

## ELEUTHERIOS VENIZELOS AND THE BALKAN WARS\*

I did not have the good fortune to know Eleutherios Venizelos personally. I was only once privileged to see him, about 1930, when I heard him speak in the Town Hall at Rethymnon, my native town. I cannot tell you what he said. I was barely ten years old at the time, and politics were beyond my grasp. But I still remember the very real contact, spontaneous and unforced, between the speaker and his listeners, and the distinctive atmosphere which prevailed, an atmosphere which would have allowed the speaker to go even counter to the wishes of his audience.

The charm which the words, even the mere presence, of Eleutherios Venizelos exerted on those around him is a fact so well known as to be beyond dispute. You may say that in attempting to add my own humble testimony I am simply stating the obvious. You must forgive me. I value this personal recollection; it is my sole visual and direct link with the national leader of modern Greece. I read later that even Venizelos's opponents recognised and feared his compelling charm, about which George Streit remarked: "When the two of us are alone and we disagree, Venizelos never convinces me! If there are three of us, I begin to waver. The moment he addresses several people, at Cabinet meetings for instance, it often happens that I am carried away too, along with the others!"<sup>1</sup>

George Streit's assertion that Venizelos needed the presence of a third person to convince his interlocutor is not correct. This is clear from his early talks with King George and from the evidence of foreign diplomats. Venizelos himself attributed his power of convincing others not to his intelligence but to his sincerity, to the way in which he opened his heart to his listener.

Much has been written about Venizelos, some of it noteworthy, some less so. Yet historical scholarship still awaits a definitive biography. Responsible historians, weighing up the difficulties involved, have so far hesitated to come

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1. G. Ventiris, *Ἡ Ἑλλάς τοῦ 1910-1920*, [Greece, 1910-1920], Athens 1931, vol. I, p. 196.

to grips with this large theme. This is not for want of information. Indeed, the material available is almost too much for anyone to master unless he makes it his life's work, though in many instances there is no guarantee of its authenticity. It is partly owing to the lack of an authoritative and objective biography of Venizelos that his personality has not always been given its due and rightful place in the historical works which treat generally of the Greece of his period.

As from today the study of the life and work of Eleutherios Venizelos will be facilitated by the opening to the public of his personal archives, which are deposited at the Benaki Museum. These archives, comprising 431 files, have been classified by Mr. Constantinos Svolopoulos, graduate of the historical section of the Philosophical Faculty of Athens University, under the wise guidance of Mrs. Eugenia Hadzidaki. They include the personal correspondence of Venizelos, the letters of many of his close collaborators, and many official documents, either in the original or copies, relating to the subjects with which Venizelos was concerned in one way or another. In the past these records were consulted by George Ventiris when he wrote his two-volume work "Greece, 1910-1920". The time has now come for them to be used in the compilation of a biography of Venizelos which will cover his whole life span. This should be a work of scientific impartiality, based on the exhaustive use and correlation of all known facts. In addition to the specific information which the biographer of Venizelos will obtain from these collected papers, he will also learn from them much about the way in which Venizelos worked (how he prepared his speeches, for instance), about his innermost thoughts, his fears and his reactions. This information, valuable in acquainting the biographer with the *man* about whom he is writing, is to be found in the thousands of rough notes which are preserved in his archives.

In putting forward this plea for a scholarly and objective biography of Venizelos I should not like it to be thought that by "scholarly" I mean an arid and impersonal account. On the contrary, I believe that such a biography should be inspired by the historical presence of the great statesman, though it should not serve the now outworn doctrines of "Venizelism" and "Anti-venizelism". Indeed, it should even refer — whilst examining it objectively — to the legend of Venizelos, for this legend was also a historical reality, a reality which forms the sequel to the historical legends and visionary dreams of modern Hellenism.

In this connection, there is in the Venizelos archives<sup>2</sup> a very characteristic letter from Archbishop Chrysostomos of Smyrna, dated 5/18 November 1912, in which this prelate, martyred in the Neo-hellenic cause, endeavours to persuade Venizelos that "the bloodstained and mournful chapter of the

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2. File 311.

history of the Beast of the Apocalypse is closing for ever" and that as revealed by the prophecies, which he analyses one by one, Venizelos has been ordained by Divine Providence to fulfil the dreams of the nation.

In the short time at my disposal today I shall not attempt to sketch for you the biography of Venizelos. I shall confine myself to one chapter of his impressive career, which is at the same time one of the most interesting chapters in the history of this country: Venizelos' foreign policy on the eve of and during the Balkan Wars.

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Anyone who seeks to trace the origins and the causes of the Balkan Wars is eventually led, by different paths, to an event whose direct and indirect consequences were manifold: the Young Turk revolution of 1908. It is well known that the Young Turks' policy of Turkification, which threatened to wipe out the enslaved Christian subjects of the Ottoman Empire, contributed to no small extent to the rapprochement of the Balkan states, which had until then been waging undeclared war in Macedonia. It is also well known that the Young Turk revolution had immediate external repercussions: the annexation by Austria of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Bulgarian declaration of independence, and the proclamation by the Cretan Assembly — not for the first time — of the union of Crete with Greece.

Turkey gave way over the question of Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as over the Bulgarian question, but she took an inflexible and threatening stand over the question of Crete. Greece, unprepared for a trial of strength with Turkey, took refuge in the so-called "correct attitude", a humiliating policy which inevitably had its consequences. This policy, in conjunction with other and deeper causes, led to the Goudi revolution of 1909, which brought Eleutherios Venizelos, one of the protagonists in the Balkan Wars, to the leadership of Greece.

The annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina by Austria, a Great Power with plans for the Balkans, could not fail to be of concern to Russia, another Great Power whose Balkan plans were well known. Russia then had the idea of bringing the Slav countries of the Peninsula closer together in order to curtail Austrian expansion in the Balkans. "The genesis of the Balkan War is an extremely simple one", observed Grant and Temperley. "Russia had temporarily reconciled Bulgaria and Serbia."<sup>3</sup>

The Serbo-Bulgarian rapprochement was not, however, easy to accom-

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3. A. J. Grant - H. Temperley, *Europe in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (1789-1939)*, London 1946, p. 471.

plish. Apart from Russian pressure, a factor which contributed towards bringing it about was the outbreak of hostilities between Turkey and Italy in September 1911, which, though it offered an opportunity to the Balkan States, at the same time made them aware of a new danger: Italy.

Serbo-Bulgarian understanding was hampered chiefly by the question of the division of the territories, particularly Macedonia, which the two countries planned to detach from Turkey. In other words, Serbian plans could not easily be reconciled with the Bulgarian desire to expand as far as the frontiers laid down in the Treaty of San Stefano. Moreover, Serbia was unwilling to accept the Bulgarian proposal for the setting up of an autonomous Macedonian state, which could one day, by means of a *coup d'état* similar to that in 1885, be united to Bulgaria.

The Serbo-Bulgarian Treaty of Alliance was finally signed on 29 February/13 March 1912. The treaty was accompanied by a secret annex, which is of particular importance, since it specified the division of the territories which were to be liberated. Under article 2 of the secret annex Bulgarian rights to eastern Macedonia and Thrace, and Serbian rights to the *sanjak* of Novibazar and to Old Serbia as far as the Adriatic coast, were formally recognised. The area in between, consisting of central and western Macedonia and part of the *vilayet* of Kossovo, would be given autonomy, or, if this were not considered advisable, would be divided as follows: Bulgaria would be assigned central Macedonia and a large part of western Macedonia, as well as part of the *vilayet* of Kossovo, which included Monastir, while the remainder of the intervening area was to be regarded as a contested zone whose fate would be submitted to the arbitration of the Czar of Russia.<sup>4</sup>

The threat to Greek interests posed by the terms of this treaty is all too clear: the greater part of Greek Macedonia and Thrace was to be disposed of, in one way or another, to Bulgaria. Even more important, the Greek Government was unaware,<sup>5</sup> as was only natural, of the concrete form which the Bulgarian threat to Greece had now taken. Nevertheless, those who were responsible for guiding the destinies of Hellenism realised full well from the general situation that this country could not afford to be caught unprepared during the critical times which were to come. The position called for rapid preparation in many fields — economic, military, diplomatic, and psychological. The man who was to accomplish this feat was not wanting: it was the new leader who

4. N. Vlachos, *Ἱστορία τῶν κρατῶν τῆς Χερσονήσου τοῦ Αἰμου, 1908-1914* [History of the states of the Balkan Peninsula, 1908-1914], Athens 1954, vol. I, pp. 290-291; D. Drossos, *La fondation de l'alliance Balkanique*, Athens 1929, pp. 36 - 37.

5. J. Metaxas to E. Venizelos, letter from Thessaloniki, 16/29 June 1913 (Benaki Museum, Venizelos papers, file 311).

had been brought to power as a result of the Goudi revolution, Eleutherios Venizelos.

I should be digressing from my main theme if I attempted here to describe the reforms carried out by Venizelos from the time his first government was formed in October 1910 up to the declaration of the first Balkan War. Let me merely record that during this period he took far-reaching measures for the reorganisation of the judicial system and the administration, the consolidation of law and order, particularly in the rural areas, the overhaul of the economy, the more equitable distribution of the burden of taxation, and the protection of the workers and farmers. He attached particular importance to the organisation of the armed services, and for this purpose he himself took over the Army and Navy Ministries. He raised a loan of 110 million francs and invited a French military mission and a British naval mission to reorganise the Army and Navy. In less than eighteen months he made it possible for an army of 110-120 thousand men to be mustered, in other words, he almost doubled the strength of the Greek land forces. The Navy was also reorganised, and was reinforced by the addition of the cruiser "Averoff", the submarine "Dolphin", which were already on order, and four patrol boats.

The metamorphosis of the Greece of 1897 and the "correct attitude" into a country capable of meeting the great historical challenge of 1912 led some of Venizelos's admirers to attribute to him almost superhuman powers. In reality, his success was due to the fact that he succeeded in understanding and expressing the age in which he lived and the nation to which he belonged — an achievement which was of course possible only to a gifted statesman — and in working rationally and persistently for the fulfilment of the ideals of which his political genius made him aware. He combined bold vision, founded however on the nation's past history and the historic moment, in which he lived, with the realism which the circumstances in every case dictated.

Venizelos himself said, in a speech to the Chamber of Deputies in 1913: "I am not such a bad judge of character or of society as to be unaware that no one man alone could have achieved what has been achieved. Sub-consciously the soul of the nation has been at work for a very long time. I had the honour to be the bearer of ideas whose seeds were planted long ago and which would inevitably have borne fruit sooner or later."<sup>6</sup>

Venizelos's foreign policy, as far as its aims were concerned, was identical with that followed ever since the Greek State was established: the liberation of unredeemed Greeks, the Great Idea. But he adopted different methods.

When he came to power, his sincere desire was to preserve peace; the

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6. Ventiris, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 181.

country needed a breathing-space in order to reorganise. But events did not wait, and Greece had to choose her allies. At the critical hour she could not be left in isolation. With whom could she cooperate?

With Turkey and Rumania, some said, in order to withstand the Slav and particularly the Bulgarian threat, the full extent of which had been revealed by the question of the Exarchate and the Macedonian Struggle. This view was supported by George Theotokis, one of Venizelos' chief political rivals.<sup>7</sup>

There were others, such as Ion Dragoumis and Athanasios Souliotis - Nikolaidis, who favoured closer cooperation — not only diplomatic and military — with Turkey, with the object of saving both the Greeks and the Ottoman Empire.<sup>8</sup> This view was in some sense a survival of the Byzantine Ecumenical ideal, an older form of the Great Idea, according to which Hellenism would regain its political stature by usurping the authority of the Ottoman conqueror peacefully, gradually and from within.<sup>9</sup>

Though Venizelos rejected military cooperation by Greece and Turkey against the Christian states of the Balkans — "I would never do anything like that", he declared in the Chamber of Deputies on 21 June/4 July 1913 — he favoured all other forms of cooperation with Turkey, even at the cost of some sacrifice by Greece, "in the hope that it may be possible to introduce reforms in that country (Turkey) which would make life bearable for the millions of Greeks who live there".<sup>10</sup> But the nationalistic policy of the Young Turks, and their threatening attitude to Greece over the Cretan issue, left no margin for a rapprochement.

There remained the possibility of cooperation with Greece's northern neighbours. The history of this cooperation is a very long story which cannot of course be discussed here. Responsible Greek diplomatic and political circles had again begun to devote serious attention to the idea of Balkan cooperation, and especially to a possible rapprochement with Bulgaria, as far back as the summer of 1910, that is, before Venizelos formed his first government in Athens.<sup>11</sup>

Venizelos himself, whilst he was still in Crete, was also studying the

7. *Ibid.*, vol. I., pp. 90, 107.

8. D. Xanatalos, "The Greeks and the Turks on the eve of the Balkan Wars", *Balkan Studies*, vol. III (1962), pp. 277-296.

9. D. Zakythinis, *Ἡ Τουρκοκρατία* [The era of Turkish domination], Athens 1957, pp. 79, 93.

10. K. Kerofylas, *Ἐ. Βενιζέλος: ἡ ζωή του, τὸ ἔργον του* [E. Venizelos: his life, his work], Athens 1914, pp. 120-121, 129; G. Papantonakis, *Ἡ πολιτική σταδιοδρομία τοῦ Ἐλευθ. Βενιζέλου* [The political career of Eleuth. Venizelos], Athens 1931, vol. I, pp. 219-222.

11. Vlachos, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 266.

question of cooperation with Bulgaria and the other Balkan states. He had frequent talks on the subject, both in Canea, Crete, and at the "Grande Bretagne" hotel in Athens, in February 1910, with Bouchier, the "Times" correspondent who, though pro-Bulgarian, was a close personal friend of Venizelos. When the latter became Prime Minister he entrusted Bouchier with the task of sounding the Bulgarian Government about the conclusion of a Greco-Bulgarian alliance. This was in the spring of 1911. Bouchier worked hard for nearly a year to secure the final consent of Bulgaria, who on the one hand underrated Greek military strength and on the other was being pressed by Russia to reach an understanding first with Serbia and then with Greece.<sup>12</sup>

Bulgaria was finally induced to accept the proposal for a Greco-Bulgarian alliance after taking into account the reorganisation of the Greek army, the assistance which the Greek fleet could render in a war with Turkey, and the danger that in the event of a clash between Turkey and Bulgaria Greece might possibly take up an attitude unfavourable to the latter.

The details of the Greco-Bulgarian Treaty were discussed by Venizelos and Bouchier in very odd circumstances, in the course of a trip to Mount Pelion in the spring of 1912. Bouchier was hard of hearing, and this, combined with the necessity for secrecy in discussing such an important subject, induced the two men to resort to the deserted slopes of Mount Pelion.<sup>13</sup> The Greek Ambassador to Sofia, Dimitrios Panas, presented to the Bulgarian Government a draft treaty which was, however, rejected by Geshov, the Prime Minister, since it did not provide for autonomy for Thrace and Macedonia. The Greeks, like the Serbs, were opposed to the grant of autonomy to Macedonia, since the Bulgarians, as I said before, appeared to seek by granting autonomy to create conditions which would favour a *coup d'état* resulting in the annexation of the area to Bulgaria, as they did in the case of Eastern Rumelia in 1885. The Greeks wanted zones of influence to be laid down and, if possible, an assignment of territory, which the Bulgarians rejected.<sup>14</sup>

The negotiations would have foundered over the question of autonomy for Macedonia and Thrace, had not Venizelos, who in the meantime had apparently learnt of the signing of the Serbo-Bulgarian Treaty though not yet of the contents of the secret annex on the partition of Macedonia,<sup>15</sup> insisted on a solution being found. His insistence sprang from the thought that, in the

12. D. Dakin, "The diplomacy of the Great Powers and the Balkan states, 1908-1914", *Balkan Studies*, vol. III (1962), pp. 344-345.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 345; G. Roussos, "'Ο Έλ. Βενιζέλος και η εποχή του" [El. Venizelos and his times], *Vima* (newspaper), 4 April 1961.

14. Dakin, *op. cit.*, p. 345; Vlachos, *op. cit.*, vol. I, pp. 298-300.

15. Ventiris, *op. cit.*, vol. I, pp. 92, 97; I. Metaxas to E. Venizelos, letter, 16/29 June 1913.

event of Greece not taking part in the war which was imminent, "if victory went to the Serbs and the Bulgarians, our frontiers would be fixed for ever at the Meluna Pass or, at the most, at the Aliakmon, whilst if the Turks won the war, the life of the Greeks living in the Ottoman Empire would be intolerable".<sup>16</sup>

Some solution had to be found, therefore, and the solution which was eventually reached was to avoid any mention in the treaty either of autonomy or of the allocation of territory. It was a risky solution, for which Venizelos was later criticized by his opponents. But it was the only solution. According to information given to George Ventiris by the then Minister of Education, these were the arguments which Venizelos advanced to persuade his Cabinet colleagues to accept it: "The Bulgarians forget", said Venizelos, "that the Greek army is fighting fit. It will lose no time in occupying the territory in Macedonia, which is the object of our immediate national claims. The course of the operations against Turkey will most probably be as follows: the Bulgarians will send their forces to attack Adrianople and the Evros, whilst the Serbs will advance on Skopje. We shall march on Thessaloniki and Serres. We shall get there in good time. The allocation of territory will take place later on the basis of the military occupation."<sup>17</sup> Events bore out his forecast.

The Greco-Bulgarian Treaty was signed in Sofia and is dated 16/29 May 1912. Contrary to the Serbo-Bulgarian Treaty, it is a defensive pact and, as I said before, it made no provisions for the assignement of any territories which might be liberated as the result of a war with Turkey. Nor did it refer to the autonomy of Macedonia and Thrace. It did however refer to the safeguarding of "any rights arising out of treaties or otherwise conceded" to the Christian population in these areas, which could in certain conditions facilitate the grant of autonomy at some future date. The Greco-Bulgarian Treaty, which was secret, was accompanied by a declaration that Bulgaria was under no obligation to render military assistance to Greece if the latter was attacked by Turkey on account of the admission of the Cretan deputies to the Greek Chamber.<sup>18</sup>

Venizelos accepted this Bulgarian reservation, which left Greece exposed to a direct and specific danger, since he did not want the Cretan question to be the "object of discussion and bargaining with Bulgaria". Crete, he reflected, was substantially free already, and could wait; she would not have to wait long. If war broke out, union with Greece would automatically take place, and nobody would voice any objection.<sup>19</sup> His policy was justified by events.

16. E. Venizelos to P. Kountouriotis, letter 3 December 1933, quoted by Roussos, *op. cit.*, *Vima*, 22 April 1961.

17. Ventiris, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 93.

18. Drossos, *op. cit.*, pp. 26-29; Vlachos, *op. cit.*, vol. I, pp. 307-309.

19. Ventiris, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 94.

In the meantime, however, he was forced to prevent the Cretan deputies from entering the Greek Chamber in order to avoid provoking Turkey.<sup>20</sup> His attitude, which was a political sacrifice for him personally, aroused the wrath and bitterness of the Cretans, his compatriots, and the condemnation of his political rivals, who did not hesitate to accuse him, even of treachery.

The Bulgarian declaration on the Cretan question was rendered void even earlier, perhaps, than Venizelos himself had anticipated. By August 1912 at the latest Bulgaria had decided that the war with Turkey must begin in the autumn.<sup>21</sup> The Bulgarians themselves now desired the admission of the Cretan deputies into the Greek Chamber, which could provide the desired *casus belli*.<sup>22</sup> Thus it was that in the military pact signed between Greece and Bulgaria on 22 September/5 October 1912, Bulgaria also undertook to aid Greece in the event of the latter provoking a Turkish attack by giving a solution to the Cretan question which would be in accordance with the wishes of the Cretan people.<sup>23</sup> The Cretan deputies were admitted to the Greek Chamber on 1/14 October 1912. War with Turkey began for Bulgaria and Serbia on 4/17 October and for Greece on 5/18 October.

The rapprochement between the four Balkan states — Greece, Bulgaria, Serbia and Montenegro — which fought the First Balkan War as allies, was neither in form nor in substance close, sincere and substantial. There was no written treaty of alliance between Serbia and Greece. There had only been negotiations for this purpose, which had ended in a draft treaty. The text of the Greco-Bulgarian Treaty had not been communicated to Serbia, though the latter was of course aware of its existence and tenor. Nor had the text of the Serbo-Bulgarian Treaty been communicated to Greece, though Greece likewise knew of its existence and had finally been informed of the secret annex relating to the parcelling up of Macedonia. When Serbia and Bulgaria were questioned about this, however, both countries assured Greece that they had made no agreement whatever on the division of territories.<sup>24</sup> Montenegro had a written treaty only with Serbia; with Bulgaria and probably with Greece there had merely been some verbal understandings.<sup>25</sup> Nevertheless, despite the lack of sincerity and the looseness which characterized the Balkan

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20. Drossos, *op. cit.*, pp. 112-114.

21. E. C. Helmreich, *The diplomacy of the Balkan Wars, 1912-1913*, Cambridge (U.S.A.), 1938, pp. 103-105.

22. Ventiris, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 95.

23. Drossos, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

24. I. Metaxas to E. Venizelos, letter, 16/29 June 1913.

25. Helmreich, *op. cit.* p. 89; H. Batowski, "The failure of the Balkan alliance of 1912", *Balkan Studies*, vol. VII (1966), p. 113.

League of 1912, this makeshift contrivance helped the allies to win the First Balkan War and to push the Turks back to the Tchataldja lines, near Constantinople.

This is not the time or place to examine in detail the military successes of the allies, the victories of the Greek army, or the achievements of the Greek navy, which made a decisive contribution to the allied victory by preventing the Turks from reinforcing their army in the Balkans with troops from Anatolia. Our viewpoint is a different one, and compels us to devote our attention rather to the dangers which loomed ever closer as the war pursued its victorious course. What would be the aftermath of victory? This was the thorny problem which occupied the mind of Venizelos at the moment when the nation was rejoicing in the fulfilment of its age-old aspirations.

As I have already mentioned, Venizelos had foreseen the trend of events and in particular had anticipated that Bulgaria, underrating the strength of the Greek army, would turn her full military might on Adrianople and Constantinople. "We shall march on Thessaloniki and Serres", he had predicted. "We shall get there in good time. The allocation of territory will take place on the basis of the military occupation". Guided by this prophecy, he was compelled, as is well known, to press on with the capture of Thessaloniki and to intervene in the plans drawn up by the Greek General Staff who, for strategic reasons, had planned that the army should push on towards Monastir. It is due to Venizelos's intervention that the Greek army entered Thessaloniki before the Bulgarians.

The question of Thessaloniki brought into sharper focus the friction between Greece and Bulgaria which was to lead the two countries into an armed clash in only a few months' time. Venizelos tried in all sincerity to avoid the conflict, but at the same time he was anxious to ensure that in the event of war Greece would not be left without allies. He was able very skilfully to pursue both these aims during his stay in London, where two conferences on the Balkan question were held in December 1912, between the representatives of the Great Powers on the one hand, and those of the five warring states on the other.

To the Bulgarians Venizelos made his attitude quite clear. He declared that Greece was prepared to make substantial concessions on other matters, but not on the question of Thessaloniki, which she would abandon only after an unsuccessful war. Greece's determination in this regard was, moreover, underlined by the constant presence in the Macedonian capital of King George I.<sup>26</sup>

In London Venizelos met and became friendly with Take Ionescu, the Rumanian Minister of the Interior. Greece was not on good terms with Ru-

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26. Kerofylas, *op. cit.*, pp. 115-116, 136.

mania over the question of the Koutzo-Vlachs. Venizelos realised however that, apart from Serbia, whose conflict with Bulgaria was, as we shall see, to drive her into cooperating with Greece, the latter also needed the friendship of Rumania. He therefore told Ionescu that Greece was willing, as a great concession, to concede all possible freedom to the Koutzo-Vlachs. With this declaration, and the close association which he formed with Ionescu, Venizelos laid the foundation for Greco-Rumanian friendship, which proved to be valuable, especially during the signing of the Treaty of Bucharest.<sup>27</sup>

Of all the issues discussed by the representatives of the Great Powers in London in 1912-1913, the question of Albania should be singled out, since the decision to found an Albanian state was destined to have an important influence on the course of affairs in the Balkans. This decision was due to the insistence of Austria and Italy, who aimed at keeping Serbia and Greece away from the coast and the entrance to the Adriatic. Its ultimate consequence was the loss of Northern Epirus to Greece, whilst its immediate consequence was the formulation by Serbia, in exchange, of demands for territory in Macedonia<sup>28</sup>, which was claimed by Bulgaria and which had been otherwise disposed of according to the Serbo-Bulgarian Treaty of 1912. Bulgaria, on the contrary, insisted on the treaty being carried out to the letter, and the Bulgarian reaction of necessity led to a rapprochement between Serbia and Greece, whose differences with Bulgaria were, as we have seen, irreconcilable.

The First Balkan War was ended by the Treaty of London, signed on 17/30 May 1913. The treaty laid down that the Sultan should cede to the allies, without distinction, all the territories in his Empire on the continent of Europe (with the exception of Albania) west of the Enos-Midia line, which extended from the Aegean to the Black Sea, at an average distance of 173 kilometers west of Constantinople. The Sultan also renounced in favour of the allies all rights over the island of Crete. The treaty did not, however, specify how the territories ceded to the allies were to be divided, and it left many other issues undecided.<sup>29</sup>

The Greco-Serbian Treaty of Alliance<sup>30</sup> was to be signed in Thessaloniki two days after the signature of the Treaty of London, namely, on 19 May/1 June 1913. The Greco-Serbian Treaty assured Serbian cooperation with Greece in the Second Balkan War, but it was at the same time to place Greece in a

27. *Ibid.*, pp. 151-153.

28. Helmreich, *op. cit.*, pp. 345, 353-354.

29. S. Antonopoulos, *Αἱ συνθήκαι Λονδίνου, Βουκουρεστίου καὶ Ἀθηνῶν* [The treaties of London, Bucharest and Athens], Athens 1917, pp. 1-4.

30. *Διπλωματικά ἔγγραφα 1913-1917* [Diplomatic documents 1913-1917], Athens 1917, pp. 6-21.

fearful dilemma when Serbia became involved in the First World War. As I said before, the alliance was prompted by the threat from Bulgaria. In addition, Serbia was also vulnerable to attack from Austria, from which she sought to protect herself by means of the Greco-Serbian Treaty. Venizelos did not want to bring Greece face to face with a Great Power, especially a Power which had obvious interests in the Balkans and which was a member of the Triple Alliance. There is a revealing note among his papers which says, *inter alia*: "Why do I fear an understanding with Serbia? Because of Austria."<sup>31</sup> But he was forced by sheer necessity to lean more and more towards it. Bulgaria not only failed to show any sign of conciliatoriness, but grew more provocative every day. There was no lack of incidents. War seemed certain. The Bulgarian army outnumbered the Greek army by about three to one, and responsible military circles were gloomy as to the outcome of a war waged single-handed by Greece against Bulgaria. Rumania was biding her time and did not seem eager to be bound by an alliance. There was no alternative but the alliance with Serbia. Negotiations to this effect had begun in January 1913 in Thessaloniki between the military governor there, Prince Nicholas, and Crown Prince Alexander of Serbia. Venizelos was at that time in London and counselled circumspection. But on his return to Greece he visited in Belgrade and talked with the Serbian Prime Minister Pashich about the problems which concerned the two countries. An important step towards Greco-Serbian cooperation was taken with the preliminary protocol signed on 22 April/5 May, which determined the allocation of the territories west of the Axios between Greece and Serbia. It only remained to sign the final treaty; this was, however, hindered by Serbia's insistence that the alliance should also cover the event of an Austrian attack.<sup>32</sup>

At a dramatic Cabinet meeting presided over by King Constantine, Venizelos pointed out that Greece, especially after the Bulgarian aggression in the Mount Pangaion area, was in fact in a state of undeclared war with Bulgaria, and that the threat to Thessaloniki was immediate. Nor did he fail to underline the dangers to which Greece would be exposed in the event of her signing a pact, even defensive in character, which could be directed against Austria. After putting before his audience the magnitude of the dilemma in which Greece found herself Venizelos, as the country's responsible leader, went on to suggest to them the decision which they should take. His argument was: "An isolated Austro-Serbian clash is unlikely. It would lead to a European war, since Russia will not leave Serbia to her fate. Behind Russia there is France. Greece will then be allied to the whole of the Triple Entente — France, England and

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31. Benaki Museum, Venizelos papers, file 265.

32. Ventiris, *op. cit.*, vol. I, pp. 153-156; Helmreich, *op. cit.*, pp. 346-347.

Russia — with which her wider interests are identified." The Greco-Serbian Treaty ought to be signed. The King and the Ministers agreed, and the treaty was, as I said, signed on 19 May/1 June 1913.<sup>33</sup>

The Second Balkan War began on 17/30 June 1913 with a lightning attack by Bulgaria on the Serbs at Gevgeli, and simultaneously on the Greeks at Nigrita, between Serres and Thessaloniki. The allies not only withstood the attack successfully, but very soon launched a victorious counter-attack, highlighted by battles such as those of Kilkich and Kresna. The Second Balkan War ended in total defeat for the Bulgarians after the intervention of Rumania, whose army reached the gates of Sofia without encountering any resistance, and of Turkey, who recaptured Adrianople without a battle. In desperation Ferdinand, the Czar of Bulgaria, begged the Powers to mediate to secure an armistice. A Russian demarche to this effect met with no success. The Greek view was that, together with an armistice, the preliminary terms of a peace treaty should be signed on the battlefield. The safety of the army did not permit a suspension of hostilities. Moreover, in this way not only would the Great Powers be kept at a distance, but Bulgaria would be committed and would be unable to take advantage of the truce to rebuild her forces and put forward unreasonable claims. Ferdinand then appealed to the King of Rumania, Charles, who after being promised a revision of the Rumano-Bulgarian frontier, undertook to mediate, on a friendly basis, with Greece, Serbia and Montenegro in order to bring about an armistice and restore peace. In reply to the Rumanian appeal, King Constantine said that he was willing to send envoys to discuss peace terms, but was unable to agree to an armistice in advance, for the reasons already stated.<sup>34</sup>

Venizelos, who headed the Greek delegation which attended the peace conference in Bucharest, considered that following the halting of the Rumanian advance on Sofia, Greece should no longer refuse an armistice, since this would make her appear unduly intransigent, at the risk of finding herself isolated during the forthcoming diplomatic battle. He was however compelled to accept the view of the King and the General Staff and to uphold it during the talks which he had with the Rumanian delegates immediately on his arrival in Bucharest. He was thus placed in a very difficult position when shortly afterwards, the course of operations at the front forced him not only not to concede but actually to press for an armistice. The telegram which King

33. Ventiris, *op. cit.*, vol. I, pp. 156-157.

34. S. Th. Lascaris, *Διπλωματική ιστορία τῆς Ἑλλάδος, 1821-1914* [Diplomatic History of Greece, 1821-1914], Athens 1947, pp. 236-238; *Ὁ Ἑλληνικὸς στρατὸς κατὰ τοὺς Βαλκανικοὺς Πολέμους 1912-1913* [The Greek army during the Balkan Wars 1912-1913], Athens 1932-1935, vol. III (Documents) p. 993.

Constantine sent to Venizelos on this issue reads: "My army is physically and morally exhausted. In the light of these conditions, I can no longer refuse the armistice or the suspension of hostilities. Endeavour to find some way of securing a suspension of hostilities, if possible as from tomorrow." Venizelos handled the matter with great skill, or, more accurately, with a cunning which was somehow out of keeping with his wonted straightforwardness. He pretended that after mature thought he had come to the conclusion that it was his duty to meet the desire of King Charles for an armistice, and that he himself would be responsible for obtaining the approval of King Constantine. The Bulgarians changed their attitude and objected, but were compelled to accept the suspension of hostilities. The Bucharest conference thus opened with a success for Venizelos.<sup>35</sup>

Even before the conference at Bucharest was decided on, the King and the Greek Cabinet had already begun to consider the matter of Greece's eastern claims, which were finally formulated on the basis of three successive lines. The first, and most easterly line, which represented Greece's maximum territorial claims at that time, was the Makri line, which passed a few kilometers to the west of Alexandroupolis, thus excluding it. The second was the Porto Lago line which gave Greece Xanthi, and the third was the Nestos (Mesta) line, which excluded Xanthi but awarded Kavala to Greece.<sup>36</sup> Greek claims in central and western Macedonia were covered by the Greco-Serbian treaty.

Venizelos fought a hard battle, starting with the Makri line, but the circumstances were difficult. Matters were complicated by the actions of the Great Powers behind the scenes. The rival camps, Russia and Austria, were for once in agreement, for reasons relating to the balance of power, that Bulgaria should not be unduly weakened. Serbia adopted a conciliatory attitude in regard to her own claims. She was afraid of Austria and anxious to get the peace treaty signed. Rumania had almost resolved her differences with Bulgaria. The Bulgarian delegates made Venizelos a counter-proposal based on the Gulf of Orphano line, which gave them Mount Pangaion and the land to the east of it. Venizelos rejected this proposal, but was forced to give way and retreat first to the Porto Lago line and then to the Nestos line. The sorrow

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35. Ventiris, *op. cit.*, vol. I, pp. 171-174; 'Ο 'Ελληνικός στρατός, vol. III (Documents), pp. 992-993, 1082, 1102.

36. 'Ο 'Ελληνικός στρατός, vol. III (Documents), pp. 857, 867, 966, 967, 979, 1146, 1148-1150; *British Documents on the Origins of the War, 1898-1914*, London 1926-1936, vol. IX (ii), p. 972.

with which the visionary of a Greater Greece, who nonetheless was at all times a realistic politician, made these concessions may well be imagined.<sup>37</sup>

The other protagonist in the Balkan Wars, King Constantine, in deep anxiety followed the progress of negotiations from the Greek headquarters in the forward lines. Once again he saw, not for the first or the last time, that full justice was not done to the sacrifices made by Greece. At one stage he became uneasy, and did not hide his anxiety from Venizelos. Venizelos was offended, and proposed entrusting the further conduct of the negotiations to another. At the same time, he explained his attitude: "The terms of peace", he said, "are not always imposed by force of arms alone. This is shown by the Treaties of San Stefano and of Shimonoseki. And if this is true of great nations such as Russia and Japan, it is even more true of the small nations of the Balkan Peninsula. Moreover, we cannot claim that we have completely vanquished Bulgaria and that she is now at our mercy, since we have not reached the capital. Even supposing that we could get there, I do not think that the advantages which we may gain would justify the further sacrifices which would probably be entailed. Further, Bulgaria's recent adversities afford sufficient proof that to push things to extremes is an extremely dangerous thing." To this telegram King Constantine replied: "Please continue negotiations. I do not think this is the time for misunderstandings."<sup>38</sup>

The Greco-Bulgarian dispute in Bucharest was finally narrowed down to the question of Kavala, which the Greek Navy had in the meantime occupied. Bulgaria proved to be stronger in the diplomatic field, and there was a great risk that this Macedonian port would be lost to Greece. Venizelos realised that over the question of Kavala Rumania could play a very important part. He had, it will be recalled, been working for many months towards a rapprochement with that country. Now he saw that the time had come for him to offer Rumania something specific in return. He wrote officially to the Rumanian Premier: "Greece agrees to grant autonomy to the Koutzo-Vlach schools and churches which are situated in the territories which she is to acquire..."<sup>39</sup> It was this offer which largely won Venizelos the support of Rumania. He also sought to influence that country through Germany. Here he was acting on a confidential suggestion made to him by Ionescu. In this, he was helped by Queen Sophia, who made an approach to her brother, the Kaiser, which resulted in the latter's making a friendly recommendation to the

37. 'Ο 'Ελληνικός στρατός, vol. III (Documents), pp. 1148-1149; *British Documents*, vol. IX (ii), pp. 971-972; Ventiris, *op. cit.*, vol. I, pp. 175-176.

38. 'Ο 'Ελληνικός στρατός, vol. III (Documents), pp. 1150-1151.

39. Antonopoulos, *op. cit.*, pp. 101-102.

King of Rumania. The Kaiser said in his telegram: "Can you do anything about Kavala? I am sympathetically disposed towards this question."<sup>40</sup> Rumanian support proved to be decisive. Bulgaria was compelled to give way, and Greece gained Kavala.

With the Treaty of Bucharest, signed on 28 July/10 August 1913<sup>41</sup> Greece expanded towards the east as far as the river Nestos, and gained control of eastern Macedonia. By the same treaty Bulgaria formally renounced "any claims to the island of Crete".<sup>42</sup> In general, Greece's participation in the Balkan Wars gave her control over the areas of Epirus and western and central Macedonia which are in her possession today, together with the islands of the eastern Aegean, excluding the Dodecanese, which are now part of Greek territory. Greece increased her area from 64.786 to 108.606 square kilometers and her population from 2.666.000 to 4.363.000 people. In addition, she regained her morale, and made herself a factor to be reckoned with in south-east Europe. The fulfilment of her great dreams now appeared less difficult. If this new Greece is compared with the Greece of the Meluna Pass and the "correct attitude" and if it is recalled that only a few months before the outbreak of the First Balkan War Greek rights in Macedonia had been almost totally ignored by both friends and enemies in the Serbo-Bulgarian treaty of 1912, the full extent of this great achievement will easily be appreciated.

In conclusion, I should like to quote a text which acknowledges in the most formal possible way Venizelos's contribution to this achievement. It is a telegram sent to him by King Constantine when he was informed of the signature of the Treaty of Bucharest:

"Grateful to you for announcement of the signature of the peace treaty. God has richly blessed our endeavours. In the country's name and my own, I express to you the thanks of your King. A new and glorious age now opens before us. As a mark of my gratitude and my esteem I award you the Grand Cross of the Royal Order of the Saviour. Your country is grateful."<sup>43</sup>

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40. 'Ο 'Ελληνικός στρατός, vol. III (Documents), p. 1147; Helmreich, *op. cit.*, p. 391; Ventiris, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 176.

41. 'Ο 'Ελληνικός στρατός, vol. III (Documents), pp. 1157-1166.

42. Helmreich, *op. cit.*, p. 396; Antonopoulos, *op. cit.*, pp. 75-76, 87.

43. 'Ο 'Ελληνικός στρατός, vol. III (Documents), p. 1167.