

## \* BRITISH SOURCES CONCERNING THE GREEK STRUGGLE IN MACEDONIA, 1901-1909

One important British source—a series of Parliamentary Papers or Blue Books<sup>1</sup> is already well known in Greece, and I notice that Greek historians sometimes refer to these publications. Indeed, these Blue Books, like the French Yellow Books, were studied in Greece as they appeared, and they came in for scathing attacks from the flourishing Athenian Press. In July 1907 (just about the time when memorial services were held for the gallant officers, Fofas and Agras) the, admittedly, somewhat sensational, paper *Kairi* («Καιροί») stated that the British ministers responsible for the publication of the Blue Books suffered from a raving and incurable Bulgarianism and that British consuls made biased statements based on Bulgarian sources, saying for example that thousands of Greeks had passed into Macedonia in the early months of 1907. The truth was—so *Kairi* tells us—that Greek bandsmen never exceeded 200, whereas the Bulgarians had 36 bands of 50 each (a total of 1800), which were assisted by thousands of peasants in arms.

These statements about the Blue Books were hardly true. The consuls never reported “thousands” of Greeks invading Macedonia and they did not base their reports exclusively on Bulgarian sources: more often they relied, among others, on Turkish sources; and they had indeed private in-

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\*. Paper read to the Institute for Balkan Studies, 19 April 1961.

1. The titles are *Correspondence and Further Correspondence concerning the affairs of South Eastern Europe*. The first, Turkey, No 1 (1908) LXXXVII, 261, covers the period December 1900 to January 1903. Thereafter we have No 2 (1903), LXXXVII, 575; No 3 (1903), LXXXVII, 583; No 4 (1903), CX 911; No 1 (1904) CX 381; No 2 (1904), CX 735; No 4 (1904)—in continuation of No 2—C111, 555; No 2 (1905)—in continuation of No 4 (1904)—C111, 793; No 3 (1905), CXXXVII, 175; No 1 (1906), CXXXVII 1; No 1 (1907)—in continuation of No 1 (1906)—C. 27; No 3 (1908)—in continuation of No 1 (1907)—CXXV 607. This last covers the period January 1907 to April, 1908. The next, Turkey No 1 (1909), C.V. 943 is *Correspondence respecting the Constitutional Movement in Turkey*, and deals with the period July-December 1908. On the subject of British Parliamentary Papers, see E. Prevelakis, *Tà Βρεταννικά Κοινοβουλευτικά Έγγραφα...* Thessaloniki, 1960.

formants, who were, perhaps, not always reliable. These reports had, it is true, many shortcomings. But I imagine that Greek historians of today (while noting errors, omissions, and exaggerations) will not, like the contemporary Greeks, condemn them as a whole; for, dull and prosaic as they are, they do at least show the great achievements of those fateful years—achievements which, to my mind, were as great, if not greater, than those of 1821, when perhaps the attitude of Europe was less unfavourable to Greek aspirations.

During the Macedonian struggle, the Greeks of necessity had to conceal their plans and achievements. The Greek Government, when so tardily it came to act by encouraging the private enterprise of more adventurous Greeks, had to keep in the background, professing, when the British Minister called attention to bandsmen, to have heard of tobacco smugglers in the Gulf of Volos, promising to make enquiries (which would lead to nothing) and having ready at hand a long list of Bulgarian atrocities as an answer to accusations against the Greeks. Theotokis, Skouses (in whom irrelevance was a virtue) and Baltazzis defended themselves ably and often had the better of diplomatic repartee. But fifty years later, things are different. The great struggle ended in victory; and the means by which it was achieved and all those who played their part in it became most laudable subjects of historical study—a study which flourishes in this Institute, whose “Macedonian” publications are completing the picture of those important years in Greek national history. It was most fortunate indeed that Penelope Dhelta, as Mr Laourdas has shown in his excellent lecture<sup>1</sup>, had the happy idea of prevailing on some of the great figures—Karavangeli, Dhikonimos and Papazanetea—to tell their stories. And it is also most fortunate that Mr Modhis has written so many excellent works which recapture for us the age and which give us such vivid portraits of many who took part in the struggle<sup>2</sup>.

The somewhat heavy and prosaic Blue Books cannot hope to rival these lively Greek sources. But in their arid and somewhat unfriendly pages they do at least reveal the mounting Greek offensive which, as Karavangelis tells us, would have been less protracted if only it had been undertaken earlier. The statistical picture, composed laboriously every month in the British Consulate at Salonica, though not accurate in every detail, shows clearly enough at what points the battle was engaged and the results of actual engagements. I know of course that victory or defeat did not

1. *Ἡ Πηνελόπη Δέλτα καὶ ἡ Μακεδονία*, Thessaloniki 1960.

2. Cf *Balkan Studies* I, 1960, 132.

depend entirely upon the casualties inflicted or sustained: that the victorious band was one that could roam far and wide, maintaining its communications, avoiding conflict except when it needed to extend its field, winning over the inhabitants and protecting them from renewed intimidation. I know also that the Greek bandsmen were very skilful in bringing the Bulgarians face to face with the Turkish troops, thus saving their own powder for another day; and I know too that an elaborate organisation of non-combatants worked quietly and efficiently behind the scenes. These and other finer points hardly ever appear in the British reports, which too crudely assess operations in terms of casualties. All the same, the British Blue Books reveal at a glance where the Greek bands were operating and they supply much information about the recruiting of these bands and of their movements across the frontier.

But the interesting thing about the Blue Books is that they do not give all the reports that reached the British Government and, what is more, many of the reports included have been reduced by omissions. In its official publications, the British Government, far from exaggerating the Greek effort, deliberately scaled it down. This policy is clearly revealed in a dispatch of 8 August 1907 from Sir Edward Grey to Sir Francis Elliot. This dispatch is a reply to a communication in which the British Minister in Athens had passed on to Grey a proposal from Theotokis for a formal agreement with Great Britain. Theotokis, it seems, had discussed his proposal with the Greek King but kept it secret from his cabinet. The proposal was to the effect that on the break-up of the Ottoman Empire ("in two years' time or it might be fifty") the allies of Greece should ensure that she obtained satisfaction of her aspirations, that Epirus should be given to her and that her road to Constantinople should not be barred. In return Greece offered to improve her navy and to put her harbours at the disposal of the western powers. On this particular episode the unpublished British documents (which I hope sometime to make known) shed a great deal of new light. But what interests us here is the British reply. Having pointed out that Britain did not make secret agreements, Grey went on to answer Theotokis' insinuation that Britain had abandoned Greece. "M. Theotoky is no doubt aware", wrote Grey, "that if it were to become widely known in Great Britain how prominent a part has lately been played by the Greek element in creating disturbances in Macedonia, this circumstance would leave a painful impression in the minds of the British public which might react on the political relation of the two countries, and His Excellency will not fail to have observed that, when asked to give figures in Parliament respecting outrages in Macedonia, His Majesty's Government have hitherto

abstained from specifying the very large proportion of which is due to the action of the Greek bands"<sup>1</sup>.

These omissions from the Blue Books came as no surprise to one of the chief contributors, Sir Robert Windham Graves, who succeeded old Sir Alfred Biliotti as British Consul-General in Salonica in July 1903. While he was on leave in England it had been suggested to him that he should tone down his reports. In his memoirs<sup>2</sup> he tells us: "I could not bring myself to act on this suggestion, and I continued to report undoubted facts as they were brought to my notice, although I knew that my despatches would suffer considerable mutilation before their publication in Blue Books, if they were not entirely suppressed, since it was not opportune that public opinion should be excited by such tales of horror when England was not prepared to take a strong line in Macedonia, as she had done in Crete a few years earlier".

Of these omissions in the Blue Books I am unable at present to state precisely what they amount to, as I have not yet finished the laborious task of comparing these published papers with the original documents. But my impression is that the omissions scale down not only Greek activity but also the stern measures of the Turks. Where the Turks were concerned, the British Government was in a dilemma. More than any other power it was urging the Sultan to put down the bands: but when the Turk acted, in what was indeed a difficult situation, his methods were such as to bring discredit on his advisers, and that is why Graves's "damning criticisms of Turkish methods" were entirely suppressed in the Government's publications.

Of even greater interest than the reports mutilated and suppressed are the Foreign Office minutes on both the published and the unpublished documents. These minutes confirm the contemporary Greek view that the Greek case found little sympathy in Westminster. When Consul Heathcote reported<sup>3</sup> from Monastir the heavy losses of a Greek band near Loshnitza on 29 July 1907, one enthusiastic sportsman scribbled: "A very good bag". On a despatch from Merlin<sup>4</sup>, Consul at Volos, containing some sensible observations on Greek policy, we have the comment: "Unfortunately the

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1. F. O. 371/264 - 23355.

2. R. W. Graves, *Storm Centres of the Near East*, 1933, p. 228. See also his comments on p. 211.

3. 3 August 1907. F. O. 371/380.

4. 24 August 1907 F. O. 371/380. It was Merlin who kept an eye on the movements of Greek bands in Thessaly.

Greeks are well aware how successful their policy of forcible Hellenism has been in the past... this policy has been carried on... ever since the Bulgarians... and... Kutzo-Vlachs began to revolt against the tyranny of the Patriarchate..." Again: "a strong Bulgaria is the best barrier to the Russian advance to the Bosphorous and Aegean... In a long conversation I had with Mr. Bouchier<sup>1</sup>... he set forth very clearly the circumstances of the Greco-Bulgarian conflict... He dwelt on the fact that it was so little understood or believed how enormously the Bulgarian element preponderated over that of any other in European Turkey".— And so on in this vein for several pages. True, on this occasion, the other minute writers were not so outrageous. Sir Charles Hardinge (though no Philhellene) added the note: "I used to know Mr. Bouchier in Sofia as the mouthpiece of Prince Ferdinand and no reliance is to be placed on his views which are more Bulgarian than the Bulgarians"<sup>2</sup>.

The Foreign Office minutes are also revealing in another way. They show quite clearly that the Macedonian question was a somewhat disturbing side-show. During these years England was moving away from a position of semi-isolation to one in which her allies were likely to be pre-determined. This change was closely related to a change in Austrian policy. In 1895 England refused to renew the Mediterranean Agreement on Austria's terms. Shortly afterwards Austria embarked on her ten-year alignment with Russia, a shaky affair which nevertheless led to the Vienna proposals and the Mürzsteg programme of 1903. While it lasted this arrangement deprived both France and England of any sense of real urgency in Near Eastern affairs. To Austria and to Russia they left, for the most part, the odium of pressing for reforms at Constantinople reserving indeed the right to make their own suggestions in the event of the failure of the Mürzsteg programme—a right which, under the pressure of parliamentary opinion, they certainly exercised, though with great caution, seeking always the approval of the European Concert. "If we separate from the Concert of Europe", wrote Grey, "and try to act alone, we shall not solve the Macedonian question: we shall raise the Turkish question"<sup>3</sup>. In a sense, the Concert was almost perfect and yet almost entirely useless as far as Macedonia was concerned. That is the paradox. It was almost perfect, because, except for Germany, who feathered her nest at Constantinople, the powers were in a large measure of agreement: they were all intent on

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1. Balkan Correspondent of the *Times*.

2. F. O. 371/264 - 23355.

3. Cabinet Memorandum, 20 January, 1908. F. O. 871/581 - 6742.

maintaining the *status quo*. Lamsdorf, in view of the Russian Far Eastern position, was prepared to restrain Bulgaria. There were signs indeed that the Bulgarians might force Russia's hand, but internal dissensions, Prince Ferdinand's timidity<sup>1</sup> and above all the lack of military preparation prevented this development until it became obvious that Russia, involved in conflict with Japan, could not be counted upon to come to their assistance. All this favoured the existence of the Concert. But, as Grey admitted in the House of Commons on 5 February 1908, the Concert lacked vitality and there was a danger it would perish because of its failure. Yet England continued her endeavour to keep the Concert in being, for she was afraid of being isolated in the Balkans.

Outside the Balkans, the Concert did not exist. Russia, despite her *entente* with Austria, set great store on the French alliance. The French, in view of German policy, made every effort to compose their differences with England; and the British, after the failure of the Anglo-German negotiations, wishing moreover to underwrite the Jap alliance and to improve (through France) relations with Russia, mindful too of the German naval threat, drew closer and closer to France<sup>2</sup>. The result was that despite the existence of the Concert in the Near East, the Powers, in dealing with the Macedonian question, kept their eyes firmly fixed upon their alignments elsewhere. This indeed is evident from a study of the published British Documents dealing with the origins of the First World War. Volume V of this collection reproduces a great amount of material to be found in the Blue Books; but much of the Blue Book material it omits, and, in so doing, omits many minutes which emphasize the subordination of the Macedonian problem to other considerations. Let me give a few examples. Commenting on certain Russian press extracts which attacked the Mürzsteg programme and also Austria's Mitrovitsa railway concession, Sir Charles Hardinge wrote: "The Struggle between Austria and Russia in the Balkans is evidently now beginning and we shall not be bothered by Russia in Asia"<sup>3</sup>. And a few days later (he was assuming that Germany had encouraged

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1. "It must always be remembered that Pr. Ferdinand is without personal courage, which is a good thing for the rest of Europe, as he will avoid at all costs going to war". (Minute of Sir Charles Hardinge on Buchanan's Despatch of 6 February, 1908. F. O. 371/581 - 4831).

2. There are signs indeed that the British attached greater importance to the Entente than did the French. During the Morocco crisis they were much concerned lest the French should appease Germany by conceding a naval base in North Africa.

3. F. O. 371/581.

Austria in obtaining the railway concession); "The action of Austria and Germany will make Russia lean on us more and more in the future. In my opinion this will not be a bad thing"<sup>1</sup>. On all occasions, when trying to extend the scope of the reforms for the three Vilayets, the British Foreign Office took especial care not to cause offence to Russia; and it was even hoping that a Franco-Russo-British alignment might promote reform better than the Austro-Russian combination acting with the mandate of the Powers. A minute referring to the British reform proposals of 4 April 1908 states: "If M. Isvolsky is sufficiently courageous we should get German consent to these proposals and carry them, thus playing on a German apprehension of a Franco-Russo-British understanding in the Near East"<sup>2</sup>. Another minute states: "The Germans will come to heel if Isvolsky is firm"<sup>3</sup>.

On the whole, Britain obtained more support from Russia than she did from France, despite the pressure on the French government of the Unified Socialist Party which favoured the British Macedonian policy. The French indeed were not always helpful. By way of contrast, the British took great care not to give the French cause to complain. When the French wanted British support for Fournier's naval plans for Greece at the end of 1907, the British agreed to furnish it, although their own opinion was that a re-organised Greek Navy would prove an embarrassment rather than an assistance"<sup>4</sup>. When subsequently Theotokis changed his mind about Fournier's naval programme, the Foreign Office, hearing that the Greek Prime Minister had had casual talks with Admiral Drury's Chief of Staff, Captain Troubridge, was much alarmed lest Theotokis' change of view should be attributed by the French Government to British Machiavellian designs<sup>5</sup>.

This general situation which I have described tended to leave the Greeks in isolation, and it certainly gave rise to a sense of great frustration among them. It was not, however, entirely unfavourable, for, at the same time, it restrained Bulgaria and prevented her from making war on Turkey. It therefore provided the opportunity for Greece to do two very necessary things: to deprive the Bulgarians of their dominating position in Macedonia and to improve the Greek navy and army so that in more

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1. *Ibid.*

2. F. O. 371/582 - 126601.

3. F. O. 371/582 - 12613.

4. F. O. 371/464 - 30187.

5. *Ibid.*

favourable circumstances she could play a dominating role in the solution of the Macedonian question. Her achievement during this period, when we remember the difficulties with which she was confronted, was truly remarkable. She was a small country of only 2,600,000 souls: her young men were leaving for America at the rate of 2,500 a month: the influx of well over 20,000 refugees from Bulgaria and Eastern Roumelia necessitated the building of five new towns at a cost of over 12 million drachmas. Much of her revenue was assigned to servicing a gold debt which was under the control of an international commission. Money was needed for railway expansion, for re-arming her forces with up-to-date Mannlicher rifles and with French 75 mm. Schneider guns, and for improving her navy, which was small and semi-obsolete. Her strategic and potential military importance was underestimated except by experts like Admiral Fournier, whose plans, however, found little favour in Greece. Her bargaining power, both in the diplomatic and financial world, was weak; her alliance value was underrated; and it was hard to live down the disaster of 1897. Hence her claims in Macedonia and Epirus found little support in European circles; and her activities there were frowned upon by every European government. Nevertheless, through the great enterprise of individuals, she fought a rearguard action in Macedonia and even moved over to a kind of offensive, thus preventing the irreparable loss of territory which was eventually acquired in more favourable circumstances, but only after three major wars, at the treaties of Bucharest and Neuilly.

Of the Greek offensive in Macedonia the British sources provide a fairly detailed picture. They also provide considerable information concerning the Servian effort and the policy and military measures of the local Turks. Above all they show very adequately the weight of the Bulgarian onslaught, explaining at the same time why it was not greater and more effective than it actually was. They provide, in short, a very clear and a very detached survey of events in the three Vilayets or Salonica, Monastir and Uskub. As such they have a value in themselves: they give the substance of British intelligence and the British interpretation of that intelligence—which, of course, is all part of the history of the Macedonian question. But whether these documents have anything to add to established facts and whether they provide accurate information are questions not easily answered. I can however make certain observations.

Up to July 1903 when Biliotti was Consul General at Salonica, much of the information came from Greek sources, and the Greek case was very adequately and fully stated. Biliotti, a Greek from Rhodes, was in sympathy with Hellenic aspirations, as was also Dr. Theodorides, British Vice-Consul



at Serres. These two officers had had long experience of the Turkish Empire and of Bulgarian methods, and they saw through the Bulgarian attempt to provoke the Turks into committing atrocities, thus incurring the wrath of Europe. They also saw quite clearly that the Bulgarians, under the cover of a religious and social movement, were endeavouring to obtain the whole of Macedonia. Taking great pains over their enquiries, they challenged the account given in the *Times* of 5th December 1902 of the Turkish action in the Kazas of Melnik, Djuma-Bala, Razlog and Petritch on the occasion of the Bulgarian rising during the autumn of 1902. They pointed out that the Turks had lost 350 men in the Kresna defile, that the Bulgarians had murdered Greeks at Matchoukovo, and they subjected Bulgarian complaints, which had been loudly voiced in the press, to searching examination. Biliotti called in his doctor to examine Ivan Constandin's "charred toe", which turned out to be a mild case of frost bite. Others whom Dr Zanna examined showed no signs of injury. Biliotti could also point out that some of the alleged tortures were physically impossible; that there could be no Bashibuzouks from the entirely Christian village of Novo Selo; that individual petitioners were entirely ignorant of what had been written over their names. He also explained that the European picture of starving Turkish soldiers always robbing peasants was quite fantastic: Turkish soldiers had a good bread ration, part of which they sold; if you had a guest you always tried to give him "soldiers' bread"<sup>1</sup>.

When Graves took over the Consulate from Biliotti (he had previously succeeded him in Crete four years earlier) there was a marked change in the British reports. The first thing he did on arrival at Salonica was to get rid of Biliotti's agents who—so he tells us in his *Memoirs*<sup>2</sup>—showed "a decided bias in favour of the Greek as opposed to the Bulgarian claims in Macedonia". By that time consular officers like Fontana of Uskub and Pissurica at Monastir had been replaced by a different type of official. Graves himself relied to a greater extent than Biliotti on Turkish sources. He was able, when the organisation developed, to obtain reports from the European officers in the Turkish gendarmerie—an organisation, which, incidentally, was largely Biliotti's idea; and he seems often to have received information from newspaper reporters and from people working with the foreign religious missions. He had also many contacts with members of the Balkan Committee, whose ideas he tended to

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1. See Blue Books "Turkey No 1 (1903)", pp. 271 - 74, 218 - 84 and "Turkey No 3 (1903)", pp. 6 - 10, 56 - 61.

2. *Op. cit.* p. 197.

share. He certainly did not see eye to eye with his own government. Unlike his chief at Constantinople, Sir Nicholas O'Connor, he was never optimistic about the reform programme, or indeed about the reformed gendarmerie, though he was highly appreciative of the individual efforts of British officers like Fairholme, Bonham, Elliot, Grogan and others, who were his friends. In so far as he had any constructive ideas at all he favoured a "Cretan" solution, little realising that this solution if applied to Macedonia would have made the three Vilayets into another Eastern Roumelia<sup>1</sup>. This indeed was the view which had found some favour with Lansdowne. "There seemed to me", wrote Lansdowne to Monson, Ambassador in Paris, reporting a conversation with the French Ambassador, "only two possible solutions of the Macedonian difficulty. Macedonia might be either joined to Bulgaria, or given an autonomous régime under a Governor virtually independent of the Sultan. My impression was that the former would not obtain the support of the Signatory Powers (of the Treaty of Berlin)"<sup>2</sup>. Grey, however—and this was fortunate for Greece—preferred to persevere with the thankless task of trying to establish European control: and though he did indeed contemplate the plan of having a Christian Governor of the three Vilayets he was content to work out a less drastic solution in company with Russia—which fell considerably short of the "Cretan" solution favoured by Graves, who had a very poor opinion of his superiors in London.

All the same Graves was a conscientious official and in spite of the limitations of his sources and his lack of sympathy for Greek aspirations, he compiled good reports. As he was out to show that the Greeks were the principal trouble-makers in the three Vilayets, he reported as a matter of course the Greek offensive. Hence his reports have a certain historical value. Their publication during the heat of the struggle was indeed displeasing to the Greeks, for these reports ignored Greek claims and were generally unsympathetic. What is more they tended to stress the rather senseless acts of terrorism (which, as we know, the leaders of the Greek Macedonian movement regretted); and, at the same time, they frequently

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1. Graves's views came in for much misrepresentation, mainly through the garbled version of a memorandum by the Bulgarian, Tosheff, which the Turks planted in the German language newspaper, *Vossische Zeitung*. Graves was in London when the newspaper article reached the Foreign Office. He was invited to give his comments, which are to be found in an interesting memorandum of 29 July 1908 (F.O. 371/584 - 24075). He was alleged to have proposed a constitution for Macedonia.

2. 20 February 1904. British Documents Vol. V, p. 68.

excused Bulgarian acts of terrorism on the grounds that the Greek activities had provoked them, omitting to mention that those Greek activities had been originally provoked by Bulgarian atrocities. If I had time I could give many instances of this. But the point I wish to make is that Graves's reports (and the same is true of those of his successor, Lamb) show forcibly the Greek achievement—or at least much of it, for we must remember that some of the finer points of it do not figure in the British reports, which tend to give only the engagements and the casualties of the battle, that is to say only the tactical position and not the overhaul strategic picture.

Nevertheless, these reports made a great impression in the Foreign Office who realised that by 1907 the Greeks were on top and Bulgarians in retreat. A minute states: ... "the great preponderance in the number of Bulgarians killed over that of Greeks is due—as our Consular reports show—to the greater activity of the Greek bands..."<sup>1</sup>. It was also realised that the Greek bands, though less numerous, were better organised and more skilful. Commenting on a document describing the Greek Macedonian organisation—a document which had been found on a Greek arrested at Monastir in early February 1908—Sir Charles Hardinge wrote: "It will be difficult to defeat this organisation"<sup>2</sup>. What amazed the Foreign Office on reading Graves's and Lamb's reports was the failure of the Turks to annihilate the Greek bands as effectively as they annihilated the Bulgarian. At first the Turks made very little effort to do so and providing the Greek bands did not go out of their way to attack the Turks they were left unmolested. Later, when under constant pressure from the Powers they made some effort to chastise the Greeks, they were usually unsuccessful and not infrequently found themselves involved in hostilities with Bulgarians against whom the Greeks had skilfully manoeuvred them. When Mursurus Pasha dutifully reported to Grey the successes of the Turks in July 1907, the comment of the Foreign Office was: "It is to be feared that this extensive pursuit of the bands will merely end by leaving the Greeks masters of the situation..."<sup>3</sup>. Harvey, British Member of the Financial Commission at Salonica, confirmed this view. He told Grey that the Turks could deal with Bulgarians and even with Servians but not with the Greeks who, on nearly all occasions managed to escape<sup>4</sup>. When in the spring of 1908 the Bulgarian Macedonian Congress abolished

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1. F. O. 371/380 - 12053.

2. Minute on Erskine to Lamb, Serres, 15 March 1908. F. O. 371/52 - 9845.

3. F. O. 371/380 - 26329.

4. Grey to O'Beirne, 6 August 1907, F. O. 371/380 - 26670.

its bands, it was making a virtue out of necessity: these bands had been outmatched by the Greeks: all that remained to be done was once again to throw dust again in the eyes of Europe<sup>1</sup>.

To throw dust in the eyes of Europe was for the Bulgarians a not unpromising venture. For many years, European opinion had been largely ill-informed and mis-informed of the Macedonian question. In England, Gladstone's "Bulgarian Massacres", which had some reality in its day, had become a myth and the opinion was ready to believe that, events of 1902-8 were a repetition of the old familiar scene. Disraeli, who had frustrated San Stephano, was looked upon by many as an outmoded charlatan, and the liberal idea of "breasts of freemen" as the foil to Russian expansion was a comfortable and doctrinaire conception. All these sentiments were part of the mental equipment of the Balkan Committee, which, as the *Times*<sup>2</sup> pointed out, made the mistake of thinking the Turks solely to blame. Though its emissaries paid fleeting visits to the scene, they saw only what they expected to see—the sufferings of Christian peasants some of whom played only a reluctant part in the struggle. Sympathy for such people was laudable enough; but failure to see the design of the Bulgarian Government and of those who in their various ways acted independently of it was another matter. Unfortunately for Greece, the Balkan Committee seems to have had in Britain and Europe an influence not usually enjoyed by such organisations. As Rhallys pointed out (and his observation is substantiated by the numerous petitions which reached the Foreign Office from churches and other bodies) the followers of the Balkan Committee had a very mis-informed religious attitude to the question and knew next to nothing of the political problems. It is interesting to note however that it was not until 1907 that Sir Edward Grey paid much attention to the Balkan Committee.

The Greek case received very little hearing, despite the money spent upon it and the energy with which it was presented. In part this is to be explained by the relations of the Powers and Greece's lack of alliance value. But there are other explanations. For nearly a hundred years the Greeks had occupied the attention of Europe. The Greeks were known: but they

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1. Another possible explanation is that Isvolsky had promised the Bulgarians, if they kept quiet, eventual acquisition of Macedonia, provided Serbia obtained the Kossovo Vilayet and part of Old Serbia. Buchanan reported to Grey (Sofia, 28 April 1908, F. O. 371/583 - 15245) that he had obtained this information from a reliable private source.

2. 3 August 1907.

were now known largely through their failings and not their virtues—which was the reverse of the situation a century before. They were regarded as trouble-makers in the East. As the *Times* pointed out, they had acted precipitately in 1897 (though in point of fact only two bands had crossed the frontier without authority); they had thrust in Crete; and they were acting recklessly again, trusting that Europe would rescue them from all their follies. What strikes one as one studies this period is the absence of Philhellenes: there was no Parliamentarian like James Monk who had spoken so loudly for the Cretans; and no great literary figures or prominent journalists to state the Greek case.

It was fortunate for Greece that certain Greeks both from within and without the Kingdom had faith in themselves and that they succeeded in inducing so many of their brothers to make a sacrifice for Hellenism. Many names could be mentioned: those who stand out, I think, are: Metropolitan Karavangeli, the "Germanos" of the Macedonian struggle, who sounded the tocsin from the Metropolitan Church at Kastoria; the Consuls, Kallergi at Monastir, Sachtouris at Serres, Koromelas at Salonica, Mavroudi at Kavalla and Dragoumi at Dedeagatch; Kota of Roulia; Vangeli, leader of the first Greek band; Georghi of Nenkovani and his nephew Nikola; Exadhaktilos, Mazarakis and Tsontos; Kaoudis, Dhikonimos, Perakis, Volanis, the brothers Vardas, Dalipis, Vlachakis, Vranas, Kalomenopoulos, and above all Pavlos Melas, the Byron of the Macedonian Struggle, whose early death<sup>1</sup> impressed on all the worthiness and the dire necessity of the crusade.

For Melas, as for many who took part in the struggle, the cause was sacred. Like many of his compatriots who went to serve in Macedonia he came from a family with ample means; and, had he so chosen, he could have lived a life of ease, for the duties of an officer in the regular Hellenic army were not at that time particularly onerous. But he realised instinctively that the whole future of Hellenism was at stake; and, as the many letters he wrote in the summer of 1904 show, he realised that every effort must be made to prevent the loss of those parts of Macedonia which were essentially Greek<sup>2</sup>. His noble example was followed by many others, including all those Cretans who joined the bands. It is true indeed (and we get glimpses of this in the British sources) that there were dissensions among the Greeks; and there were times indeed

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1. 13 October 1904.

2. Παῦλος Μελάς. *Βιογραφία* (Ed. "Νέα Ζωή") Athens, 1926, *passim*.

when these dissensions seemed likely to lead to disaster; but in the end the fight was won, and it was won for the most part, not, as was generally believed in Western Europe, by armed brigands and uncivilised murderers, but by Greeks of substance who, like Melas, sacrificed everything for the cause of Hellenism. Their methods, or at least some of them, were not approved in Western Europe and their aims found, as we have seen, but little sympathy. But these methods, were not of their own choosing: these Greeks were called upon to combat an organisation which had adopted terrorist methods and which was firmly entrenched in most of Macedonia. Only with great difficulty did they finally build up a counter-organisation and only with difficulty did they achieve victory. It is chiefly to their efforts that today Thessaloniki is a Greek city and that other fair cities in Macedonia—Kavala, Drama, Serres, Florina, Kozani, Kastoria and Edessa—lie within the confines of the Hellenic Kingdom.

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