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The perception of Muslim minority in Greece in Greek and Bulgarian policy and strategy (1912-1923)

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After the Balkan Wars the European territories of the Ottoman Empire were divided up by the allied Christian states. But, apart from the new territories, the winner-states also inherited solid Muslim minority populations. The problem that immediately arose was the incorporation of these populations into the administrative and social structures of states where the Christian Religion had played a major role and the national awareness had been shaped by anti-Turkish stereotypes. Furthermore, a propagating device promoting territorial and other claims against neighboring states was set up around the minority policy followed by each Balkan state. The above is evident in the Greek and Bulgarian claims in Macedonia and Thrace during the period 1912-1923. This article presents how the Greek propaganda created the motif of the ideal Greek administration towards the Muslim minority and on the other hand the motif of the Bulgarian atrocities against the Muslim population by concealing actions of the Greek authorities that opposed the above ideal picture while on the contrary exaggerating Bulgarian actions that could support it.

During the Balkan Wars the Greek side was referring with dark remarks to the attitude of the Bulgarians towards the Greek and the Muslim populations of the territories occupied by the Bulgarian army. Moreover emphasized the fact that the Muslims were demanding from the Greek army to take over their villages because of the latter’s fair behavior or that they were also turning to the Greek territories for

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1 The Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs asks its embassy in Constantinople to send every week information regarding the Bulgarian atrocities against the Greeks and the Muslims see: Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs Historical Archive (AYE here after) 1913/6 Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Kanellopoulos in Constantinople, Athens 7/2/1913, reg. 4361 and AYE 1913/23 Kanellopoulos to Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Constantinople 17/6/1913, reg. 18965 where according to the previous request of the Ministry dispatches a report of Bulgarian atrocities against the Greeks and the Muslims.
The Greek ambassador in London informed the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs that the issue of atrocities against the Macedonian Muslims was posed in the British Parliament and that the head of Foreign Office, replied that relevant representations had been send to Sofia and Belgrade. To the question of the Greek ambassador why wasn’t made any reference to Athens, the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs replied that this happened due to the fact that the Greek army respected and protected the Muslims. Referring to the same period the Ministry of Relief pointed out that: “an example of Greek philanthropy, justice and religious tolerance, is the fact that the Turkish populations were abandoning their territories to cross the Greek borders seeking asylum for their religious and national heritage which was threatened by the Bulgarians”. The Greek Press was full of references to the Bulgarian atrocities against the Muslims. According to the Prefect of West Macedonia, this information made the Muslims of the region more tolerant of the Greek authorities. Another example though shows that this information had a different outcome. In June 1913, in the region of Edessa the rumor that the advent of a big Bulgarian band of comitajis was imminent caused the retreat of the Greek military units from north of Edessa and the panic of the Muslim population. The Greek government delegate in Edessa characteristically reports that both the Muslims and the Greek overwhelmed by fear deriving from what they read in the newspapers about the Bulgarian atrocities and that if it hadn’t been for the pleasant news coming from the battlefields, it would impossible to appease them. It seems that by exposing the Bulgarian behavior the Greek side wanted to promote the Greek claims in Macedonia and Thrace already from the negotiations in London. Since the January of 1913 Greek agents had been assigned to extract complaints from the Greek population of the regions of Serres, Kavala, Drama and Xanthi about the subjection of these regions to Bulgaria.


3 AYE 1913/16 Greek Embassy in London to Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs, London 21/2/1913, reg. 203.

4 Mih. Ailianos, Υπουργείο Περιθάλψεως, το έργον της ελληνικής περιθάλψεως (Ministry of Relief, the work of Greek relief), Athens 1921, p. 79.

5 AYE 1913/16, Prefecture of West Macedonia to Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Florina 31/1/1913, reg. 220.

6 Gennadius Library, American School of Classical Studies, Stefanos Dragoumis Archive, F. 113(Greek-Bulgarian war), the government delegate in Vodena A. Zotos to General Government of Macedonia, Vodena 24/6/1913.
Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs points out that an effort must be made so that the Muslim population submits its complaints with an emphasis on the Bulgarian atrocities as well. Thus certain efforts to communicate with the Muslim religious and political leaders of the above regions were made in order to go to Constantinople and submit their complaints to the embassies of the Great Powers. In March of 1913 the governmental representative in Serres informed the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs that he has found three Hotzas willing to travel to London to give an account of the Bulgarian atrocities that they enduring and to state that they prefer the Greek administration. This Greek propagating motif was also helpful in the effort to contract a defensive agreement with Turkey against Bulgaria. The Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs sends relevant instructions to the embassy in Constantinople pointing out that it is essential to constantly ignite the Muslim public opinion against the Bulgarians using publications in the Turkish Press (mostly in “Sabah” and “Ikdam”). For that purpose the most appropriate medium would be the narrations about the oppression that the Muslim population in Thrace and Macedonia is suffering from the Bulgarians.

The promoted Greek policy of tolerance towards the Muslims, in contrast always to the Bulgarian one, was aiming at attracting the solid Muslim population of

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7 AYE 1913/9, Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Prince Nikolaos, Athens 28/1/1913, reg. 2392
8 AYE 1913/9. D. Digas to Kavallieratos Constantinople 7/1/1913, D. Melfos to Kavallieratos, Constantinople 8/1/1913, Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Prince Nikolaos, Athens 4/2/1913, reg. 3848, Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Kanellopolous, Athens 23/1/1913, reg. 2519. Delegate of the Greek Government in Kavala to Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Kavala 3/1/1913, reg. 25 where he asks from the Greek Government to take into consideration, at the negotiations in London, not only the aspirations of the Greek population of East Macedonia but these of the Muslim population as well who desires its subjection to the Greek Administration. See also various resolutions of villages of East Macedonia, subscribed by Muslim inhabitants as well and sent to the London Conference, which complain about the subjection of certain regions to Bulgaria. AYE 1913/36.
10 Secret agreements between Greece and Turkey had begun before the treaty of London and were intensified after this. Venizelos tried to achieve a defensive agreement on common action against Bulgaria without making concessions in the Aegean. This of course did not achieve. He achieved however to maintain the interest of Turkish government for a potential collaboration with Greece so much effervescent so that Greece avoided a threatened Turkish-Bulgarian approach, see: Eleni Gardika-Katsiadaki, “Ο συσχετισμός των δυνάμεων και η Ελλάδα μπροστά στη συνθήκη του Βουκουρεστίου”(The correlation of powers and Greece in front of the treaty of Bucharest), in Συμπόσιο, Η συνθήκη του Βουκουρεστίου και η Ελλάδα (Symposium, The Treaty of Bucharest and Greece), Institute of Balkan Studies Thessaloniki16-18 November 1988, pp. 44.
11 AYE 1913/8, Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Greek Embassy in Constantinople, Athens 4/6/1913 and AYE 1913/26. Kanellopolous to Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Constantinople 21/8/1913, reg. 981 where it is stressed that any communication between Turkey and Bulgaria clashes with the public sentiment after the Bulgarian atrocities.
East Macedonia and West Thrace to the Greek camp, so as to limit the Bulgarian claims in the region. This policy seems to have borne fruit during the 2nd Balkan War. The Muslim populations of the East Macedonia helped the Greek army’s operations against the Bulgarians in many ways and this is something that was underlined by the Turkish Consul in Thessaloniki a year later when he accused the Greek authorities of ingratitude towards the population who had offered them such a big help in the war with Bulgaria. The Greek military and civil authorities were making sure that the difference between the Greek and Bulgarian administration was evident with actions like restoring to the Muslims the mosques that had been previously turned into churches by the Bulgarians or permitting the previously christianized Muslims to convert again to Islam. In Serres at the ceremony where the Greek Authorities transferred the mosque, which had been converted to church by the Bulgarians, to the Muslim community in the presence of the Great Powers’ consuls in Thessaloniki the Muslim and the Christian speakers pointed out the difference between the behavior of the Greek and Bulgarian authorities. Of course all these actions were not deriving from innate characteristics of the Greek cultural identity but had obviously a political and military objective. Mazarakis the leader of the Greek partisan forces in East Macedonia, emphasized that the restoring of the mosques to the Muslims in Kavala and Serres would strengthen the Greek influence on the Muslim population and that the same action should be taken elsewhere. Thanking notes of the Muslim communities of East Macedonia and West Thrace were published in the Greek Press; there the Greek army is characterized as liberator and the Greek administration is

12 ELIA Leonidas Paraskeouopoulos archive, report for the military operations of the 10th Division during the Greek-Bulgarian war of 1913, Veria 25 March 1914 the commander of 10th Division L. Paraskeouopoulos, pp. 18,19,55. Extraits fac-similés de certaines lettres trouvées dans le courrier du 19me régiment de la VIIme division grecque, saisi par les troupes bulgares dans la région de Razlog, Sofia 1913, letter of Z. Kaligianni, Rodope 13 July 1913. AYE 1913/24 Press Office of Thessaloniki to Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Thessaloniki 1/7/1913, reg. 91 and 4/7/1913, reg. 89.

13 AYE 1914/A/19 δ’ The General Consul of Ottoman Empire in Thessaloniki to Repoulis, Thessaloniki 8/4/1914, reg. 100.

14 AYE 1913/25. Press Office of Thessaloniki to Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Thessaloniki 3/7/1913, reg. 114. Same action was taken in all East Macedonia and was suitably projected by the Greek authorities, see: AYE 1913/24 Press Office of Thessaloniki to Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Thessaloniki 15/7/1913, reg. 84. Archive of the General Government of Macedonia/F. 117. Administrative Delegate of Kavala to General Government of Macedonia, Kavala 15/7/1913. Atrocites Bulgares en Macédoine faits et documents expose de la Commission d’ enquête de l’ association Macédonienne, Athens 1913, pp. 18, 27. AYE 1913/8 Office of military intelligence Second Lieutenant Konstantinidis, 18/7/1913, reg. 73 where descriptions of christianizations of Muslims by the Bulgarians and the granting of permission to the Muslims to wear fez, something which had been banned by the Bulgarians.

15 Gennadius Library, American School of Classical Studies, Stefanos Dragoumis Archive, F. 113(Greek-Bulgarian war) letter of Mazarakis to General Government of Macedonia.
praised\textsuperscript{16}. In the Carnegie Report it is underlined that until the Treaty of Bucharest the Greek side appreciated the help of the Muslim population against the Bulgarians\textsuperscript{17}. But after the Treaty of Bucharest Greece continued to try to prevent the incorporation of West Thrace in Bulgaria helping thus its efforts for autonomy in collaboration with the Muslim population. In this case as well the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs urged the representatives of the Greek communities to stress in their memorandums to the Great Powers that the non-Bulgarian population in Thrace had suffered many atrocities during the Bulgarian occupation\textsuperscript{18}.

However, from the autumn of 1913, after the signing of the Turkish-Bulgarian Peace Treaty and especially in 1914 the Muslim population of Greece is treated with suspicious since the reports referring to the Turkish-Bulgarian cooperation aiming at the autonomy of Macedonia\textsuperscript{19} are steadily being reproduced and, moreover, Greece and Turkey were on the verge of war. The Greek authorities in the same period, refuted the Turkish accusations of Greek atrocities against the Muslim population, attribute them to the Young Turkish propaganda and presented an idealized portrait of the Greek administration\textsuperscript{20}. As far as it concerns the emigration of the Muslim population, quite increased in 1914, the Greek authorities ascribe it, among other reasons, to the rumours spread by the agents of the Young-Turkish Committee that, along with Bulgaria, will invade Greek Macedonia. The fear of further Bulgarian atrocities led the Muslims to emigrating\textsuperscript{21}. Even though the Greek propaganda in

\textsuperscript{16} See for example: AYE 1913/24. Press Office of Thessaloniki to Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Thessaloniki 15/7/1913, reg. 84 where telegrams of the Kavala Muslims. Newspaper “Νέα Ημέρα” 28/7/1913 where telegram of the Gumuldjina Muslims to the King Konstantinos.

\textsuperscript{17} George F. Kennan, \textit{The other Balkan Wars}, Carnegie Endowment for international peace, Washington 1993, p. 201.

\textsuperscript{18} Καλλιοπή Παπαθανασί-Μουσιοπούλου, “Ο αντίκτυπος της συνθήκης του Βουκουρεστίου στη Θράκη” (The repercussion of the Treaty of Bucharest in Thrace), in Συμπόσιο, Η συνθήκη του Βουκουρεστίου και η Ελλάδα (Symposium, The Treaty of Bucharest and Greece), Institute of Balkan Studies Thessaloniki 16-18 November 1988, pp. 113-125.

\textsuperscript{19} For the Turkish-Bulgarian cooperation in this period, see for example: AYE 1914/A/2. Greek embassy in Sofia to Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Sofia 29/3/1913, reg. 73. AYE 1913/3. Kanellopoulos to Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Constantinople 9/9/1913, reg. 1072. AYE 1913/30. Levidis to Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Pera 22/10/1913, reg. 29684 and Pera 17/11/1913, reg. 32017.

\textsuperscript{20} About the accusations made by the Ottoman government regarding the Greek atrocities against the Muslim population and the effort by the Greek Government to refute them see: AYE 1914/A/19 δ’ (Greek-Turkish talks about the complaints made by the Muslims of the New Countries, January till December) and Archive of the General Government of Macedonia/F. 74 and 75 (Turkish Embassy).

\textsuperscript{21} From the beginning of the Balkan Wars till the end of 1914 125,000 Muslims left Greek Macedonia (100 to 115,000 left in 1914). For statistical information about the Muslim emigration, see: Α.Α. Παλλής, \textit{Στατιστική Μελέτη περί των φυλετικών μεταναστεύσεων Μακεδονίας και Θράκης κατά την περίοδο 1912-1924} (Statistical study about the racial emigration in Macedonia and Thrace during the period 1912-1924), Athens 1925. For the causes of the emigrations, see: Archive of the General Government
1914 was aiming at refuting the above-mentioned Turkish accusations, the superior behavior of the Greek authorities in contrast to the Bulgarian one was a commonly used argument. The above Greek argumentation is presented in the report of Reiss, professor of the University of Lausanne with the title “About the situation of the Bulgarian-speaking population and Muslims in the New Greek Territories”, published in 1915, as well as in the report for the Greek government written by Naum, the Greek ambassador in Sofia. Both visited East Macedonia in 1914, discussed with the Muslims inhabitants and wrote the reports, which on no account leave any shadows on the Greek administration.

In reality, though the behavior of the Greek authorities wasn’t as ideal as presented. The British Consul in Thessaloniki points out that if somebody believes the picture presented by the Greek side about the way its administration is practiced could conclude that Greek Macedonia is almost a heaven on earth. In the same report the British diplomat exposes incidents that disprove the above ideal picture, he underlines that Greece, although a small country, has occupied quite a big territory and tends to suppress every revolutionary attempt against its authority. Its inexperience justifies to some extent its arrogance and chauvinism. And he concludes by stating that the opinion of the foreign observers is that the familiar mistakes of the Ottoman administration are also evident in the Greek administration. The British Vice-Consul in Kavala has the opinion that, although the Greek government may not adopt a policy of expulsions against the Muslim population, the local officials and the Christian population are sorting out old differences with the Muslims. Indeed, the above opinions of the British diplomat expose the contradiction in the political beliefs about the Muslims between the central and the local administration, and also the Christian population. Things deteriorated when refugees from the Ottoman Empire started...
arriving in 1914. The co-existence of the Greek refugees, still remembering the Turkish expulsions, with the Muslim element in Greek Macedonia was extremely difficult. The suspicions about the cooperation between the Muslims and the Bulgarians in Macedonia against the Greek dominance may have been justifiable, but the Greek authorities and especially the military ones, found difficult to distinguish the guilty from the innocent ones when taking suppressive measures. Besides the Greek government took some measures against the Muslims, especially regarding the Muslim land ownership. During the Balkans Wars the Greek army, the partisan forces and the local Christians committed some atrocities as well, against the Muslim population. Moreover the accusations that the Muslims of Strumista were forced by the Greek army to follow them into the Greek territories can disprove the Greek argument that the Muslim population of the territories given to Bulgaria and Serbia

27 According to the Kilkis Deputy Governor’s report the refugees were a real plague for the Muslim population of his district. Archive of the General Government of Macedonia/F. 14, Report of the Deputy Governor of Kilkis about the state in general of the sub-government to the Prefect of Thessaloniki, 14 December 1914.
28 Making use of the law 262/1914 the Greek Government seizes the lands in the New Countries, which were abandoned by their owners after the beginning of the A΄ Balkan War giving them one year to present the titles of ownership. This law contradicts article 6 of the Greek-Turkish Treaty of Athens, which states that the Muslims of the territories occupied by the Greek army maintain their immobile property even if they emigrate outside Greece and that they can make any necessary arrangements through their representatives. Later on with the law 687 an extension is given for the presentation of the titles of ownership so that the lands occupied by the Greek state could be returned but on the term that the Sublime Porte would recognize the same right to the Greeks of the Ottoman Empire that had emigrated to Greece and their lands had been occupied by the Ottoman Government. The laws 262 and 687 were in some way the Greek government’s response to the expulsions of the Greeks of Asia Minor at the same period, but at the same time the Greek government tried to avoid every commitment in the Treaty of Athens regarding the land owning state of the New Countries.
29 George F. Kennan, op. cit., Justin McCarthy, Death and Exile: The ethnic cleansing of ottoman Muslims, 1821-1922, New Jersey 1995. Tülüm Sümer, “Türkleri Makedonya’dan göce mecbur eden Yunan zulümleri”(The Greek atrocities that forced the Muslim population to emigrate from Macedonia), Belgelerle Türk Tarh Dergisi, 15 (1968), 49-53. T.C. Babakanlık Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü Osmanlı Darı Daire Başkanlığı yayını 22 (General Department of the State Archives of the Premiership of the Turkish Republic, Department of the Ottoman Archives, edition number 22), Arşiv Belgelerine göre Balkanlar’da ve Anadolu’da Yunan Mezalimi, 1: Balkanlar’da Yunan Mezalimi (The Greek atrocities in the Orient and the Balkans according to documents of the Archive, 1: Greek atrocities in the Balkans), Ankara 1995. Kadir Misirlioğlu, Yunan Mezalimi Türkün siyah kitabı (Greek atrocity, the Turkish Black Bible), Istanbul 1968. The bibliography relating to atrocities, especially in the Balkans, many times, due to national and political interests, resorts to exaggerations; this characterizes mainly the Turkish bibliography. The issue of atrocities against the Muslims in the areas occupied by the Greek army never seemed to worry the Greek bibliography, which seemed to ignore its existence. Scattered information regarding the Greek atrocities can be found in diaries portraying the Balkan Wars, and in various articles. For such a recording see the article of the team of journalists with the name «Ιος της Κυριακής» in the newspaper «Κυριακατικὴ Ελευθεροτυπία» 26-27 April 2003.
after the Balkan Wars was turning to the Greek lands wanting to experience the advantages of the Greek administration.

The Greek suspicions about the cooperation between the Bulgarians and the Turks against the Greek dominance in Macedonia were justified during the 1st World War when the two countries allied with the Central Powers. The Muslim population of the region—with exceptions of course—helped the Bulgarians to occupy East Macedonia in 1916. The Greek ministry of Foreign Affairs published a series of documents referring to this cooperation against the Greek population in East Macedonia31. In 1919 a report with the same subject is published by Reiss in Paris with title “The Bulgarians and the Turks against the Greeks”32.

With the restoration of the Greek dominance in East Macedonia one would expected that a policy of expulsions against the Muslim element would be implemented, since their cooperation with the enemy and their participation in the expulsions of the Greek population provided an excuse for the Greek authorities. What happened though was the opposite. The Greek government connected the success of the Greek aspirations in Thrace and Asia Minor with the promotion of the fair Greek policy towards the Muslim minority mainly in East Macedonia where the necessary comparison with Bulgarian behavior could be done. Besides, Greece was claiming regions with solid Muslim population and it was necessary to show to the Great Powers, conferring in Paris, that the country was able to administer regions with minority populations. Furthermore minority rights was an issue dominating in the Peace Conference33. All things considered, Greece could benefit from following a

31 Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Πι λωματικά έγγραφα 1913-1917. Ελληνοσερβική συνθήκη συμμαχίας. Εισβολή γερμανοβουλγάρων εις Μακεδονίαν (Diplomatic Papers 1913-1917. Greek-Serbian treaty of alliance. German-Bulgarian invasion in Macedonia), Athens 1920².
policy of tolerance towards the Muslims until the signing of the peace treaties with Turkey and Bulgaria. In 1919 with the contribution of Greek government the 1915 Reis report was republished, since the positive elements that it contained about the behavior of the Greek administration towards the Muslims of East Macedonia were really necessary at that time.\(^{34}\)

Venizelos from Paris sends to the Greek authorities relevant instructions. He points out that the Muslims that had abandoned East Macedonia during or before the Bulgarian occupation should be permitted to return and their possessions that were being confiscated should be given back. Moreover Venizelos asks from the Minister of Agriculture to go to East Macedonia to oversee the implementation of these measures and to explain to the Muslims that the Greek Government is favorably disposed towards them. The Greek Prime Minister regarded the above as extremely important for the realization of the national aspirations in Thrace.\(^{35}\) The leader of the Greek Military Delegation in Sofia considered that the favorable behavior of the Greeks authorities towards the Muslims of East Macedonia would help the negotiations with Muslim representatives of the Bulgarian Parliament.\(^{36}\) Venizelos was willing to make many concessions to the Muslim population of East Macedonia and Thrace in order to fulfill the Greek claims. Thus, he suggests to be used as a basis of negotiation with Muslim representatives in the Bulgarian Parliament the autonomy of East Macedonia and Thrace under the Greek control. Venizelos suggested a type of autonomy close to the one granted to the District of Ruthenians by Czechoslovakia. The Governor of the autonomous region would be appointed by Greece, but he could retain his position only if he was supported by the local parliament. Moreover, he

\(^{34}\) AYE 1918/T/108,3 (Reiss File).

\(^{35}\) AYE 1919/A/5 10a, Venizelos to Vice-President of Cabinet and Minister of Agriculture, Paris 11/8/1919, reg. 8408. The land owning was the most important issue that the Greek government had to deal with in order to succeed in attracting the Muslim population to its side and thus only the favorable measures taken, after Vamvaka’s relevant proposal, about the Muslim lands of East Macedonia can be explained. The returning of the big Muslim properties was directly connected with the degree of help that the Muslim owners were willing to offer to the Greek propaganda device and this was something openly put forward by the General Governor of Macedonia at his meeting with the Muslim big landowners of Macedonia. As it will be stressed further on, the cooperation between the Greek authorities and the Muslim member of the Bulgarian Parliament Ismail Hakki had for the latter part and some economic motives since Ismail Hakki owned vast areas of land in East Macedonia, which had been occupied by the Greek state.

promises the representation of the Muslims at the central Greek parliament and the appointment of one Muslim Minister. However, Venizelos pointed out that Greece was willing to make all these concessions only if the Muslim population helped towards the achievement of the common goal of both sides (namely sending away the Bulgarians from Thrace) and since a kind of treaty was first signed with the Muslim population of Thrace, the sanction of which would be sought from the Conference of Paris. This way he wanted to eliminate all movements of autonomy of West Thrace under the Bulgarian control or under the Turkish Thracian Committee. The Greek Prime Minister addresses constantly instructions to the military and political authorities to keep an impeccable attitude towards the Muslims. He also points out that the incidents occurred during the landing of the Greek army in Smyrna should no way be repeated at the temporary occupation of Xanthi. He even asks for the courts-martial against the Muslims for crimes committed during the Bulgarian occupation to stop and for those detained to be released underlining the political reasons that impose these measures.

Muslims representatives in the Greek Parliament, although they don’t belong to the party of Venizelos undertake missions to Constantinople and Smyrna to set out the benefits of the Greek administration. Vavmakas authorized by the Greek Prime Minister, goes to Macedonia to co-ordinate the policy favoring the Muslims and among others he succeeds in acquiring memorandums where the Muslims of East Macedonia and the West Thrace were stating the superiority of the

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37 The idea for autonomy is proposed at the talks with the representatives of the Turkish Committee, when Greece finds difficulty in promoting its claims in Thrace, facing mainly the reaction of the USA and Italy, and it is abandoned when it is obvious that the problem of Thrace will be solved in favor of Greece, see: Mpeneaki Museum Venizelos Archives/F. Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs 1919 173/24, Venizelos to General Government of East Macedonia, Paris 18/11/1919, telegram no 318 and Venizelos to General Government of Thessaloniki, Paris 17/11/1919, reg. 7307. AYE 1919/A/5/1,4 Venizelos to Greek High Commission in Constantinople, Paris 18/8/1919, reg. 8169. N. Petsalis-Diomidis, op. cit., pp. 162-163, 280-281.


40 AYE 1919/A/5,10 γ, Venizelos to Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Paris 17/8/1919, reg. 8633. AYE 1919/A/5,6, Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs to General Headquarters, Athens 11/10/1919, reg. 9926.

41 AYE 1919/ A/5,10β, Diomidis to Venizelos, Athens 11/3/1919, reg.1881 where it is mentioned, that after some actions taken by the representative Pop, the Muslim representatives of the opposition send a telegram to Paris where they praise the behavior of the Greek Authorities towards the Muslims. We mention for instance the delegations of Seih Omer, the representatives Ali Demir, Housamedin Sait to Constantinople or of the Turkish-Cretan Mehmet Bey Zade to Smyrna.
Greek administration, which is compared with the Bulgarian atrocities⁴². The Greek delegation in the Peace Conference is swamped with reports by Muslim communities from East Macedonia and later on from Thrace with a similar content⁴³.

One of the most powerful weapons of the Greek propaganda for the elimination of the Bulgarian and Turkish claims in Thrace is the cooperation with a group of Muslim representatives in the Bulgarian Parliament, led by Ismail Hakki⁴⁴. The Greek Military Delegation in Sofia plays an important role in contacting these representatives and helping them to escape from Bulgaria. The Muslim representatives of the Bulgarian Parliament are helped to escape to Constantinople by the Greek Military Delegation. However, there some of them, Ismail Hakki was among them, are put in jail by the Turkish police. After the intervention of the Greek High Commission they are set free and they go to Kavala with a Greek military ship. The same group of representatives sends memorandums to the Paris Conference where they underline that due to the oppression that the Muslims experienced by the Bulgarian administration they cannot remain under the Bulgarian yoke and they prefer the Greek occupation because the Greek authorities have always followed a fair and liberal policy⁴⁵. Ismail Hakki together with other Muslim representatives tours East

⁴³ AYE 1919 A/5/10G, General Headquarters, Staff, Office II, information and political affairs department to Politis Greek delegation in Paris, General Headquarters 26/8/1919, reg. 11420. Attached thanking letters for the Greek army by the Mufties of Serres, Sidirokastro and various ottoman villages. General Headquarters, Staff, Office II, information and political affairs department to Politis Greek delegation in Paris, General Headquarters 16/9/1919, reg. 12784/7475/II. Attached thanking letters of Muslim inhabitants of East Macedonia. Politis asks from the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs for appropriate instructions to be given to the Greek occupation army of Thrace so that the Muslim population will submit memorandums to the Allies where they will refute the possibility of a Bulgarian occupation, see: AYE 1919 A/5/11, Politis to Greek Foreiinf Ministry, Paris 20/1/1919, reg. 992.
⁴⁴ Ismail Hakki came from Kavala and he had a kinship with Khedive of Egypt. After some accusations that he worked for the autonomy of Macedonia and Thrace he sought refuge in West Thrace where he was elected representative of Komotini in the Bulgarian Parliament. He owned vast areas of land in East Macedonia (particularly in Sari Saban and Eleftheres) which had been seized by the Greek state as abandoned, something which made him a “Philhellene” according to Mazarakis, leader of the Greek Military Delegation in Sofia and an old friend of Ismail. Hakki follows the Greek army during the occupation of Thrace, while later on he expresses his will to be used by the Greek Administration of Thrace as a Prefect. However, the Greek government assessing that Hakki wasn’t much liked in East Macedonia and Thrace chose to use him in Central and West Macedonia.
Macedonia and West Thrace aiming at, as Vamvakas points out in confidential report, inducing the Muslims to set up local councils that will represent the will of the inhabitants against the Bulgarians and in favour of the Greeks\textsuperscript{46}. Ismail Hakki and his group drafts memorandum, gives interviews and later goes to Paris\textsuperscript{47}. An emigrating movement of Muslims from Bulgarian Thrace towards the Greek territories is used appropriately by the Greek propaganda. Venizelos advises the Greek authorities to treat them well since this behavior will affect positively the attitude of the Muslim element during the occupation of the East Thrace\textsuperscript{48}. The Greek military delegation in Sofia contacts the Muslims representatives from the regions of the Bulgarian Thrace and it co-ordinates their actions. Memorandums to the Paris Peace Conference are drafted by the Muslim population where the repeat the above mentioned arguments\textsuperscript{49}. Ismail Hakki having as a weapon the suggestions of Venizelos for autonomy prepares a convention in Komotini where delegates from the Bulgarian Thrace would participate and they would ask the annexation of their territories to Greece\textsuperscript{50}. However, Venizelos, who is now certain about the decision of the Conference regarding Thrace, doesn’t approve of Hakki’s actions, which were directing the Muslim populations against the Bulgarians\textsuperscript{51}, and he also asks the Greek authorities not to encourage the movements of the Pomaks of the Bulgarian Thrace towards annexing to Greece or their thoughts on revolting\textsuperscript{52}.


\textsuperscript{46} Κ Παπαθανασι-Μουσιοπούλου, \textit{Η απελευθέρωση της Δυτικής Θράκης από το αρχείο του Χαρίσιον Βαμβάκα} (The liberation of West Thrace from the archive of Xarisios Vamvakas, Athens, p. 130.

\textsuperscript{47} \textit{ΑΥΕ} 1919/Α/5,11, Venizelos to Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Paris 23/3/1919, reg. 3173 where Venizelos asks to help Ismail Hakki in every possible way to go to Paris. See also: Hakki’s interview in the \textit{Morning Post} 31/10/1919.

\textsuperscript{48} This is mainly about Pomaks of the region of Arda who pass in the Greek territories in 1919 and 1920. Mpenaki Museum Venizelos Archives/Γ. Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs 1919 173/23, Diomidis to Venizelos, Athens 4/9/1919, reg. 8179. AYE 1919 A/5,6, Diomidis to Commander in Chief Paraskeuopoulos, Athens 21/8/1919, reg. 8178. K. Papathanasi-Mousiopoulou, op. cit., pp. 24-26.\textsuperscript{49}

\textsuperscript{49} AYE 1919/A/5,6, Paraskeuopoulos to Vice-President of Government, General Headquarters 29/8/1919, reg. 6445 where talks between Major Iatridis of the Greek Military Delegation in Sofia and the Muslim representative Etem Rouhi about the drafting of a memorandum from 28 villages of the districts of Dovlen and Pasmaki. Greek Military Delegation in Bulgaria to General Headquarters, Sofia 30/9/1919, reg. 737 where memorandums of the Muslims of Egri Dere, Kirtzali and dari Dere. N. Petsalis-Diomidis, op. cit., p. 181.\textsuperscript{50}

\textsuperscript{50} AYE 1919/A/5,4, Kanellopoulos to Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Constantinople 10/8/1919, reg. 6063 and Kanellopoulos to Venizelos, Constantinople 23/8/1919, reg.6063.\textsuperscript{51}

\textsuperscript{51} AYE 1919/A/5,6, Venizelos to Kanellopoulos, Paris 10/8/1919, reg. 8398.\textsuperscript{52}

\textsuperscript{52} In the contacts between the Greek Military Delegation in Bulgaria and the Muslim representatives it was proposed by the latter part to incite a revolt of the Muslim-Pomak population against the
When the efforts to present the superiority of the Greek policy towards the minorities were undermined by measures taken by local authorities (as, for example, the seizure of the estate belonging to the mother of a Muslim Representative in Drama or the arrest and imprisonment of the brother of Ismail Hakki), Venizelos expresses his disappointment. He says that the blindness of the Greek administration is incurable since it systematically does its best to undermine the Greek national claims and he asks for the necessary orders to be issued in order to restrain the local authorities from such actions. Moreover, the Greek Minister of Foreign Affairs from Paris points out to the vice-president of the Greek government that he finds it urgent that strict guidelines be given to the authorities in Macedonia in order to protect the Muslims. From the above-mentioned comments of Venizelos about the Greek Administration we can conclude that the local authorities weren’t exactly following the Greek Prime Minister’s suggestions about the policy that should be followed towards the Muslims, irrespective of its necessity. Furthermore, the policy of tolerance towards the Muslims, particularly those of East Macedonia, ignoring in many cases their behavior during the period of the Bulgarian occupation, met with strong reactions by the representatives of the local Greek authorities. The General Governor of East Macedonia in his letter to the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs expresses his opposition to the cooperation of the Greek government with the representative of Drama Housamedin, who had been assigned a propaganda mission in Constantinople, pointing out that this specific representative had cooperated with the Bulgarians and the Young Turkish Committee during the Bulgarian occupation of East Macedonia and that his actions against the Greek element are enough to indict Bulgarians asking at the same time for help from the Greek side. However, Venizelos was against this option and he preferred to put Bulgaria under pressure at the Paris Conference through memorandums and protests, see: AYE 1919/A:5,6, Venizelos to Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Paris 21/8/1919, reg. 8745. AYE 1920/ 153.2, Press Office of Thessaloniki, confidential, to Politis, Thessaloniki 13/4/1920. Mpenaki Museum Venizelos Archives/F. Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs 1919 173/23, Kanellopoulos to Politis, Pera 1/9/1919, reg. 6278. K. Papathanasi-Mousiopoulou, op. cit., p. 27. N. Petsalis-Diomidis, op. cit., p. 282.

53 AYE 1919/A:5 10A, Venizelos to Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Paris 13/8/1919, reg.8459. At a different point, Venizelos draws Paraskeuopoulos’, Commander in Chief of the army, attention to information about serious misbehavior by the military detachments against the population of the regions of Karatzova, Lagada and Gianitsa and he states characteristically “if we don’t learn to govern the foreign populations under our administration in a fatherly way, it will be impossible to retain our sovereignty over them. It is necessary that all be inspired by this truth”, see: AYE 1919/A:5/113, Venizelos to Paraskeuopoulos, Paris 2/8/1919, reg. 8544.

54 ELIA Paraskeuopoulos Archive, Politis to Diomidis, Paris 29 Αυγούστου 1919.
him to the court-martial\textsuperscript{55}. When the Greek propaganda was promoting its policy towards the Muslims, Ismail Hakki was addressing to the Greek High Commissioner in Constantinople mentioning that many Muslim Greek citizens of East Macedonia not only didn’t take back their estates but also had to pay rent to the Greek government in order to stay at their own houses\textsuperscript{56}. Venizelos talks about an incurable blindness of the Greek Administration.

When the climate on a diplomatic level is no longer positive for Greece and after the emerging deadlock in the Asia Minor operations, the Bulgarian side, either by expressing its position through the official government or through the various Macedonian or Thracian organizations, concentrated its efforts on reversing the treaties that were cutting Bulgaria off from the Aegean Sea. Also tried to approach both the Muslims of Thrace and the Kemal movement. The London Conference of 1921 encouraged the actions of the Bulgarian and Turkish organizations and their corresponding propaganda. The Greek diplomatic delegation in Bulgaria and the Greek High Commission in Constantinople constantly refer to the cooperation of Bulgarian Macedonian or Thracian committees with Turkish committees or Ankara. Turkish-Bulgarian bands are gathered in the borders with Greece, officers of Kemal go to Bulgaria to organize the actions of the committees and to co-ordinate the propaganda, while some actions of sabotage are reported within the Greek territories\textsuperscript{57}. According to the Greek Embassy in Sofia the Bulgarian government has also been in contact with Kemal since autumn of 1920 and, moreover, tolerate and

\textsuperscript{55} AYE 1919/A/5 E. Gotsis to Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Drama 12/4/1919, reg. 811 and General Government of East Macedonia to Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Drama 11/4/1919, reg. 811 where attached reports of the former Mayor of Kavala and the Mufti of Drama against the hostile attitude of the Muslim representatives of Drama against the Greek population. There are also reactions about the delegation of Ismail Hakki, see: AYE 1919/A/5, 6, Nikolopoulos to Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Drama 14/9/1919, reg. 246.

\textsuperscript{56} Mpenaki Museum Venizelos Archives/F. Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs 1919 173/22, Kanellopoulos to Venizelos, Constantinopole 23/8/1919, reg. 6058.

protect Kemal’s representatives, while on the other hand, Bulgarian representatives go to Turkey for consultations. As part of a propaganda scheme, both the Bulgarian and the Turkish side blame the Greek administration for pressuring the Muslim population and suggest as a solution the autonomy of Thrace and Macedonia or in other case the annexation of Thrace to Bulgaria, a state that has proven its ability to administer the Muslim communities in a fair way. The Greek side trying to refute all the above accusations uses the same arguments that had used in the recent past. Resolutions by Muslims communities underline the excellent behavior of the Greek administrative and military authorities. Furthermore, once again, the desire of the Muslims of the Bulgarian Thrace to be incorporated into Greece is emphasized and a relevant resolution by representatives of the Bulgarian Thrace who have taken refuge in Greece is send to the London Conference. The Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs

58 AYE 1922/94, Greek Embassy in Sofia to Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Sofia 10/4/1922, reg. 2041 report regarding the foreign policy of the government of Stambolinski. It seems that Sofia and Ankara signed a treaty for military cooperation in March 1922, in Pavlovo with which they agreed on acting together in Macedonia and Thrace. But there are reservations as to which extent this treaty is real. About the text of this treaty, see: M. Paksimadopoulou-Staurinou, op. cit., p. 142 and generally about the cooperation between Sofia and Ankara pp. 106-125 and 139-148. A treaty of this kind was signed and in Ankara in June 1922, the text of which can be found translated in English in the Venizelos’ archives, Mpenaki Museum Venizelos Archives/F. Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs 1922 173/30, Greek Embassy in London to F.O., London 30/10/1922, reg 3462/St/22. About the Bulgarian delegations to Ankara with representative Grozkov at head in March, 1921 and Dimitr Ackov in December, 1922 and about the existence of an official of Kemal (Cevat Abbas) in Sofia since the beginnings of 1921 see: T. C. Başbakanlık Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü Yayın nu: 16, Belgelerle Mustafa Kemal Atatürk ve Türk-Bulgar İlişkileri (1913-1938), Ankara 2002, pp. XXII-XXIV.


60 AYE 1921/4, Greek High Commission in Thrace to Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Adrianople 25/8/1920, reg. 326 where thanking addresses by the Mufti of Serayiou of East Thrace. AYE 1921/7, Civil Administrator of Thrace to the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Adrianople reg. 2575 16/12/1921 decree by the Muslim community of Gumuljina to the Prefect of Rodope, Gumuljina 14/2/1921. AYE 1921/20, General Government of Thrace to Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Adrianople 3/3/1921, reg. 26308 where a protest by the Muslim community of the sub-government of Vrissi about the fact that Muslim representatives of the Greek Parliament didn’t sign the Parliament’s decree towards the Conference of London about the Greek fair claims in Thrace and Asia Minor.

61 AYE 1921/7, Greek High Commission in Thrace Prefecture of Rodope to Greek Ministry of Interior, Gumuljina15/2/1921, reg. 1033 and to D. Gounaris, Gumuljina 10/2/1921, reg. 932. The Bulgarian side, in its response to the protest by the joined forces of Greece, Serbia and Romania about the bands operating from Bulgarian territories, accuses Greece of inciting the Pomaks of the Bulgarian territories to revolt and to draft memorandums with which they ask their unification with Greece, see: AYE
provides evidence in an effort to refute the accusations of pressures against the Muslims and comments characteristically: “why do the Bulgarians care about the Muslims weren’t those who behaved in the worst way towards them during the Balkan Wars and later on?” In 1922 K. Svolopoulos in a book of his mentions that the Bulgarians and the Turks joined forces trying to revise the treaties, claiming that the Greek administration is quite incompetent and he refutes these allegations reminding the Bulgarian behavior against the Muslims during the Balkan Wars. The Greek administration of this period, once again, is not as ideal as presented. The Muslims are regarded with suspicion as they are thought to support the Kemal movement and to prepare a revolt in cooperation with the Bulgarian side. In such a climate and with the military operations going on in Asia Minor, the chances of pressuring the Muslims are many.

After the collapse of the Asia Minor Front, the information about the cooperation between Bulgarian and Turkish groups and also between Sofia and Ankara, are multiplied. The Greeks are afraid that, if the talks in Lausanne are brought to a standstill, Kemal will invade Thrace while the Bulgarian and Turkish bands will harass the rear parts of the Greek army or will cause a revolt in Macedonia and Thrace. Finally, the cooperation between Sofia and Ankara, despite the contacts, wasn’t realized. Kemals victories increase his demands in Thrace. Sofia

1922/94, Berne 17/6/1922 Legation Royale de Bulgarie Mikoff a Eric Drummond League of Nations Secretary General, no 11/21347/21347.

62 AYE 1921/7, report by the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs with data for refuting the accusations that the Greek authorities were causing the emigration of Bulgarians and Turks from Thrace.

63 D.K. Svolopoulos, Η Θράκη υπό την ελληνική διοίκησις (Thrace in Greek administration), Constantinople 1922.

64 For example the behavior of the Greek military detachments during the operations for the capture of the Muslim bandits of Kara Ali and Sefer Retzek in West Macedonia see Museum of the Struggle for Macedonia, Archive of General Administration of West Macedonia/F. Bandits of Interwar, Gendarmerie of Sorovitz for the General Administration of Kozani, Sorovitz 31 July, 1922. Special report of the committed extortions against the Muslims of the village of Elevitz. The Prefecture of Kozani P. Zaharitsas to the Commander of Independent Battalion, Kozani 7 July, 1922, reg. 5084 where he asks for the examination of the complaints of the Mufti of Kailaria about assaults against the Muslim villagers by military Divisions.

worries and also the Bulgarian Macedonian or Thracian organizations because they see the original plan of cooperation with the Turkish side, which was the autonomy of the whole Thrace, East and West, being abandoned. The Greek ambassador in Sofia, in September 1922, in a report of his, after his meeting with the Bulgarian Minister of Foreign Affairs reveals the disappointment of the latter about the restoration of East Thrace to Turkey.\textsuperscript{66}

Concluding with an assessment of the policy towards the Muslim community during the period 1912-1923 followed by Greece and Bulgaria, we could deduce that neither side adopted an organized policy of expulsions of the Muslim populations, with the exception of the Bulgarian policy towards the Pomaks during the Balkan Wars, while the minority rights were satisfyingly protected by international treaties and the national legislature. In reality though, both governments didn’t feel comfortable with the existence of a numerous Muslim community, which also possessed a big proportion of the arable land, while in the relations between the Christian population and the Muslim one the negative stereotypes deriving from the distant and recent past where dominating. The same period Greece experienced greater turmoil’s than Bulgaria regarding its relations with the Muslim population, since the Greek-Turkish relations were also characterized by constant friction and military conflicts. On the other hand, Bulgaria was focusing on the not liberated Bulgarian populations and the Macedonian question and not on the Muslim minority. As far as it concerns the accusations for violent behavior towards the Muslim communities against both countries, it would be pointless to be led to a comparison. Besides, we shouldn’t forget that the promoted behavior towards the minorities by both sides was serving a particular objective. The British Consul in Thessaloniki presents successfully the way that the propaganda of the Balkan States towards the minorities works: “each Balkan people is, within its own borders, persecuting the adherents of its neighbors, and each is endeavouring to obtain its own justification before the world, the sympathy of Europe for itself and European condemnation of its
neighbours, by loudly calling attention to its neighbours acts and by concealing its own”67.

67 This extract is cited in the article: Basil C. Gounaris, “Doing Business in Macedonia: Greek problems in British perspective (1912-1921)”, European Review of History 5/2(1998), 172.