

Book Reviews

Stathis Gourgouris, *Dream nation: enlightenment, colonization and the institution of Modern Greece*, Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1996, 203 pp.

Greece does not exist, this author tells us. He explains that his “engagement with the labyrinth of Neohellenic history ... is predicated on nothing less than this positing/position of absence: the nation’s fundamental *non-existence*” (his emphasis). In fact, the Greek nation is a dream and dreams, he says, die not when they are forgotten but when they are interpreted. So, he does not interpret. He will not investigate—he says—the *what* of Greece, but the *how* of Greece. To clarify matters further he decides “to cast the point in the current philosophical idiom: this study is interested” he points out “not in the *Being* of Greece but in the *situation* of its being”. Exploring the concept of the nation-as-form (of a dream) he stumbles on the fact that “as a form, the Nation is fundamentally unintelligible”.

However, his own ontology is not easier to grasp. “Conferring upon the nation the mark of a dream” he makes clear, “does not at all mean that the nation/dream is nor *real* or in any case less real than a political scientist’s description of it as the Nation-State. The nation is real *insofar* as it is a social-imaginary institution. This, he adds disarmingly “is not at all a paradoxical thought (although it does point to the limits of the rational)”.

From then on he deals unexceptionally with the Greek Enlightenment, Fallmerayer’s views on Greek (dis)continuity, Paparrigopoulos’ refutation of such ideas, the “Great Idea”, underdevelopment, clientelism, corruption (no dream so far), “the astonishing fantasy of philhellenism”, the “dream of Europe” and other pure creations of the mind. Getting down to specifics he examines Makriyannis and the “politics of memory”, Seferis and the “nostalgia of utopia” and somehow brings into the discussion Montaigne’s “philosophical meditation on the ambivalence of the barbarian”. Speaking of barbarians he treats with amused condescendence the brutal murders perpetrated by the 17th November terrorist group since 1975. He credits these “terrorists” (his quotation marks) with considerable analytical skills in the documents they produce after each murder in showing that “Greece’s ruling capitalist class is a fake... Whether this is actually so or not, it is no wonder that a majority of Greeks find the group’s leaflets endearing...”. He calls them “the State’s shadow and as such the nation’s spiritual conscience”. He even likens them, as “self-appointed avengers”, to Count Montecristo and only regrets that they some-

times act in "the national(ist) interest" by "targeting Turkish diplomatic officials" (p. 168).

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Miladin Milošević, *Srbija i Grčka, 1914-1918. Iz istorije diplomatskih odnosa* (Serbia and Greece, 1914-1918: From the History of Diplomatic Relations), Belgrade, Zajecar, 1997, 318 pp.

Despite the supposedly close cultural relations between the two countries, very little has been written about Greek-Serbian relations either in Greece or in Serbia or the former Yugoslavia. This also applies to the First World War, one of the most crucial stages in the development of their bilateral relations, which was characterised by great expectations, hopes, and demonstrations of friendship, love, and mistrust and hostility too. It is a period that has never been fully studied, whether owing to technical problems (the difficulty of access to the two countries' state archives) or by scholarly or political choice. So, although studies exist of Greek-British, Serbian-British, Greek-French, and Serbian-French relations during the Great War, Greek-Serbian relations have been examined only with reference to isolated issues —such as the transportation of the Serbian army from Corfu to Thessaloniki, for instance— and mainly on the basis of British, French, or German sources. So this latest book by Miladin Milošević breaks fresh ground in that it focuses exclusively on the diplomatic relations between Greece and Serbia in this particular period.

In this period of Greek-Serbian relations, there is one fundamental reference point around which most of the issues revolve, including the collaboration between the two states. This is the Greek-Serbian Mutual Defence Agreement of 1913, which was drawn up in response to Bulgarian expansionism and to consolidate the two signatories' interests in the Balkans, with the co-operation of Romania and the tolerance of the Great Powers. The most important consideration in the diplomatic activity in the early years of the conflict was the question of Greece's obligations towards its ally Serbia, which had been the first to enter the fray, when Austro-Hungary declared war on it. With the collapse of Serbia, followed by the transfer of the Serbian political and military leadership to Greece (Corfu), together with most of the Serbian army (Corfu and then Macedonia) and large numbers of non-combatants (Corfu, Athens, Volos, Thessaloniki, e.t.c.), new questions arose that were conditioned either by the perception of the alliance between the two countries (which never officially ceased to exist) or by Athens' relations with the Allies.