

*BASIL C. GOUNARIS*

**GRECO-TURKISH RAILWAY CONNECTION: ILLUSIONS AND BARGAINS IN THE LATE NINETEENTH CENTURY BALKANS\***

In the minds of nineteenth century statesmen the ability of railways to stimulate finances assumed legendary proportions. Proponents connected railways with the immediate solution of considerable political and economic problems. The rapid progress that some European states experienced after constructing a railway network was pointing to the same direction. Naturally, such a prospect could not leave indifferent any state, especially those which were desperately trying to solve the problem of a growing budget deficit. Greece and the Ottoman Empire were no exception to the rule. Despite profound financial weakness and a rather unfavourable political background they both tried to meet the railway challenge in a desperate attempt to catch up with modernisation. This paper, will first try to evaluate briefly the economic and political prospects of railway building both in Greece and in the Ottoman Empire in the mid-nineteenth century. Then it will focus on the diplomatic manoeuvres of successive Greek governments, from the 1870s to the first decade of this century, to achieve Ottoman consent for a railway junction between the two neighbouring states. Finally it will examine the causes of failure to achieve this consent in an overall attempt to prove that the junction issue had never had a chance of success within the particular financial and political context.

Railway planning in Greece was put forward as early as 1835, but the actual construction remained an unfulfilled dream for more than 35 years. Poor finances and low capital accumulation essentially deprived the Greek state of international credit and substantial investment until the early 1870s. However, Greece's feeble position in the international capital market, although an important, was not the only one factor which discouraged the immediate introduction of railways. Almost half a century after Independence, agriculture was still the dominant financial sector. Yet, although certain international circumstances had favoured commercialisation of some cheap agricultural

\* As usual, I am grateful for his valuable comments to Prof. John S. Koliopoulos.

products, export trade was confined to limited coastal areas. Industry, on the other hand, restricted by the low rate of urbanisation, shortage of capital, international competition and the insufficient land communication system, was represented until the late 1860s only in the form of some small scale manufactures<sup>1</sup>.

In the 1870s a number of new factors influenced the Greek economy, though not as drastically as contemporaries would have hoped. Urbanisation accelerated and measures, like additional customs duties, were taken to protect local industrial products. Moreover, the flow of western capital to the Balkans and to eastern Mediterranean basin in search of lucrative investments increased due to the financial crisis which shook European economies from the mid 1870s onwards. In this favourable context, Greek industry would have done better, had it not been for the opening of the French market to the Greek currants and, some years later, for the annexation of Thessaly to the Greek state. The expansion of the vine and cereal cultivation, in conjunction with a wavering customs policy, hindered the effective supply of industry in manpower and discouraged investments in the secondary sector.

Still, despite the growing agricultural output and the deplorable transportation network, railway construction was not, in fact, a state-wide pressing issue. No doubt, local lines in western Peloponnese and in Thessaly would have been beneficial for the native commercial needs, but a national network connected to the European was a luxury that Greece could do without, at least for a few more years. Yet, in view of railway expansion in the Balkans, railway access to the north, like so many other issues in Greek history, was sentimentally charged and deliberately overemphasised. It was considered as a necessary condition, not only for economic development, but also for the political unification of the nation with its brethren in Macedonia<sup>2</sup>.

More sober than the young kingdom, the Ottoman Empire was no less anxious to build its own railway network, both in the Asiatic and in the European provinces. In contrast to the Greek governments, which had a rather vague idea about what changes railways would bring to the country, the Porte had far more realistic expectations. The Empire was on the defensive and the General Staff was well aware that, in the future, keeping Ottoman dominions

1. Leuteris Papagiannakis, *Oi ellinikoi sidirodromoi (1882-1910)* [Greek Railways, 1882-1910] (Athens, 1982), 45-61. Nikos Mouzelis, *Neoelliniki koinonia: opseis ypanaptixis* [Modern Greek Society: Facets of underdevelopment] (translated by Tzeni Mastoraki, Athens, 1978), 34-38.

2. Papagiannakis, *op. cit.*, 61-72. Mouzelis, *op. cit.*, 38-44.

in one piece would depend on the speed at which reserves would be forwarded to the front. For Sultan Abd-ül Aziz, a well known admirer of technological innovations, and Grand Vezirs Ali and Fuad, railway construction was necessary for the financial revival of the Empire. Both industry and agriculture were expected to profit a lot: raw material, minerals for example, would be transported at a low cost and fast; new areas would be opened to cultivation, since access to the sea would be secured; public revenue would rise steadily, since financial control over remote provinces would be strengthened<sup>3</sup>.

Unlike the Greeks, Turks were to see their railway dreams fulfilled quite soon. In fact construction work in Turkey had progressed long before a single mile was laid in Greece. Between 1856 and 1866 four lines of local importance had been constructed by British companies, two in the Asiatic and two in the European provinces. The Ottoman Empire was still a newcomer in the world capital market. State borrowing was relatively easy for the Porte; actually, it was encouraged by western bankers. Direct foreign investments, either in Anatolia or in the Balkans, were also considered as extremely profitable for Europeans. Especially railway construction was first classe choice for western capitalists, not only because of the extremely high kilometric guarantees but also for the consequent stimulation of import and export trade<sup>4</sup>.

Both Greece and Turkey seemed to share common illusions about their financial recovery. The prospect of railway construction had nourished these dreams to a large extent. The governments of the two neighbouring states hoped in vain that railways could by themselves push all financial indicators upwards, while carriageable feeder roads did not exceed few hundred miles. However, in spite of similar economic expectations, political and military considerations were anything but similar. The Greek kingdom had never ceased plotting, officially or unofficially, against the integrity of the Ottoman Empire; its collapse was the goal of practically every Greek. Evidently, railway connection with the *irredenta* was expected to check slavic propaganda and to be the first step towards economic incorporation and eventually politi-

3. Roderic H. Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire, 1856-1876* (Princeton, 1963), 238. Şefket Pamuk, "Foreign Trade, Foreign Capital and the Peripheralization of the Ottoman Empire, 1830-1913" (California Univ. Ph. D. thesis, 1978), 148-150. Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey* (2nd edn., Oxford, 1968), 96.

4. The Smyrna-Aidin and the Smyrna-Kassaba lines in Asia Minor and the Costantina-Chernavoda and the Varna-Ruse in the Balkans [Yaqub N. Karkar, *Railway Development in the Ottoman Empire, 1856-1914* (New York etc., 1972), 64-67]. Şefket Pamuk, *The Ottoman Empire and European Capitalism, 1820-1913* (Cambridge, 1987), 12-13, 56-57, 68.

cal annexation<sup>5</sup>. Naturally, the Porte and the Ottoman General Staff were determined to prevent Greek irredentists have their way and, therefore, extremely reluctant to support any Greek railway scheme.

Despite favourable conditions in the capital market, it was not until April 1869 that a major railway construction project was assigned to a European company by the Porte. After lengthy negotiations, Baron Maurice de Hirsch, a well known capitalist of the time, undertook the construction of a 1.550-mile long network throughout the Ottoman European provinces; a network which was expected to bind up all the western dominions and, eventually, give them access to central Europe<sup>6</sup>.

While the Ottoman Empire was making the first decisive steps in the railway era Greece, with its 5.2 mile long network, was immersed in fruitless parliamentary debates and endless negotiations. Between 1859 and 1872 five different companies (Leathers, Louis de Normand, Piat, Crédit Foncier and Duvernois-Fornierod) had put forward railway projects for the construction of track from Athens to the border. All of them failed to reach an agreement with the Greek government. Piat was the most successful of all. In 1870 he was granted a concession to build a line from Piraeus to the border. A year later Halil Bey, the representative of the Porte, met in Vienna with Chancellor Beust and started negotiations for the connection of the Austrian and Ottoman railway networks. The Greek press urged the government to seize the chance and join the Austro-Ottoman scheme. However, Piat's attempts to raise the necessary funds were to no avail. A consortium of Greek capitalists, represented by Andreas Syngros and Stephanos Skouloudis, offered to take over the project in 1872 but fortune did not favour them either. Although the proposal was accepted by the Deligeorgis cabinet, work ceased only a few months after it had started, in October 1873. The reasons was a disagreement between the government and the construction company over the position of the Piraeus railway station, a disagreement which developed into a lengthy legal dispute<sup>7</sup>.

It is interesting that the first official Greek approach to the Porte, on the issue of the railway connection, was made in July 1875, after fifteen years

5. See for example *Ephimeris ton Syzitiσεων tis Voulis* (E.S.V.), eleventh period, special synod, 23 Mar. 1889, p. 292.

6. For an excellent account of railway construction in the Ottoman Balkans see: George Young, *Corps de droit Ottoman*, iv (Oxford, 1906), 62-117.

7. Papagiannakis, *op. cit.*, 52-59. Walter Rechberger, "Zur Geschichte der Orientbahnen. Ein Beitrag zur österreichisch-ungarischen Eisenbahnpolitik auf dem Balkan in den Jahren von 1852-1888" (Vienna Univ. Ph. D. thesis, 1858), 134-136.

of planning an international line. It is even more interesting that it was probably Trikoupis' initiative, whose interim government had taken office three months earlier. Albeit a clear indication of Trikoupis' enthusiasm for public works, it was by no means the appropriate time for such a move. For Greece, July 1875 was an election month, while the Porte had much more serious problems to tackle, since the small scale rising in Bosnia was gradually evolving into a major crisis. Ottoman officials were willing to offer their verbal assurance that Turkey would not reject any enterprise expected to benefit both states, a tactic which was not to be abandoned in the following years<sup>8</sup>.

Shortly after the Congress of Berlin railway companies repeated their proposals. In July 1879 Count de Moutressy submitted a wider railway construction plan, including a track to the border, but his terms were not appealing at all. In August 1881 Perdoux was granted by the Koumoundouros cabiner a concession to build a line from Patras to Larissa via Piraeus. Soon he declared that he could not meet the requirements, unless the terms were reconsidered in his favour. But Trikoupis, who had won the December 1881 elections, was radically opposed not only to a reconsideration but to the initial terms as well. For the new Premier an international railway line was not a matter of priority. A national network, which would unify the local markets, was thought to be much more promising<sup>9</sup>.

Although Trikoupis's railway policy, inaugurated in early 1882, was devoted to the development of the local lines, he did not ignore the prospect of a future international connection with Turkey. The annexation of Thessaly in 1881 had renewed hopes for further expansion to the north. Moreover, the convention signed by the Ottoman Empire, Austria-Hungary, Serbia and the Principality of Bulgaria, in May 1883, had made clear that the Balkan railway unification would soon be realised. Pressure from the *irredenta* was also not negligible. In a letter addressed to Konstantinos Paparrigopoulos, a prominent Greek historian and deeply involved in the dissemination of Greek letters and culture in the Greek *irredenta*, the Greek Consul in Salonika mentioned that a connection via Servia (a town near Kozani) would support

8. The information comes from a retrospective account sent by Foreign Minister Stephanos Dragoumis to the Greek Ambassador to the Porte, Andreas Koundouriotis, in 1886. See Greece, Archeion Ypourgeiou ton Exoterikon (AYE) [Foreign Ministry Archives]/Presveia Konstantinoupoleos (PK)/1906/6, 13 Sept. 1886, No. 9001. In January 1876 the first Greek newspaper of Salonika, *Ermis*, wrote that the Porte had accepted the connection of the Greek and Turkish railway networks (*Ermis*, 70/27 Jan. 1876). It was either a delayed publication or a new verbal reassurance.

9. Papagiannakis, *op. cit.*, 59-60, 75-76, 91-92.

Greco-Turkish trade, divert the migration traffic from Bulgaria to Thessaly and facilitate the foundation of a Greek agricultural bank in Macedonia. He even suggested that, since the project was of paramount national importance, Greece should not hesitate to sacrifice its short term financial interests<sup>10</sup>.

In fact approaches to the Porte must have been repeated shortly after the Eastern Crisis but to no avail. Premier Koumoundouros had even tried during his tenth and last time in office (Oct. 1880 to Mar. 1883), on behalf of certain European engineers, to get permission for a study of a junction line. Turkish officials were negative. They were constantly arguing that the Empire's financial situation was too weak to start another railway project. The Ottoman Ministry for Public Works passed the issue over to the Foreign Ministry but no decision was made. In early March 1884 Alexandros Kondostavlos, Trikoupis' Foreign Minister, proceeded to yet one more approach. He urged the Greek Ambassador in Constantinople, Andreas Koundouriotis, to repeat his calls to the Porte and informed him that, in exchange for the Ottoman concession, Greece would volunteer to guarantee the annual returns of the Turkish part of the connection line, relinquishing even the right of surveillance.

However, Koundouriotis seemed reluctant to proceed immediately to such an unfair bargain. Instead, he met with the Ottoman Foreign Minister, Aarifi Pasha, who eventually promised to get permission for the engineers. Aarifi was honest enough to admit that there was a "prejudism" against railway connection with "other countries" which would not be easily "uprooted". Koundouriotis suggested that they should wait until the permission for the study was granted. But he himself could not stay aloof for long. He went on pressing Aarifi, though always in vain. The Ottoman Minister continued to give nothing more than promises<sup>11</sup>.

In April 1884 there was still no sign of approval. The Volos-Larissa line was on the point of inauguration and Kondostavlos must have been anxious to get from the Turks a positive reply. He asked his Ambassador to suggest a more effective way to handle the problem. Koundouriotis in his account explained that the Turks feared that any connection with European states would diminish their sovereignty over the European provinces. He calculated

10. For the text of the convention see Young, *op. cit.*, iv 76-83. AYE/PK/1883, Dokos to Chairman of the Association for the Dissemination of the Greek Letters, Monastir, 8 Dec. 1883, No. 851.

11. AYE/PK/1906/6, S. Dragoumis to Koundouriotis, Athens, 13 Sept. 1886, No. 9001; Kondostavlos to Koundouriotis, Athens, 5 Mar. 1884, No. 307; Koundouriotis to Kondostavlos, Constantinople, 12 Mar. 1884, No. 603 and 3 Apr. 1884, No. 870.

that, the connection with Austria-Hungary, which was on its way, would help the Sultan to give in, despite his prejudice, and thought it was advisable, in due time and in a "suitable" way, to draw the attention of the Turks to the strategic advantages a railway connection with Greece offered. Eventually, he suggested that it was time for the Greeks to take over the financial burden of the Ottoman guarantee, but he pointed out that the approach should be made by a foreign railway company in order to extort a definite reply by the Porte<sup>12</sup>.

Although the Greek government offered to cover the Turkish share of a future guarantee without involving the Sultan's domains, the Porte officially remained silent. Despite Koundouriotis frequent visits to the Ministers both for Foreign and Domestic Affairs, despite the lengthy and warm conversations on the advantages of the junction, despite his optimism and his well calculated approaches, nothing was gained. Actually, by the end of 1884 no permission had been granted not only for the connection but not even for the study. Aarifi declared that he could not commit himself to the case before the completion of the Austro-Turkish junction line<sup>13</sup>.

Needless to say 1885 and the first semester of 1886 was not the appropriate time to raise the issue anew. Tension in the Balkans, following the annexation of Eastern Rumelia by Bulgaria, retarded the construction of the Turco-Austrian junction line. Theodoros Diligiannis's cabinet considered seriously war against Turkey in order to balance the new Bulgarian southern acquisitions, in fact he even proceeded to mobilise Greek forces. An ultimatum sent by the Great Powers and the blockade of Piraeus brought them back to reality. The fragile Greek economy failed to sustain the additional financial burdens, while troops could not be sent to the front by boat, via the port of Volos. In May 1886 Trikoupis returned to power and the army was soon demobilised. A month later the network of Thessaly, from Volos to Kalambaka, was given to traffic. Before the end of September 1886 interest for a track to the border revived as nationalist feeling subsided. Thus, Koundouriotis was sent once again to the Porte to renew Greek proposals for a junction line<sup>14</sup>.

12. AYE/PK/1906/6, Kondostavlos to Koundouriotis, Athens, 11 Apr. 1884, No. 400; Koundouriotis to Kondostavlos, Constantinople, 24 Apr. 1884, No. 958.

13. AYE/PK/1906/6, Koundouriotis to Kondostavlos, Constantinople, 28 June 1884, No. 1601 and 5 Dec. 1884, No. 2834; Kondostavlos to Kountouriotis, Athens, 21 Nov. 1884, No. 1732.

14. Basil C. Gounaris, "Railway Konstruction and Railway Availability in Macedonia in the Late Nineteenth century", *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies*, 13 (1989), 146-147.

The Rumelian Crisis had clearly shown to both Greeks and Turks that railway construction was an imperative need. Actually, the Ottoman state had already experienced the benefits of railway transportation in the Eastern Crisis (1875-78). As Greek aggressiveness was becoming more dangerous and unpredictable, another track to the south was seen as useful for sending troops to the border. During the first half of 1887 the Porte asked Vitali's company, which was building the last part of the Turco-Austrian junction, to prepare a study for a line running from Velesa (Titov Velles) to Elasson via Monastir (Bitol). Since the company lacked the necessary staff, a survey was ordered instead. It was evident that railways were approaching to the Greco-Turkish border, yet there was no encouraging sign that the Ottoman government was considering seriously a junction line<sup>15</sup>.

In January 1888 Alfred Kaulla, director of the Württembergische Vereinsbank, who was involved in the sale of Mauser rifles to the Ottoman Empire, informed Koundouriotis that the Porte had approved a railway line from Velesa to Servia, according to a scheme put forward by Lafayette de Freize, the representative of an American company. In March of the same year there were even rumors, circulated by Field-marshal Rejep Pasha in Salonika, that the imperial *irade* had already been granted. Rejep was loquacious enough to communicate to the Greek Consul General in Salonika, George Dokos, that the new track would run from Gradstko to Kozani via Monastir and Florina. He even speculated that there were chances for a junction line from Veroia to Tyrnavos, via the coast of Katerini, but the Kozani-Kalambaka scheme was out of the question. Kaulla was not particularly happy with the idea. Personally he was interested in building a coastal line from Salonika to the border but his project had already been rejected by the Ministry for Public Works as harmful to the Empire's commercial interests. Counting on his influence with the Sultan, Kaulla hoped that he would be able to cancel the decision taken by the government. Later developments showed that he had good reasons to be so optimistic<sup>16</sup>.

As the Turco-Austrian junction line reached its end, in May 1888, Greek

Georgios Aspreas, *Politiki Istoria tis Neoteris Ellados* [Political History of Modern Greece], (Athens, 1930), ii 162-175. Papagiannakis, *op. cit.*, 116, 127. AYE/PK/1906/6, S. Dragoumis to Koundouriotis, Athens, 13 Sept. 1886, No. 9001.

15. AYE/PK/1906/6, unsigned note, Constantinople, 25 Sept. 1887, attached to Memo No. 280.

16. AYE/PK/1906/6, Koundouriotis to S. Dragoumis, Constantinople, 2 Jan. 1888, No. 10. AYE/PK/1888/Consulates-Vice -Consulates/Dokos to Koundouriotis, Salonika, 8 May 1888, No. 558.



anxiety increased. The prospect of direct communication with Europe had put Austrian and German capitalists into a frenzy of investments in Salonika. However, the Greek community was unprepared to meet the Austrian commercial challenge. Greek investors appeared rather reluctant to do business in Macedonia and the shortage of Greek banking houses was obvious. Moreover, the commercial rise of Salonika was expected to increase the interest of northern neighbours for an Aegean outlet. As the Greek newspaper *Ephimeris* wrote "the loss of Salonika implies the inevitable political death of Greece"<sup>17</sup>.

Inevitably, as the tactic of personal contacts had failed to bring any results, Greek railway policy had to be reconsidered. It seems that during the summer of 1888 Markos Dragoumis, the Greek Ambassador in Vienna, began to sound members of the Austrian cabinet. In October he announced that Austria-Hungary was willing to support Greek approaches to the Porte. In addition, the Austrians advised a parallel approach by a railway company. Of course, the "advice" was anything but friendly, since L nderbank of Vienna, which was already involved in serious banking business in Salonika, had shown interest in financing the Piraeus-Larissa project and hoped to get simultaneous Ottoman permission for a junction line as well<sup>18</sup>.

Assuring Austrian support was only one part of Greek objectives. During the same period contacts were made with representatives of all Great Powers, perhaps with the exception of Great Britain. The German Ambassador in Constantinople encouraged an immediate Greek approach and evaluated that both Austrians and Italians would assist Greek claims<sup>19</sup>. Russian support was also sought and promised, although Nicholas Giers, the Russian Foreign Minister, seemed to ignore the matter<sup>20</sup>. In Paris, Ambassador Nikolaos Diligiannis had a successful meeting with R n  Goblet, the French Foreign Minister. The latter promised to favour the Greek venture and instruct the French Ambassador in Constantinople accordingly, if Greece would care to put the request for mediation officially. Naturally, Goblet expressed his hopes that in due time Greece would choose French banks to finance railway con-

17. *Loc. cit.* *Pharos tis Makedonias*, 1240/14 May 1888. AYE/Kentriki Ypiresia (KY)/1888/B/30, Dokos to S. Dragoumis, Salonika 15 Sept. 1888, No. 1239; 22 Oct. 1888, No. 1443. *Ephimeris*, 180/28 June 1888.

18. AYE/KY/1888/B/30, M. Dragoumis to S. Dragoumis, Vienna 14 Oct. 1888, No. 520/203; 2 Oct. 1888, No. 504/191.

19. AYE/PK/1906/6, Koundouriotis to S. Dragoumis, Constantinople, 20 Sept. 1888, No. 2860; S. Dragoumis to Koundouriotis, Athens, 3 Oct. 1888, No. 10598.

20. AYE/KY/1888/B/30, Panas to S. Dragoumis, Petersburg, 24 Oct. 1888, No. 51.

struction. Actually, a few days later, before any French mediation, Comptoir d'Escompte was encouraged by Goblet to cooperate with L nderbank<sup>21</sup>.

In mid October 1888 international pressure seemed to be working effectively. Koundouriotis was informed that the Grand Vezir had already studied the issue and the Ottoman Foreign Minister had promised to support Greek claims at the Cabinet meeting<sup>22</sup>. However, the pressure exercised by the Great Powers did not revive Greek aspirations only. Kaulla approached the Porte once again, though not officially. In view of the fact that he was also the go-between for a new loan agreement, the Turkish government thought it was unwise to turn him down. Thus, Kaulla was granted permission to proceed with a study of a junction line<sup>23</sup>. Only a few weeks later in Vienna he discouraged the director of the L nderbank to cooperate with the French and get involved with the Greco-Turkish line. He argued convincingly that the construction of the Turkish part was not profitable and the international financial situation unfavourable<sup>24</sup>. Was he consciously misleading the Austrians to get them out of his way or was it a blunt estimation implying that he himself was not so fervently committed to the project? One can hardly say. He had every reasons to cheat, which in fact he did, but his arguments were valid after all.

In any case Kaulla had more than one competitors to deal with. As Ottoman reaction temporarily gave way several entrepreneurs appeared on the scene. Pears, a lawyer representing several British banking houses, Dimitrachi Effendi Yenidounia, a certain Dalg gio and Lafayette de Freize expressed their interest in taking over the junction project, but only the last bidder was given serious consideration. De Freize, as mentioned above, represented an American banking house, the "Silkmann Bros", and was willing to construct a track running from Velesa to Servia via Monastir on terms similar to those in use in Asia Minor. The idea was not unattractive to the Ottoman government, as they had been currently searching for the best possible option which would leave the trade of Salonika intact. Of course, the line was not a "junction

21. AYE/KY/1888/B/30, N. Diligiannis to S. Dragoumis, 27 Oct. 1888, No. 1895; 5 Nov. 1888, No. 1987; 9 Nov. 1888, No. 2017.

22. AYE/PK/1906/6, Koundouriotis to S. Dragoumis, Constantinople, 12 Oct. 1888, No. 3030.

23. AYE/KY/1888/B/30, Koundouriotis to S. Dragoumis, Constantinople, 17 Oct. 1888, No. 3073. Apparently the reference is made to the 1888 loan. With the assistance of the Deutsche Bank, all the bonds were bought by German investors, see: Pamuk, *Ottoman Empire and European capitalism*, 74.

24. AYE/KY/1888/B/30, N. Diligiannis to S. Dragoumis, Paris, 13 Nov. 1888, No. 2040.

one"; according to the contract put forward by de Freize a connection branch was optional. Therefore, Kâmil Pasha, the Grand Vezir, hurried to reassure the Greeks that the construction of the Veleša-Servia domestic line and negotiations for the junction would proceed at the same time, so that the two countries would reach "the result they both wished for"<sup>25</sup>.

Rumors that the de Freize contract would soon be passed by the Cabinet meeting stirred excitement in southern Macedonia<sup>26</sup>. But the rebuff was soon to follow. Despite the favourable odds, the answer of the Palace was negative. However, the traditional military and commercial arguments, i.e. the Porte's interest in the exploitation of the Salonika port and the General Staff's military concerns, were only one side of the coin<sup>27</sup>. Kaulla's manoeuvres were the other one. As soon as de Freize withdrew, the German banker rushed to submit a new project, more realistic from the military point of view than his coastal one. Actually his new line was not in many ways different from what de Freize had proposed. The project was approved by the Palace officials but surprisingly, few days later it was reshaped. The Palace was positive once again. Thus the project was passed over to the Cabinet, among the members of which the idea of a junction line had gained a few supporters, especially in view of the international pressure<sup>28</sup>. It seems reasonable to assume that the German banker had used effectively his influence with the Sultan—as he had boasted in the past—not only to stem the American project but to promote his own case as well.

For Kaulla getting over with the Turks was not enough to bring the case off; in fact, it was just the tip of the iceberg. The Greeks too had to be handled, and this was an issue too delicate to tackle. But Kaulla was not alone. After having undermined the Austro-French cooperation, he approached the Comptoir d'Escompt which was interested in taking over the construction of the Piraeus-Larissa line. The French representatives, Biedermann and Vitali, visited Athens but failed to get through successfully. Trikoupi refused to sign the contract, unless the company guaranteed to pay the divided coupons

25. AYE/PK/1906/6, Koundouriotis to S. Dragoumis, Constantinople, 28 Nov. 1888, No. 3493. AYE/KY/1888/B/30, Koundouriotis to S. Dragoumis, Constantinople, 14 Nov. 1888, No. 3366; 7 Dec. 1888, No. 3597.

26. *Pharos tis Makedonias*, 1293/7 Dec. 1888. AYE/KY/1889/B/30/1, Dokos to S. Dragoumis, Salonika, 24 Dec. 1888, No. 1711.

27. *Pharos tis Makedonias*, 1302/14 Jan. 1889.

28. AYE/PK/1906/6, Koundouriotis to S. Dragoumis, Constantinople, 9 Jan. 1889, No. 45; 11 Jan. 1889, No. 66. AYE/KY/1889/B/i, Koundouriotis to S. Dragoumis, Constantinople, 16 Jan. 1889, No. 116.

of the Greek railway loan, in case the connection of the Greco-Turkish networks was postponed. Although Kaulla had assured the Greek government that the connection would be secured, if Vitali's terms were accepted, Vitali himself was not willing to consent. In Constantinople, his next stop, the French entrepreneur reminded Ambassador Andreas Koundouriotis that it was only due to Kaulla that the Porte had granted its permission. He added that the German banker was reluctant to proceed, unless the Greek part was given to the French. Few days later Kaulla himself mentioned that Ottoman promises could never be taken for granted. The Turks could easily change their minds and eventually reject the junction; thus, he confided, the Greek term could not be accepted. However, he boasted that, if the junction was ever to be made, the concession would be granted to himself. Koundouriotis was well aware that Kaulla's influence with the Sultan was deliberately over-emphasised to blackmail Trikoupis; but, in any case, negotiations did not last long. Two weeks later, due to a major financial crisis in France, all discussions were interrupted<sup>29</sup>.

However, railway fever in Athens was still high. In late March, in four consecutive sessions, the parliament discussed and agreed, in majority, to issue bonds for the amount of 80 million francs, which would be invested on the construction of the Piraeus-Larissa line. The opposition argued that the amount was excessive, given the fact that the Porte, which lacked financial motivation, had not yet approved the junction. They warned the government that such an action would inevitably weaken the Greek position in future negotiations: Greece would be in such a rush to pay off the debt, that Turkey would be able to impose any terms regarding the junction. There was also the risk that the Turks would be content with just a local military line, from Skopje to Servia, and the Greeks would be left with an annual interest of five million francs and without a mile of a junction line. Premier Trikoupis and his Foreign Minister maintained that for military and financial reasons or under European pressure, the Ottoman Empire would be forced to build a track until the border. However, Trikoupis claimed, the Turks were not in a position to secure a foreign loan for such a construction, unless they consented to the junction<sup>30</sup>.

29. AYE/PK/1906/6, Koundouriotis to S. Dragoumis, Constantinople, 11 Jan. 1889, No. 66; 1 Feb. 1889 and 8 Feb. 1889 both without ref. numbers. AYE/KY/1889/B/i, Koundouriotis to S. Dragoumis, Constantinople, 6 Mar. 1889, No. 629.

30. E.S.V., eleventh period, special synod, 20 Mar. 1889, 225-228, 230-231; 21 Mar. 1889, 248, 251; 23 Mar. 1889, 292-293.

Soon enough developments showed that Trikoupi had few reasons to be optimistic. After Kaulla's withdrawal the Porte exercised considerable and constant pressure on the Salonika Chamber of Commerce to take a decision against the future railway connection of the two states. In spite of the Greek Consul's efforts to influence the Jewish merchant community, the Chamber made a negative recommendation. Bulgarian merchants and other "equally narrow-minded" persons joined the Turks partly for other commercial interests but chiefly because they were afraid to oppose openly the will of the Provincial Governor, the Porte and the Sultan who, according to a source, had personal financial reasons to check the connection<sup>31</sup>.

Around the same time a British engineer, Willoughby Furnivall, who represented a British-Ottoman consortium, proposed another junction line running from Giannitsa to Kalambaka, via Naousa, Veroia, the Aliakmon basin, Servia and the Sarandaporo pass. Furnivall offered an advance of £250.000 and probably he was given permission for a survey; but no further steps were taken since the whole project was extremely expensive for the Turks<sup>32</sup>. Evidently the Porte did not want to discourage foreign investors on the junction issue but simultaneously was doing everything in its power to prevent the realisation of such a scheme.

Submission of applications went on throughout 1889 and 1890. Alfred Kaulla, the Ottoman and foreign press, even the Grand Vezir himself encouraged such applications but always to no avail<sup>33</sup>. In late October 1890 Kaulla's attempts to build a line in the Balkans were crowned with success; yet it was not the junction he had wished for. A decree was issued authorising the German banker to construct 136 miles of track, from Salonika to Monastir via Veroia, on the promise of a 14.300 franc annual kilometric guarantee<sup>34</sup>.

The Greeks were definitely less lucky than Alfred Kaulla but by far more

31. AYE/PK/1906/6, Dokos to S. Dragoumis, Salonika, 21 Apr. 1889, No. 506; 13 May 1889, No. 616; AYE/PK/1889/Consulates in Macedonia, 13 May 1889, No. 627. Public Record Office (PRO), Foreign Office (FO) 195/1654, Blunt to Salisbury, Salonika, 14 May 1889, ff. 221-222; "Report of the Salonika Chamber of Commerce on the Proposed Greek-Turkish Railway Junction, Salonique 2/14 May 1889", ff. 236-237.

32. AYE/PK/1906/6, Dokos to S. Dragoumis, Salonika, 13 May 1889, No. 616; Dokos to N. Mavrokordatos, Salonika, 7 June 1892, No. 494. *Pharos tis Makedonias*, 1334/13 May 1889.

33. *Pharos tis Makedonias*, 1383/29 Nov. 1889; 1413/17 Mar. 1890; 1415/24 Mar. 1890; 1456/1 Sept. 1890; 1483/15 Dec. 1890. AYE/PK/1906/6, N. Mavrokordatos to Trikoupi, Constantinople, 15 Jan. 1890, No. 143. N. Mavrokordatos to S. Dragoumis, Constantinople, 19 May 1890, No. 1528; 26 May 1890, No. 1619.

34. Young, *op. cit.*, iv 113.

optimistic and, as usual, unrealistic. It seems that they were not prepared to take "no" for an answer. In July 1889, amidst a serious deterioration of Greco-Turkish relations, a British consortium of capitalists had already taken over the construction of the Piraeus-Larissa line. In September of the same year the assignment was confirmed by royal decree. In May 1890 the bonds were eventually issued but the credibility of the Greek economy had deteriorated considerably in spite of Trikoupis's great expectations. Actually only the 65 per cent of the bonds were sold to C. J. Hambro and Sons and to the German National Bank. In the following months of 1890 financial weakness and political instability, due to developments in Crete, led to Trikoupis's fall. In October he was succeeded by Theodoros Diligiannis, but the change of cabinet failed to improve either Greek credibility or relations with the Ottoman Empire. The new Premier had few, if any, chances to deal with the issue of the railway connection. His irresponsible opposition during Trikoupis's rule had piled up more problems than he could possibly handle<sup>35</sup>.

In May 1892 Trikoupis was restored in power. Before the end of that month an engineer, Paul R. Krause, was sent by the Ottoman Bank to prepare another survey for a junction, from Platý to Kalambaka, via Giannitsa, Naousa, Veroia, and the Aliakmon basin. Krause also began a study of a coastal route. The latter, however, according to George Dokos, the Greek Consul General in Salonika, did not offer any financial advantages and could be well served by the existing coastal boat service<sup>36</sup>. Trikoupis's government assisted Krause in every possible way. Apparently the Greeks were particularly sensitive to such an Ottoman move, not only because they wanted at last to get over with the junction project but also because Krause had proved that all those rumors for a Salonika-Sofia railway line, via Sidirokastro (Demir Hissar) were true. Needless to say, these news had alarmed the Greek Foreign Ministry which was well aware of the detrimental political implications on the national struggle in Macedonia. The Greek Embassy in Constantinople did its best to undermine the rapprochement and "demonstrate the political targets of Bulgaria". But in fact there was no need to worry, since the Ottoman War Office wished to back neither Greek nor Bulgarian claims in Macedonia. Thus, the *irade* was no sooner issued than withdrawn<sup>37</sup>.

35. Papagiannakis, *op. cit.*, 129. Aspreas, *op. cit.*, ii 186-199.

36. AYE/PK/1906/6, Dokos to N. Mavrokordatos, Salonika, 7 June 1892, No. 494; 15 June 1892, No. 528.

37. *Pharos tis Makedonias*, 1610/6 June 1892, AYE/PK/1906/6, S. Dragoumis to N. Mavrokordatos, Athens, 10 June 1892, No. 667; Mavrokordatos to S. Dragoumis, Con-

However, the Greeks did not sit back. After the Bulgarian threat had been removed, Foreign Minister Stephanos Dragoumis asked Evgenios Zalokostas, the Greek Chargé d'Affaires in Constantinople, to look again on the matter of the junction. He wrote that "Greece, being a European state, had every legal right to ask for access", Turkey should stop "acting peevishly" and the Great Powers should press the Porte in favour of the Greeks. Then, he revealed to Zalokostas that the government had been trying to sell out the Piraeus-Larissa line, which was being built on a loan, to a major company. Were they to secure Ottoman approval for the junction, bargains with the company would be extremely facilitated<sup>38</sup>.

Zalokostas met with Krause and he was provided with detailed information on the prospects. According to Krause, the alternative routes were three: (a) The starting point would be on the Salonika-Skopje line. The railway track would follow the course of the Salonika-Monastir line and would go south to Larissa, via Platamona and the Tempi Valley. (b) The starting point would be on the Salonika-Monastir line, thence would run to Kalambaka, via Servia and Velemisti. (c) The starting point would be the same with (b) but would end in Larissa, passing through Servia. Krause mentioned that the first route was by far less expensive but also vulnerable to sea attacks. The third option was preferable to the Greeks but the construction of the Ottoman part would be a heavy financial burden for any constructor. Evidently the only option left was the second and, according to Krause, it had to be the focus of all Greco-Turkish negotiations<sup>39</sup>.

However, in the following months, Trikoupis and his successors, Sotirios Sotiropoulos and Dimitrios Rallis, had much more serious problems to deal with, namely the mounting financial deficit which was getting out of hand. To make things worse, in mid 1893 the British company, which was building the Piraeus-Larissa line, ran out of capital, while the Greek state had already used the railway loan to cover part of the budget deficit. In October 1893 Trikoupis returned to power, but the only thing left to be done to restore Greek finances was to declare the state bankrupt<sup>40</sup>.

The year which followed December 10th 1893, the official day of bankruptcy, was certainly not the best of Trikoupis's political life. The fierce at-

stantinople, 24 June 1892, No. 1215; S. Dragoumis to E. Zalokostas, Athens, 10 July 1892, No. 838; E. Zalokostas to S. Dragoumis, Constantinople, 19 July 1892, No. 1424.

38. AYE/PK/1906/6, S. Dragoumis to Zalokostas, Athens, 8 Aug. 1892, No. 8989.

39. AYE/PK/1906/6, Zalokostas to S. Dragoumis, Constantinople, 13 Sept. 1892, No. 1830.

40. Papagiannakis, *op. cit.*, 129.

tacks of the opposition, the frequent rallies in the capital and the interference of the palace accelerated his downfall (January 1895)<sup>41</sup>. It goes without saying that political upheaval and financial crisis did not favour any additional approaches to the Porte at a time when numerous European entrepreneurs were bombarding the Ottoman government with various railway projects. As the construction of the Salonika-Monastir line had reached its final stage and the Salonika-Constantinople junction was steadily progressing, an English constructor, a certain Bright, backed by the French, suggested to build an extension line from Monastir to the Adriatic coast. Ambassador Nikolaos Mavrokordatos pointed out that all these lines running from Constantinople to the west were threatening to isolate the Greek kingdom. He suggested that Bright should be "convinced" that it was to his benefit to combine his project with a Greco-Turkish junction and a line running southward to Piraeus. Not surprisingly Bright was not convinced. It seems that no argument was strong enough to persuade foreign investors, especially at a time when Greece had failed to compromise with the constructor of the Piraeus-Larissa line and had detained the two million franc guarantee<sup>42</sup>.

Despite European indifference and Greek shortage of capital, Theodoros Diligiannis, the new Prime Minister, was not prepared to stay aloof. It is reasonable to maintain that the mass invasion of Bulgarian bands in Macedonia from the early spring 1895 had disturbed the Greek cabinet which lacked the financial means to sustain the Greek presence in Macedonia intact<sup>43</sup>. This time the task to prepare a study was assigned to the War Office, which so far had been left out. Indeed, in April 1895, the War Minister, General Ioannis Papadiamantopoulos, complained to the Foreign Minister because, so far, railway tracks had been planned without taking into account Greek military considerations. He mentioned that the commercial interests of the unredeemed brethren had to be sacrificed for the security of the Greek state. Therefore he suggested that the only line which could be accepted by the Greek army was the coastal one, via Platamon and Tempi. However, he realised that the Turks would never agree on such a line. All the other routes, in case of war against the Ottoman Empire, would be vulnerable. Moreover, they were longer

41. Aspreas, *op. cit.*, ii 197-202.

42. AYE/PK/1906/6, N. Mavrokordatos to Foreign Minister, Constantinople, 11 Feb. 1894, No. 280. Papagiannakis, *op. cit.*, 129-130.

43. Kostantinos A. Vakalopoulos, *I Makedonia stis paramones tou Makedonikou Agona (1894-1904)* [Macedonia on the Eve of the Macedonian Struggle] (Thessaloniki, 1986), 55-62.



and therefore the diversion of the Indian mail —the Greek fervent wish— was by no means guaranteed<sup>44</sup>.

Despite Papadiamantopoulos's view, Greece decided to proceed with another approach. This time they hoped not only to convince the Porte to accept a railway connection, but also to impose the coastal line. Shortly afterwards lieutenant-colonel of Artillery Nikolaos Pournaras undertook to prepare a memoir showing that Greece had only financial reasons in mind in proposing a coastal track. Indeed, in his account all Greek military arguments were replaced by financial considerations. He claimed that such a junction would be harmless to Salonika; indeed, it might even be profitable! Later on that year (1895) Pournaras was sent on a mission in Macedonia and thence to Constantinople, where he was granted an audience by the Grand Vizir. After discussing the situation in Macedonia the conversation turned to the issue of the railway connection. The Grand Vizir listened carefully to Pournaras's "financial arguments", stressed the importance of a junction and then sent the officer over to the Minister for Public Works<sup>45</sup>.

Diligiannis hurried to authorise Pournaras to negotiate with the Ottoman Minister but advised him to use strictly "commercial arguments" and not reveal Greek military considerations<sup>46</sup>. Unfortunately, we lack further evidence on this approach, a fact which might be linked to Pournaras's sudden death—he was just 50 years old—in September 1895. Anyway, the Turks were determined not to add a single mile of track to the south of Macedonia and the fighting in Crete and Macedonia certainly did not favour a shift of policy in favour of Greece. Besides, the Diligiannis government, amidst all financial burdens and political entanglements, had to prepare for the first modern Olympics. However, the successful organisation of the games and the civilised European image that Greece tried to cultivate for the occasion was just one side of the coin. The irredentist passions excited by the powerful *Ethniki Etairia* (National Society) was the other.

It is not the purpose of this paper to follow Greek revolutionary activities which developed in Crete and Macedonia under the auspices of the National Society and eventually led to the 1897 Greco-Turkish War. The Greek defeat and humiliation shocked the nation. However, the shock was not that strong

44. AYE/PK/1906/6, Papadiamantopoulos to Foreign Minister, Athens, 5 Apr. 1895, No. 2.

45. AYE/PK/1906/20, N. Mavrokordatos to Foreign Minister, Constantinople, 25 July 1895, No. 604; Diligiannis to N. Mavrokordatos, Athens, 29 Aug. 1895, No. 9050.

46. AYE/PK/1906/6, Diligiannis to N. Mavrokordatos, Athens, 29 Aug. 1895, No. 9050.

to make Greeks see that Ottoman diplomats and members of the General Staff were competent enough to decide what was good for the Empire. It was evident that Turkey had gained a considerable military advantage after the construction of the Salonika-Monastir and the Salonika-Alexandroupolis (Dede-Agatch) junction line which justified the traditional Ottoman policy against a southern railway connection and would continue to weigh heavily, at least as long as Greece lacked a line to the border<sup>47</sup>. Nevertheless, Greek diplomats thought that they were clever enough to convince the Porte to accept a railway connection in the context of the treaty which ended the 1897 war, just a few months after the cease-fire<sup>48</sup>.

In spite of the Ottoman refusal, the Greeks, like so many times in the past, did not give up hope and repeated direct and indirect approaches, either to the Porte or to foreign diplomats. In 1900 Premier George Theotokis, a nobleman from Corfu, and Baron George de Reuter, the representative of a railway construction syndicate, signed a convention for the completion of the Piraeus-Demerli line (the latter being a station to the south of Larissa), which had been abandoned six years earlier. Work on the track started only three years later and revived hopes that a junction with the Ottoman network was still possible. Indeed, in 1903, during a parliamentary debate, the issue of the connection surfaced again and, surprisingly, after 25 years of fruitless negotiations, when the dream of the Indian Mail was completely out of date, there were deputies who still believed that the intentions of Turkey had not yet been clarified. Theotokis was one of them<sup>49</sup>.

In February 1904, when the first part of the Piraeus-Demerli line had at last reached its final stage, Premier Theotokis directed the Foreign Ministry to approach immediately the Porte and persuade the Turks to grant permission for a junction line via Tempi and Katerini. He was convinced that the coastal route was the cheapest possible and hoped that Greek arguments were strong enough to bend Ottoman reservations<sup>50</sup>. Instructions were forwarded to the

47. Actually the line was ready just in time for the war and naturally during warfare it attracted the interest of Greek saboteurs. See Georgios Th. Lyritzis, *I Ethniki Etaireia kai i drasis autis* [National Society and its Activity] (Kozani, 1970), 123. F.O. 195/1988, Blunt to Foreign Minister, Salonika, 18 Apr. 1897, ff. 344, 347.

48. AYE/PK/1906/6, Zalokostas to Foreign Minister, Constantinople, 18 May 1899, No. 1101.

49. *Loc. cit.* AYE/PK/1906/6, N. Mavrokordatos to Foreign Minister, Constantinople, 13 Sept. 1899, No. 2119. Papagiannakis, *op. cit.*, 130-132. E.S.V., sixteenth period, first synod, 6 Mar. 1903, p. 540; 14 May 1903, pp. 1364-1365.

50. Papagiannakis, *op. cit.*, 132. AYE/1906/20, Theotokis to Foreign Ministry, Athens, 10 Feb. 1904, No. 98.

Embassy the following day and shortly afterwards de Reuter and J. Guin, members of the Administrative Council of the Piraeus-Demerli construction company, rushed to Constantinople to assist the new Greek approach<sup>51</sup>. They were both granted audience by the Grand Vezir who accepted their proposals with almost no resistance after a short debate. Of course, the Grand Vezir suggested that details should be discussed later on, after the completion of the Greek part of the line<sup>52</sup>.

Apparently aware that Ottoman officials had a long tradition of going back on promises, Theotokis's cabinet thought it was advisable to activate simultaneous foreign pressure. The embassies in Paris and Vienna were informed on February 21, 1904 on the new round of negotiations and were asked to secure French and Austrian support respectively. France was quick to respond since French capitalists were heavily involved in Greek railway business. But Count Goluchowski, the Austrian Foreign Minister, was rather reluctant to promise his assistance. He claimed that the Austrian Ambassador in Constantinople was intensely engaged in the Macedonian reform scheme and could not spare a minute of his time. The Greek Ambassador suggested that, although the railway question itself was irrelevant to the Macedonian Question, Austrians could present both to the Sultan as a package deal: if the Porte would be willing to consent to the railway connection, Greece would continue to conduct a friendly policy in Macedonia and the loyalty of the Sultan's Greek subjects would be assured<sup>53</sup>.

It is hard to say whether Austrians responded quickly to the Greek proposal but it seems that between spring 1904 and late 1906 they had tried not more than once to back the Greeks, though unsuccessfully. In November 1906, King George I of Hellenes met with Aehrenthal, who had just succeeded in office Goluchowski. The Piraeus-Demerli line had been ready for two years and the final part, from Demerli to the border, via Larissa, was under construction. Aehrenthal, satisfied because the Greek monarch had first sought the support of Austria-Hungary and aware of the prolonged Greek railway drama, offered to take the matter of the junction up to the Porte<sup>54</sup>.

51. AYE/PK/1906/20, Romanos to Gryparis, Athens, 11 Feb. 1904, No. 2546; 13 Feb. 1904, Recommendation.

52. AYE/PK/1906/20, Gryparis to Romanos, Constantinople, 18 Feb. 1904, No. 399.

53. AYE/PK/1906/20, Romanos to the Hellenic Legation in Vienna, Athens, 21 Feb. 1904; Romanos to the Hellenic Legation in Paris, Athens, 21 Feb. 1904; Delyannis to Romanos, Paris, 2 Mar. 1904; Manos to Romanos, Vienna, 25 Feb. 1904, No. 102.

54. Papagiannakis, *op. cit.*, 132. Solomon Wank, "Aehrenthal and the Sanjak of Novi-bazar Railway Project: Reappraisal", *Slavonic and East European Review*, 42 (1963-64), 363.

Of course, Aehrenthal's offer was not a pure act of good will. In 1906 the Austrians were working hard to convince the Turks to give permission for the notorious Novibazar railway line. He thought it was a good idea to connect the two projects just for the occasion, although the Greek one was chiefly of British and French interest. In this way he tried to show that Austria had a wider interest in Balkan railways and not only in the *Sanjak* of Novibazar scheme. Pallavicini, the Austrian Ambassador in Constantinople, advised his Foreign Minister to refrain from a second attempt to assist the Greeks. One denial, he wrote, was enough. Aehrenthal kept his promise but Pallavicini proved right<sup>55</sup>. The Turks had not changed their minds yet, nor were they going to change them until the very last day of the Ottoman presence in Macedonia. Despite the rumors for new lines and the petitions of the Greek local population, not a mile of track was laid<sup>56</sup>. It proved easier for the Greeks to win a war against the Turks, the First Balkan War, than to persuade them accept a junction scheme.

Apparently the Greek Foreign Ministry had used all the available strategies, either combined or each by turn, and should not be blamed, at least for lack of flexibility. It should also be kept in mind that Greek interest in railway connection was not an exclusive target of Trikoupis's policy. All the governments from the mid 1870s to the Balkan Wars were equally concerned with the grim prospect of Greece's complete isolation. Koumoundouros, Diligiannis and Theotokis did not neglect the issue either, though they could not match Trikoupis's obsession with public works. But then one should ask why the Greeks had failed, if the steps taken by the diplomats were the appropriate ones and all the cabinets were truly devoted to the cause. In general, the Ottoman Empire, especially before 1888, was never a keen supporter of international railway communication. Railways were apparently the main instrument of European penetration and would undoubtedly undermine the unity of the Sultan's domains. In this particular case, Turkey not only lacked financial interest but also had specific military arguments against a junction project, especially a coastal one. In addition, European governments, having realised how delicate the issue was, were extremely reluctant to favour any Greek military schemes which might harm Ottoman strategic plans and thus

55. Wank, *op. cit.*, 355-356, 365 and note 47. For the diplomatic manœuvres concerning the Novibazar project see also: Arthur J. May, "The Novibazar Railway Project", *Journal of Modern History*, 10 (1938), 496-527 and René Pinon, "La crise balcanique: chemins de fer et réformes", *Revue des deux mondes*, 5th series, 45 (1908), 143-176.

56. *Aliitheia*, 918/3 Mar. 1909. *Makedonia* 34/13 Aug. 1911.

refrained from exercising all their influence. To make things worse the condition of the Greek economy was not particularly appealing to Europeans, while political instability did not favour business either. Blackmails and other intrigues, which were used by foreign investors, also created mistrust between the Greek state and the construction companies. Finally, the traditional hostile relations between the two neighbouring states and the continuous outbursts of the Cretan and Macedonian Questions undermined any chance to create a friendly climate, which was the necessary precondition for overcoming old prejudices.

However, it is worth wondering about the reasons which stimulated and perpetuated attempts for more than three decades, since it was obvious, almost from the start, that the Porte had strong arguments against the junction. First of all one should take seriously into account the irredentist and romantic atmosphere which dominated Greek foreign policy and kept alive the most unrealistic dreams. Local pressure for the creation of a modern financial infrastructure was another factor. In this context, Greece had to keep the junction question open in order to attract the interest of foreign railway construction companies and achieve better terms. Defensive considerations, especially after the humiliating experiences of 1885 and 1897, also necessitated such a construction. Pressure was also exercised from Macedonia, where the Bulgarian advance threatened Greek interests. Last but not least, the Turks themselves also cultivated the idea, more often with words than with facts, that a junction was possible after all and never left the Greek ambassadors and the construction companies without a hope. Ottoman officials promised year after year "to look seriously into the matter", "to do their best", "to influence" their colleagues and justify Greek expectations. To make matters worse, European capitalists and ministers provided the Greeks with additional hopes.

Ottoman and European encouragement kept Greek aspirations alive for some 35 years, despite the obvious and formidable obstacles. Greek politicians never gave up hope that there was still ground for negotiations. They showed lack of realism and this led them take Turkish and European reassurances and rumors at their face value<sup>57</sup>. Therefore the question arises how they hoped to overcome Turkish reluctance. Initially the matter was in the hands of the ambassador in Constantinople who tried direct contacts with Ottoman

57. Even a Greek newspaper in Salonika mentioned that "if Greeks are interested in railway connection then, they should drop their claims over Crete". See *Alitheia*, 834/12 Nov. 1908.

Ministers, either for Foreign or for Domestic Affairs, and met occasionally with the Minister for Public Works but to no avail. He even approach the Grand Vezir himself, but with no better results. The failure of direct contacts necessitated the use of certain go-betweens. Greek ambassadors in almost all the European capitals did their best to attract the interest of the Great Powers on the railway junction issue. Even King George was mobilised for the same cause. They collected only promises. European pressure was never strong enough to change Turkish minds. Even the Austrians, who had both the motives and the influence, failed. More decisive was the use of entrepreneurs as intermediaries. European capitalists or famous engineers, who had strong links with the Ottoman cabinet, like de Freize, Kaulla, Krause and de Reuter, played a considerable role in Greco-Ottoman railway negotiations; indeed they were the only men who had some chance of persuading the Turks. They, too, failed.

As often has been the case Greek statesmen deceived themselves in believing that a Christian and European state like Greece could count on European support. Moreover, they believed that constant European pressure, frequent friendly visits of the ambassadors to the Ottoman ministries and friendly conversations with officials was the appropriate strategy to persuade the Turks to act against their profound national interests and permit a junction, while Greek revolutionary activities in Crete and Macedonia were a constant threat to the integrity of the Empire. Had the Greeks realised in time the incoherence of their tactics, the superficiality of their arguments, and the inconsistency of their irredentist dreams with the political and financial realities of the time they would have achieved a much more sensible and balanced foreign policy towards both Turkey and Europe.

*Museum of the Macedonian Struggle*  
*Salonika*