

UNIT VII

The Messiah and the Bourgeoisie⁷

- One issue ^{επιβλήθη / appear more prominent & important than} overshadowed all else in Greek politics; this was the
- 'Great Idea', a dream of territorial expansion to incorporate the Greek diaspora into the new kingdom, thereby creating a Greater Greece to ^{απορροφήσει} rival the glories of the Byzantine Empire. As one foreign observer put it, this ^{αδελφωτική} irredentist vision ^{διεισδύει} permeates all classes of society - the toothless baby draws it in with the maternal milk, and the toothless mouth of age ^{επιβουλεύει / προοιμίζει / υποβόσκει} pledges ^{προσέχει} to it in long drafts of the native ^{ατ} resined wine. The shepherd dreams about it in the cold mountain air under his ^{βαλάντιος / αλεπούς / αρνιών} shaggy sheepskin, and the rich ^{ιδιοκτήτης} proprietor traces it in the graceful smoke-cloud of the incessant cigarette. 'As we shall
- see, his responsiveness to the 'Great Idea' was central to Venizelos's eventual success.

- For over twenty years before he appeared on the national stage,
- two parties had dominated Greek politics: one led by Charilaos
- 2 { Trikoupi, and after his ^{συμμετοχή} retirement, by the Corfiot George
- 1 { Theotokis; the other by the ^{επιδεικνύμενος / προωδονόμος} inflammatory Theodoros Deliyannis, a ^{Ομιλ-παιών} leading ^{συμφορο} advocate of the 'Great Idea'. Greece's 1897 defeat at Ot-
toman hands delivered a blow to Deliyannis's ^{αλυτρωτισμός} irredentism and opened the way for Theotokis to pursue his policies of military re-
form in his ministries of 1899, 1903 and 1905. He tried to reduce the power of the irregulars, to prevent army officers from involving

⁷ Taken and revised from: Mark Mazower, The Messiah and the Bourgeoisie: Venizelos and Politics in Greece, 1909-1912. *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 35, No. 4 (Dec., 1992), pp. 885-904.

reform = μεταρρύθμιση, αναδιοργάνωση, αναδιοργάνωση
irredentism = a policy of advocating (agreeing on) the
restoration to a country of any territory formerly belonging to it

themselves in political life, and to expand the regular army - or-
 dering new weapons, building barracks and organizing a combined
 general staff for the first time. In his long last ministry, Theotokis
 handled the army ministry portfolio himself. He also attempted to
 introduce a much broader set of administrative reforms, badly
 needed by Greece's antiquated state machine.

In another country, at another time, Theotokis might have been
 acclaimed for his methodological approach. Indeed, although his
 party fared badly in the 1905 elections, in the polls the following year
 they secured a triumph. But the Balkan powder-keg was about to ex-
 plode, and the pressures of the international scene now hemmed him

in. Across the northern border, the Macedonian struggle was reach-
 ing its greatest intensity, stimulated by just those irregular bands

— which the prime minister had tried to disarm. In Crete, revolution-
 aries led by the young Eleftherios Venizelos, set up a provisional gov-

ernment at Therissos, which aroused enormous interest and
 sympathy in Athens. At the end of 1907 there was trouble on Ot-

toman Samos where the mayor of the capital, Themistokles Sofoulis
 (a future lieutenant of Venizelos's), clashed with the island's prince,

bringing Ottoman troops to the latter's assistance, and forcing So-
 foulis and his supporters to flee to Greece. Sofoulis told Theotokis of

the 'terror' provoked by the Turkish troops on the island. But the
 Greek premier's protests to the great powers were unsympathetically

received. Samos, Crete and Macedonia all seemed to offer testimony
 to the weakness and lack of vigour of the Theotokis government on

the international stage; the contrast between the cautious Corfiot and
 the defiant young figures of Sofoulis, Venizelos and the heroes of

Macedonia began to attract unfavourable comment.

after
 Easter > The Young Turk revolt of 1908 threw the political life of the king-
 dom of Greece into turmoil. In May 1909, a group of young army

remittance: ἐμβάσμα

embroid (66 m sth) = involve / εμπλέκω

High Commissioner: ύπατος αρμοστής

ENGLISTORIA

Chamber Βουλὴ

στρατιωτικό ἐνδεῖκος

officers in Athens formed their own 'Military League' to demand the military and political reforms they believed necessary for a more aggressive foreign policy. In August they camped with their supporters at Goudi, just outside the Greek capital, forcing a change of

military
& coup
d'état

government, and inaugurating a period of direct military pressure upon the Chamber. At first, public support for the League was emphatic: in Athens over the summer there were unprecedentedly large

αὐθιγὰ
(τμήμα)
(δυνα-
στεία)

+ ἐντεν-
νότητα

αὐθ. για
οὐ μόνον
οὐ μόνον

μεντήριος
Βουλὴ

αὐθ.

προβλεπόμε-
νη

legis-
lative
hall

demonstrations against the old politicians. But this public acclaim evaporated as it became apparent that the officers did not really

know how to implement their demands. Venizelos, a Cretan politician who had been prominent for more than a decade in the enosis movement on his island, was invited to Athens by the League's lead-

ers to advise them on the way out of their impasse. In the course of a brief visit, early in 1910, he managed - despite his lack of experience of national politics - to persuade the League to disband, on the condition that elections be held for a National Assembly to revise

the constitution. (ἐννοεῖται ὅτι οὐκ ἔπρεπε) (ἐννοεῖται ὅτι οὐκ ἔπρεπε)

The results of this election, held on 8 August 1910, were a shock for the established parties: 146 out of 362 seats were won by Independents, mostly newcomers to the Greek political scene. The daily Patris referred next day to the 'merciless decimation of the parties'

and commented that 'the general view is that a new period is dawn-
ing in Greece'. Venizelos himself, despite doubts as to the validity of his Greek citizenship, and without having campaigned in person,

finished top of the electoral list in Attica, and was immediately recognized as the Independents' leader. Four days after the Revisionist
Assembly convened, he landed at Piraeus to be greeted by an enormous crowd. When King George offered him the premiership, he

quickly decided to call new elections in the hope of winning an absolute majority. His gamble paid off. The old parties boycotted the

"Ethnarch"
> Venizelos liberal republican vs.
conservative, monarchist anti-Venizel-
(Nov. 1910 > Prime Minister)

election, in protest, and on 28 November, his supporters - now grouped into a hastily formed Liberal Party - won 300 seats. Of these, only 117 had been elected in the August round; only 45 representatives had held a seat before 1910. In other words, the governing class now consisted almost entirely of new men.

✓ Venizelos's ascendancy was confirmed, when the Assembly was dissolved early in 1912 and his Liberal party won a massive majority in elections to the new chamber. Parliamentary government seemed to have been given a new lease of life; national pride gloried

in the triumphant outcome of the Balkan Wars of 1912-13. The years 1910-15 came to seem a golden age of domestic reform and foreign conquest under the leadership of the charismatic figure who would go on to make a name for himself throughout Europe as a masterly diplomatist, and dominate Greece until his death in 1936. (Benevolent)

EXERCISES: 1, 2, 4, 5

✓✓ 1. Circle the correct term:

1. An irredentist concept of that expressed the goal of establishing a Greek state that would encompass all ethnic Greeks, since large Greek populations after the Greek independence in 1830 still lived under Ottoman rule.
a. National Goal b. Great Idea c. National Schism
2. The communities of Greek people living outside the traditional Greek homelands, but more commonly in southeast southeast Europe and Asia Minor. Its members can be identified as those who themselves, or whose ancestors, migrated from the Greek homelands.
a. deportation b. Greek expansion c. Greek diaspora