

# **The Enemy that Never Was: The Muslim Minority in Western Thrace during the Axis occupation and the Civil War, 1941-49**

Research project funded by the British Arts and Humanities Council (AHRC)

## **Progress Report**

### **Summary**

The project is directed by Prof. Kevin Featherstone and Dr Dimitris Papadimitriou (University of Manchester) and is supported by two Post-Doctoral Research Fellows, Dr. Argyris Mamarelis and Dr. George Niarchos. The duration the project is 24 months (due to be completed in September 2008), leading to the publication of a research monograph and several articles in international academic journals.

The activities of the research team over the past 14 months have focused on the collection of archival material (in Greece, USA, UK, and Bulgaria), conduct of personal interviews in the field as well as the presentation of our preliminary findings to major international conferences and research institutions. A brief summary of activities is listed below.

### **Archival Research**

The stage of archival research will be completed by the end of January. This forms of key part of our endeavours since we are trying to piece together a sequence of events that has not yet been systematically studied by the Greek (or the international) literature. We are pleased to report that a large volume of previously unseen material has been collected. The list of archives studied is listed below:

- Public Record Office, London
- National Archives, Maryland, USA
- Historical Archive of the Greek Foreign Ministry, Athens
- The Historical Archives of the Bulgarian Foreign Ministry, Sofia
- ELIA, Greek Literary and Historical Archive, Athens
- ELIA, Greek Literary and Historical Archive, Thessaloniki
- ASKI, Archives of Modern Social History ('Synaspismos archives'), Athens
- Bulgarian State Archives, Sofia
- General State Archives (GAK), Komotini
- General State Archives (GAK), Xanthi
- General State Archives (GAK), Alexandroupoli
- Public Library, Komotini
- Public Library, Xanthi
- Public Library, Alexandroupoli
- Demokriteion University of Thrace Library, Komotini
- University of Athens Library
- Panteion University Library, Athens
- National Library, Athens
- Benakeios Library, Athens (ongoing-finishing this week)
- Library of Parliament, Athens (ongoing-finishing this week)
- DIS, Department of Army's History, Athens (ongoing)
- General State Archives, Athens (ongoing)
- IMXA, Centre for Balkan Studies, Thessaloniki
- Historical Archive of Macedonia (now General State Archives), Thessaloniki

## Fieldwork

So far the research team visited the region on three separate occasions during the summer and autumn of 2007 and in January 2008. During these visits we spoke with a large number of people (both from the Muslim minority and the Christian majority) who witnessed or participated in the events at the time or had collective/family memories and stories. So far we have collected over 40 transcribed interviews with war veterans and we held many more informal discussions in local residents across the villages of the Rodhopi mountains

A key interview was conducted with Mihri Belli, a prominent Turkish Marxist, who organized the 'Ottoman Regiment' within the Democratic Army (DSE) and printed a newspaper in Turkish. Significant information was also obtained either through interviews or series of discussions with local personalities (both from the minority and the majority), including journalists/minority newspapers' editors, Christian MPs, Foreign Ministry officials, Turkish Consular officials, minority MPs (ex and current), a Mufti, academics, as well as experts on minority affairs.

An selective list of places visited during our fieldwork is listed below:

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- Alexandroupoli
- Ano Drosini
- Drosero
- Ehinós
- Glayki
- Gratyni
- Iasmós
- Kehros
- Komotini
- Medoussa
- Mega Dereio
- Oraion
- Organi
- Sidirohori
- Smigada Hloe
- Sminthi
- Xanthi

## Output

Below is a list of invited lectures and conference presentations delivered by the research team:

Argyris Mamarelis and Dimitris Papadimitriou, *The Enemy that Never Was: Some Preliminary Research Design Issues*, Hellenic Studies, Yale University, 31/1/07.

Argyris Mamarelis and Dimitris Papadimitriou, Η διάσταση πολιτικής μεταξύ της κεντρικής επιτροπής του ΕΑΜ στην Αθήνα και του ΕΑΜ Δυτικής Θράκης, 1941-1944, Συνέδριο του Δικτύου για την Μελέτη των Εμφυλίων Πολέμων, Κατοχή, Αντίσταση και Εμφύλιος Πόλεμος στην Αθήνα και τις μεγάλες πόλεις, Αίγινα 21-24 Ιουνίου 2007.

Kevin Featherstone (Chair), "Western Thrace in the 1940s", *Modern Greek Studies Association Conference*, 18-20 October 2007, New Haven, CT, USA.

Argyris Mamarelis and Dimitris Papadimitriou, *Between discipline and discord: EAM/ELAS Strategy in Western Thrace during the Axis occupation 1941-44*,

Modern Greek Studies Association Conference, 18-20 October 2007, New Haven, CT, USA.

Georgios Niarchos and Kevin Featherstone, The 'Enemy' that Wasn't Yet: the strategy of the Greek Government towards the Muslim Minority of Western Thrace, 1946-49, Modern Greek Studies Association Conference, 18-20 October 2007, New Haven, CT, USA.

### **Future Plans**

Over the course of the next 10 months the efforts of the research team will focus on the completion of a book manuscript and several journal articles that are currently in draft form. Two public events are also planned for the summer of 2008: an international workshop at the LSE and a day event in Komotini bringing together academic experts, local veterans and the general public.