

Thanos Veremis, *Greece's Balkan Entanglement* (ELIAMEP-YALCO, Athens 1995), 134 pp.

At a time when Greece's "Macedonian" policy is still subject to acrimonious party wrangling, while only recently it was the target of bitter foreign criticism, Professor Veremis' book may seem a preciously "different" approach. It is a scholarly attempt to interpret the Greek attitude towards the Balkan situation which resulted from the collapse of the region's communist regimes and the dissolution of Yugoslavia. What is more, the abundance of shallow interpretations of the latest Balkan crisis offered by many in the West, more often than not based on pseudohistorical "analogies", has prompted the author to present his main theme in a historically informed way. The text is primarily aimed at foreign readers, who are not necessarily familiar with the complexities of Balkan and Greek history and politics. Thus, the book appropriately begins with a brief but lucid presentation of modern Greek history, from the establishment of the Greek state in 1830 to the end of the civil war in 1949.

Chapter II deals with the post-War efforts to promote forms of multi-lateral co-operation across ideological boundaries in the Balkans —a dear cause to successive Greek governments after 1974. These efforts, of course, broke down by 1990-1991, as the downfall of the communist dictatorships was followed by an outburst of nationalist rhetoric and the rekindling of earlier feuds. Confronted with this situation, the foreign policies of Western Europe and Greece proved wanting in many respects. Noting this "absence of [a] unified [European] policy" towards the post-communist Balkans, Professor Veremis does not shrink from putting forward concrete proposals for a constructive, stabilising Western approach to the region's problems: his discussion of various steps, designed to promote democracy, free market economy, political dialogue and stability, conveys an air of both expertise in international affairs and much needed common sense.

The search for security in post-Cold War Balkans requires a clear understanding of the regional issues at stake: the resurgence of nationalism and its troublesome effects constitute the main subject of the following three chapters of this book. In Chapter III, the author observes the precarious value of self-determination as a normative principle in international relations, especially when its application is not accompanied by democratic rule and respect for human rights. It is this latter deficiency of the post-war political settlement in Central-Eastern Europe that Professor Veremis, in common with many liberal analysts, holds responsible for the current trend towards ethnic strife and political disintegration. Further, he is quite critical when

assessing the role of Germany and the United States in the break-up of Yugoslavia and the protracted conflict that ensued. Yet the author far from subscribes to a "conspiracy theory" of any sort. The low priority accorded to the region by most Western policy makers may well explain the lamentable record of crisis-management in former Yugoslavia: "the Balkans are no longer the powder keg of Europe but a decaying backwater cut off from the prospect of communication with the Western community" (p. 55).

One can hardly disagree with the author, when, in Chapter IV, he states that anachronistic views do die hard in this corner of Europe. The resurrection of the Macedonian controversy, since Skopje deserted Belgrade in September 1991, and the tortuous course of Greek foreign policy ever since may well be a case in point. After a brief but clear description of the irredentist legacy burdening the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Professor Veremis provides a full account of developments in the issue, both on the diplomatic level and on the domestic political scene of the parties involved. The reader is able to follow the flow and ebb of events from the declaration of "Macedonian" independence and the 16 December 1991 decision of the European Council of Ministers, through the Pineiro and Vance-Owen "packages", the imposition of the Greek embargo on FYROM, until the summer of 1994 — a year before the eventual *interim* agreement of New York. The author's is a candid assessment of Greek policy: "Greece's handling of the 'Macedonian' question", he states, "constitutes a case study of how diplomacy fails when it is hinged on domestic politics" (p. 92). And his narrative provides ample justification for this conclusion.

The blend of populist and nationalistic rhetoric characteristic of Greek politics of the last fifteen years or so and its negative effect abroad have apparently led Professor Veremis to probe into the "elusive content", as he puts it, of Greek nationalism. The rough treatment which Greece has repeatedly received in the columns of the foreign Press is, according to the author, often influenced by a misreading of Greek nationalism. Historical factors that condition a nation's image of itself are often overlooked by foreign commentators as they level their criticism on current issues; and these factors need to be reminded. Veremis argues that Greek nationalism has been premised on claims for a *cultural*, not racial, continuity of Hellenism, a rather flexible approach, which allowed for the eventual integration of various linguistic and cultural groups into a —now— homogeneous national community. The author further acknowledges the transformations of Greek nationalist ideology, from the aggressive 19th century irredentism to the "defensive, exclusive and parochial" national ideology of the post-Civil War era and the verbal assertiveness of the PASOK governments *vis-à-vis* Greece's We-

stern partners.

The book comes complete with a review article on five recent titles, four dealing with Balkan affairs and one with nationalism and national identity. This may seem somewhat redundant for a text that in the previous chapters has served its stated purpose well. To be sure, more questions are raised than can possibly be answered in 134 pages. Cardinal issues, such as the content, role and transformations of nationalism, the purported analytical framework of this work, are treated rather briefly. Yet one comes to the end of this concise work with a clearer mind about the historical background and factual aspects of Greece's latest Balkan entanglement, and enough "food" for further thought and discussion.

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Gunnar Hering, *Nostos*. Gesammelte Schriften zur südosteuropäischen Geschichte. Herausgegeben von Maria A. Stassinopoulou. Frankfurt/M. etc., Peter Lang 1995. S. 380.

Aus der Festschrift zum 60. Geburtstag ist eine Gedenkschrift geworden: der Wiener Neogräzistik-Professor und bekannte Historiker ist am 22.12.1994 einem heimtückischen Leiden erlegen. Er ist vor allem bekannt geworden durch seine Dissertation zu Kyrillos Lukaris *Ökumenisches Patriarchat und europäische Politik 1620-1638*. Wiesbaden 1968 (griechische Übersetzung Athen 1992) und seine zweibändige Darstellung der griechischen Parteigeschichte *Die politischen Parteien in Griechenland 1821-1936*, München 1992 stellt eine umfassende, analytische und mit vielen Neuwertungen versehene Dokumentation des politischen und öffentlichen Lebens Griechenlands von der Staatengründung bis zur Metaxas-Diktatur dar. Präzision der Quellenerschließung, Genauigkeit in der Aufarbeitung, Überprüfbarkeit der Ergebnisse, klare gedankliche Konzeptionen, Einbettung der Teilphänomene in übergreifende Strukturen waren überhaupt wesentliche Charakteristika seines Arbeitsstils. Seine Beschäftigung mit Ethnostereotypen und die entmystifizierende Rationalität, mit der er vor allem den südosteuropäischen Nationalmythen und Geschichtsideologemen begegnete, sind wegweisend für die Balkan-Historiker der Zukunft. Die im FS-Band zusammengestellten Arbeiten dokumentieren nicht nur die methodische Unbestechlichkeit, sondern darüber hinaus einen übergreifenden Interessenshorizont und eine Vorliebe für interdisziplinäre Fragestellungen. Sprachbegabung und stupende Quellenkenntnis, theoretische Kompetenz und eine unstillbare Neugier verbinden sich zu einer