

The Macedonian Uprising

1821-1822

In the year 1821 started the outbreak of the Greek revolution against the Ottomans that led to the founding of an independent Greek nation. Along with the other regions inhabited by Greeks, the Macedonians took part of what has been known as the “Greek War of Independence”. Uprisings broke out in Mount Athos, Halkidiki, Mount Vermio, Naoussa and the districts of central Macedonia, the district of Mt.Olympus and the Pieria mountains. Nevertheless, the uprisings were not properly prepared and ended in defeat. Naoussa and the other towns were captured by the Ottoman troops and its heroic defenders were put to the sword. Rebels who escaped went to southern Greece to continue to fight. When the Hellenic nation came into being, Macedonia, as well as other Ottoman Greek regions like Thessaly, Epirus, Grete the Aegean islands etc. were left outside of the country’s narrow borders. Nevertheless, the Macedonians, along with the Cretans, the Thessalians and the Epirotes continued their efforts to liberate their own native homelands.

1854-1856

During the Crimean War, new Greek uprisings broke out in the Greek provinces of Turkey. In Macedonia, such an uprising occurred on three fronts: Western Macedonia, Halkidiki and Mount Olympus. They had only limited success because the European powers didn't want to see the Ottoman Empire defeated.

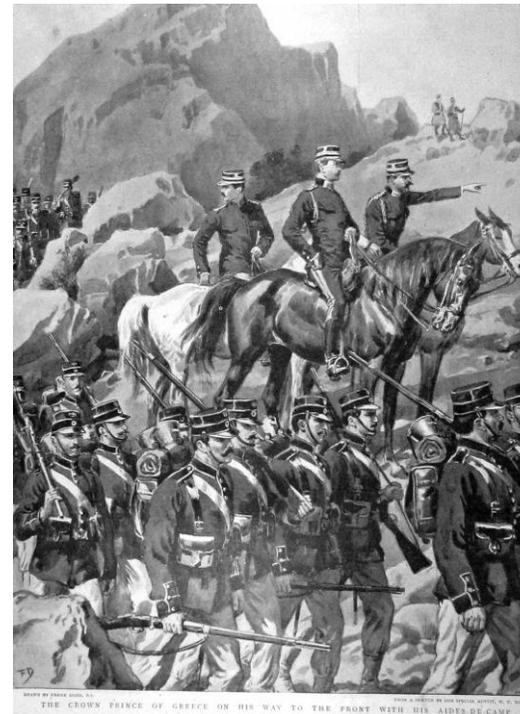


1878

The Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878 caused the Greek Macedonians to revolt once more. The uprising broke out a few days before the Ottomans came to terms with the Russians at San Stefano. Here, Russia tried to create a “Greater Bulgaria” that would swallow up almost the whole of Macedonia except for Thessaloniki and Halkidiki. Meanwhile the Greek revolt was spreading to Pieria, to Kozani, and as far afield as Monastir (present Bitola), in protest to the San Stefano agreements. A few months later, at the Congress of Berlin, the Great Powers decided to create two autonomous Principalities: Bulgaria and Eastern Rumelia, respectively north and south of the Balkan mountain range, but Macedonia remained in the hold of the Ottoman Empire. A few years later, Bulgaria acted upon its aspirations in Macedonia through the organized action of armed bands (the ‘komitadjis’), which mainly targeted the Greek communities therein.

1896-1897

In the summer of 1896 more Greek uprisings broke out in Macedonia. These were repeated in the spring of 1897, at virtually the same time as the Greco-Turkish war. The Greek defeat in that war, brought the Greek revolts in Macedonia to an end.



Macedonian Society at the turn of the 19th century [1/2]

The Macedonian society was traditional, but it was in the process of modernization. Because of crushing debts and rampant money-lending, farmers in the countryside lived in conditions bordering on the inhuman, especially in the ciflik, the great estates. Stockbreeding flourished in the upland districts. Emigration was widespread, with merchants, professionals and specialist craftsmen moving within the Ottoman Empire or outside it, making considerable profits. The curse of the mountainous regions was lawlessness: the inhabitants were constantly at the mercy of numerous brigands, Muslim or Christian.

Macedonian Society at the turn of the 19th century [2/2]

Society was changed faster inside the cities. Because the countryside was unsafe, the population moved into the towns and a labor force came into being. Development was accelerated by the simultaneous presence of the armed forces, commercial representatives from Europe, and the many public servants. A new breath of economic life was given by the coming of the railway, which also helped to disseminate new ideas. In parallel with the machines now coming into the inhabitants' lives, educational establishments were being built and cultural societies founded, while newspapers and magazines expressed their political and national views in no uncertain terms. Meanwhile, self-government at the communal level resulted in the emergence of various social forces, even as the social balance was tilted by the misery of farmer and worker. Soon national competition became the central issue in every aspect of social life.

Characteristics of the struggle

The Greek struggle relied on the willingness of individuals and the military throughout the Hellenic world to enlist in the armed bands. A vital part was played by the local slav-speaking Greeks (Graikomans), the warriors whose deeds and self-sacrifice neutralized any Bulgarian assertions about the ethnic character of Macedonia. Fighting alongside them, with fanatical zeal, were Vlach-speaking Greeks in town and village, resistant to the idea of being 'adopted' by Romania. Together with them, and as one man, fought volunteers from Hellas (from Pelion, the Mani, the Ionian Islands, and other parts) and from regions outside Hellenic sovereign territory (Crete, Epirus, Eastern Rumelia, Cyprus). Plans were drawn up so that the bands should be distributed and operate successfully, and it was the Hellenic consulates' job to put these plans into practice. Geography and the lie of the land dictated the strategic options; the aim was to have control of the main roads and mountain passes, vital for supply lines and for the control of the countryside.

The Balkan Wars and the incorporation of Macedonia into the Hellenic state_[1/2]

In July of 1908, started a new rebellion inside the Ottoman Empire. It was named the Neo-Turk rebellion. This was basically a military coup by the Turks against the Sultan. They promised equal rights to all Christians and Muslims that lived in the Ottoman Empire, they also thought that they could stop the Greek revolution by promising them amnesty and equal rights. This didn't work out as intended and instead of stopping them, they made them start what is known as the First Balkan War. In autumn 1912 Greece, Serbia, Bulgaria, and Montenegro co-operated and declared war, one after the other, on the Ottoman Empire.

With the assistance of veteran fighters, the Greek army made a quick thrust into the heartlands of Macedonia, to free Thessaloniki, on 26th October 1912. Epirus and the islands of the eastern Aegean were also liberated at this time.

Hostilities had hardly died down and as a result, that friction then broke out between the Balkan allies. This culminated, in mid June 1913, in a pre-emptive attack by Bulgaria against Serbia and Greece. The Hellenic army retaliated and liberated eastern Macedonia after some tough battles. In every village there were bloody encounters, whether between regular units or irregulars.

From the end of the Balkan Wars to the present

The so-called 'Army of the East' disembarked in Thessaloniki's harbor in the autumn of 1915. German aerial raids on Thessaloniki were frequent and a distinctive feature of these German bombardments was the role played by airships known as Zeppelins. On 1 February 1916, the LZ-85 bombed Thessaloniki's central market. In one of the following bomb raids, on 1 March 1916, it completely destroyed the Bank of Thessaloniki, situated in what is now Kountourioti St. The third Zeppelin raid took place on the night of 4/5 May 1916. After numerous maneuvers by its pilot, the LZ-85 was finally spotted and shot down by the English battleship Agamemnon. The Zeppelin burst into flames and crashed to the ground in the marshy estuary of the River Axios, near Koulakia (now Chalastra).

The History of the Building

The Museum for the Macedonian Struggle is located in the center of Thessaloniki, the building, designed by the famous architect Ernst Ziller after the great fire that laid waste much of the city in 1890, was completed in 1893. After the 1978 earthquake in Thessaloniki, which caused considerable damage to the building, it was restored and made over to the Society of "Friends of the Museum for the Macedonian Struggle" as a repository for all manner of relics and documents pertaining to this important chapter in Greece's modern history. On 27 October 1982 this historic building, now converted into a museum, was formally opened by Greek President Constantine Karamanlis.



References

<http://www.imma.edu.gr/imma/exhibition/index.html>

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