East when he married Dareios' daughter and conquered the East.²³

In the enthusiasm of so many races at the proclamation of the Constitution, Souliotis could only see individuals of one mingled race and he could fancy of an Eastern Empire of all the nations of Turkey united with the bounds of comradeship. He was of the opinion that the common political ideal of all the nations would have the power to erase the individual nationalistic ideals. It is evident that the two of them, Souliotis and Dragoumis, attempted to replace hatred among nationalities, and between nationalities and the state, by the ideal of love and union.²⁴ The proclamation of the Constitution, wrote Souliotis,²⁵ and the constitutional liberties helped the Greeks of Turkey to set forth and follow openly a political program,²⁶ a political ideal, different from that of the Moslem, for the purpose of uniting not only the nationalities, but the states of the East themselves so that a powerful and just state for all be founded. A state,

moreover, which would be capable of facing with success the demands and selfish designs of so many foreign powers. The Greeks could bring about the realization of this program but they needed the assistance and collaboration of others as well. As the most suitable collaborator for their plans they chose the Young Turks themselves.²⁷

Before I proceed any farther explaining these ideas I should make a note of the fact that their movement had made so profound an impression that the Austrian Ambassador to Athens felt compelled to report to his Government at Vienna that certain negotiations were taking place at Constantinople between the Greek Ambassador there and the Turks but that no formal proposal had been communicated to Athens. He added, also, that the initiative was taken at Constantinople.²⁸ As it will appear in subsequent pages, the events the Austrian Ambassador was relating were the doings of the O.C.

The leaders of the O.C. had turned to the Young Turks proposing a close cooperation. Fearing, however, that their plans might be met with scepticism on the part of the Turks they decided to make clear to them the direct threat which would result for the state from the perpetuation of the internal conflicts and the expansionist designs of the Great Powers, particularly those of the Slavs.²⁹ Souliotis wrote that the Greeks would attempt to convince the Young Turks that it was to the interest of Hellenism that the Turkish state survive, provided, however, that equal rights were granted to all nationalities. Both sides had to be convinced that the danger was direct and common. Unfortunately, the unbridled nationalism of the Turks and certain errors of the Greek Government obstructed a sincere rapprochement.³⁰

The "common dangers" appears many times in the writings of both Souliotis and Dragoumis although the Slavs are not always mentioned by name. In one of his reports on the Young Turks Revolt in 1908, Souliotis wrote that among other things one of the reasons for the revolt was the humiliation felt by the Turkish officers at seeing the Europeans exploiting and scorning their country while they were looking on incapable of taking any action in the Macedonian disturbances precisely on account of the intervention of the foreigners.³¹ Along with their indignation a new desire was born for a sort of a new Turkish ideal properly adapted to their needs and to the spirit of the times. All the nationalities were in favor of the Constitution. The Bulgarians, believed Souliotis, now in clear minority to all the Greeks of Turkey, would attempt to create trouble for the state. This might even cause a Turko - Bulgarian war, and in that case he considered it to the interest of the Greeks to support the Young Turks, so that

Hellenism might may assume the leading role. For this reason, he believed that the Greeks ought to express, by all means, their love and dedication to the Ottoman state and to the ideal of the fraternity of all peoples. In this way, he thought he could exploit easily the danger that the Slavs posed on all.³³ The report of the O.C. to its members also points out the Slavic danger:

The members should assist in stabilizing the collaboration . . . the nations should group together to save the State. The Armenian nation which is threatened with absorption by the Slavs of the East and is persecuted by the Turks, is with us. If a Turko - Bulgarian war breaks out Greece may gain some territory . . . however, the bulk of Hellenism . . . will either remain as it is, a rather doubtful (situation) . . . or it will be divided among other powerful states.³³

It is clearly evident which states he had in mind. Dragoumis was even more outspoken in his comments: "Many peoples are ready to be the first to grab the lands which the Turks will leave behind them . . . Our worst enemies are the Slavs".³⁴ Both men try to convince the Greek Government to conclude an agreement with Turkey whereby "the Turks will cease Crete and Greece will denounce her designs for territorial expansion".³⁵ When the independence of Bulgaria was announced, the Greek M.P.s. pointed out the great danger which that development posed saying that "all these are the doings of Panslavism" (Parliament meeting, January 10, 1909).³⁶ Bousios (Greek M.P.) added, that "the Macedonian Question is an Ottoman question. The Bulgarian designs in church affairs do not pose a religious issue but a political one".³⁷ And Artas (M.P. from Thessaloniki) believed that "what Austria and Bulgaria managed to seize now, would bear an impact on Turkey in the future. And should Bulgaria declare war against Turkey, we, the Greeks, will come to the assistance of Turkey because of our hate of the Bulgarians and our love of the Turks".³⁸

The Patriarch himself tried to convince the Turkish general in charge, to desist from helping the Bulgarians to seize the Greek churches "in the common good and in the common interest".³⁹ Unfortunately he failed to convince him. The first issue of the *Political Review*, published later by the O.C. and aimed at the peoples of the East, contained the following appeal: "(the peoples) who inhabit this land for centuries . . . will realize that with their own differences they do nothing else but to allow, like barbarians, their common inheritance slip away into the hands of foreign exploiters".⁴⁰ The danger from the north is also illustrated in the Russian and Austrian presentations which caused the removal of Koromilas, influential Greek consul at Thessaloniki.⁴¹

The O.C. program received the support of the Greek Government. Dra-

goumis went to Athens for this reason "where he could assist the O.C.'s plans with love and enthusiasm".⁴² There was, indeed, close cooperation between the O.C. and the Greek Government.⁴³ Unfortunately the Young Turks were not convinced of the sincerity of the Greeks.

Now the O.C. turned for cooperation to other nationalities in an effort which, it appears, was aimed at forcing the Young Turks to accept an agreement with the subject nationalities.⁴⁴ In the beginning, it approached the Christian peoples of the Balkans because, as Souliotis wrote,⁴⁴ "no matter how the general history shapes up... the peoples of the Balkans, for geographical reasons, would need to come to an agreement among themselves to live somehow well",⁴⁵ and he points elsewhere, "if I could instill in their consciousness how many things unite them, if they could understand how much they are in danger to vanish all of them together... they could find a political scheme which will unite them all".⁴⁶

In more than one instance the O.C. showed its interest in safeguarding the state. It did not try to take advantage of the difficulties the Young Turks were facing, to create additional disturbances because it wanted to convince the Young Turks that "the only solution is the preservation of the Empire and the cooperation of all nationalities. And the beginning should be made by an alliance between Greece and Turkey".⁴⁷ Then an agreement would follow between all nationalities and all states,⁴⁸ but not against Turkey. In the funeral oration for a Greek officer the speaker "grasped the opportunity to explain our policy for the preservation of the Ottoman state".⁴⁹ Despite the opposition of the Turks, the O.C. continued its efforts.⁵⁰ Characteristic on this point are the words of the Greek M. P. Bousios: "If you are in good terms with us, Greece, by necessity we will be with you. The Ottoman state is our mother; Greece our sister".⁵¹ Even when the "Union and Progress" Committee came out with a policy of fighting the nationalities, the O.C. answered that the nations (*millet*) will form a coalition not against the state, but in favor of its preservation.⁵² At the same time it kept the Greek Government informed on its actions.⁵³ Even more important is a memorandum submitted by the Greek M.Ps. to the Turkish Government:

We hereby submit this memorandum as the supreme duty toward the state... The Greeks will rejoice if a strong state is organized... Regrettably, the Administration favors one nationality only (the Turkish)... it is biased in its views... The same things were happening under the autocratic regime... and brought the dissolution of the state... We are most afraid that (dissolution)... will now occur even faster... Firmly believing that it is to the advantage of

our nation that a strong state exists... we call on the loyalty toward the Fatherland... (so) that the only healthy and life-giving basis for the (existence) of the state be reinstituted... by granting equality of rights to all nationalities... so that our common Fatherland become strong internally and respected abroad.⁶⁴

Souliotis adds that this memorandum created a great sensation among the nationalities and abroad.⁶⁵

Similar is the position adopted by the Patriarchate in its *takrir* on military conscription (November 27, 1910) and education (December 4, 1910). Even the same arguments are employed for the same goals, i.e. for brotherhood among the nationalities, for the strength and well-being of the state and for the success of the broader aims of the state. The attitude of the Young Turks to these overtures is clear by the answer given by the Patriarchate to a Turkish *tezkere*:

Regrettably the Government does not want to comprehend, that there is a difference between state and nationalities... it does not count the number of the Greeks. The Government does not want to be convinced that what is to the interest of the Greek *millet* is also to the interest of the State... (i.e.) our common preservation.⁶⁶

To overcome any possible questions on whether those related in official documents might not have been the entire truth, i.e. that the Greeks were pursuing well-concealed goals, I will now refer to confidential circular letters sent by the O.C. to its members throughout the country. When the Young Turks were deep in trouble, the O.C. addressed its members in these words: "The Greeks should support the Young Turks; they should not (try) to dissolve the state... The Greeks should, through their cultural abilities, aim at Hellenizing the state from many angles".⁶⁷ In another letter to its members the O.C. declared:

The Greeks of Turkey should enjoy the complete confidence of the Turks. They should do nothing which would indicate that they separate their own fate from that of the State... They should emphasize that, as it is with the Turks, we (also) have the same hate toward the Bulgarians and toward anybody who conspires against our common Fatherland... against the Bulgarians... we have the same, if not bigger hate, because we were... fighting against them even before the arrival of the Turks... We, Greeks, are convinced that the Bulgarians and the Slavs are the real menace which hangs over the State, i.e. against Greek and Turk alike. We will defend the State in any event.⁶⁸

Unfortunately the Turks showed no confidence to these friendly overtures. Even during the days of great enthusiasm, at the time of the

proclamation of the Constitution, voices were heard against the Greeks.⁵⁹ For this reason, the Greeks began to have their doubts about the new regime and looked elsewhere for friends and allies.

For the sake of objectivity we must say that certain manifestations on the Greek side were hardly conducive to the objectives of the O.C. policy. The continuous projection of the Cretan Question, for example, and certain pronouncements and manifestations for territorial expansion in the spirit of the "Great Idea" naturally could not assist the O.C. in its work. And it was precisely for this reason that the O.C. was against such expressions in the conduct of the national policy.⁶⁰

The O.C., however, did not halt its efforts and turned to cement closer and even more sincere cooperation with other nationalities. In doing so the leaders of the O.C. truly believed in the ideal that they were pursuing: "Above all" wrote Souliotis,⁶¹ "we are the prophets of an ideal. We call it the "Eastern Ideal". It embraces that part of the globe where man first founded his religions, his philosophies, his cities. There laid Babylon, Alexandria, Mecca, Jerusalem, Athens, Constantinople . . . In the place of hate and suspicion which divides and destroys the common cultural elements . . . we will utilize impressive Eastern ideas . . . we will enter politics . . . we will install our own politicians . . . in Greece; we, two, three, all the believers, we will take over politics . . . to start Hellenism moving. . .".⁶¹

In early January 1911, the Greek M.P.s. from Constantinople invited to tea their Christian colleagues.⁶² In the political discussion which followed, an attempt was made to exchange views and set a common, logical course to be followed by all. Present were 18 Greeks, 3 Armenians, 3 Bulgarians and 2 Arabs. The meeting was labelled as the beginning of a continuous exchange of views which would remove the obstacles found in their way. It was said that their action was designed to help the Government's work and the unity of the State.

And the O.C. moved on: "These are our objectives, and those who think otherwise are in the wrong. They are mistaken if they do not understand that we want a powerful state, but a state for all".⁶³

To succeed in their plan they turned to other directions also. They won over to their ideas the Patriarchate. They kept the Greek Government continuously informed by sending it a copy of the program of the Greek M.P.s. and a detailed report.⁶⁴ In the report, Souliotis wrote that all these actions had in mind the common interest of the nationalities living in Turkey. These actions made considerable impression.⁶⁵ They alarmed the Turkish Government which began to think. The report indicates that negotiations were taking place between Greeks, Bulgarians, Serbs, Armenians and

Albanians. It even went further to propose that an agreement should be concluded for the same purpose, between the national states of those nationalities. The O.C. did not fail to inform the Greek Government of the *takririya* of the Patriarchate on military conscription and education.⁶⁶ These *takrir* demanded of the Turkish Government to grant certain rights to the nationalities "for the strength and well-being of the State".⁶⁷

In one of its reports in September 1911, the Greek Embassy of Constantinople asked the Greek Government what attitude should the Christian members of the Turkish Parliament and other political leaders adopt in the difficult position in which Turkey had found itself. It added that the Greek M.P.s. were of the opinion that they should cooperate with their colleagues of the other subject nationalities, especially those of the Balkan states, but that their national states should also cooperate to the same end. They placed, however, one condition, namely, that "none of them would attack Turkey. Only in the event one of them was attacked, the others would come to its assistance. The governments of the respective states, the M.P.s. believed, should ask Turkey to grant certain rights to its nationalities".⁶⁸ The Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs answered that it consents to the cooperation of the nationalities and to the efforts undertaken to obtain the concession of more rights.⁶⁹ It also agreed with the contents of the memorandum of the Greek M.P.s.⁷⁰ In another letter, the Greek Foreign Ministry wrote: "The policy of the Government is to obtain more benefits for the co-national, native population of Turkey... The political program of the present, as that of the previous Government, is to achieve, through negotiation with the other non-Turkish nations of Turkey, equal rights (for the nationalities)... It recommended that a union of all nationalities be formed but that no one of them should attack Turkey. Negotiations with the Albanians did not proceed very far because their leaders demanded autonomy while the Greeks were determined not to cooperate in a movement for the establishment of autonomous regions which were bound to be detached from Turkey".⁷¹

To understand more fully the policy of Greece and that of the O.C. we should bear in mind that at that time Turkey was entangled in a struggle against Italy in Africa.⁷² Unfortunately the Young Turks paid no attention to the proposals of the Greeks. The Ambassador of Austria was right when he wrote to his Government that Venizelos and most Greek politicians felt bitter on account of the Turkish intransigence.⁷³ It was at that time that the *Political Review* wrote:

The existence... (and) the growing of the State in strength and well-being... should become the common endeavor of all nations

interested in its survival... The rulers consider us... agents of foreign ideas... We answer to them: Not we... but you... consider all the governed as working for you... You should be denounced... because government based on lording over the subjects destroys the State... We will prove to you that you are foreigners... We have decided to save this State, which we consider ours, because we need it and we will save it with or without you.⁷⁴

The O.C. moved even farther. It succeeded in cooperating and establishing a common front between the group of the Greek M.P.s. and the Turkish Party "Freedom and Conciliation". Their main policy objective was to achieve the application of a policy of equal rights for all.⁷⁵ The Turks accepted the cooperation of the Greeks because they also believed that the Government ridiculed the State when even followers of the Government itself were voicing their opposition. Even the Grand Vezyr stood in Parliament to declare that he could see the fate of Poland hanging over the State. The Greeks, especially those of the O.C., saw this danger and expressed their concern. In his speech before the Greek Parliamentary Group, Bousios said, that the Greek *millet* agreed with the other nationalities and told the leaders of the Government that if they would continue the policy of lording over the nationalities the state will be destroyed, while it would have even to the interest of all concerned, to be preserved. He said that everything will be smoothed out if equality of rights would be granted to the nationalities.⁷⁶

To put pressure on the Turks, the O.C. translated and sent to every direction, in the country and abroad, the main editorials published in its press which were relevant to the demands of the nationalities.⁷⁷ And Bousios asked: "What has the Government done for our rightful demands? Speeches...speeches...And to make it worse, it took away from the Greeks their churches and gave them to others (the Bulgarians) so that they may drive a wedge between us and benefit from our fight. They base their policy on the principle of "divide and rule" seeing not that they push the the State to its destruction".⁷⁸

The Patriarchate, on the other hand, issued a series of *takrir* for the purpose of strengthening the foundations of the State "especially now during these critical moments".⁷⁹ When irregularities and injustices took place during the elections, the O.C. and the Patriarchate protested pointing out that such measures "would bring no benefit to the State".⁸⁰

We could list here more documents showing the sincere objectives of the O.C. and generally of the Greeks. We think, however, that what

has been stated is sufficient, not to exhaust the subject, but simply to show the endeavors of Souliotis, Dragoumis and others for a sincere co-operation with the Turks which would have created a powerful state capable of defending itself against the encroachments of other states. Those of the O.C. attempted to solve the Eastern Question not for the sake of third interested parties, but for the sake of those inhabiting the respective lands. They failed and thus we came to the Balkan Wars of 1912-1913.

Two treaties preceded the wars. One, concluded between Serbia and Bulgaria in March 1912, aimed at dividing European Turkey between the two states with Russia acting as the supreme umpire.⁸¹ The other, concluded between Greece and Bulgaria in May 1912, was purely defensive and aimed at securing certain rights to the subject nationalities.⁸² The Greek Government was notified of the forthcoming war only a few days prior to its declaration. Venizelos, having no other alternative entered the war.⁸³ Consequently, it is not true—at least not absolutely so—that Venizelos considered the Italo-Turkish war as an opportunity to see the national hopes of Greece realized.⁸⁴ Relative documents of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Embassy of Constantinople have already been quoted.

On their part, Souliotis and Dragoumis worked tirelessly, even during the last days before the war, to have their views accepted. Souliotis wrote:

I came to Athens a few days before the war began. We agreed with Dragoumis and we insisted that the ultimatum should not be drawn as the Bulgarians wanted it. We submitted our own draft to Venizelos and he accepted it. There is no mentioning of war in this draft. Simply certain guarantees were asked of Turkey in regard to the nationalities which, had Turkey failed to accept, Greece would then depend on the decision and intervention of the Powers, in which she had absolute confidence.⁸⁵

But this attempt was also destined to fail. Greece entered the war against Turkey on the side of Serbia, Bulgaria and Montenegro. Souliotis left immediately from Constantinople, came to Athens and was dispatched by the Government to Sofia to keep a watch on the Bulgarian division of General Thodorov which intended to enter Thessaloniki before the Greek Army could do it.

His concern for the fate of Hellenism, and especially for the lands of the "Eastern State" which fell to the hands of the Slavs, are vividly presented in his diary. Travelling from Hungary to Sofia, Souliotis wrote: "I could see so many Slavs... and then I would think... They are in a hurry to open the gates of the Aegean to the Slavs and gamble the soul of the Nation with foreigners".⁸⁶ When he arrived at Saranta Ek-

klisies, in Thrace, and saw the atrocities committed by the Bulgarian allies against the Greek population of the region, he sensed in all its magnitude the Slavic menace he had previously envisioned and felt very disappointed. He wrote in his diary: "Approximately 400 Russian volunteers arrived tonight . . . and later more Russians, especially officers, and there are rumors that more will come".⁸⁷ And then, a few days later, on October 30, 1912 he entered these words in his diary:

It burns you up realizing what a hell of a treaty we have concluded, a treaty which abandons purely Greek cities to the Bulgarians . . . From a policy of negotiation we were thrown to war . . . If they had just waited for two years . . . for the policy of nationalities to continue, our Eastern policy would have been in its (proper) channels.⁸⁸

Even during the moments of the Greek victories, Souliotis worries about the ambitious design of the Slavs to move southwards and he writes: "They would probably start negotiations now with the Turks . . . I remember Dragoumis . . ." ⁸⁹ When he saw some Turks, prisoners at the hands of the Bulgarians, he commented bitterly:

Javer is prisoner of the Bulgarians, . . . he weeps . . . those Turks, the villains, they left the chance we offered them—they to be saved and we to advance—slip from their hands . . . The Government did not listen to us . . . In Constantinople I and Dragoumis had another program . . . a new political East . . . We reshaped the problem into a problem of the East, as it really is . . . They did not listen to us . . . The Bulgarians tricked us into addressing quickly to Turkey a note which excluded any solution but war . . . Now I am afraid that we will grow as a nation but in an unstable way, while the Bulgarians will grow more as a state and on firm ground. On the other hand, Hellenism as a nation . . . will go on disappearing . . . And the Slavs will eat the Greeks up, because the Greek politicians pursue in state policy . . . while the natural thing to pursue is a national one . . . We tried with Dragoumis to keep away from the Balkans the mass of Northern peoples, but others, with a different mentality, brought them down to the Rhodope (Mountains).⁹⁰

Now the only thing he can do is to ensure that the Greeks who will be left either under the Turks, or the Serbs and the Bulgarians, will enjoy as many rights as possible. On the end he submits to the Greek Government reports with his ideas. For the failure of his ideas to be accepted he blames many factors; first among them his own weakness. Usually, however, he writes that there were other factors to be considered for their failure.

First were the Turks, especially the Young Turks who, with their intransigence and their incapability, did not realize the threat which imperiled the existence of the country. They could not overthrow the feeling of

being the overlords in the land. They could not realize the dangers of an eventual uprising of the nationalities or from the selfish ambitions of the foreigners, particularly those of the Slavs.

Another factor for the failure, according to Souliotis, was the Bulgarians who never ceased to work for a "Greater Bulgaria". This was the reason which drove the O.C. to spare no effort in attempting to convince Turkey and Greece alike to come to a sincere agreement and to work together, since both were faced with the same danger. Bulgaria was hard to be convinced to cooperate sincerely with the rest of her neighbors. She felt secure having powerful protectors whose interests Bulgaria had many times served in the past and continued still to do so at that time.

Some of the responsibility for the failure he attributed to the Greek Government. He criticized in strong words some of its actions and pronouncements. The Government, he believed, failed to convince all the responsible authorities that the "Great Idea", as the majority viewed it, was a nice word but with no real substance. "It was a sentiment, not a thought; and even less was it a political program", he wrote. Souliotis refers in particular to the great emphasis placed on the Cretan Question as another obstacle to his plans.⁹¹ Especially he commented to certain manifestations of the Greeks in Athens and Constantinople which reminded the Turks of the "Great Idea" and which made them suspicious to the efforts of the O.C.⁹²

Another important factor for the failure was the intervention and the individual ambitions of certain Great Powers. This factor is mentioned by both Souliotis and Dragoumis and it is evident in the articles of the O.C. and the *takrir* of the Patriarchate. Probably foreign influences and interests had a hand also in the continuous revival of the Cretan Question,⁹³ as they had in certain disturbances within the Turkish Empire.⁹⁴ It is a well known fact, of course, that the final solution of every Balkan problem depended upon the interests of foreign powers. Certain of these powers could not foresee that this attitude, and the solutions they imposed were bound to turn against them in the long run. "They did not draw any lesson from 1453".⁹⁵ All the efforts of the O.C. toward this direction were met with failure.

Faced with these difficulties, and with even more as mentioned in the Souliotis manuscripts, the two men, Souliotis and Dragoumis tried to counteract by enlisting the help of the Greeks living outside liberated Greece, to their scheme of building the State of the East. But they failed. Was it probably a mistake that they overestimated their power? Were their objectives groundless? Did they err in overlooking the spirit of

their times which was utterly nationalistic and demanded national states? Did they err in their policy? And had they succeeded in their policy, would that have been beneficial to Hellenism as a whole or not?

Questions may be posed on end, but their answer is difficult, because difficult is to express an opinion on something which has no results to show. No one, however, can deny the self-sacrifice, the determination and fanaticism with which these inspired men pursued their ideal. One cannot deny that, as they themselves have said, they were prophets, dreamers of an ideal, the ideal of a coalition of the peoples of the Balkans and Asia Minor which would save them from the encroachments of so many powerful states. They were the dreamers of an ideal which would have Hellenism assume the leading role and develop once again the Hellenic civilization. They had an ideal, and down deep in their heart, that was a Hellenic ideal. As Souliotis wrote in his pamphlet the "Great Idea":

Only the cowards who do not have the strength to defend their-Fatherland, only they make their wretchedness their philosophy... A Nation cannot long endure when it lacks an Ideal, when it lacks an objective toward which to move.⁹⁶

The ideal was not selfish, but one which would unite the peoples for their common salvation as they believed it to be. They attempted to keep this part of the globe—the "East" as they called it—master of its own affairs, with its traditions and civilization—the Eastern civilization—whose finest expression was the Hellenic civilization. Could that be achieved? They themselves doubted it: "We, the two, three of us are the founders of an ideal... and the founder never moves toward a concrete goal". A student of the history of that era wrote that certain Greek M.P.s. (i.e. the O.C.) took over the initiative to establish a federation. Those inspired by this idea were motivated deeply by a gentle feeling and by a love for the country and its people. "They are moved by brave ideas... but I am afraid they don't know well their neighbors"⁹⁷.

If we review what has taken place and, perhaps, what is threatened in the region where Souliotis and Dragoumis had tried to work out a sincere cooperation between its peoples at the exclusion of foreigners, and if we study the past and look forward to the future, then, perhaps, we the peoples who have lost from past mistakes⁹⁸ may concur with the thesis of those men and the opinion of a specialist of these problems, that there are elements for a true rapprochement of the two peoples, the Greeks and the Turks⁹⁹. Perhaps there are even more elements which should draw the careful attention of others who are interested in the fate of these countries.

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3. Ion Dragoumis, "Ὅσοι ζωντανοὶ [*Those Alive*], 1911, p. 10.
4. Manusc. No. 557. The reader of "Ὅσοι ζωντανοὶ should bear in mind that "Alexis" is Dragoumis himself and the "friend" is Souliotis.
5. Manusc. No. 560.
6. Dragoumis, "Ὅσοι ζωντανοί, pp. 9, 11.
7. Manusc. No. 153
8. Manusc. No. 238.
9. Dragoumis, "Ὅσοι ζωντανοί, p. 30.
10. Dragoumis, *Προγραμματικοὶ πολιτικοὶ στοχασμοί*, 1916, pp. 4, 5.
11. Dragoumis, *Μαρτύρων...* p. 152.
12. Manusc. No. 154.
13. Dragoumis, "Ὅσοι ζωντανοί, p. 69.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 113.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 114.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 100.
17. *Ibid.*, pp. 107, 111, 117, 123; Manusc. No. 242.
18. Driault E., Lheritier, *Histoire Diplomatique de la Grèce* 4, 79, 182. Greek Prime Minister Harilaos Tricoupis had made in the past an attempt to reach an agreement with the Turks. Laskaris, *Διπλωματική ἱστορία τῆς Ἑλλάδος* [*Diplomatic History of Greece*] 1821 - 1914 (Athens 1947), pp. 122, 174, 175; Driault, 4, 79, 164, 176, 182.
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21. Manusc. Nos. 230 - 231.
22. Dragoumis, "Ὅσοι ζωντανοί, pp. 96, 106 - 107, 109, 116.
23. *Ibid.* p. 79.
24. Manusc. No. 142.
25. Manusc. No. 244.
26. For the program see also Dragoumis, "Ὅσοι ζωντανοί, pp. 56, 60.
27. Manusc. No. 144.
28. «Τὸ Βῆμα» (Athens, Nov. 30, 1960) [The Archives of the Austrian Foreign Ministry].
29. Dragoumis also points out the same danger in his books.
30. Manusc. Nos. 144, 244.
31. Driault, 5, 5.
32. Manusc. No 477.
33. Manusc. No. 410, 465.
34. Dragoumis, *Προκήρυξη στοὺς σκλαβωμένους καὶ στοὺς ἐλευθερωμένους Ἕλληνες* [*Declaration to the enslaved and to the liberated Greeks*] 1908, pp. 4, 5. *Μαρτύρων καὶ ἡρώων αἷμα*, pp. 13, 39 - 40.

35. Manusc. No. 459; Dragoumis, *Προκήρυξη*, p. 5 and "Όσοι ζωντανοί, pp. 56, 102, 131.
36. See Driault, 5, 461.
37. Manusc. Nos. 516, 517 (Meeting of January 8, 1909); Driault, *La Question d'Orient 1918-1937* (Paris 1938) p. 14.
38. Manusc. No. 538.
39. Manusc. No. 376.; 'Εκκλησιαστική 'Αλήθεια (June 10, 1909).
40. Manusc. Nos. 377, 533; *Πολιτική 'Επιθεώρησης* [Political Review] April 4, 1910.
41. Manusc. No. 165.
42. Manusc. No. 629.
43. Manusc. Nos. 197, 246.
44. Manusc. No. 144.
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46. Manusc. Nos. 239, 243.
47. Manusc. Nos. 247, 249.
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49. Manusc. Nos. 351 - 352.
50. Manusc. No. 375.
51. Manusc. No. 376.
52. Manusc. 410.
53. Reports to the Government : Manusc. Nos 207, 398, 455, 477, 489, 493, 581, 591, 598, 602, 620, 633, 643. Answer of the Government : 612, 616.
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57. Manusc. No. 388.
58. Manusc. No. 390.
59. Dragoumis, "Όσοι ζωντανοί, p. 118.
60. Manusc. Nos. 360, 361, 538.
61. Manusc. No. 572; Dragoumis, "Όσοι ζωντανοί, pp. 71, 73, 74, 117.
62. Manusc. No. 579; *Πολιτική 'Επιθεώρησης* (January 9, 1911); Hamoudopoulos, *op. cit.*, p. 35.
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70. See above for the memorandum of the Greek M.P.s.
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81. Driault, *Histoire*, 5, 68, 73; Laskaris, pp. 221 - 223; Vlachos, p. 368.
82. Driault, *Histoire*, 5, 69, 71; Laskaris, pp. 221 - 223.
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92. Manusc. Nos. 251 - 252, 429, 465, 512, 513, 591.
93. Driault, *Histoire*, 4, 271, 301.
94. Bischoff, *La Turquie dans le Monde* (Transl. by M. Bénouvielle), Paris 1936, pp. 84, 88.
95. Driault, *Histoire*, p. 5, 450, 455 - 456, 461.
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