Greece in the Balkans

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Paschalis M. Kitromilides, *Enlightenment, Nationalism, Orthodoxy: Studies in the Culture and Political Thought of South-Eastern Europe* (Variorum, Aldershot 1994)

Loring M. Danforth, *The Macedonian Conflict: Ethnic Nationalism in a Transnational World* (Princeton University Press 1995)

Thanos M. Veremis and Mark Dragoumis, *Historical Dictionary of Greece* (Scarecrow Press, Metuchen, NJ 1995)

In May 1981, on the centenary of the birth of Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, in an imaginative gesture aimed at improving the troubled climate of Greek-Turkish relations, a commemorative gathering was held at the house in Thessaloniki where Mustafa Kemal, a native of the city, had once lived. This now contains, besides a small museum dedicated to Ataturk, the 'Father of the Turks', the Turkish Consulate-General. Some three hundred worthies, including Nikos Martis, the Minister for Northern Greece and a redoubtable latter-day *Makedonomakhos*, or defender of Greek Macedonia against the Slavic threat, attended the ceremony. A Turkish government minister duly called for a return to the heyday of Greek-Turkish rapprochement inaugurated in the early 1930s by Eleftherios Venizelos and Kemal Ataturk, when the Greek prime minister (unsuccessfully) nominated the Turkish president for the Nobel Peace Prize.

But the sonorous platitudes that are the norm on such occasions were rudely shattered when a circus acrobat threatened to crash a light plane packed with dynamite on the house. Panic ensued. Two Mirage jets were scrambled but could do nothing because the acrobat's plane was flying too low. Only when the pilot's brother was prevailed upon to radio that the stuntman's wife and children had been take to the Consulate was the episode brought to an end – when it proved to be no more true that the hired plane was packed with explosives than that the wife and

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three children had been corralled in the Ataturk House. But by then such goodwill as had been engendered by the ceremony had been comprehensively dissipated. The pilot was duly brought to trial and argued in his defence that he could not bear to see Greeks celebrating with Turks while his Greek Cypriot brethren were suffering on Cyprus. This argument manifestly carried weight; for the public prosecutor, no less, called for an acquittal on the ground that one overcome by patriotic sentiments is liable to engage in actions which he is unable to control.

Greece certainly has no monopoly of nationalist mayhem: witness the recent declaration by a Turkish couple that they intend to get married on Imia (Turkish Kardak). It was a dispute over the sovereignty of this uninhabited islet close to the Turkish mainland which came close to provoking an all-out war between Greece and Turkey in January 1996. But nationalist froth can have an altogether darker side, with serious consequences for the individuals concerned. In 1984, a few years after the Ataturk House incident, a Greek-Cypriot teacher at the Tasis Hellenic International School in Athens had the imagination to ask his twelfth-grade class to write an essay looking at the Turkish invasion of Cyprus in 1974 from a Turkish perspective. Within less than two weeks, following protests by angry Greek parents, a telegram arrived from the Ministry of Education ordering the teacher's immediate dismissal, no matter that he as a Cypriot, or his wife as an Armenian, might have particular reason to be apprehensive of Turkish treatment of minority populations. Ministry inspectors subsequently impounded a number of Turkish propaganda pamphlets, citing a 1931 law which forbids foreign schools from holding material deemed to be 'unfavourable to the Greek nation'. What criteria are invoked to determine whether books are 'anti-Hellenic' is not immediately clear. So seriously was the matter taken by the Ministry of Education that for a time it looked as though the school might be closed down.

Incidents of the kind described – and they could easily be multiplied – demonstrate how high the passions generated by *ethnika zitimata* and perceived threats to Greece's territorial integrity can run. Nationalist excess is by no means a uniquely Greek phenomenon, as was demonstrated by the nasty seam of chauvinism not far beneath the surface of British life that was exposed by the Falklands war. In the Balkan context, however, the Greek example has a particular interest in that the Greeks were the first of the subject peoples of the Ottoman Empire to import the heady nationalist doctrines emanating from Revolutionary France. The national movements of other Balkan peoples in the nineteenth century were to a significant degree inspired by the Greek precedent, while at the

same time constituting a reaction against Greek cultural and religious hegemony.

Over the years Paschalis Kitromilides has established a formidable reputation as a student of the history of ideas in Greece and of the interplay between nationalism and Orthodoxy in the Greek-speaking world. Variorum has therefore performed a valuable service in bringing together thirteen previously published studies not all of which are easy to track down. These are accompanied by a useful commentary in which the author assesses his own work in the light of subsequent research and lists the most important additions to the bibliography since the original date of publication. The core of the volume focuses on the period of the 'Neo-Hellenic Enlightenment', the critical seventy years or so before the outbreak of the War of Independence, about which Kitromilides has written to such good effect in *The Enlightenment as Social Criticism: Iosipos Moisiodax and Greek Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (Princeton 1992). He writes with authority of the Orthodox commonwealth, which united the Orthodox communities, irrespective of ethnicity, before they began to be set against each other once, under the influence of the Enlightenment and French Revolution, nationalist ideas had taken root in the Ottoman lands. For much of the *Tourkokratia*, the period of Ottoman rule, distinctions based on ethnicity had little meaning.

Kitromilides has particularly interesting things to say of the unsuccessful rearguard action fought by members of the Orthodox hierarchy, and more especially figures such as the Ecumenical Patriarch Ioakeim III, to stem the tendency towards phyletism, the trend whereby each ethnic group sought to establish its own church hierarchy. This is often misleadingly translated as 'racism'. No single word in English fully reflects an expression meaning 'differentiation on grounds of ethnicity or race'. Hierarchs such as Ioakeim feared, and with reason, that the seamless robe of Orthodoxy and his Patriarchate's ecumenical pretensions, which had their origins in Byzantine times, would be irreparably undermined by the introduction of nationalist categories in the Church. It bears noting, however, that the senior prelates of the Ecumenical Patriarchate were almost invariably Greeks.

Some of the most interesting material in the volume relates to the process by which Athens, the 'national centre', sought in the nineteenth century to inculcate into the Orthodox Christian populations of Asia Minor a sense of Greek ancestry and an identification with the glories of the ancient Greek past. This was no easy task, given that many of the Greeks of Asia Minor either spoke dialects that were scarcely intelligible to the inhabitants of the Greek kingdom or were Turkish-

speaking. Matters were further complicated by the insistence of missionary gymnasiarchs, educated in Athens at the University or the Rizareios Theological College, that the language of instruction should be the *katharevousa*, 'cette gauche et plate contrefaçon du grec ancien maintenant de mode à Athènes' (so Georges Perrot, a French archaeologist and shrewd observer of the Greek communities in Asia Minor). But all this effort came to naught as the Greek irredentist project in Asia Minor collapsed in the Catastrophe of 1922, a victim of the Turkish nationalist movement of which Mustafa Kemal Ataturk acted as a catalyst and which had in turn emerged in reaction to the nationalisms of the Ottoman Empire's subject populations that had posed an increasing threat to its integrity during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

One consequence of the ensuing Exchange of Populations, whereby Orthodox Christians (many of them Turkish-speaking) in Turkey were exchanged for Muslims (many of them Greek-speaking) in Greece, was that the ethnic homogenization of the Greek state was given a substantial boost. From being a minority in the portion of Macedonia acquired by Greece during the Balkan Wars of 1912-13, Greeks became, thanks to the refugee influx, a clear majority, even if serious tensions existed between the local Greek populations and the Turcophones from Asia Minor or the Pontic Greeks, whose speech was barely intelligible to the inhabitants of the kingdom. Nonetheless, even after the settlement of the refugees, significant minority populations remained: Jews, Slav Macedonians, Gypsies and, in Western Thrace, Turks and Pomaks (Slav-speaking Muslims) – to the discomfiture of Greek nationalists who could not conceive that a Greek could have any other religious affiliation than Orthodoxy.

It is with the recent history and current situation of the Slav-speaking minority in northern Greece that Loring Danforth is concerned. His impressive book was inspired by the recent re-emergence of that traditional bone of contention, the Macedonian question, following the emergence of an independent Macedonia in the wake of the collapse of the Yugoslav Federation, and in particular by the way the most vigorous manifestations of the dispute have occurred among the migrant communities of Australia, Canada, and, to a lesser extent, the United States.

Many outside Greece have been puzzled by the way in which such intense controversy should have been aroused by the existence in northern Greece of a small Slav-speaking population, within which there is an even smaller group which identifies itself as 'Macedonian' and feels kinship with the Macedonians of the Republic of Macedonia. Danforth's book is of great assistance in trying to

penetrate behind the propaganda barrage emanating from both Skopje and Athens. To great effect he brings the anthropologist's insights to bear on the current controversy, though from time to time he displays the anthropologist's curious tendency to provide references for such statements of the obvious, as 'in Michael Herzfeld's apt phrase (1987) Greece is located "on the margins of Europe"'.

Moreover, while Danforth strives to be even-handed, he has at times a disconcerting tendency to extol scholars whose views support his overall thesis (Horace Lunt, for example, is described as 'a distinguished Slavic linguist' and Eugene Borza is a 'well-respected ancient historian'), while those such as N.G.L. Hammond, whose views sit less comfortably with his general argument, receive no such laudatory epithet. Danforth argues that the fact that Macedonian is taught at 'prestigious' universities in over twenty countries has given the language international recognition. Certainly, the investment by the Federal Government of Yugoslavia of a modest sum to promote the teaching of Macedonian at the University of Bradford has produced rich dividends, while at the same time acting as the catalyst for the provision of Modern Greek teaching in that university. Greek-Macedonians have themselves been no sluggards in seeking the mantle of academic legitimacy for their views: witness the establishment of a branch of the Pan-Macedonian Library at New York University, presumably associated with the same university's ill-starred Onassis Center for Hellenic Studies.

Danforth is an excellent guide to the intricacies of the *Makedoniko* and is careful in his treatment of sources. Much of his evidence for the mistreatment of the minority, however, tends to the anecdotal. (One might hope that, at some stage, historians will be able to sift through whatever sensitive material there may be in the Greek state archives for the inter-war and post-war periods in order to establish precisely what were the policies of the Greek state in seeking to 'Hellenize' its Slav-speaking minority.) Danforth is careful, too, in his use of terminology, though it is not always clear in what respects ethnic identity differs from national identity. One of the factors that has helped to fuel the controversy, indeed, is the difficulty in distinguishing in Greek between an ethnic and a national minority: the expression *ethnotiki meionotita* for 'ethnic minority' is a recent coinage and not one that would be widely understood. The more usual expression *ethniki meionotita* or 'national minority' has more threatening overtones, implying the existence of minorities whose ultimate allegiance may be to a neighbouring state, or over which a neighbouring state may seek to exercise some form of protection.

Danforth is a useful guide to such linguistic nuances, though in translating a document cast as an invalid ballot by some Slav Macedonians in one (or both?) of the parliamentary elections in 1989, he confusingly renders *ethnotita* as 'nationality' and not 'ethnicity' . Surely there can be no dispute that the 'nationality' of these Macedonian activists was Greek. What was in contention was their ethnic identity. Likewise, in a fascinating description of the process whereby two brothers who migrated from Greek Macedonia to Australia developed different national identities, he writes that they disagreed about what 'nationality' they both really were. Surely their 'nationality', or even 'nationalities' in the case of dual nationals, can be simply established by reference to the passport(s) which they hold. Their ethnic identity is another issue and one that, as Danforth emphasizes, is essentially a matter of self-ascription.

A particularly valuable section of the book focuses on the way the battle over contested identities is in many respects being more vigorously fought, not in Greece itself, but in the 'Macedonian' diaspora which has established itself in Australia, Canada and elsewhere. Danforth quotes a Greek consul as saying that the front line in the struggle for Macedonia lies in Australia, an observation born out by the alacrity with which politicians virtually across the spectrum are prepared, like true *Makedonomakhoi*, to fight the good fight against the Slavs, often on shared platforms, in a fashion that would be rare in Greece itself. (The exception is the Greek Communist Party, the KKE, whose pronouncements on the *Makedoniko* are notably more sober than those of the 'bourgeois' parties.)

Danforth is surely right to emphasize that one of the most flagrant instances of discrimination against Slav Macedonians in recent times has been their exclusion from the blanket amnesty, announced with much fanfare by Andreas Papandreou in 1982, for political refugees who fled Greece in the aftermath of the 1946-49 civil war. The amnesty was characteristically hailed as yet another confirmation of the progressive credentials of PASOK, never mind the fact that significant numbers of refugees had been allowed back by earlier right-wing governments. What most observers were unaware of, or chose to ignore, however, was the clause in the small print restricting the right of return to *Ellines to genos*, that is, 'Greeks by race' or 'ethnic Greeks'. This (though comparable to German immigration law) was a very significant exclusion, given that, in the closing stages of the civil war, close on fifty per cent of the combatants in the communist-controlled Democratic Army were Slav Macedonians. It was this reality that prompted the beleaguered KKE briefly to advocate in 1949 the establishment of

an independent Macedonia that would be composed of 'Vardar', 'Pirin', and 'Aegean' (i.e. Greek) Macedonia. Apologists for PASOK turned a blind eye to what can only be termed overt racism. Characteristically, the three-hour Channel Four blockbuster on the 1940s, 'Greece – the Hidden War', which enjoyed a certain *succès de scandale* in the mid-1980s, made no reference to a piece of blatantly discriminatory legislation that sat ill with the overall theme of the series, namely that PASOK in the 1980s was the heir to the progressive legacy of the wartime National Liberation Front (EAM) in the 1940s.

Danforth, incidentally, sometimes translates the phrase *Ellines to genos* as 'Greeks by birth', sometimes as Greeks 'by birth, origin, or descent'. The rendering 'Greeks by birth' could be construed as meaning those born on Greek soil, whereas the expresssion essentially means 'Greeks by race' or 'birthright Greeks'. When not so long ago a Research Scholarship in Greek Studies was advertised by Merton College, Oxford, the further particulars in English stated, perfectly reasonably, that the scholarship was restricted to nationals of Greece and Cyprus. But the Greek version, of which the College authorities were no doubt ignorant, specified that the scholarship was open to *Ellines to genos*, a stipulation which, if strictly interpreted, would have excluded Turkish Cypriots (or Armenians and Maronites for that matter), not to mention Slav Macedonians, Vlachs, Turks, Pomaks, and Jews in Greece. Whether a Greek Catholic or Protestant could be deemed to be an *Ellinas to genos* would doubtless be questioned by some Greek nationalists.

Although the Slav Macedonians have been, and continue to be, subject to various forms of discrimination, the picture has not always been as gloomy as it has been portrayed by critics of Greece's treatment of her minorities. One trial in Greece that attracted widespread interest abroad, though it is not mentioned by Danforth, was that of the 'OSE Five', five Trotskyists charged over a pamphlet on the Macedonian question and the working class. This was held, *inter alia*, to have created a climate of fear and anxiety by claiming that a Macedonian minority existed in Greece and to have damaged Greece's external relations by drawing an analogy between the treatment of Kurds in Turkey and of Slav Macedonians in Greece. I observed this trial on behalf of the Committee to Defend Greek Socialists and was generally impressed by the fairness of the proceedings and the latitude given by the court to the defendants to expound their views. The proceedings were punctuated by some genuinely humorous interludes, which contrasted with the laboured efforts at humour of the British judiciary. To the

surprise of most in the court, and certainly of myself, the five defendants were unanimously acquitted. Inevitably, the absurd decision to press charges against this group attracted much adverse publicity outside Greece. Just as inevitably, their acquittal attracted little attention outside the country or, for that matter, inside it. Danforth writes that the role of the judiciary has always been to defend the interests of the Greek state. No doubt this has generally been the case. But, as this trial demonstrated, it is not invariably so.

For much of the first half of the 1990s much of Greece's diplomacy and cultural propaganda was devoted to preventing the diplomatic recognition of the state of Macedonia, or, if that was not possible, then to interdict the use of 'Macedonia' in the title of the new state. The huge effort (and expenditure) involved in demonstrating that 'Macedonia is Greek 4000 Years', or, as the English slogan on Greek phone cards has it, 'Macedonia is one and only and it is Greek', has met with mixed results. The Republic of Macedonia is still known as the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia for official purposes, but this has been a battle won only at great cost in terms of general good will. Greek politicians may get their way in meetings with their EU partners by bursting into tears, but this is hardly a ploy that can be used with any great frequency. A huge propaganda campaign was devoted to seeing off the non-existent Macedonian threat, while, as the Imia/Kardak incident demonstrates, the real danger lies in the fraught state of Greek-Turkish relations.

The very existence of Danforth's excellent monograph demonstrates that Greek heavy-handedness over the Macedonian issue has all too often proved counter-productive. His interest in the whole question was occasioned by an invitation to the First International Congress on Macedonian Studies in Melbourne in 1988. This was sponsored by the Australian Institute of Macedonian Studies, an organization of Greek-Macedonian academics, who presumably thought that Danforth's previous anthropological fieldwork in northern Greece would predispose him to look favourably on the Greek case over Macedonia. But at the Congress he would have heard a former Minister of Northern Greece declare that there were no 'Macedonians' in Greece, while outside the conference hall members of Melbourne's vociferous Macedonian community complained that one of the purposes of the conference was to deny the existence of a distinct Macedonian ethnic group in Greece and, by extension, in Australia. Not only has the book under review appeared, making far from comfortable reading for those who subscribe to the official Greek viewpoint; its author now plans a sequel on

the battle currently being waged between Greeks and Macedonians in Australia. At a conference of the Modern Greek Studies Association at the University of Florida in 1991, I myself participated in a panel which included Anastasia Karakasidou. (Cambridge University Press's decision not to go ahead with publishing a monograph by her on Macedonia lest it endanger the Press's personnel in Greece was one of the stranger manifestations of the Macedonian frenzy.) Our panel was accused by the local Greek-American media of plotting the dismemberment of Greece. In the ensuing discussion I was asked what policy I thought Greece should adopt towards its minorities, and replied that, in my view, the appropriate policy was one of 'benign neglect'. Oddly, I was denounced as 'a second Lord Elgin' for my pains.

Much of Greece's propaganda effort has been focused on the ancient world, and few outside Greece can see the relevance of Alexander the Great to the current controversy over the naming of a small Balkan state that can pose no threat to the territorial integrity of Greece. But almost nothing has been said about the Greek folk memory of the brutal Bulgarian occupation of Western Thrace and part of Greek Macedonia during the Second World War, which Danforth himself touches on too briefly. What is now termed 'ethnic cleansing' occurred on a large scale, and it is this fact that helps to explain fears that to non-Greeks may appear irrational and without foundation. Perhaps the imperative of maintaining good relations with Bulgaria in the face of the current Turkish threat has led the Greek government to play down events that occurred well within living memory in favour of those which occurred in remote antiquity.

Danforth's contention that there are among the Slavophones of northern Greece some who deem themselves to constitute a Macedonian minority is not shared by Thanos Veremis and Mark Dragoumis. In their *Historical Dictionary of Greece*, they state that 'the few families left in western Macedonia who speak a Slavonic idiom opted to consider themselves Greek so that there is actually no Slavomacedonian minority in Greece.' This statement is contained in the entry on Macedonia. There is another entry on the Republic of Macedonia but this, confusingly, is listed under the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the clumsy temporary title imposed at Greek behest. How many users of the dictionary, I wonder, will think to look up the Republic of Macedonia under the letter F? Nor will they find much material on Greece's other minorities, ethnic, religious, or linguistic. There are no separate entries , for instance, for Catholics, Protestants (for the most part the descendants of Orthodox Christians converted

to Protestantism by American missionaries in Asia Minor), Old Calendarists (an Orthodox group that, *inter alia*, adheres to the Julian Calendar and, by some accounts, constitutes some five per cent of the entire population), Vlachs, Turks, Pomaks, Gypsies, or Arvanites (Greeks of Albanian descent, some of whom continue to speak Albanian).

A good *Historical Dictionary* is certainly a desideratum in modern Greek studies, for excellent dictionaries already exist for the classical and Byzantine periods. One of the problems with the present volume is that it is not clear where the focus is supposed to lie. The historical introduction, and the great bulk of the of the entries, suggests that it is on contemporary Greece. Yet there is an entry on the Acropolis, although none for the Elgin Marbles and the current controversy over their return. One of the longest entries is that devoted to the Ecumenical Councils of the early Christian era, which receive three times as much space as the War of Independence, although there is admittedly a substantial entry on the battle of Navarino.

The choice of entries for such a dictionary is almost bound to be somewhat idiosyncratic and will necessarily reflect the interests, and perhaps also the prejudices, of its author or authors. Inevitably, criticisms can be levelled at the choice of entries in this volume. In 180 or so pages of not very dense text, does Helen Glykatzi-Ahrweiler (listed here as Ahrweiler-Glykatzi), one of the great cultural panjandrums of the PASOK era, really rate an entry when space has not been found for such figures as Napoleon Zervas and Aris Velouchiotis? Again, the entry on Manolis Andronikos, the excavator of Vergina, is longer than that for Ottoman rule. Do the Hesychasts, a medieval sect, really deserve an entry almost three times the length of that devoted to the Second World War? Given the centrality to the historical experience of the Greek people of *xeniteia*, or sojourning in foreign parts, it is odd to find more space devoted to Saints Cyril and Methodius, the ninth-century evangelists of the Slavs, than to the diaspora in modern times. Incidentally, the Greek-American community is nearer one million in size than the figure of three million given here. In the entry on Greek-Americans, we are told that Greek-American incomes are an 'incredible' 31.6 % higher than the 'native white American average'. If this statistic is correct, and there is no reason to doubt it, then why should it be incredible? Quite what is meant by 'native' in this context is unclear. If the authors mean WASPs, it is worth noting that Spiro Agnew was an Episcopalian, while John Brademas, the former majority whip in the House of Representatives, is a Methodist.

On such points, the volume's focus and purpose are unclear and surprising to the reader. The entry devoted to Schism, for example, relates not to the *Dikhasmos*, the schism that divided Greece during the First World War, but to the Great Schism of the eleventh century. At the same time, the focus of the introduction, entitled Historical Continuities, is very much on the post-war period and the reader is given little indication as to the process by which Greece emerged as an independent Greek state. The volume contains, however, a useful chronology and bibliography; though there is a number of irritating slips, as when Ignaz von Rudhart, one of the prime ministers under King Otho, is metamorphosed into 'Knight Rundhart'.

All three books under review throw light, in different ways, on the phenomenon of nationalism, ethnic identity, or – as Veremis and Dragoumis term it, in one of the longest entries in their dictionary – 'Greekness', in a country that is indeed 'on the margins of Europe'. Greece is a country marginalized not only by its geographical situation but by the burden of the past. Greece is the only country, Greeks the only people, and Greek the only language, routinely prefaced by the epithet 'modern'. Moreover, during the forty or so years of the Cold War, Greece, for no better reason than that it did not have a communist system of government, was often viewed as a kind of European Nagorno Karabakh, a West European enclave somehow marooned in the Balkans. These books provide a salutary corrective to such a view, and are a reminder of how important is the Orthodox and Balkan dimension of Greece's historical heritage.