
IN MEMORIAM

Professor Douglas Dakin, M.A., Ph.D.

An outstanding historian and true friend of Greece died in Gloucester, England, on July 20, 1995, at the age of 88.

Douglas Dakin was born in Gloucester, the son of a schoolmaster. He was given an enlightened education at Rendcomb College, in Gloucester, and an open scholarship sent him to Peterhouse, Cambridge, in 1926. He graduated from Cambridge with a first in History, in 1931. After a short period as schoolmaster he began what was to be a long distinguished teaching career, as a Lecturer in History at Birkbeck College, University of London, where, but for a few interruptions, he was to influence generations of undergraduates and graduates passing on his consummate skills of historical writing and research. The field of research the young historian had chosen was French history.

During the Second World War Douglas Dakin served with the British Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve in Egypt and Greece, as a liaison officer to the Royal Hellenic Air Force. In 1944, he found himself a fugitive in Greece in the company of a defecting ELAS colonel. It was this experience that after the war he abandoned French history to devote himself to the study of Modern Greek History. Returning to Birkbeck College, Dakin's academic career proceeded steadily, taking on the additional role of Registrar—a task he discharged with enormous efficiency and in an unconventional manner. Mean-while his academic career culminated with his appointment to a chair in 1968. Already, in 1963, he had joined the Foreign and Commonwealth Office as the Director of a massive research project: the First Series of the *Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-1939*, published by Her Majesty's Stationary Office. The volumes XVII and XVIII, referring to Greece and Turkey¹ is a masterly work which reflects his own interest and expertise.

However, the monument to Dakin's scholarship are his five major works on Modern Greek History: The first of them is *British and American Philhellenes during the Greek War of Independence, 1821-1833*, published by the Institute for Balkan Studies in 1955. In 1959 he published an important documentary collection *British Intelligence of Events in Greece 1824-1827* (Athens). A major work of impressive research on the Macedonian problem *The Greek Struggle in Macedonia 1897-1913*, was published also next work is

1. See Domna Visvizi-Dontas, «The Allied Powers and the Eastern Question, 1921-1923», in *Balkan Studies* 17,2 (1976) 331-357.

the well-known textbook *The Unification of Greece, 1770-1923* (London 1972) in which he succeeded in doing for modern Greece what others have done for modern Italy —to tell the story of how unifications was achieved. Its Greek edition appeared in 1989. A second textbook was published in London in 1973, *The Greek Struggle for Independence 1821-1833*, which consists of three hundred pages of narrative and interpretation of the events which led to the establishment of an independent Greek state. He had also written a great number of important articles.

All of Dakin's publications are based on systematic research of the records of the Foreign Office and the Colonial Office at the public Record Office and of the Manuscript Department of the British Museum, as well as of the Archives of the Greek Foreign Ministry and of many other sources.

A man of immense personal charm and humour, Douglas Dakin was the opposite of the conventional and remote academic prototype. Being a natural tireless and gifted teacher and with a affable, informal and witty manner, made him the ideal person as a university teacher and for the students it was a privilege and also a very good fortune to have been his pupils. This is especially true for Greek students studying abroad. It was good fortune because he was a scholar of international repute in Modern Greek History. He had prepared his Greek postgraduate students so that, when returning home, they were able to give a new impetus to historical studies by using extensively and systematically primary sources, concentrating especially on diplomatic records. It was thanks to Professor Dakin's advice and assistance that the Research Centre for Modern Greek History of the Academy of Athens was established —and the Academy of Athens gratefully rewarded him for his great contribution to Greek History by electing him a life corresponding member in 1971. Already, in 1969, the Faculty of Letters of the University of Thessaloniki had awarded him a honorary Doctorate.

Professor Dakin continued to contribute substantially to the development of Modern Greek Historical Studies. This was due to the support and expert guidance that he so generously gave to his old students during their professional lives. So, they vividly and gratefully remember him as an inspirational and kind teacher, qualities which have attracted an enormous respect and affection for him. His influence on Greek historians was considerable. And that lasted for more than one generation. It was natural then that they have added his name on the list of the great Philhellenes.

With these few words of recollection, I want, as Professor Dakin's first Greek student, to honour the memory of a great Teacher.