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**Draža Mihailović – Napoleon Zervas: A comparative
analysis of Resistance and Collaboration in
Serbia and Greece (1941-1944)***

Introduction

One of the most problematic issues during the period of Axis occupation in Serbia and Greece (1941-1944/45) deals undoubtedly with the relation of two prominent exponents of non-Communist resistance to the German and Italian authorities. General Dragoljub (Draža) Mihailović and Colonel Napoleon Zervas, two officers of the old Yugoslav and Greek Army who had more or less parallel bias –not to forget to mention their attempt to establish a military cooperation–, represented as no one else the difficult symbiosis between non-Communist resistance against enemy occupation and anti-Communist cooperation with the Axis powers.¹

Although Mihailović and Zervas were the main protagonists of the non-Communist struggle against Axis, Tito and ELAS (*Greek People's Liberation Army*), there is no comparative study on their political and military activity. There are of course books and articles which deal with the one or the other person and give us useful

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1. The term “collaboration” means here the cooperation with the Axis powers and will be not used as a synonymous word for “treason.” On this matter, see Stathis Kalyvas, “Collaboration in comparative perspective,” *European Review of History* 15.2 (2008): 109-11.

information about their controversial motives.² But a comparative view can help us better understand their strategy toward the Axis authorities and the Communist-led resistance movements.

Until the mid-eighties Mihailović and the Chetniks were considered in the official Yugoslav historiography as “collaborators” and “war criminals.”³ In the nineties, he was celebrated in Serbia as a “national hero.” By contrast, Zervas was officially recognized after the occupation as one of the main leaders of the guerrilla resistance movement. After the fall of the Colonels’ dictatorship (1967-1974) and under the predominance of the left-wing historiography he was usually regarded as an “agent of the British” or –even worse– as an ally of Nazi Germany.⁴

2. To Mihailović: Walter Roberts, *Tito, Mihailović, and the Allies, 1941-1945* (New Brunswick-New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1973). Jozo Tomasevich, *War and Revolution in Yugoslavia, 1941-1945. The Chetniks* (Stanford: University Press, 1975). Lucien Karchmar, *Draza Mihailović and the Rise of the Chetnik Movement, 1941-1942*, 2 vols. (New York-London 1987). Simon Trew, *Britain, Mihailović and the Chetniks, 1941-1942* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1998). Mihailović’s contacts with the Axis powers were already 1945 a subject of study. R. V. Elson, “The tryth about Mihailovic,” *World Review* (January 1945): 18-25. Zervas’ biography has not been written. To his organization see, for example, Vagelis Tzoukas, *Οι οπλαρχηγοί του ΕΛΕΣ στην Ήπειρο 1942-44. Τοπικότητα και πολιτική ένταξη* (Athens: Estia, 2013). Michail I. Myridaki, *Αγώνες της φυλής. Η Εθνική Αντίσταση ΕΛΕΣ-ΕΟΕΑ 1941-1944*, 2 vols. (Athens: Sideris, 1976).

3. Holm Sundhaussen, “Okkupation, Kollaboration und Widerstand in den Ländern Jugoslawiens 1941-1945,” in *Okkupation und Kollaboration (1938-1945). Beiträge zu Konzepten und Praxis der Kollaboration in der deutschen Okkupationspolitik*, ed. Werner Röhr (Berlin-Heidelberg: Hüthig Verlagsgemeinschaft, 1994), 349-65, 355.

4. About the new tendencies in the Greek historiography regarding the civil war, see Nikos Marantzidis and Giorgos Antoniou, “The Axis Occupation and Civil War: Changing Trends in Greek Historiography, 1941-2002,” *Journal of Peace Research* 41/2 (2004): 223-31.

Military Careers

Both Mihailović and Zervas were officers of the pre-war army. The first was born 1893 in Ivanjica in the Kingdom of Serbia. In 1910 he entered the Serbian Military Academy. He participated in the Balkan Wars and in the First World War at the Salonika front. In 1918 he was promoted to Lieutenant. In 1922 –as a Major– he became a member of the General Staff. In 1934 he served as military attaché in Sofia and in 1936 in Prague. He was promoted to the rank of Colonel in 1935. Two years later he got into trouble, when he submitted a critical report on the structure of the Royal Yugoslav Army. His proposals concerned the idea of dividing the Yugoslav Army along national lines (into Serbs, Croats and Slovenes) and the use of mobile guerrilla units at the border districts. General Milan Nedić (1877-1946), Minister of the Army and Navy, sentenced Mihailović to ten days imprisonment. The Second World War found him holding the position of an assistant to the Chief of Staff of the Second Army in northern Bosnia.⁵ Mihailović was at that time known to circles of the British Embassy and he supported the pro-allied *coup d'état* of General Dušan Simović in Belgrade on May 27, 1941.⁶

Zervas on the other side was of revolutionary nature. He was born 1891 in the region of Arta in Epirus. In 1910 he volunteered for the Greek Army and participated in the Balkan Wars. Unlike Mihailović he was an adherent of Republic. In 1916 he joined the pro-Venizelist movement of National Defence in Salonika, and in 1922 he supported the anti-Royalist revolt of Nikolaos Plastiras (1883-1953) and

5. Holm Sundhaussen, *Geschichte Serbiens. 19.-21. Jahrhundert* (Wien-Köln-Weimar: Böhlau Verlag, 2007), 320. Matteo J. Milazzo, *The Chetni Movement and the Yugoslav Resistance* (Baltimore-London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975), 12-13. Bundesarchiv-Militärarchiv Freiburg [BA-MA] RS 3-7/16: Befehlshaber der deutschen Truppen in Kroatien, Abt. Ic, Nr. 1897/43 geh., “Die nationale Aufstandsbewegung der Cetniks im Unabhängigen Staat Kroatien, Slovenien und Montenegro,” H.Qu., 5.5.1943.

6. Walter R. Roberts, *Tito, Mihailović and the Allies, 1941-1945* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1987) [first published in 1973], 21. Klaus Olshausen, *Zwischenspiel auf dem Balkan. Die deutsche Politik gegenüber Jugoslawien und Griechenland von März bis Juli 1941* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1973), 45-57.

Stylianos Gonatas (1876-1966). In the inter-war period he played an active role in military affairs. After the establishment of General Theodoros Pangalos' dictatorship in 1925 he was appointed commander of the Second Battalion of the Republican Guard in Athens. On August 22, 1926, he took part in the "palace revolution," led by General Georgios Kondylis (1879-1936), that overthrew Pangalos. When Kondylis made clear his intention to dissolve the Republican Guard, Zervas opposed him violently. He was defeated in the street fights of Athens and sentenced to prison. Two years later the government of Eleftherios Venizelos granted him amnesty, and he became Lieutenant Colonel in retirement.⁷

After that the military career of the ambitious Greek Colonel seemed to come to an end. In contrast to Mihailović, Zervas was not belonging to the high-ranking military leadership on the eve of the German invasion (6 April 1941). He neither enjoyed a good reputation among his colleagues. But he possessed undoubtedly military qualities. Soon the Axis occupation gave him the opportunity to prove his abilities.

Axis Occupation

In April 1941 Mihailović and Zervas were faced with the reality of enemy occupation. After the military collapse of Yugoslavia and Greece the Axis authorities began to establish their *New Order*. Germany annexed northern Slovenia; the ultranationalist organization "Ustasha" (*Croatian Revolutionary Movement*) proclaimed the Independent State of Croatia (NDH) under the leadership of the so-called *Poglavnik* (chief) Ante Pavelić, but without Dalmatia that was

7. Hermann Frank Meyer, *Blutiges Edelweiß. Die 1. Gebirgs-Division im Zweiten Weltkrieg* (Berlin: Ch. Links Verlag, 2008), 508-13. Hagen Fleischer, *Im Kreuzschatten der Mächte. Griechenland 1941-1944* (Frankfurt am Main-Bern-New York: Peter Lang, 1986), 95. John Louis Hondros, *Occupation and Resistance. The Greek Agony 1941-44* (New York: Pella, 1983), 106-07. Heinz Richter, *Griechenland zwischen Revolution und Konterrevolution* (Frankfurt am Main: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1973), 169.

annexed by Italy. Montenegro was turned into an “independent province” under Italian administration. Kosovo (except Mitrovica) became part of an Italian-influenced “Great Albania.” Bulgaria was rewarded with Vardar-Macedonia (except the Albanian enclaves in the west) and Greek eastern Macedonia and Thrace.⁸ In Serbia and Greece German-controlled governments under the leadership of high-ranking army officers like Milan Nedić and Ioannis Tsolakoglou came to power.⁹

Belgrade suffered not only on the economical exploitation but also under the enormous territorial losses. Serbia (with Banat, in which dominated the local German minority) was reduced to its pre-1912 borders (about 51,000 km²).¹⁰ Athens on the other hand was confronted with hunger, black market, inflation and a serious national threat in northern Greece: The Bulgarization of eastern Macedonia and Thrace.¹¹ It was also confronted with the Italian ter-

8. Marie-Janine Calic, *Geschichte Jugoslawiens im 20. Jahrhundert* (München: Verlag C. H. Beck, 2010), 136-45. Edgar Hösch, *Geschichte der Balkanländer. Von der Frühzeit bis zur Gegenwart*, 5th ed. (München: Verlag C. H. Beck, 2008), 225-31. Sundhaussen, *Geschichte Serbiens*, 306-11. Misha Glenny, *The Balkans 1804-1999. Nationalism, War and the Great Powers* (London: Granta Books, 1999), 485. L. S. Stavrianos, *The Balkans since 1453* (London: Hurst & Company, 2000) [first published in 1958], 771.

9. Milan Ristović, “General M. Nedić-Diktatur, Kollaboration und die patriarchalische Gesellschaft Serbiens 1941-1944,” in *Autoritäre Regime in Ostmittel- und Südosteuropa 1919-1944*, ed. Erwin Oberländer (Paderborn-München-Wien-Zürich: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2001), 633-87. Hagen Fleischer, “Kollaboration und deutsche Politik im besetzten Griechenland,” in *Europa unterm Hakenkreuz. Okkupation und Kollaboration (1938-1945). Beiträge zu Konzepten und Praxis der Kollaboration in der deutschen Okkupationspolitik*, ed. Werner Röhr (Berlin-Heidelberg: Hühig, 1994), 377-96.

10. Milan Ristović, “Rural ‘anti-Utopia’ in the ideology of Serbian collaborationists in the Second World War,” *European Review of History* 15/2 (2008): 179-92, 179.

11. Bulgaria also intended to extend its sphere of influence on the German-occupied Florina district in Greek western Macedonia for the protection of the “Bulgarian population.” Documents on German Foreign Policy 1918-1945 [DGF], Series D (1937-1945), vol. XIII, *The War Years (June 23-December 11, 1941)*, RAM 56 g. Rs., Record of the Reception of the Bulgarian Foreign Minister Popov by the Foreign Minister in Berlin on November 26, 1941, Washington 1964, 840-

ritorial claims on Epirus and the Ionian Islands and with the separatist efforts of parts of the ethnic, religious and language minorities such as the Vlachs¹² in Thessaly, the Slavophones in western Macedonia and the Albanian-speaking Muslims (Chams) in Epirus, particularly in the area of Thesprotia.¹³

The collapse of the political and territorial pre-war order left a vacuum that enabled the rise of anti-Axis movements and radical revolutionary forces.

The “Ravna Gora Movement”

Axis *New Order* forced the creation of resistance movements. Two groups were able from the very first to organize the armed liberation struggle: Communists and army officers. In Serbia as well as in Greece army officers with pro-English sentiments and bourgeois

43. The Italians too wanted to incorporate the town of Florina in “Great Albania.” German Foreign Policy 1918-1945 [DGF], Series D (1937-1945), vol. XII, *The War Years (February 1-June 22, 1941)*, 230/153212-13, The Foreign Minister to the Legation in Bulgaria, Telegram, Secret No 645, Berlin, May 4, 1941, Washington 1962,702-703. Also in Vardar-Macedonia (regions of Ohrid, Struga and Tetovo) existed a conflict of interests between Bulgaria and Italy. DGF, *The War Years (February 1-June 22, 1941)*, 274/177926-27, The Foreign Minister to the Legation in Bulgaria, Telegram No 318 of April 25, 1941, 639-40.

12. The Rumanian government was interested on the fate of the Vlachs. In a memorandum to Berlin it proposed “a free Macedonia, with the inclusion of the Rumanian national group or [...] a Rumanian area for the Rumanian population in the Timok and Vardar Valleys [...]” It rejected the idea of “a supremacy of Bulgaria, and thus of the Slavs in the Balkans.” DGF, *The War Years (February 1-June 22, 1941)*, 222/149545-48, Memorandum by an Official on the Foreign Ministry, Berlin, April 23, 1941, 616-18. General Ion Antonescu also favored “the establishment of a route linking Germany with Salonika which is not dominated by Slavs.” After that Bulgaria would be separated from Serbia. DGF, *The War Years (February 1-June 22, 1941)*, 222/149577-79, The Minister in Rumania to the Foreign Ministry, Bucharest, Telegram No 1170 of April 28, 1941, 656-58.

13. Vaios Kalogrias, *Okkupation, Widerstand und Kollaboration in Makedonien 1941-1944* (Mainz-Ruhpolding: Franz Philipp Rutzen, 2008), 87-128. Evangelos Kofos, *Nationalism and Communism in Macedonia. Civil Conflict, Politics of Mutation, National Identity* (New York: Aristide D. Caratzas, 1993), 100-07.

views became leaders of guerrilla units. In the first case it was the royalist and pro-western Colonel of the General Staff Mihailović, a soldier with an intellectual appearance, who refused to accept the capitulation of the Royal Yugoslav Army and moved with 50-60 compatriots to the mountains of western Serbia. In May 1941 he organized the first groups of his Chetnik-movement around Ravna Gora. Later, they were called officially “Yugoslav Army in the Homeland.”¹⁴

The Chetnik organization (*Ceta*, armed band) had its origin in the Serbian battles against the Ottoman Empire in the nineteenth century. It had played a crucial role during the Balkan Wars and the First World War. The organization was also in existence during the inter-war period as a special unit of the Royal Yugoslav Army, under the command of veterans of the irregular war.¹⁵ The German military authorities considered the Chetnik-movement as successor of the old Yugoslav Royal Army.¹⁶

Mihailović’s goal was the liberation and restoration of the former Yugoslav Kingdom under Serbian rule and the cooperation with the Allies, especially with the British Supreme Command in the Middle East. He also wanted to maintain the social pre-war order and to protect the Serb minorities in Croatia and Bosnia against the genocide policies of “Ustasha.”¹⁷ But he also sympathized with the idea

14. Roberts, *Tito, Mihailović and the Allies*, 20-21. The first German reports about the Chetnik groups are from May 10, 1941. Erich Schmidt-Richberg, *Der Endkampf auf dem Balkan. Die Operationen der Heeresgruppe E von Griechenland bis zu den Alpen* (Heidelberg: Kurt Vowinckel Verlag, 1955), 16.

15. Roberts, *Tito, Mihailović and the Allies*, 20. Stavrianos, *The Balkans*, 773. Ladislaus Hory and Martin Broszat, *Der kroatische Ustascha-Staat 1941-1945* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1964), 103. Also see BA-MA RS 3-7/16: Befehlshaber der deutschen Truppen in Kroatien, Abt. Ic, Nr. 1897/43 geh., “Die nationale Aufstandsbewegung der Cetniks im Unabhängigen Staat Kroatien, Slovenien und Montenegro,” H.Qu., 5.5.1943.

16. BA-MA RW 40-13: Der Bevollm. Kommandierende General in Serbien, Ia/Ic, Nr. 3335/41 geh., “Aufstandsbewegung,” O.U., 1.11.1941.

17. On the motives of Ustasha’s mass terror see Jonathan E. Gumz, “Wehrmacht perceptions of mass violence in Croatia, 1941-1942,” *The Historical Journal* 44/4 (2001): 1015-38, 1025-28. The German authorities in Croatia were wor-

of a “Greater Serbia” within Yugoslavia. According to his memorandum “The homogenous Serbia” from June 1941, post-war Serbia would include northern Albania, Vardar-Macedonia, Montenegro, Herzegovina, Bosnia, Dalmatia and parts of Croatia (with a strong Serb population). This plan was connected with mass expulsions of Croats, Albanians and Muslims (especially from Sandzak and Herzegovina).¹⁸ According to German sources the Serb Colonel also intended to incorporate Bulgaria into his post-war Yugoslavia.¹⁹ Obviously, he seemed to wish a Serb hegemony over the Balkan Peninsula.

The propaganda of the Croatian nationalists used a so-called map of Mihailović’s “Future Federal Yugoslavia” to emphasize the “Serb danger.” As Pavelić’s authorities noted, Mihailović considered only Greece as a friendly state.²⁰ He needed a common Yugoslav–Greek frontier and a good relationship to Greece, because the port of Salonika would guarantee Serbia’s access to the seas.²¹

ried about the Ustasha’s excesses against the Serb population because they would “create centers of unrest in the near future which will be difficult to control.” DGF, *The War Years (June 23-December 11, 1941)*, 245/162034-35, The Chargé d’Affaires in Croatia to the Foreign Ministry, Subject: “Persecution and resettlement of Serbs,” Zagreb, Telegram No 708 of July 10, 1941, 113-15.

18. Calic, *Geschichte Jugoslawiens*, 160-61. According to Sundhaussen, “Great Serbia,” “Serbian Hegemony over the Balkans,” “Serbian Rebirth” and “Revenge” were the four key motives of the Chetnik ideology. Sundhaussen, *Geschichte Serbiens*, 322. But last, Mihailović’s strong nationalist bias and support for the crown and the pre-war order were no competition for Tito’s internationalist and revolutionary slogans. Stavrianos, *The Balkans*, 779.

19. BA-MA RS 3-7/16: Befehlshaber der deutschen Truppen in Kroatien, Abt. Ic, Nr. 1897/43 geh., “Die nationale Aufstandsbewegung der Cetniks im Unabhängigen Staat Kroatien, Slovenien und Montenegro,” H.Qu., 5.5.1943.

20. Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes [PA AA] R 105164a: Iwo Bogdan, “Aufdeckung neuer Urkunden über politische Ziele und Bestrebungen der ‘Jugoslawischen Regierung’ in London.” The map was published in the Croatian newspaper *Spremnost* on January 24, 1943.

21. BA-MA RH 19XI/45: Nachrichten-Aufklärungs-Abteilung 16, Br. B. Nr. 128/45 gKdos., Nachr. Aufkl. Lage-Meldung, “Tito und D.M.-Banden im ehem. Jugoslawien,” 18.1.1945. In a report of the leading EDES-members in Athens after the war, it was estimated that Mihailović had territorial claims over Greek

In the face of the German decision to reduce the territory of Serbia in the boundaries of the old Kingdom²² and under the impression of “Ustasha’s” persecution measures, the increase of Serb nationalism was a logical consequence. In Ravna Gora Mihailović enjoyed the support of Serb notables who continued to believe in traditional values such as Church and Monarchy. In Belgrade he won the support of bourgeois politicians, the Orthodox clergy, anti-Communist intellectuals, university students and Serb refugees from Bosnia and Croatia. As early as August 1941 –and before the creation of a collaborationist government– he established a “Central National Committee,” that was composed of personalities from the pre-war Serb Agrarian and Republican party. On January 11, 1942 he was appointed Minister of War at the exiled Yugoslav cabinet – a fact that emphasized his leading role.²³

The German administration became aware of him: “Furthermore there exists in the person of Colonel Draza Mihailovic a rallying point für all insurgents with nationalist leanings. This person [...] should nevertheless not be underestimated, since many nationalistically minded Serbs sympathize with him. [...] True, at the present moment he does not present any acute danger, particularly as he has become an enemy of the communists [...]. In the long run, however

(western) Macedonia. Gennadius Library [GL], American School of Classical Studies at Athens [ASCSA], George Papaioannou Collection 2/11, “Εκθεσις μελών Δ/σης Επιτροπής ΕΔΕΣ Αθηνών–Πειραιώς–Περιχώρων,” Athens, February 10, 1971.

22. Many officials of the Third Reich were not even ready to accept a Serb national state.

23. Calic, *Geschichte Jugoslawiens*, 145-46. Roberts, *Tito, Mihailović and the Allies*, 22. Milazzo, *The Chetni Movement*, 18. In this way the Yugoslav military in exile was hoping to tie Mihailović to the government. Stevan K. Pavlowitch, “Out of Context–The Yugoslav Government in London 1941-1945,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 16 (1981): 89-118, 95.

he might become dangerous.”²⁴ The German authorities also characterized Mihailović’s organization as a popular movement with a clearly military structure and no prominent politicians.²⁵

The Yugoslav government in exile promoted him to the rank of General. Since October 1941 he enjoyed –as the only legitimate representative of the Yugoslav resistance– the material and logistical support of Britain. A British Liaison Officer (BLO), Colonel Bill Hudson, an agent of SOE,²⁶ was sent to his headquarters in Ravna Gora.²⁷ Also the Soviet Union recognized the Chetniks officially: Moscow radio praised Mihailović as the leader of the Yugoslav resistance forces.²⁸ This development helped him to consolidate his authority among the non-Communist officers in Serbia.

Until September 1941 the number of Mihailović’s Chetniks was not very high (about 3,000-4,000 men). Many of them were officers and other ranks of the Yugoslav Royal Army, police officers and gendarmes. According to German military records the guerrilla army grew to 30,000 in 1943. But the arithmetical dynamic of the movement didn’t represent its quality. The rivalries between the various local Chetnik leaders were not an unusual phenomenon, and Mihailović didn’t succeed to force discipline and to control the activities of his own men outside Serbia.²⁹ This was a disadvantage for the

24. DGF, *The War Years (June 23-December 11, 1941)*, 4927/E2583372-79, The Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Foreign Ministry With the Military Commander in Serbia to the Foreign Ministry, Confidential, Subject: “The situation in Serbia,” Pol. S No 2, Belgrade, December 3, 1941, 944-48.

25. BA-MA RH-20/12-217: Kommandeur der Nachrichtenaufklärung 4, Br.B.Nr. 806/42 gKdos., “Organisation der Draza Mihajlovic-Bewegung,” O.U., 11.9.1942.

26. The organization “Special Operations Executive” was supporting armed resistance in Axis-occupied Europe.

27. Roberts, *Tito, Mihailović and the Allies*, 28-30. Wolfgang Bretholz, *Ich sah sie stürzen* (Wien-München-Basel: Verlag Kurt Desch, 1955), 182. In his reports Hudson confirms the rumors about Mihailović’s cooperation with the enemy. Elisabeth Barker, “Fresh Sidelights on British Policy in Yugoslavia, 1942-3,” *The Slavonic and East European Review* 54/4 (1976): 572-85, 573.

28. Roberts, *Tito, Mihailović and the Allies*, 44.

29. Calic, *Geschichte Jugoslawiens*, 146.

whole Chetnik-movement, because it couldn't represent itself as a united guerrilla army and follow a common line toward the Axis authorities and "Ustasha." As L. S. Stavrianos remarks, "this loose organization and the lack of discipline were to be important factors in Mihailović's failure to build up an efficient army."³⁰

From this point of view it was not a surprise that in some Yugoslav lands (Bosnia, Herzegovina, Montenegro) the Chetniks collaborated with the Axis troops against Tito, and in Serbia they organized the guerrilla struggle against them. This is why the Germans spoke usually of "Mihailović-Movement" and "illegal Chetniks" with refer to the resistance branch, and not generally of Chetniks. Kosta Pećanac for example, a veteran of World War I and the nominal head of the Chetnik organization when the Second World War broke out, didn't share Mihailović's resistance views. After the German invasion of the Soviet Union he was engaged in a policy of collaboration. On August 27, 1941 he announced the recognition of the German authority and cooperated with the Nedić administration. Detachments of his Chetniks in southern Serbia were incorporated into the state gendarmerie. The German Army appreciated his willingness to fight against the communist-led Partisans and to keep distance from Mihailović.³¹

More chaotic was the situation outside Serbia. The Chetnik leaders in eastern Bosnia (Bogdan Dangić, Boris Damjanović, etc.) operated independent from Ravna Gora. They fought each other and also against "Ustasha." One of them, Major Dangić, was ready to sign an agreement with the German military authorities. In turn, he expected the recognition of his local authority. For the purpose of negotiations he came himself to Belgrade. But the reaction of the Croatian government prevented such an agreement. Dangić was later captured

30. Stavrianos, *The Balkans*, 773.

31. Roberts, *Tito, Mihailović and the Allies*, 21. Milazzo, *The Chetni Movement*, 18-19. Hory and Broszat, *Der kroatische Ustascha-Staat*, 104-05, 113-14. BA-MA RW 40-13: Der Bevollm. Kommandierende General in Serbien, Ia/Ic, Nr. 3335/41 geh., "Aufstandsbewegung," O.U., 1.11.1941.

by the Germans. Only in July 1942 Mihailović succeeded in persuading some of the so-called “separatist Chetniks” (thanks to money or even to terror) to accept his leadership. The final aim of all Chetniks in Bosnia was the unification of their homelands with Serbia.³²

Regarding his resistance concept Mihailović did not wish large-scale military operations against the Axis troops – a typical attitude of many regular officers in German-occupied Europe –, because he was afraid of reprisals against the civilian population, especially against the Serbs. The executions of 2,300 people in Kragujevac by the German troops on October 21, 1941 made a deep impression on him.³³ He also held back with attacks against members of Nedić’s administration.³⁴ In accordance to the declaration of the Yugoslav government in exile from July 22, 1941 he chose to safeguard his organization until an allied invasion would take place in the Balkans (like in the case of the First World War). Then his guerrilla army would rise against the Axis powers and preserve public order.³⁵ He was convinced that only the Allies could liberate the Yugoslav territories – and not a guerrilla organization. So he “planned to organize the entire country militarily before awaiting the opportune moment

32. Hory and Broszat, *Der kroatische Ustascha-Staat*, 119-20. BA-MA RH-20/12-217: Kommandeur der Nachrichtenaufklärung 4, Br.B.Nr. 806/42 gKdos., “Organisation der Draza Mihajlovic-Bewegung,” O.U., 11.9.1942. BA-MA 40/28: Kommandierender General und Befehlshaber in Serbien, Abt. Ia Nr. 3320/42 geh., H.Qu., 30.4.1942.

33. Roberts, *Tito, Mihailović and the Allies*, 34. On this massacre see Walter Manoschek, “Kraljevo–Kragujevac–Kalavryta. Die Massaker der 717. Infanteriedivision bzw. 117. Jägerdivision am Balkan,” in *Von Lidice bis Kalavryta. Widerstand und Besatzungsterror. Studien zur Repressalienpraxis im Zweiten Weltkrieg*, ed. Loukia Droulia and Hagen Fleischer (Berlin: Metropol-Verlag, 1999), 93-104.

34. Paul N. Hehn, “Serbia, Croatia and Germany 1941-1945: Civil War and Revolution in the Balkans,” *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 13/4 (1971): 344-73, 352.

35. Sundhaussen, *Geschichte Serbiens*, 320. Roberts, *Tito, Mihailović and the Allies*, 26. BA-MA RW 40/39: Kommandierender General und Befehlshaber in Serbien, Abt. Ia Nr. 920/43 geh., “Lagebericht für die Zeit vom 1.-15.3.1942,” H.Qu., 19.3.1943.

for a general uprising.” Until then resistance had to be coordinate with the British orders.³⁶

What is usually forgotten is that Mihailović also intended to establish cooperation with the non-communist resistance forces in other states. He was the only army officer who seriously thought about a common guerrilla action and could play a leading role in the Axis-occupied Balkans. The strategic position of Serbia in the centre of the Balkans was a major advantage and enabled him to reach contact with like-minded personalities in the neighbouring countries. He authorized the set up of an illegal radio station with broadcasts in Bulgarian, Turkish, Rumanian, Greek and Serb language. His commander in southern Serbia, Colonel Radoslav Djuric, received the order to negotiate with the Bulgarian *Agrarian Party* and Albanian groups, and to organize the “Mihailović-Movement” in Macedonia and Salonika. Mihailović also created an effective courier service with branches in Salonika, Bucarest, Ankara, Cairo and London.³⁷

Obviously, through the last channel he attempted to establish contact with the Greek non-communist resistance groups. In late summer 1942 a Chetnik representative was sent for this purpose to Salonika, but without success. It is estimated that in June 1944 another Chetnik representative made his way to the Greek city. Resistance-friendly army officers in the state administration advised him to come in touch with the head of a guerrilla force in the mountains of Epirus. His name was Napoleon Zervas.³⁸

36. Milazzo, *The Chetni Movement*, 16-17.

37. BA-MA RH-20/12-217: Kommandeur der Nachrichtenaufklärung 4, Br.B.Nr. 806/42 gKdos., “Organisation der Draza Mihajlovic-Bewegung,” O.U., 11.9.1942.

38. Athanasios I. Chrysohoou, *Η Κατοχή εν Μακεδονία. Οι Γερμανοί εν Μακεδονία*, vol. 5 (Thessaloniki: Society for Macedonian Studies, 1962), 217-22, 397-401. Also German sources confirm the mission of the Serb officer in Salonika. PA AA, R 27301, Sonderbevollmächtigter SO, Akten betreffend Telegramme Athen-Belgrad vom 2.1944 bis 9.1944, 183 vom 14. Juni, für Gesandten Neubacher, Graevenitz.

The “National Republican Greek League”

In the case of Greece neither high-ranking army officer remained in the mountains after the military defeat in April 1941 to organize armed resistance, nor the Greek government established a guerrilla command as the Yugoslav government did in April 1940.³⁹ However, some kind of conspirative preparation was made among army officers in mid-June 1941 in Athens – before the German attack against the Soviet Union. One of these officers was Zervas.⁴⁰ On September 9, 1941 he founded an illegal anti-Royalist organization under the name of EDES (*National Republican Greek League*) with General Nikolaos Plastiras, who was exiled in France, as its nominal head. In the next two years Zervas became the dominant figure of the second important guerrilla mass movement in Greece. He was the first well-known (ex-regular) army officer who created armed units in the mountains.⁴¹

Unlike his Serb colleague Zervas did not recognize the authority of the Greek government in exile and rejected the royalist pre-war order. His aims were primarily of political-revolutionary nature: The establishment of a “Social Democratic Republic” after the occupation and the punishment of all persons who had participated in the authoritarian Metaxas regime (1936-1941).⁴² The “old political world” in Athens, powerless and discredited, did not support him.⁴³ His political home, the *Liberal Party*, as Zervas wrote to his old

39. Hondros, *Occupation*, 100.

40. GL, ASCSA, George Papaioannou Collection, Napoleon Zervas, “Συνοπτική έκθεσις μετά τινών στοιχείων της οργάνωσης Εθνικής Αντιστάσεως ΕΔΕΣ,” Athens, February 19, 1949.

41. C. M. Woodhouse, *The Struggle for Greece 1941-1949* (London: Hurst and Company, 2002), 29.

42. Hondros, *Occupation*, 105. Richter, *Griechenland zwischen Revolution und Konterrevolution*, 169.

43. André Gerolymatos, *Red Acropolis, Black Terror. The Greek Civil War and the Origins of Soviet-American Rivalry, 1943-1949* (New York: Basic Books, 2004), 73.

friend General Gonatas (1876-1966), reacted in a negative way.⁴⁴ And KKE (*Communist Party of Greece*) mistrusted his post-war intentions.

Zervas established an organization that was identified with his own person. Mark Mazower is right when he writes that EDES was based “on the charismatic personality of the *archigos* [leader] rather than on ideology.”⁴⁵ But the reason for that was the fact that he had neither a broad basis of support in the pre-war area as in the case of KKE, nor had he a military structure like the Chetniks. The centralization of power was a necessity and not a matter of option.

EDES was an attempt to fill the political and ideological gap between the pre-war bourgeois parties and KKE.⁴⁶ Zervas understood well that it was impossible to organize the guerrilla struggle from Athens. In July 1942 he took to the hills in the region of Valtos north-east of Arta with some close comrades such as the intellectual professor Komninos Pyromaglou and Michalis Myridakis.⁴⁷ Before that he established an EDES-Committee in Athens.⁴⁸ Unlike Mihailović Zervas had not many armed followers, but he managed to

44. GL, ASCSA, George Papaioannou Collection 1/4, “Ναπολέον Ζέρβας προς Στυλιανό Γονατά. Ελευθέρα Ορεινή Ελλάδα”, January 9, 1944.

45. Mark Mazower, *Inside Hitler's Greece. The Experience of Occupation 1941-1944* (New Haven-London: Yale University Press, 1993), 140.

46. Komninou Pyromaglou, *Η Εθνική Αντίσταση. ΕΑΜ-ΕΛΑΣ-ΕΛΕΣ-ΕΚΚΑ* (Athens-Janina: Dodoni, 1988), 305-07.

47. Zervas claims that he aimed first to set up a political organization for the support of the guerrilla struggle and then to take to the mountains. This is the reason why he delayed to leave Athens. Direction of Military History/General Staff of the Greek Army [DIS/GES]: Napoleon Zervas, “Συνοπτική έκθεση τις οργανώσεως ΕΔΕΣ,” February 19, 1949 (ΑΕΑ, vol. 2, doc. 1). He regarded as too early the British wish to take guerrilla action in April 1942. GL, ASCSA, George Papaioannou Collection, Napoleon Zervas, “Συνοπτική έκθεση μετά τινών στοιχείων της οργανώσεως Εθνικής Αντιστάσεως ΕΔΕΣ,” Athens, February 19, 1949.

48. Among the leading members of EDES in Athens were Ioannis Matsoukas, Iraklis Petimezas, Ilias Stamatopoulos, Dimitrios Giannakopoulos, Apostolos Papageorgiou, Ploutarhos Metaxas, and Haralabos Papathanasopoulos. Its main organ was the illegal paper (*Δημοκρατική Σημαία* (from August 16, 1942 until October 12, 1944). GL, ASCSA, George Papaioannou Collection 2/11, “Έκθεση

incorporate into EDES some local organizations as the “National Group of Valtos” and “Ellas–Eleftheria” (*Greece–Freedom*) in March 1943. The latter was founded in December 1941 by reservist army officers in the town of Arta.⁴⁹ By the end of 1942 Zervas had already a well-armed band of 100 *andartes* (irregulars) under his command, which played an important role in the famous Gorgopotamos’ operation in November of the same year.⁵⁰ Whenever he could, Zervas employed regular and reservist officers, in the main adherents and friends of Plastiras and Gonatas, with strong republican sympathies.⁵¹

It is quite true that Zervas’ guerrilla army was based most on personal ties and on the competent clientele structure of his local warlords (*capetani*) rather than on political or ideological motives.⁵² The *capetani* were politically or economically influential persons who had filled the power vacuum in their region after the beginning of occupation and had established armed formations.⁵³ Mihailović’s *vojvodas* were organized in a similar way. They were stronger and perhaps more efficient, but Zervas’ warlords achieved a better control of their subordinates. Stylianos Choutas for example –the founder of a national group in the mainly pro-royalist region of Valtos who cooperated closely with Zervas–⁵⁴ stopped the initiative

μελών Δ/σης Επιτροπής ΕΔΕΣ Αθηνών–Πειραιώς–Περιχώρων,” Athens, February 10, 1971.

49. GL, ASCSA, George Papaioannou Collection 4/3, “Εκθεσις επί του τρόπου οργανώσεως, της οργανώσεως Εθνικής Αντιστάσεως Ελλάς–Ελευθερία (Ε–Ε),” after 1944.

50. Hondros, *Occupation*, 106.

51. Edgar O’Ballance, *The Greek Civil War 1944–1949* (London: Faber and Faber, 1966), 53.

52. Polymeris Voglis, *Η ελληνική κοινωνία στην Κατοχή 1941–1944* (Athens: Alexandria, 2010), 89.

53. To the structure of the local warlords in Epirus, see Vagelis Tzoukas, “Οπλαρχηγοί και καπετάνιοι στη δεκαετία 1940–1950. Η περίπτωση της Ηπείρου,” in *Οι άλλοι καπετάνιοι. Αντικομμουνιστές ένοπλοι στα χρόνια της Κατοχής και του Εμφυλίου*, ed. Nikos Marantzidis (Athens: Estia, 2005), 375–430.

54. It was a difficult task for the republican leader of EDES to find loyal adherents in the pro-royalist region of Valtos. GL, ASCSA, George Papaioannou

of some native army officers to create their own band.⁵⁵ Another competent local EDES' leader, George Papaioannou, also was succeeded in keeping the unity of his *andartes* group in his birth region Trichonis.⁵⁶

Papaioannou was the head of a local band from March 22 until October 10, 1943. In March he joined EDES and one month later he received British military support. In May he and some of his men were captured in Thermos by ELAS. Papaioannou was tortured and a few members of his band were executed. Thanks to the intervention of British officers he was released. After this bloody episode, Papaioannou took action again. But his band was dissolved once again by ELAS in October. Some of his subordinates were arrested and brought to the monastery of Proussou which was turned to an ELAS' concentration camp.⁵⁷ Papaioannou was forced to leave that area. In Athens he joined EDES' committee and took over a leading role.⁵⁸

Generally, the *capetani* respected Zervas who tolerated their self-administration and legitimated their armed presence as a resistance force. But in many cases they were unwilling to take orders from EDES' officers and operated mostly in consultation with Zervas. On the other hand, they knew that without the cooperation with the army officers they did not have a chance to be recognized by the British and the exiled Greek government. The alliance between them and the army officers, that laid the foundation for the growing of EDES' guerrilla movement, was necessary for the *capetani* if they wanted

Collection, 2/15, "Περί της Εθνικής Αντιστάσεως εν Βάλτω, υπό Λουδ. Γερομήτσου δια Νικ. Γ. Παπαιωάννου," after 1961.

55. GL, ASCSA, George Papaioannou Collection 1/8, "Στυλιανός Χούτας προς Ευγένιο Στράτο," Triklinos, June 10, 1943.

56. GL, ASCSA, George Papaioannou Collection 2/3, "Γ. Ν. Παπαιωάννου προς το Γενικόν Αρχηγείον (Γραφείον Αρχηγού)," S.D.A.T., October 10, 1943.

57. GL, ASCSA, George Papaioannou Collection 2/6, "Εκθεση του Α. Χολέβα για την Εθνική Αντίσταση και τα γεγονότα μεταξύ ΕΔΕΣ και ΕΑΜ στη Δυτική Στερεά," June 15, 1945. GL, ASCSA, George Papaioannou Collection 8/3, "Εκθεση Γεωργίου Ν. Παπαιωάννου," Agrinio, January 6, 1953.

58. GL, ASCSA, George Papaioannou Collection 8/2, Ilias Diamesis, "Εκθεση στρατιωτικής δράσεως του ιατρού Γεωργίου Ν. Παπαιωάννου," Athens, March 15, 1947.

to be accepted as “freedom fighters.” This alliance was also necessary for the army officers because, otherwise, their resistance and political slogans could hardly reach the local village population. Thanks to Zervas’ successful “management” a *modus vivendi* was found. Of course the loose military structure and the lack of discipline were not the ideal basis for the creation of a revolutionary army on national grounds – as it was created by the Communists. In the words of Christopher Montague Woodhouse, “Zervas’ force was virtually a private army, dominated by a single personality and limited to his native territory in north-west Greece.”⁵⁹

Zervas’ units in the Italian-occupied area of Epirus fought against the Axis troops and also operated against the collaborationist militia of the Albanian-speaking Chams in Paramythia and Philiates, who favored the annexation of Epirus to a “Great Albania.”⁶⁰ But he refrained from attacking the Greek state administration in his operation area. Like Mihailović Zervas was a typical exponent of traditional irredentist bias (northern Epirus, Dodecanese, Cyprus) and a zealous advocate of a “Greater Greece.” Especially he supported a national-minded Greek resistance organization in southern Albania (northern Epirus) called MAVI (*Liberation Front Northern Epirus*) with men, arms and supplies. He was anxious to expand EDES’ activity outside the Greek territory.⁶¹

His resistance concept was very similar with that of his Serb colleague: He focused on limited military action in accordance with the directives of the Allied Headquarters in Middle East.⁶² He was convinced that only an allied victory could liberate Greece from Axis yoke. For this reason he cooperated closely with members of the BMM (*British Military Mission*) such as Christopher M. Woodhouse. The latter described him as “a loyal ally, but not, like the

59. Woodhouse, *The Struggle*, 38.

60. Fleischer, *Im Kreuzschatten der Mächte*, 463.

61. DIS/GES: Ethnikes Omades Ellinon Andarton EDES, “Εκθεσις επί του ες Αλβανία ελληνικού στοιχείου,” August 18, 1943 (AEA, vol. 1, doc. 6).

62. Fleischer, *Im Kreuzschatten der Mächte*, 137.

Communists, as a born organizer.”⁶³ Thanks to the British help Zervas was able to establish a guerrilla administration called EOE (*Free Mountain Greece*).⁶⁴ His “rural kingdom” survived until the end of Axis occupation. He was the only Greek army officer who succeeded in constituting a parallel state-like structure.

Civil War and Collaboration

Mihailović’s anti-Communist war

Both Mihailović and Zervas shared a common fear for a “communist insurgency.” In Mihailović’s case the quarrel with the Communists begun from the very first moment. The consultations between him and Tito on September 19, and October 27, 1941 did not flow into an agreement for common guerrilla action. Too different were the resistance concepts and the post-war goals of the nationalist and communist struggle: Mihailović, the pro-royalist army officer, rejected the idea of “total war” against the occupation forces; he preferred a defensive strategy without mass losses for the civil population and opposed the concept of a “Federal People’s Republic” that would lead to the abolishment of the Monarchy. He had not revolutionary ambitions, his guerrilla army was composed of peasants and he appealed mainly to the Serbs, while Tito proceeded to gain support of all ethnic groups, to build up mobile “Proletarian Brigades” and to overthrow the bourgeois pre-war order.⁶⁵ For Mihailović the fight against the “internal enemy,” i.e., the Partisans, became a high priority; the liberation struggle could wait at the moment.

Although some kind of cooperation took place, the Communist-led side was seeking “to influence the Chetnik rank and file with

63. C. M. Woodhouse, “Situation in Greece—Jan to May, 1944,” in *British Reports on Greece 1943-1944*, ed. Lars Baerentzen (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 1982), 47-115, 80.

64. For more information see Kosta E. Ioannou, *Η Ελευθέρα Ορεινή Ελλάδα* (Athens: Dromevs, s.a.). Also see Vagelis Tzoukas, “1944–Η Ελεύθερη Ορεινή Ελλάδα του ΕΔΕΣ,” in *Η Εφημερίδα των Συντακτών* 12.03.2014.

65. Hory and Broszat, *Der kroatische Ustascha-Staat*, 114-15.

false slogans and in some instances by coercive means.”⁶⁶ The proclamation of the soviet-inspired “Republic of Uzicé” (south of Belgrade) in September 1941 alarmed national-minded peasants. In November armed clashes took place between the Chetniks and the Partisans. After the military operations of the Wehrmacht against all irregulars Mihailović was on the run; his Staff was dissolved, and some of his comrades were arrested and later shot by the Germans.⁶⁷ The Partisans also were forced to evacuate the “Republic of Uzice” and to retreat south into Italian-occupied territory. The action of Wehrmacht saved probably the Chetniks from a defeat against the Partisans. At the same time Mihailović had a meeting with representatives of the German military administration. The German Intelligence Service was informed about the split between the Chetniks and the Partisans and intended to achieve a *modus vivendi* between the Axis authorities and Mihailović’s units. But the negotiations on November 11 have not been successful; the Germans were not interested on a accomodation. They accused Mihailović of having collaborated with the Partisans and demanded –in a remarkable arrogant way– the complete surrender of his “illegal Chetniks.” But Mihailović refused. His cooperation offer was a truce in exchange for arms, which he would probably use against the Partisans.⁶⁸

The German authorities had no doubt about Mihailović’s anti-Axis motives. In a telegram of December 3, 1941 the Plenipotentiary of the German Foreign Ministry with the military commander in Serbia, Felix Benzler, reported about him: “Furthermore there exists in the person of Col. Draza Mihailović a rallying point for all insurgents with nationalist leanings. This person who is said to have his headquarters in the mountain between Cacak and Valjevo in the village of Ravna Gora has not many followers any longer but should

66. DGF, *The War Years (June 23-December 11, 1941)*, 230/153316, The Plenipotentiary of the Foreign Ministry With the Military Commander in Serbia to the Foreign Ministry, Belgrade, Telegram No 493 of August 12, 1941, 308.

67. BA-MA RW 40/14: Der Bevollm. Kdr. General in Serbien, Abt. Ia Nr. 339/41 gKdos., Belgrad, 10.12.1941.

68. Glenny, *The Balkans*, 493. Roberts, *Tito, Mihailović and the Allies*, 31-37. Milazzo, *The Chetni Movement*, 37-38.

nevertheless not be underestimated [...]. At the present moment he does not present any acute danger, particularly as he has become an enemy of the Communists, with whom he had first cooperated, and is indeed fighting them.”⁶⁹ Until liberation Mihailović would always be considered in Berlin –especially by Hitler and his entourage– as an enemy of the Nazi *New Order*.⁷⁰

Collaboration with Axis was not Mihailović’s original plan. But the strengthening of Tito’s Partisans and the developments in Montenegro brought him in a very difficult situation. The Italian-Chetnik cooperation started at a time when Mihailović was still in Serbia and had no control over the events in Montenegro.⁷¹ He probably decided to tolerate the local Italian-Chetnik agreements in order to keep the Partisans out of Montenegro and to turn that territory into a bastion of the Chetnik forces. Of course he didn’t confirm openly the agreements of the Montenegrin Chetniks, because he was too careful not to break with the British and to lose eventually popular support. The “legal Chetniks” in the Italian-occupied area were free to establish a local village administration and to take up an official position.⁷² In turn they left the Italian garrisons and communications in peace and accepted –at least for the moment– the Axis regime. The Italian authorities, whose territorial claims were directed against the Independent State of Croatia, appreciated the Chetniks’ participation in anti-Partisan military operations. They also looked to build up a domestic counterweight to the “Ustasha.” But the policy of collaboration undermined lastly Mihailović’s prestige by the Allies.⁷³

69. Roberts, *Tito, Mihailović and the Allies*, 39.

70. Sundhaussen, “Okkupation,” 361.

71. Roberts, *Tito, Mihailović and the Allies*, 40-41.

72. Calic, *Geschichte Jugoslawiens*, 146. Hory and Broszat, *Der kroatische Ustascha-Staat*, 139.

73. Roberts, *Tito, Mihailović and the Allies*, 62. Hugh Seton-Watson, *The East European Revolution*, 2nd ed. (London: Methuen & Co., 1952), 80-81. Hehn, “Serbia, Croatia and Germany,” 356.

The Germans, who continuously criticised the Chetnik-friendly policy of the Italian administration,⁷⁴ refused to follow the Italian example and organized military operations against the “illegal Chetniks” in Serbia. Hitler was determined to destroy the Chetniks as well as the Partisans. He made no distinction between them.⁷⁵ But some representatives of the German Foreign Ministry in Belgrade like Felix Benzler realized soon that military action against both the Partisans and the Chetniks would lead probably to their unification. Therefore, Wehrmacht should act only against Tito. Also German military commanders in Serbia favoured a local cooperation with the “illegal Chetnik” groups.⁷⁶ But such thoughts did not win the upper hand. On September 9, 1942 Mihailović called through leaflets and clandestine radio transmitters for civil disobedience to Nedić’s regime. In November and December the Germans arrested and executed many functionaries of the “Mihailović-Movement” in order to restore Nedić’s authority. The German-Chetnik quarrel came to an end only after the Italian capitulation in September 1943 and the British decision in November –on the basis of reports of the BMM in Tito’s Headquarters– to abandon Mihailović and support the Partisans.⁷⁷ In May 1944 Mihailović, a devoted adherent of the crown,

74. For example, the Foreign Minister of Nazi Germany von Ribbentrop regarded the Chetniks and Mihailović as more dangerous than the Communists. For this reason he demanded from Italian Foreign Minister to put an end to the Italian-Chetnik cooperation. But the Italian military authorities were dependent on Chetniks’ support. Srdjan Trifkovic, “Rivalry between Germany and Italy in Croatia, 1942-1943,” *The Historical Journal* 36/4 (1993): 879-904, 895-96. In the same way argued Mussolini in his meeting with Ribbentrop in Rome in February 1943. *Ibid.*, 900.

75. Roberts, *Tito, Mihailović and the Allies*, 104.

76. Hory and Broszat, *Der kroatische Ustascha-Staat*, 112. Seton-Watson, *The East European Revolution*, 81.

77. Sundhaussen, *Geschichte Serbiens*, 330-31. Roberts, *Tito, Mihailović and the Allies*, 67. Milazzo, *The Chetni Movement*, 105. Hory and Broszat, *Der kroatische Ustascha-Staat*, 139. This change in British policy was initiated in February 1943 after Churchill’s consultations with SOE-officials in Cairo. The British Prime Minister had serious doubts about the military ability of the Chetniks. Hugh de Santis, “In Search of Yugoslavia: Anglo-American policy and Policy-Making 1943-45,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 16/3 (1981): 541-63,

was no longer a member of the government in exile.⁷⁸ In turn, this strengthened the collaborationist tendencies among the Chetnik leaders. At about the same time (November 1943) the Partisans declared their “Federal Yugoslavia” and prepared to enter into Serbia. From his side Mihailović called in January 1944 a “Chetnik Congress,” which announced the reorganization of post-war Yugoslavia as a federation of three units: Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia. But it was too late for a radical change of ethnic policies.⁷⁹

Under these circumstances and without allies in and outside Yugoslavia Mihailović made his “peace” with the Germans. If he wanted to continue the anti-Communist struggle, he had to give up his hostile position toward the Axis authorities and the Nedić administration. Civilian officials of the Third Reich like the “Special Emissary of the German Foreign Office for Southeastern Europe,” Dr. Hermann Neubacher, a former mayor of Vienna, tried to establish a common anti-Communist front between Nedić’s “Serbian State Guard,” the “Serbian Volunteer Corps” of the extreme Serb nationalist and pro-Nazi ‘Zbor’-movement of Dimitrije Ljotić⁸⁰ and Mihailović’s “illegal Chetniks.” In autumn 1943 Neubacher was instructed from Berlin to organize the anti-Communist struggle of the national-minded people in the German-occupied Yugoslav territories, Albania and Greece.⁸¹ He had the permission to initiate local and temporary agreements between Befehlshaber Serbien and “illegal Chetnik”-leaders who fought against Tito. The object of these agreements was the military cooperation –from case to case– against the Partisans. Hitler, who was well-known for his anti-Serb feelings, and high-ranking Wehrmacht officers declined to make an

544-45. Of course the allegations of collaboration also played an important role in the British decision.

78. Bretholz, *Ich sah sie stürzen*, 184.

79. Roberts, *Tito, Mihailović and the Allies*, 199.

80. Ristović, “General M. Nedić,” 647. “Zbor” was a stronghold of Nedić’s regime. Hory and Broszat, *Der kroatische Ustascha-Staat*, 113. Hermann Neubacher, *Sonderauftrag Südost 1940-1945. Bericht eines fliegenden Diplomaten* (Berlin-Frankfurt: Musterschmidt-Verlag, 1956), 154.

81. Neubacher, *Sonderauftrag Südost*, 167-68.

official agreement with Mihailović, because he was still pro-British and an enemy of the Reich. They also wanted to secure Nedić's authority.⁸²

At the beginning of 1944 the SS-“Prinz Eugen Division” announced that it would support the Chetniks in eastern Herzegovina with arms and supplies only if they would break with Mihailović and the Allies.⁸³ In Montenegro Neubacher supported Lieutenant Pavle Durisić to set up a new armed Chetnik formation, the “Montenegrin Volunteer Corps.”⁸⁴ Also in Croatia Chetnik leaders like Radivoj Kosoric signed official agreements with German military commanders. They were obligated to recognize the Independent State of Croatia and to cooperate with the hated “Ustasha.” Furthermore, they put themselves under the orders of the Wehrmacht and abandoned national and royalist Serb symbols.⁸⁵ But other Chetnik groups began to attack German targets in the last chaotic months of Axis occupation.⁸⁶

In Serbia Mihailović, who tolerated the local authority and also the atrocities of other Chetnik *vojvodas*, tried to achieve an understanding with Nedić in order to win time until an allied landing. But he refused to cooperate with Ljotić.⁸⁷ The Chetnik leader was not ready to identify himself with the pro-Nazi camp. After the entry

82. Klaus Schmider, *Partisanenkrieg in Jugoslawien 1941-1944* (Hamburg: E. S. Mittler und Sohn Verlag, 2002), 481-88. Hory and Broszat, *Der kroatische Ustascha-Staat*, 164. Neubacher, *Sonderauftrag Südost*, 147-48, 165-66.

83. BA-MA RS 3-7/16: 7. SS-Frw.-Geb.-Division “Prinz Eugen,” Abt. Ic Nr. 107/44 geh., “Zusammenarbeit mit den Cetniks,” O.U., 15.2.1944.

84. Hory and Broszat, *Der kroatische Ustascha-Staat*, 165. Neubacher, *Sonderauftrag Südost*, 183-84.

85. BA-MA RS 3-7/16: SS-Division “Prinz Eugen,” Ic 811/44, “Verhandlungsprotokoll in den am 7.7.1944 zwischen Herrn Radijov Kosoric als Vertreter der Romanija-Abteilung und SS-Obersturmführer Kirchner als Vertreter der SS-Division ‘Prinz Eugen’ geführten Verhandlungen.”

86. BA-MA RS 3-7/14: Gen.Kdo.V.SS.Geb.Korps, Abt. Ic Tgb. Nr. 4057/44 gKdos., Betr.: “Verhalten gegenüber Kroat. Kampfgemeinschaft und bisher loyalen Cetniks,” H.Qu., 03.09.1944.

87. PA AAR 105164a: Telegramm (geh. Ch. V.), Nr. 38, Sonderbevollmächtigter Südost, “Lage des D.M.,” Tirana, 20.1.1944.

of the Red Army in Serbia in autumn 1944 he was hiding with a few hundred Chetniks in the mountains of eastern Bosnia. In the Titoist *New Order* he was the most prominent outlaw.

Zervas' "gentlemen agreement"

In Greece Zervas' secret contacts with the German military authorities were also of anti-Communist nature. At first he had refused the proposal of his Communist opponent in the field, Aris Velouchiotis, to be the military commander of a united guerrilla army. On December 31, 1942 he wrote in his diary that Communism was planning to destroy him.⁸⁸ Zervas resisted the Communist's tactics to incorporate him into ELAS, and the British helped him to defend his sovereignty. Under the impression of the powerful EAM-movement and the disbanding of the non-communist units in Thessaly and Macedonia through ELAS he made his peace with King Georg II in March 1943 and recognized the authority of the Greek government in exile without holding an office. He became reconciled with the "old political world" in Athens and denounced EAM/ELAS as a Communist organization that wanted to seize power by force. From now on he accepted pro-royalist officers by EDES. His organization grew up in April to 3,000 men and in July to 6,000.⁸⁹

EDES became more and more conservative, but it can be assumed that "Free Mountain Greece" was something like an "oasis of freedom" for non-Communists from the EAM-controlled territory.⁹⁰ Zervas regarded Communism as a greater danger than Monarchy and was aware of the British government's attachment to the exiled

88. He also expressed his fear that the British had not understood the true Communist aims. Dimitris Thanas, ed., *Ημερολόγιο Στρατηγού Ναπολέοντα Ζέρβα 1942-1945* (Athens: Okeanida, 2013), 163-64.

89. Ole L. Smith, "«Ο πρώτος γύρος»—Εμφύλιος πόλεμος κατά την Κατοχή," in *Ο ελληνικός εμφύλιος πόλεμος, 1943-1950. Μελέτες για την πόλωση*, ed. David H. Close, 3rd ed. (Athens: Filistor, 2000), 84-100, 90. Meyer, *Blutiges Edelweiß*, 514. Hondros, *Occupation*, 135.

90. Myridaki, *Αγώνες της Φυλής*, 258-59.

King.⁹¹ But he never made propaganda for George II.⁹² The fact that he was cooperating with BMM helped him of course to achieve a great score of reputation among the bourgeois and conservative camp. The British authorities supported him as the only reasonable alternative to EAM/ELAS' expansion in rural Greece.⁹³

Despite of that, the British opposed the establishment of a common anti-Communist front between him and Mihailović. From February 1943 Zervas was anxious to establish a link with the Serb Colonel. For this reason he asked the British authorities in the Middle East to initiate the contacts. In the next month he was informed that Mihailović's representatives would visit him in Epirus.⁹⁴ But only in May 1944 two delegates of Mihailović, the Captains Divic and Pavlovic, reached Zervas' Headquarters. The Chetnik leader proposed a cooperation based on anti-Communist grounds. His delegates claimed that he ordered an army of about 40,000-50,000 men who fought against Tito and the Germans. Zervas told them that he had to consult first Cairo. But the BLOs of his staff were not very optimistic.⁹⁵ Indeed, the answer from Cairo was negative. The Headquarter Middle East as well as the Greek exiled government "suggested" Zervas to avoid any further contact with the Chetnik delegates. After that Zervas assured Cairo that he did not approve a cooperation with the Chetniks. But in his diary he expressed his anger about the decision of the British to help Tito and to abandon "national Serbia." This order was not "understandable" to him, but

91. Woodhouse, *The Struggle*, 35-36.

92. Makris-Staikos, *Βρετανική πολιτική*, 107. EDES' press still called for a "Socialist Republic." GL, ASCSA, George Papaioannou Collection 1/1, "Ο ενδελεγγόμενος δρόμος," in *Ελευθέρα Ορεινή Ελλάδα* 28.04.1944.

93. Prokopis Papastratis, "The British and the Greek Resistance Movements EAM and EDES," in *Greece. From Resistance to Civil War*, ed. Marion Sarafis (Nottingham: Spokesman, 1980), 32-42, 33.

94. Thanas, *Ημερολόγιο*, 209, 227. Public Records Office/Foreign Office [PRO/FO] 371/37201 R 2332: Pearson to P. J. Dixon, JSAP/GR/2015, March 11, 1943.

95. Thanas, *Ημερολόγιο*, 515. PRO/FO 371/43687 R 8676: Talbot-Rice to Howard, DTR/GR/7374, May 26, 1944 and R 8896: Talbot/Rice to Dew, DTR/GR/7385, May 30, 1944.

he was “obligated” to obey.⁹⁶ The exiled Prime Minister George Papandreou was afraid that EDES and the Greek forces in exile would be involved in the civil war in Yugoslavia.⁹⁷ Mihailović’s representatives returned to Serbia and their visit was kept secret.⁹⁸

Obviously, the British were determined to avoid any kind of provocation against the Communist-led resistance movements, which could lead to a general civil war and paralyse the struggle against the Axis powers. A Balkan cooperation between EDES, the Chetniks and the Albanian nationalist organization “Balli Kombetar” (*National Front*) did not take place.⁹⁹ The predominance of the left-wing Partisans in Southern Albania, Vardar-Macedonia and Greek western Macedonia and probably the unbridgeable national differences between the Chetniks and “Balli Kombetar” left no hope for an antagonistic nationalist resistance pan-Balkan movement.

Zervas was also interested in forming an anti-Communist block in Greece, but at the same time he was careful enough to avoid cooperation with the German-controlled government of Ioannis Rallis and its armed force, the “Security Battalions” (*Τάγματα Ασφαλείας*). A crisis came up in May 1943 when a part of EDES’ Committee in Athens under the Colonels Apostolos Papageorgiou and Charalambos Papathanasopoulos and the lawyer Ilias Stamatopoulos denounced the resistance struggle and begun to collaborate with the “Security Battalions” and Rallis’ administration.¹⁰⁰ They considered guerrilla action useless and advised Zervas to dissolve his units and to come back to Athens. Zervas, who denied a cooperation with the

96. Thanas, *Ημερολόγιο*, 521.

97. PRO/FO 371/43688 R 9074: Papandreou to Zervas, May 29, 1944.

98. PRO/FO 371/43688 R 9331: Talbot-Rice to Dew, DTR/GR/7421, June 8, 1944.

99. Neubacher, *Sonderauftrag Südost*, 108.

100. Fleischer, *Im Kreuzschatten*, 245-47. Hondros, *Occupation*, 105. Pyromaglou, *Η Εθνική Αντίσταση*, 308-09. Roland Hampe, *Die Rettung Athens im Oktober 1944* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1955), 47. It was also existing a resistance branch under the leadership of Ioannis Matsoukas, Iraklis Petimezas and Dimitris Giannakopoulos. DIS/GES: Napoleon Zervas, “Περί αναγνώρισεως της Οργανώσεως Εθνικής Αντιστάσεως του ΕΛΕΣ Αθηνών-Πειραιώς και Περιχώρων,” November 20, 1952 (AEA, vol. 2, doc. 7).

“Security Battalions,” refused and tried –unsuccessfully– to persuade them to abandon their pro-Axis course. In the illegal paper *Democratic Flag* (*Δημοκρατική Σημαία*) from October 15, 1943, the three members of the Athenian Committee were officially denounced as collaborators and were expelled from the organization.¹⁰¹ Zervas also denounced collaborationist officers and citizens who abused the name of EDES for “anti-National” aims.¹⁰²

Another challenge came also from Athens. In a personal letter the chief of the “Security Battalions,” General Constantin Dertilis, warned Zervas to avoid any kind of military agreement with ELAS. He made the proposal that EDES and the “Security Battalions” should attack ELAS in a common action from both sides of Greece, Epirus and Athens.¹⁰³ Zervas was not interesting in such an arrangement. But at the end of 1943 he sent army officers to German-occupied Macedonia in order “to form bands and [to give] details of beaches on Halkidiki for landing supplies.”¹⁰⁴ In October Zervas’ delegates recruited fighters in the areas of Kastoria and Grevena.¹⁰⁵ In November non-Communist officers and *capetani* in Central Macedonia who were represented by Lieutenant Asterios Mihalakis and Theofilos Vais, in a time when EDES was involved in the civil war against ELAS, proposed the integration of their armed formations into EDES. Zervas accepted that.¹⁰⁶

101. GL, ASCSA, George Papaioannou Collection 2/11, “Εκθεσις μελών Δ/σης Επιτροπής ΕΔΕΣ Αθηνών–Πειραιώς–Περιχώρων,” Athens, February 10, 1971. After liberation, Zervas was willing to forgive Papageorgiou. Thanas, *Ημερολόγιο*, 700.

102. GL, ASCSA, George Papaioannou Collection 1/2, “Ναπολέων Ζέρβας προς Στρατηγείον Μέσης Ανατολής,” 01.12.1943.

103. BA-MA RH 19VII/31: 104.Jäg.Div. Ic, Br. B. Nr. 199/44 geh., O.U., 24.2.1944.

104. PRO/FO 371/37210 R 13768: Greece. Situation Report for week ending December 18, 1943.

105. PRO/FO 371/37206 R 10938: Periodical Intelligence Summary Nr. 12, October 20, 1943.

106. GL, ASCSA, George Papaioannou Collection 1/4, Ελευθέρα Ορεινή Ελλάδα, Γραφείο Αρχηγού, “Ναπολέον Ζέρβας προς την Επιτροπήν Εθνικού Αγώνος Θεσσαλονίκη,” Nr. 494, November 5, 1943.

But the unification was not successful. Most of these ex-guerrilla groups collaborated as “village self-defence units” with the German authorities against ELAS under the name of EES (*National Greek Army*).¹⁰⁷ Despite of that, Zervas proceeded to put under his command the collaborationist militia of EES in western and central Macedonia.¹⁰⁸ But the British officers by EDES did not give the permission for such a cooperation. Zervas was put under pressure to give up his plan.¹⁰⁹

The outbreak of the civil war between EDES and ELAS in October 1943 was a turning point in the history of Greek resistance. Zervas had declared his will to liberate Greece from the “dictatorship of the proletariat” and to support the nationalist cause in the Balkans, perhaps having Mihailović in mind.¹¹⁰ But the civil war had further consequences. As John Hondros writes, “the attack on Zervas pushed the guerrilla leader into developing a special relationship with the German forces in Epirus.”¹¹¹ The German military authorities, well aware of the Greek internal affairs, initiated –as they did in Mihailović’s case– the first secret contacts with the leader of EDES in October 1943 and offered him an armistice, which would give EDES a chance to continue the struggle against ELAS without the fear of a German attack on its back. The negotiations between Zervas’ representatives and the head of the German Army in Epirus (XXII. Geb. Armeekorps) General Hubert Lanz, who had the permission of the Army Group E in Salonika for the negotiations with Zervas, at the beginning of 1944 led to the so-called “gentlemen agreement.”¹¹² This would last from February until June/July 1944.

107. To EES see Kalogrias, *Okkupation*, 243-48.

108. PRO/FO 371/43694 R 17346: “The nationalist organization EES,” No 8018, October 25, 1944.

109. C. M. Woodhouse, *Apple of Discord. A Survey of recent Greek politics in their international setting* (London-New York 1948), 95.

110. Smith, “«Ο πρώτος γύρος»,” 94.

111. Hondros, *Occupation*, 171.

112. For a detailed account, see Heinz A. Richter, “General Lanz, Napoleon Zervas und die britischen Verbindungsoffiziere,” *Militär-geschichtliche Mitteilungen* 1 (1989): 111-38.

During the above period EDES and Wehrmacht made no use of arms against each other. This secret agreement –only a few loyal adherents of Zervas knew about that– enabled the leader of EDES to protect the civil population from German reprisals and to maintain his power in Epirus using Wehrmacht as a buffer between EDES and ELAS.¹¹³ “For Zervas,” as Woodhouse put it, “it was a matter of survival, and he knew that his survival was vital to Papandreou and the British.”¹¹⁴

From the other side, the German authorities did not wish to see EDES weakened or destroyed, and they certainly did not want to see ELAS controlling the strategic road between Arta and Ioannina. They preferred a divided resistance and not one which could be monopolized by the Communists or the Nationalists. They were always afraid of the unification of armed resistance and the establishment of a common anti-German front. They also thought that Zervas could be useful to them as a leader who could mobilize conservative circles in the struggle against “Bolshevism.” But also they had to consider his close ties to the British and that EDES could become a major threat during an allied invasion in Epirus. As in the case of Mihailović an official agreement with Zervas was undesirable. Important was to stop the conflict between the German troops and EDES and to exchange information about a common enemy, ELAS.¹¹⁵ Indeed, Zervas informed Lanz about his anti-ELAS operations and assured him that he would never attack Wehrmacht units, not even by an allied operation. The Germans paid no attention to his assurances.¹¹⁶ But Zervas didn’t mean it seriously.

In his diary he wrote only that a few days after Stauffenberg’s assassination attempt on Hitler, Lanz informed his agent Asterios

113. Hondros, *Occupation*, 198-99.

114. Woodhouse, *The Struggle*, 91-92.

115. Hondros, *Occupation*, 183, 186. Woodhouse, *The Struggle*, 60-61. Richter, *Griechenland zwischen Revolution und Konterrevolution*, 369.

116. BA-MA RH 19VII/31: Okdo.H.Gr.E – Ic/AO, Nr. 362/44 gKdos., 11.2.1944. Zervas also informed the German authorities about the peace negotiations in Plaka between EDES, EAM/ELAS and EKKA (Colonel Psarros). BA-MA RH 19VII/31: Okdo.H.Gr.E – Ic/AO, Nr. 462/44 gKdos., 20.2.1944.

Mihalakis that he wished to come to terms with the British. Zervas assumed that Lanz was somehow involved in the *coup d'état* against the *Führer* of the Third Reich.¹¹⁷ The British sources confirmed the negotiations between British agents in Epirus and Lanz about the unconditional capitulation of the German troops in western Greece.¹¹⁸ In mid-August 1944 Zervas lanced an attack on the German troops in Menina, in accordance with British instructions.¹¹⁹

The “gentlemen agreement” initiated a temporary military coexistence between EDES and the Wehrmacht. After the beginning of Zervas’ attacks against the German troops, the Army Group E decided to destroy EDES and to capture Zervas –this “imminent danger” in western Greece– as well as the BLOs of his Staff.¹²⁰ On August 19, 1944 a representative of Zervas informed the German military authorities that a) Zervas could not keep longer his “neutral position,” b) EDES’ attacks were ordered by the British, and c) Zervas disagree with the German occupation of the Epirus’ coast.¹²¹ According to Zervas, on September 9 Mihalakis informed him about the proposal of Lanz to give up the towns of Arta, Preveza, Ioannina and Metsovo, if Zervas would stop the operations against his troops. But the Greek Colonel denied his “offer.”¹²²

On September 24 Zervas’ delegates proposed to Army Group E that EDES should be allowed to move unhindered toward Athens. Army Group E demanded again that the hostilities against the Wehrmacht should be stopped immediately; EDES should take action against ELAS; Zervas should accept the leadership of all Greek anti-

117. Thanas, *Ημερολόγιο*, 563-65, 572-73.

118. PRO/FO 371/43691 R 12991: Boxshall to Laskey, EGB/GR/7721, August 19, 1944; also 371/43692 R 14558: Boxshall to Laskey, EGB/GR/7785, September 1, 1944; also R 14558: Boxshall to Laskey, EGB/GR/7842, September 11, 1944 and R 14558: Boxshall to Laskey, EGB/GR/7898, September 23, 1944.

119. Thanas, *Ημερολόγιο*, 574-75. In the next time Zervas was under British pressure to take action against the German troops. *Ibid.*, 589.

120. BA-MA RH 19VII/31: Okdo.H.Gr.E röm. 1a 6396 geh., 8.7.1944. BA-MA RH 19VII/31: Ic, 13.7.1944.

121. BA-MA RH 19VII/31: Okdo.H.Gr.E röm 1a 8049 gKdos., 20.8.1944.

122. Thanas, *Ημερολόγιο*, 595-96.

Communist groups (inclusive the collaborationist forces) and, more important, he should break with the Allies.¹²³ In contrast, Zervas asked for German permission to establish a military EDES organization to enter into Macedonia and to crush ELAS, which cooperated with “Russians, Bulgarians and Tito.” The members of the “Security Battalions” –i.e., the local anti-Communist militia of EES– should join EDES, and EDES should take control of the Halkidiki peninsula. With Halkidiki as a military base, EDES’ units could fight against ELAS and the Bulgarian Army in northern Greece. Perhaps they could achieve to enter into Bulgarian territory. Zervas also underlined the fact that he could not openly cooperate with the German troops in Macedonia.¹²⁴ The goal of his proposals was not to cover the German withdrawal from Greece, but to extend his own operation zone from Epirus to Thrace. Zervas did not want to see northern Greece falling into ELAS’ hands. According to bourgeois and conservative circles, KKE was planning to proclaim –with Tito’s help– an independent Macedonian state.¹²⁵

The discussions between Zervas and Lanz took place at a time when Bulgaria changed sides and France was in the hand of the western allies. The end of the German occupation was a matter of time. Because of that, the German Army had to cancel “Operation Verrat” against EDES. The liberation found Zervas’ guerrilla army controlling the main part of Epirus. At the same time Zervas’ *capetani* started military operations against the collaborationist militia of

123. Hondros, *Occupation*, 197.

124. BA-MA RH 19VII/31: Anlage zu FA Kdo. 311 Br. B. Nr. 391/44 gKdos., “Vorschläge des Generals Servas an die deutsche Truppenführung betr. Aktion der EDES im mazedonischen Raum,” 27.9.1944.

125. On this issue, see Christophorou A. Naltsa, *Το Μακεδονικό Ζήτημα και η Σοβιετική Πολιτική* (Thessaloniki: Society for Macedonian Studies, 1954).

the Chams that led to the expulsion of the Albanian-speaking minority.¹²⁶ In spite of Zervas' orders to respect lives and property of the Chams, many acts of violence were followed.¹²⁷

Conclusion

There is no doubt that Mihailović and Zervas had started as sincerely patriotic resistance leaders. Cooperation with Axis did not belong to their original strategy. But gradually the Communist-led Partisans became a more dangerous enemy than the occupation forces. Communism was understood as a major threat for the bourgeois future and the pro-Western orientation of Yugoslavia and Greece. Both of them were regarded by the Communists as typical representatives of the "reactionary old regime." Unlike Pavelić Mihailović was neither an ally of the Germans, nor a friend of National Socialism. The same is to be said about Zervas. Both leaders did not act within the framework of the *New Order* – like Nedić, Ljotić or Rallis. But Mihailović did not succeed to achieve control of the Chetnik movement and came into conflict with the British policy. Zervas was able to maintain the control over EDES and to avoid a conflict with the British. His military cooperation with the BLOs was a successful one.

The fate of both men was decided to a great extent in London. London abandoned Mihailović but it supported Zervas. Serbia became a part of Tito's "Federal Yugoslavia," while Greece remained under British influence. Mihailović was arrested in eastern Bosnia in March 1946 and brought to trial in Belgrade. He was found guilty of 'high treason' and was executed on July 18, 1946. Zervas was luckier. He made a short political career as founder of the right-wing *National Party of Greece* and became in 1947 Minister of Public Order. He served again as Minister of Public Works in 1950/51.

126. For further details, see James Pettifer, *Woodhouse, Zervas and the Chams* (Tirana: Onufri, 2010). Also see Ilias G. Skoulidas, "Οι σχέσεις Ελλάδος Αλβανίας," in *Βαλκάνια 1913-2011. Εκατό χρόνια θύελλες και χίμαιρες*, ed. Society for Macedonian Studies (Thessaloniki: Kyriakidis, 2012), 203-23, 218.

127. Thanas, *Ημερολόγιο*, 585-86.

