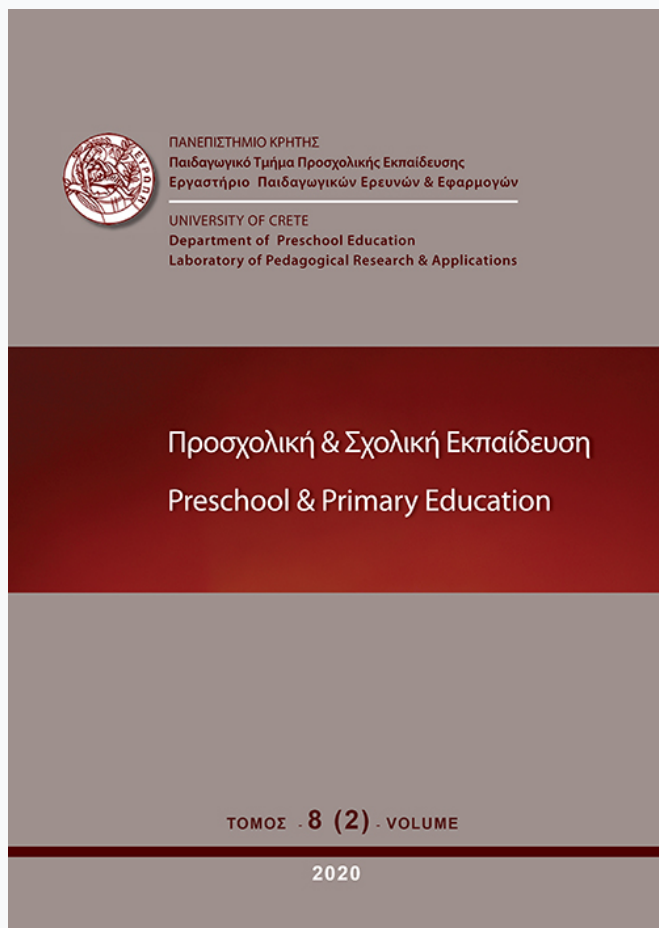


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# Imperialist Planning and Educational-Cultural Policy of the Axis Powers in Greece during World War II

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**Abstract.** This paper examines the policies applied in Greece during World War II by the Axis occupational powers - Germany, Italy, and Bulgaria - in the fields of education and culture. Methodologically the policies concerned are interpreted and better highlighted by presenting (a) the profile of each of the countries involved and their mutual relations with Greece, as they were formed during the time of the development of nation states and their respective nationalisms, and (b) the nationalistic incentives and geopolitical aspirations tracked behind the imperialistic designs of each occupying power. The ultimate goals of the occupiers can be summarized as follows: Dehellenization or expelling the Greek population in Greek territories intended for future annexation to their nation states, degradation of the Greek language and culture, injecting fascism into the political system, and economic exploitation of the country.

**Keywords:** World War II, Imperialism, Nationalism, Greece, Axis occupation, Education and cultural politics

As Châtelet&Pisier-Kouchner (1988) put it, in a view quite prevalent today and associated with a certain 'orthodox' interpretation of Marxism, 'imperialism' is a particular practice of nation-states which, having reached a certain stage, end up, for economic and political reasons, extending their pursuit of sovereignty over the entire world. Both World Wars were the culmination of a race of imperialist rivalries among powerful national states. Smaller national states were forced to choose sides, even when they wanted to remain neutral. During the war, Greece, a small country on the southern tip of the Balkan Peninsula, found itself in a peculiar state of triple occupation - Italian, German, and Bulgarian - with the power of the occupiers imposed on the military, political, economic, cultural, moral, and psychological spheres, among others.

During WWII nationalisms were at their apogee either as militarist and aggressive nationalisms or as defensive/patriotic nationalisms (Hechter, 2000). In their aggressive form they were connected to the imperialistic/hegemonic aspirations some nations had over others. Whole societies were put under violent, massive restrictions and suffered offensive and violent policies targeting the 'national consciousness' of the occupied populations on the grounds that the conquest and occupation of a foreign national state could be viable only if the terms which give a state its national character were lifted. That would require systematic work towards deconstructing the main national features on which the identities of modern nations were based as 'imagined communities' which highlighted certain traits (language, history, traditions, heroes, symbols, and so on) and ignored others (Anderson, 1983)<sup>1</sup>. Thus,

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national languages, national traditions and cultures, national histories, and religious beliefs were at the center of aggressive politics.

The most direct way of attacking such an organized target was the deconstruction of the education systems of the countries under occupation, as the schools and especially the universities were the most conscious champions of nationalism (Hobsbawm, 1977). They were monopolized by the state and played a key role in the construction of the nation, to nation-formation, as well as the consolidation of the “imagined community” of a nation (Anderson, 1983). Through the education systems, the national states managed to create homogeneous societies, to construct national languages instead of local dialects, and national cultural habits instead of regional ones (Lawrence, 2004). Education has been and continues to be the ark of glorious memories of the nation, promoting a common view on national history and organizing the shared collective memory. By being universally standardized formal education contributes heavily – along with the Mass Media – to cultural standardization, an essential feature of nationalism (Gellner, 1997). Because they are a neuralgic feature of the central ideological mechanisms of the modern state (Althusser, 1983) educational systems were of nodal importance to the control and manipulation of public opinion, to the discipline of the occupied and the drastic containment of their resistance. Cultural identity being a distinct aspect of national identity was of high political and economic value (Tomlinson, 1991) for the occupiers, who implemented an imperialistic policy intervening not only in formal education but in the wider area of culture, thus imposing “cultural imperialism” (Tomlinson, 1991).

In this paper the policies designed and implemented in Greece in the areas of education and culture by each of the occupying powers are examined. Their ultimate goal was ‘cultural hegemony’ as a means of gradually disintegrating Greek national identity and replacing it by new identities compatible to their imperialistic pursuits.

To fully understand them, these particular policies are examined in terms of (a) the profile of each of the countries involved – Germany, Italy, and Bulgaria – and their mutual relations with Greece, as they were formed during the time of the development of nation-states and their respective nationalisms, and (b) of the nationalistic motives and geopolitical targets which are traced back to the starting point of the wider imperialistic designs of each occupying power.

## **Educational-Cultural policy: a conceptual framework**

‘Culture’ is considered a difficult term to define. There were several interpretations of the term, which was used in three ways: (a) ‘culture’ as special intellectual or artistic endeavours or products (“high culture” as opposed to “popular culture” or “folkways”), as exemplified in Matthew Arnolds’ *Culture and Anarchy* (1867), (b) ‘culture’ defined with reference to a quality possessed by all people in all social groups, who nevertheless could be arrayed on an evolutionary continuum from “savagery” through “barbarism” to “civilization”, as exposed in Edward Taylors’ *Primitive Culture* (1870), and (c) ‘culture’ as Franz Boas perceived it: without any differentiation between high and low culture, savage or civilized culture (Spencer-Oatey, 2012, p. 1). According to UNESCO (2001) “... culture should be regarded as the set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group, and [that it] encompasses, in addition to art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions, and beliefs.”

“Public policy is the sum of government activities, whether pursued directly or through agents, as those activities have influence on the lives of citizens” (Peters, 1996, p. 4, as cited in Mulcahy, 2006, p. 321). Culture is at the heart of public policy as it defines national identity and personal value. “Cultural policy” can be considered the sum of a government’s activities which would involve support for the arts (performing arts, visual arts, museums),

humanities programs, broadcasting policy (as a means of fostering national bonds, a common language, shared national rituals), institutions, libraries, and archives, for archaeological and historical monuments, and for community celebrations, folklore activities (e.g. music, dancing), etc. All governmental actions (or inactions) in the aforementioned areas constitute choices that are politically determined (Mulcahy, 2006).

In addition to internal (domestic) cultural policy there is also external (foreign) cultural policy (Mitchell, 1986) or, in a more recent terminology, “cultural diplomacy” (as a branch of “public diplomacy”), which is defined by Cummings (2003, p. 1) as the “exchange of ideas, information, art, language and other aspects of culture among nations and their peoples in order to foster mutual understanding”.

In international politics cultural influence abroad is historically associated with political and economic influence. Nation-states, especially the powerful ones, use foreign cultural policy to gain sympathies and/or raise prestige among foreign audiences for their culture, values, and policies, that is as a diplomatic tool for achieving broader foreign policy goals. Since the last decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century “cultural institutes, along with the various related bodies and activities (scholarships, student and academic exchanges, art exhibitions, theatre and concert tours, etc.), have become a standard feature of the official external cultural policy of the great powers, typically under the control of Foreign Affairs Ministries” (Paschalidis, 2009). Especially in the inter-war period international antagonisms led to the institutionalization of external cultural policy which was aligned with the different states’ geopolitical priorities and interests. It was during this period that “cultural nationalism” evolved into “cultural propaganda” (Paschalidis, 2009), a strategic way to conduct a “battle of hearts and minds” and a “war of ideas” (Waller, 2008, p. 16).

Culture and Education are closely interconnected and have historically influenced each other, they “are complex phenomena and their causal relationship is of a ‘chicken or the egg’ character” (Meşeci Giorgetti, Campbell, & Arslan, 2017, p. 1). In the modern era “educational institutions, educators, and educational materials count among the most effective agents of cultural development, change, and perhaps even ‘transfer’” (Meşeci Giorgetti, et al., 2017, p. 2). During the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, governments attempted to use education and schools (education policy) to produce citizens suitable for their states (colonial or national, liberal, socialist or fascist states), as it was believed that cultural and social transformation might be engineered, in major part, through schooling (Meşeci Giorgetti, et al., 2018). Although education is conceived by governments in national rather than international terms, it contains elements, such as the teaching of languages, which constitute a link with other countries (Mitchell, 1986).

## **Greece: From the War of Independence to the Second World War**

After the revolutions of 1848, Europe entered a rapid period in the formation of nations, either through unification processes, as were the cases of Italy and Germany, or through secession processes, as were the cases of the Balkan nations (Hobsbawm, 1996).

Greece was the first of the newly formed Nation-States of Europe to win full sovereignty and international recognition in the nineteenth century after the War of Independence from Ottoman rule (1821-1830) (Beaton and Ricks, 2009: 1). The creation of the Greek state was the result of multiple factors, which were: (a) a long period of the awakening of Greek nationalism, named Modern Greek Enlightenment, (b) the Greek War of Independence, inspired by the French Revolution, (c) the international movement of philhellenism, and (d) the politics of the Great Powers against the declining Ottoman Empire (Beaton and Ricks, 2009).

During the Modern Greek Enlightenment, a new ideology emerged, which pursued the separation of the 'national idea' from universalist Christian orthodoxy and its reunification with classic antiquity, a reunification intensified further through the commitment of the Greeks to classicism during Bavarian rule (Skopetea, 1988). The Modern Greek identity was structured based (a) on the direct connection of Modern Greeks with their glorious ancient ancestors and (b) on their turning to the West, whose 'civilized' nations were considered models to imitate (Skopetea, 1988). This new ideology was spread through a wide network of schools within the Ottoman Empire and the countries of the Danube River Basin, with their Christian Orthodox populations of different nationalities. Thus, Greek education functioned as a means of spreading the ideas of nationalism, as well as of political liberalism in the other Balkan Christian nations (Terzis, 2010).

The Greek nationalist project retained its course even after the founding treaties of 1830 and 1832 in the form of the irredentist dream (called the 'Great Idea') of liberating all Ottoman lands with considerable Greek populations (Epirus, Thessaly, Macedonia, Thrace, Crete, the Aegean islands, Asia Minor) and of reconstituting a state embracing all these lands, with Constantinople as its capital (Clogg, 1992). Greeks dreamed of the prevalence of the Greek element in the East either by rebellion or by means of peace (Skopetea, 1988), in an international framework that grew unfavorable to the materialization of this dream. The more recent circumstances it had to encounter were, first, the emergence of rival Balkan nationalisms – mainly the Serbian and the Bulgarian, which were linked to the movement of Pan-Slavism, a new aspect of Russian geopolitical thought (Dialla, 2009) – and, secondly, the dominance of the doctrine of the territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire. A sufficiently powerful Ottoman Empire in alliance with the West was the only way to stop the descent of Russia to the warm Mediterranean Sea, a geopolitical nightmare for Great Britain (Dosios, 1854).

These new geopolitical conditions required respective displacements with regard to the manner in which Greek national identity was perceived. The revisionist Greek national discourse was held mainly in terms of 'ethnic origins of nations' (ethnic nationalism). Important to this eastern, according to Hans Kohn, perception of identity was the emphasis on the common historical-cultural legacy comprised of shared language, history, traditions, ancestry, and religion (Smith, 1986)<sup>2</sup>. In the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, this national discourse, directed by the University of Athens, redefined the relationship of the Greek nation with its past, embedding in its history the era of Byzantium. Thus, a new identity about Hellenism, the Greek - Christian one, was launched, reconciling the worldly element of Hellenism with the religious one of Christianity while ideologically legitimizing the implementation of Greek irredentist program (Skopetea, 1988).

This shift in the Greek national narrative repositioned Greece in relation to its neighbouring Slavic people in the Balkans. Bulgarians in particular stopped upholding the position of the Orthodox Christian brothers and turned into a hostile other, a proof that "Le nationalisme étant en outre un phénomène historique comme les autres, il a sa propre histoire, ses phases, ses réorientations, ses mutations. Ainsi les rivaux que ses représentants indiquent comme tels ne sont-ils pas toujours les mêmes, mais changent selon les circonstances et la conjoncture socio- et géopolitique" (Koubourlis, 2010, p. 143).

By World War II, the domain of the small kingdom had expanded and included: (a) the Ionian Islands (1864), which were granted to Greece by England – thereafter Greece was tied to the chariot of the British policy and definitively diverged from Russian interests – (b) Thessaly, which was annexed to Greece with the Convention of Constantinople (1881), (c) Epirus, Macedonia, Crete, and the North- Eastern Aegean islands as trophies of the Balkan Wars (1913), and the Western Thrace annexed after World War I with the Treaty of Neuilly (1919). The Dodecanese islands, which belonged to Italy since 1911, were annexed to the Greek state in 1947 (Koliopoulos & Veremis, 2009).

As far as the composition of the population in Greece is concerned, it presented a strong degree of demographic and cultural homogenization (90% Greeks as opposed to 10% Muslims, Slav Macedonians and Vlachs), attributed to the nationalist(ic) practices of the times among which the most painful was the population exchange (between Greece and Bulgaria, Convention of Neuilly, 1919, and between Greece and Turkey, Convention of Lausanne, 1923) (J. R., 1944). The national-cultural others living in the Greek dominion during the first four decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century were either Greek citizens or accepted as such, as is the case with both Jews<sup>3</sup> and Armenians (Damanakis, 2018, p. 102). Others lived in a status of oppression or temporality and that is why they were either exchanged or left on their own accord (for instance Bulgarians, Slav Macedonians, Chams, Muslims) or they acquired official recognition of their status as a minority (Muslims in the Western Thrace).

This implies that in 1940 nation and state almost coincided, a condition that favors the emergence of the phenomenon of patriotism (Hechter, 2000), which in this case was embodied in the spirit of resistance of the Greek population against the occupation powers. In addition, the nationalistic policies of the fascist regime of Ioannis Metaxas (1936-1940) had already contributed to the further homogenization of the Greek population and to the rise of national sentiment (Carabott, 1997).

Fascist Italy invaded Greece in October 1940, but the Italian army was pushed back into Albania, an Italian protectorate at that time. Nazi Germany came on behalf of Mussolini and the Greek army was defeated in a 'Blitzkrieg' operation. By the end of May 1941, the Germans had conquered the whole country. They retained control of the most important strategic areas, including Athens and Thessaloniki. The rest of the country was divided into control zones and given to Germany's allies, Italy and Bulgaria. The Greek government went into exile, and a quisling government was established in the country. After the Italian armistice in September 1943, the Italian zone was taken over by the Germans. Bulgaria evacuated Greek Macedonia after the pro-Soviet coup in the country (9 September 1944). The German troops had withdrawn from mainland Greece by the end of October 1944 (Mazower, 1994).

## **Education in the occupation years – General preview**

The Occupation period was characterized by the indifference of the occupying forces towards the economy of the country, the seizure of all its wealth, the obviolation of export trade, the issuing of new banknotes, the collapse of the monetary system, and the disappearance of food and the appearance of the black market (Mazower, 1994). In the winter of 1941-42 60,000 children died, 130,000 suffered serious damages to their health, 400,000 were orphaned, and 450 showed signs of madness and were committed to the state Asylum (Sakellariou, 1984; Tzika, 2011). School buildings and equipment were destroyed, schools stopped operating, there were shortages in teaching staff and pupils attended schools barely or not at all. Kindergartens closed and primary schools operated occasionally with increasing drop-out rates, secondary education had many shortages and introduced the teaching of the Italian and the German languages at the request of the two occupying powers. Vocational schools stopped functioning. Some schools were established with the initiatives of teachers and local communities in liberated areas of Central Greece, which were controlled by organizations of the resistance, the left-wing National Liberation Front (EAM) and its military arm Greek People's Liberation Army (ELAS), as well as the liberal National Republican Greek League (EDES). These two organizations had prepared complete educational programs which they aspired to implement after the country's liberation. Greek teachers and students massively joined the Greek resistance organizations (Kalantzis, 2002; Filosofou, 2010).

Universities continued to operate with increasing numbers of students since admission examinations were abolished (Bali, 2014). The occupying authorities did not concern themselves with the operation and the internal issues of Greek higher education. Their only concern was upholding order and taking measures every time students revolted (Bali, 2014). The two universities of the country, in Athens and in Thessaloniki, had their buildings and equipment commandeered, and their laboratories and research infrastructure were looted and destroyed. The quisling government would intervene, fire professors, and abolish departments while there were no provisions for students (Bali, 2014).

### **Bulgaria: From the Rum millet to the antagonistic and revisionist nationalism**

The historical course of the Greek state and Greek nationalism cannot be examined outside the geopolitical framework: that is, the Balkan Peninsula and the remainder of the Balkan nationalisms (Mazower, 2000). The Balkan Peninsula, also known as Europe's 'powder keg', is an ethnographic map that shows "that Balkan ethnography is as complex as Balkan terrain" (Stavrianos, 1958, p.8). The Balkan peoples cohabitated for centuries within great empires, the Roman, the Byzantine, the Ottoman, the Habsburg. Their histories are bound to the particular importance of the geographical position of the Balkans, which until today has turned the peninsula into an object of conflict among powerful countries (Prevelakis, 2009). As Kitromilides (1990, p. 149) stated "The explosiveness of regional politics was due to the interplay of great-power imperialisms with the conflicting claims and aspirations of the region's nationalities."

Religion was the glue that kept the fragmented and heterogeneous Ottoman Balkan area united. The classification of populations in the Ottoman Empire was based on pre-national religious categories, called 'millets'. The Orthodox Christian populations belonged to the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople and were socio-politically organized in the form of the Rum Millet. The position of the Greek language and Greek culture/civilization in the framework of the Rum Millet was prominent, as the leadership of the Patriarchate of Constantinople was ethnically Greek or Hellenized in the Eastern Roman tradition (Vovchenko, 2016). As reported by Roudometof (1998, p. 18) "By making all 'Romans' (i.e., formerly Orthodox subjects of the Byzantine Empire) members of the Ottoman Rum millet, the Ottomans officially sanctioned the Orthodox Church's universalism, thus facilitating the legitimation of Grecophone ecclesiastical elites over the Balkan ethnies. "Belonging to this Orthodox commonwealth became more important to the common people than their ethnic origins (Castellan, 1991).

From the millet system there was a transition to ethnic groups and then gradually to ethnic nations. In a pre-national(ist) Balkan society purely ethnic identities did not exist. Ethnic affiliation did not have the same weight it acquired during the 19<sup>th</sup> century National Revival period (Detrez, 2010). There was not any serious ideological antagonism among the Balkan intelligentsia during the Enlightenment period. The intense ethnic and national rivalries among the Balkan peoples are a phenomenon that emerged during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Prior to this period "within Balkan society, class and ethnic lines overlapped to such an extent that Hellenism became a form of 'cultural capital' (Bourdieu, 1984) offering access to circles of wealth and prestige. Hellenization implied the acquisition of such capital and its associated benefits" (Roudometof, 1998, p. 23). Leading personalities of other Balkan nationalisms, such as the Bulgarian and the Romanian, had attended the greatest Greek educational institutions of the time (Chani-Moysidou, 2007). After the war in Crimea, Greeks were no longer considered the dominant Christian nation in the Balkans. Balkan peoples entered a process of national formation, for which it was necessary for them to be estranged from Greek nationalism, which blazed the trail.

The revival of ties with the Bulgarian medieval historical past, both with the First Bulgarian Empire (681-971) and the Second one (1185-1393), was at the core of the Bulgarian national awakening. Under the protection of Russia<sup>4</sup>, the preliminary Treaty of San Stefano (March 1878) provided for an enlarged Bulgaria – a visionary revival of the Second Bulgarian Empire – with direct access to the Aegean and the Mediterranean Sea (Hörsch, 1972; Katsovska-Maligudi, 2004). The Treaty of San Stefano, although it was never upheld, as it was superseded by the Treaty of Berlin (June 1878) which gave birth to an autonomous Bulgarian state (Principality of Bulgaria) after five centuries of Ottoman rule, “created the ideal of an extended Bulgarian state that would include all Bulgarians” (Patronidou, 2011, p. 41). A Bulgarian National Revival would require political irredentist fighting against the occupying Ottomans, as well as clashing with the cultural hegemony of Greeks in the Balkans (Katsovska-Maligudi, 2004; Vermeulen, 1984). Greeks and Bulgarians had to fight to win over populations of undecided national consciousness in highly mixed regions such as Macedonia and Thrace (Iliadou-Tachou, 2006; Vouri, 1992).

In the Greek and Bulgarian nationalisms, language and religion became the core of national identity. While it was easy to distinguish between the languages, their common base of Orthodox Christianity caused problems. To resolve them, they chose to create independent church structures. Greece was first in 1833, when it declared autocephaly of the Greek Church, and Bulgaria followed with the proclamation of the Bulgarian Exarchate in 1870, which expressed political nationalistic rhetoric as well. The situation is clearly described by Lora Gerd (2014, p. 70): “The peculiarity of Balkan nationalism was its close connection with the church hierarchy. The religiously-oriented millet system as the only legitimate form of autonomy in the Ottoman Empire provided the groundwork for political independence; church organization and church autonomy served as a model of future political organization. In this process the Bulgarians had two major opponents—the Greek Patriarchate of Constantinople and the Ottoman government. The nationalist movement, ecclesiastical in its form, was purely national and political in its content. Orthodoxy was used by the Bulgarian political elite as a means to gain other pragmatic goals”.

With the foundation of the Bulgarian Exarchate, a long period of national conflicts and hostilities between the Orthodox inhabitants of Macedonia and thus the violent claiming of the disputed lands and populations began (Katsovska-Maligudi, 2004). Large-scale violence was a common phenomenon in the early twentieth century and was adopted by Bulgaria around 1898 in an attempt to gain quick control over Christian communities in Macedonia and to accelerate the long-expected annexation procedure. The Greeks reacted actively only five years later and guerrilla war soon escalated (Gounaris, 1996). “‘Hellenization’ or ‘Bulgarization’ came to depend more or less exclusively upon the establishment of national churches, the foundation of national schools and the propagation of the respective national cultures” (Papadakis, 2006, p. 15). The Exarchate and education played a neuralgic role. Through education, populations could be claimed for the one or the other side. Whole villages could change “from being Greek to Bulgarian or vice versa depending on which side offered free or cheap education” (Vermeulen, 1984, p. 240).

In 1908 the Bulgarian government declared the complete independence of Bulgaria from the Sublime Porte. Its monarch was the Char of the Bulgarians and the country became a kingdom (Katsovska-Maligudi, 2004). In the years following independence, Bulgaria increasingly militarized and was often referred to as “the Balkan Prussia” (Korantis, 1968, p. 119). In the First Balkan War, it allied with the other Orthodox countries of the Balkans against the Ottoman Empire. However, in the Second Balkan War, it turned against its erstwhile allies, among whom was Greece, in an armed confrontation. During this war, Eastern Macedonia (1912-1913) was for the first time seized by Bulgarian powers (First Bulgarian Occupation). A Second Bulgarian Occupation followed during World War I (1916-1918), when the Bulgarians,



as German allies, occupied the area bloodlessly, without any war conflict between Greece and Bulgaria (Kotzageorgi-Zymari, 2002).

During WWII, even though initially it declared its neutrality, the almost complete financial dependence of Bulgaria on Germany and the promise of the Axis powers to satisfy its land demands on Macedonia and Thrace and an outlet to the Aegean Sea led the country to ally with them (Katsovska-Maligudi, 2004; Stefanidis, 1993). Indeed, after Greece was militarily occupied, the area from the river Strimona to the river Evros, together with the islands of Thasos and Samothrace were annexed to Bulgaria (apart from  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the prefecture of Evros with the strategically important city of Alexandroupolis) (Era of the Third Bulgarian Occupation). At that time, they were administratively (politically and militarily) assigned to the Bulgarian “periphery of the White Sea’ or ‘of Aegean’ (Belomorie) while the Bulgarians propagated that they were ‘liberated Bulgarian territories’ and prepared their permanent annexation (Hadjianastasiou, 1998)<sup>5</sup>. After the Italian capitulation (1943), the Bulgarian occupation expanded to the west and included areas of Central and West Macedonia except for the city of Thessaloniki (Fleischer, 1986a).

### **The Bulgarian policy on education and culture issues**

All three eras of Bulgarian occupation were characterized by particular violence against Greek populations (starvation, exile, torments, looting, commandeering, rapes, child abductions), which sought to reduce any trace of anything Greek in the lands under occupation and their definite annexation to Bulgaria (Roudometof, 2007).

Soon after the illegal annexation of Greek lands to Bulgaria with the lenience of the Nazis (Kotzageorgi-Zymari, 2002), the representatives of the Greek state were deported and Bulgarians were appointed in their place (Stefanidis, 1992). A line of new political, economic, social, and educational measures against Greek citizens was implemented. What was prioritized was the violent Bulgarization of the national institutions of education, the Church and the economy in these “newly liberated” regions (Petrov, 2007). Educators, civil and municipal servants, scientists, traders, industrialists, high-ranking clergy, that is the Greek élite, were among the first victims of Bulgarian aggression, “in order that the remaining population be left without leaders and people who could strengthen their morale” (Kotzageorgi, 2017, p. 135).

During the third occupation, Greeks found themselves encountering an aggressive expansionism that claimed the restoration of the national unity of Bulgaria. Violence made dozens of thousands of them seek refuge in neighbouring areas occupied by the Germans (Fleischer, 1986a; Iliadou-Tachou, 2017)<sup>6</sup>. At the same time, the Bulgarian population increased through settlement policy (colonization) (Kotzageorgi, 2019).

The Bulgarians practiced a nearly uniform educational policy in the Belomorie and in Bulgaria, both taken together as a ‘unified’ national territory (Patronidou, 2011). They established new administrative-educational boards and incorporated the Greek region’s education into the Bulgarian educational system. Greek schools were shut down and replaced by Bulgarian, Greek teachers were deported and the use of the Bulgarian language in all public services, Church and education was imposed, indicating a clear policy of assimilation. Even names had to be Bulgariazed (Kotzageorgi-Zymari, 2001; Patronidou, 2011).

The Bulgarian education policy addressed what they believed to be ‘Bulgarian’ pupil force, that is, the children of Bulgarian settlers, of Pomaks, of Slav speaking people and of mixed marriages. Free meals were given to the students of Bulgarian schools, which tempted Greek students to attend them (Kotzageorgi-Zymari, 2001). As Greek students – mainly the older ones – and their parents reacted against the Bulgarian nationalistic propaganda, it was decided to leave Greek children out of the provision of the Bulgarian Ministry of Education

(Kotzageorgi-Zymari, 2001). An exception was made for Greek children in the earlier grades of elementary schools as they were more prone to learn the language (Kotzageorgi-Zymari, 2001). Letting thousands of children especially in smaller cities and in the villages without basic education was a new tool for ethnic cleansing (Patronidou, 2011)<sup>7</sup>.

The Bulgarian education policy was nationalistic, propagandistic and assimilative. It aimed at shrinking the Greek language and culture (Kotzageorgi-Zymari, 2001). Emphasis was given to the lessons of literature, history, geography, music, and gymnastics. Pupils who were not Bulgarian native speakers had a hard time attending classes in Bulgarian. The Bulgarian national identity was cultivated in pupils with songs, festivals, and parades. They had to sing the Bulgarian national anthem and the anthem of King Boris III every morning, and they were even taught that Alexander the Great was Bulgarian (Kotzageorgi-Zymari, 2001).

Measures were taken to record folk songs which, according to the Bulgarians, were in danger of being altered by the long Serbian, Greek and Romanian occupation and influence. The contents of literature were rigorously scrutinized, and "leftist, betrayal and anti-religious tendencies" persecuted (Patronidou, 2011, p. 175). The Bulgarians took teaching resources and equipment from the Greek schools and insisted on locating religious books and encyclopaedias and transferring them to Bulgaria. Their violent and aggressive policy paid off as far as the rapid increase of the number of Bulgarian schools, pupils and teachers is concerned during this short time of occupation (Patronidou, 2011).

Even the illiterate adult 'Bulgarians' who had been Hellenized, according to the occupation regime, were requested to participate in the education process. Bulgarian teachers undertook, as part of their sociocultural activity, the organization of educational clubs, evening schools, folk universities, theatrical groups, and choirs (Patronidou, 2011). Pleasant and direct learning methods influenced by the progressive education movement were used to teach the Bulgarian language and to promote the Bulgarian culture (Patronidou, 2011). These methods included: folk songs and tales, newspaper articles, pictures and sketches, theatrical plays, cinema films, instructions for farming, animal husbandry, financial issues, house visits to offer help in farming chores by teachers (with salary subsidy), seminars on issues of farming production, etc. They also organized evening classes in Bulgarian history, geography, and culture for employed adults or pioneered the erection of monuments in honor of heroes sacrificed for the Bulgarian idea (Patronidou, 2011).

The minority schools in their jurisdiction, both Muslim and Armenian, continued to operate as such. Both minorities were considered friendly to England so the ulterior motive was to assimilate them through education (Patronidou, 2011). The Pomakoi children obligatorily attended Bulgarian schools (Kotzageorgi-Zymari, 2001).

From the onset, the Bulgarian occupation authorities aimed at exercising a cultural and through it a political influence on Thessaloniki, where they founded the "Bulgarian Club of Thessaloniki" and planned the operation of a Bulgarian School. These plans were overturned by the action of a group of Greek educators. The establishment of a Bulgarian university at Thessaloniki was also included in the Bulgarian plans, which did not succeed (Fleischer, 1995).

## **Italy and Germany: From the Unification Nationalisms to the Fascist Regime and the Third Reich**

Italian and German nationalism are the best-known examples of unification nationalisms (Breuilly & Speirs, 2005). They structured the respective countries at a later stage – in the 1860s and 1870s respectively – in relation to their main rival European nationalisms, the British and the French, which at the time were increasing their power through their colonies. The depletion of possibilities of colonial expansion led to conflicts being transferred

to Europe. Nationalisms were present in all the nation-states participating in these conflicts, and developed into delusional imperialistic nationalisms in Mussolini's Italy and Hitler's Germany, although this does not mean that the imperialist nation-state was an exception in eighteenth and nineteenth-century Europe. It was rather the rule (Antonsich, 2009).

Italian nationalism was also irredentist, as the Italian nation-state creators believed that certain territories lying outside their nation-state were defined as 'naturally' – culturally and ethnically – belonging to 'their' state. An initially moderate irredentism, which claimed areas where the Italians were a majority, was changed into an aggressive one after World War I under the influence of fascism. It claimed lands where the Italians were either a minority or which the Italians had colonized in the past. Extreme ideological constructs led to 'nation worship' and the messianic imperialistic visions of Mussolini's fascism (Chabot, 2007).

German nationalism was based on the constructs of the 'nation,' the 'people' (Volk), and the 'race' (Rasse). It was a paradigmatic case of ethnic nationalism. These concepts, although present since its beginnings, gradually acquired absolute contents and in the last decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century evolved into the phenomenon of radical nationalism (radikaler Nationalismus), which was characterized as a disease of nationalism ("Krankheit des Nationalismus") by the German historian Friedrich Meinecke as early as 1914. The initial patriotic – according to Meinecke – German nationalism was derailed into an expansionist nationalism, which led to World War I and evolved into a totalitarian national socialism (Walkenhorst, 2007).

Nation – people – race, blood, and land, living space (Lebensraum) were constructs that supported the edifice of national-socialism<sup>8</sup>, with top emphasis being given to the status of the leader, here too as in fascism (Führerprinzip) (Vandoros, 2015). A supreme value of German nationalism was race, which was considered identical to nation and defined by a mythic sense of 'German blood' whose purity must be saved at any cost. The state was an instrument at the hands of national / ethnic racism. Its purpose within the country was to protect the principle of eugenics and of living space even with war. Out of the country, it was "a state that, in an era of defilement of races, awakes with zeal to retain the best of its own, should one day be the ruler of the Earth" (Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, as cited in Chabot, 2007, p. 83).

Before World War I, Italy and Germany founded educational and cultural institutions targeting mainly their compatriots, both those of ethnic communities outside their national territory and of émigré communities. Such institutions were the All-German School Association for the preservation of Germanhood Abroad (Allgemeiner Deutscher Schulverein zur Erhaltung des Deutschtums im Auslande, 1881) and the Società Dante Alighieri (1889) (among others in Salonica, Smyrna, Istanbul and Alexandria, that is the major trading ports of the Eastern Mediterranean, "reflecting the prominent role Italian traders and the Italian language itself traditionally held in the commercial life of the region") (Paschalidis, 2009, p. 277). Both countries had to compete with French external cultural policy in the Eastern Mediterranean. The defeat of 1871 and competition with Great Britain for political and economic hegemony in the Middle East and over the territories of the collapsing Ottoman Empire had led France to upgrade its cultural diplomatic mechanism through the establishment of institutes and schools (Alliance Française in 1883, Mission Laïque in 1902, and a network of schools of Catholic missions) with the aim of spreading the French language and culture beyond the borders of the empire (Gross, 2015; Paschalidis, 2009).

Ideas about preferring a 'cultural foreign policy' (implementing a liberal imperialism or 'Weltpolitik', which would focus on commerce as the basis of national power) against war as a means to enhance German influence and prestige abroad ('Auswärtige Kulturpolitik') were championed in Germany even before WWI. Ernst Jäckh underlined the importance of introducing foreign elites to Germany's educational system, especially by building German schools abroad that would attract Turkish, Serbian, and Bulgarian youth as future messengers of German ideas. Cultural historian Karl Lamprecht saw cultural diplomacy as a way to

expand German influence through international scientific, artistic, and intellectual cooperation across the world (Gross, 2015). It was only after WWI that German interest in cultural diplomacy was awoken, motivated by the belief that the defeat of the Reich in the war was the result of the role of the propaganda. The founding of a range of relevant public and private institutions followed (Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst/ German Academic Exchange Service/DAAD, 1925; Deutsche Akademie, 1923, the precursor of Goethe Institute), targeting, however, German-speaking communities abroad. By 1929 the need for external cultural policy became more urgent and the Deutsche Akademie won sufficient state support to promote the German language among foreigners. In 1941 Hitler made it the official institution for helping the German language to “assume its proper place as a world language” (Paschalidis, 2009).

As far as Italy is concerned, in 1926 Mussolini called upon Italian writers to spearhead a ‘spiritual imperialism’ informing the world about the new Italy, as it was shaped by war and the fascist revolution. It was the same year that the state-controlled Istituti Italiani di Cultura along with the Dante Alighieri Societies turned into centres for the spread of fascist propaganda (Paschalidis, 2009). Italy, like Germany, sought support from its compatriots abroad to gain political sympathy among potential enemies like the USA or countries of economic and strategic interest, like those of Southeastern Europe.

### **The imperialistic-fascist vision of Mussolini’s Italy and its promotion through education and culture in occupied Greece**

The key pillars of the fascist political system were the party, the state and the leader in their absolute authoritarian expression (Gentile, 2007). Between 1939 and 1942 the Italian political élite and the fascist party envisioned a world organized according to the requirements of the ‘new European order of things’, which would be realized by conquering ‘the vital space’ and the completion of the fascist revolution (Antonsich, 2009; Atkinson, 1995).

Three concentric circles, classified on racial criteria, comprised the ideal geopolitical community of fascism, a revitalization of the Roman Empire, a New Mediterranean Order (Rodogno, 2006). The smallest circle, the cultural core of the empire, would include the Italian Peninsula and the other zones that would have to be annexed to the kingdom, amongst which were the Greek Ionian Islands (nationalities of Italian race) (Rodogno, 2006). The political status quo planned was the participation in the leader-nation’s power through assimilation following denationalization and fascistization and the possibility of a special administrative order. In the same circle but with a different political status, one of limited independence or direct domination, with possible annexation to the empire and a *status civitatis* on the Dodecanese pattern, the Greek lands of Crete, Sporades and Cyclades would also be included (Rodogno, 2006).

The ‘European members’ of this empire, i.e. Spain and France, and other states that would be created due to the necessary fragmentation of countries, such as Yugoslavia and Greece, would be included in the second circle. Epirus and Pindus were to be part of this circle and of the Greater Albania (Europoid race). The envisaged political status was characterized by controlled independence and the possibility of becoming a constitutionally integral part of the leader-nation. The rest of Greece together with Bulgaria, Romania, and Hungary (the Slavic and the Hellenic race) were also included in this circle under a special economic relationship, but with links to Rome varying according to degree of civilization. Countries with which Rome had forged political and economic ties and were to be given political independence but not economic (Turkey, Egypt, Middle East, communities considered ‘inferior’ by race, language and religion, but with a nationality) were placed between the second and the third circle (Rodogno, 2006).

The third circle included the African colonies (with land expansions) whose political existence would be inferior to that of the other members due to the 'racial inferiority' of their inhabitants (communities 'inferior' by race, language and religion, but without nationality). Jews were included in this category. As Sertoli Salis wrote: "... they [the Jews] must be distant from our [sic] Mediterranean" (Rodogno, 2006, p. 417-418).

Based on this vision, the Italian fascist government shaped its policy on education and culture for all the lands it occupied during the war, including Greek areas. The Italians were very interested in the Greek islands since they were related to memories of Venetian domination and since a small portion of their population belonged to the Roman Catholic Church. They already had experience with dealing with Greek populations since 1911, when they annexed the Dodecanese, inhabited mainly by Greeks (Rodogno, 2006).

Italianization projects were not something new. Since its foundation, the Italian state considered Greece and Greek nationalism as obstacles to its Balkan and Mediterranean policy. In its politics against Greece, Italy had already attempted in the 19<sup>th</sup> century to attract rivals of Greek nationalism, i.e. the Albanians and the Romanians, thus cultivating a sense of irredentism in minorities of the Greek dominion. These also included the Chams<sup>9</sup> (an Albanian speaking Muslim minority in Epirus) and the Vlachs (Latin speaking Romanian minority), both of which cooperated with the occupying powers during World War II. The aim was the dismemberment of the Greek state so that it would not become an obstacle to the Italian designs. The ultimate goal was the annexation of these lands to the Italian state (Alexiadis, 1982).

From April 1941 until September 1943 the Italians occupied the largest parts of Central Greece and of the islands, whose administration was bestowed to them after the German invasion. Through systematic attempts they promoted Italianization of varying degrees and in different ways.

Italians were obsessed with the issue of promoting knowledge of the Italian, which was considered a key element for the Italianization of the Greek population as well as for the creation of a fascist spirit (Rodogno, 2006). In Crete, where Italians occupied the easternmost prefecture of Lasithi, whilst the rest of the island was occupied by the Germans, the Dante Alighieri Commission of Rhodes made Italian language teaching compulsory. Among other activities, adult classes and courses were organized. They also had schoolchildren sing the "Inno dei Popoli Mediterranei," which the poet Elefteriou [Lefteris] Alexiou composed on the tune of the Greek national anthem (Rodogno, 2009). The school mechanism, as well as other out-of-school cultural fields, such as radio stations, bookstores, libraries, museums, cinemas, became the ultimate expression of fascist culture<sup>10</sup> and were put to the service of the fascist regime. The military authorities in all occupied areas worked closely with the National Fascist Party to develop a fascist cultural programme (Kagioglou, 2014; Tsirpanlis, 1987).

Italian education policy was based on already existing educational and cultural structures, which had functioned in Greece since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, in large cities (Athens, Thessaloniki) as well as in smaller urban centres (Patra, Kavalla, Alexandroupoli, Heraklion, Ioannina, Preveza), the Ionian Islands (e.g. Corfu, Kefallinia, Zakynthos), the islands of East Aegean (Samos, Lesbos), as well as the Dodecanese. The Italian schools and cultural centres not only served the needs of the Italian populations in Greece, but functioned as agencies of 'cultural imperialism' (Antoniou, 2011; Kagioglou, 2014; Tsirpanlis, 1987). For example, in Patra, Catholic schools were considered the best. They were funded by the Italian state and their enriched curricula, their strict structure and organization, and their impressive facilities, compared to the Greek ones, attracted the offspring of rich Christian Orthodox families. That caused Greek education and Church circles to protest against the propaganda for the promotion of the Catholic dogma and later of the fascist ideology<sup>11</sup> through these schools (Philosofou, 2010). This propaganda used better rewards for Italian-speaking teachers, the holidays in Italy for the pupils of the Italian schools, scholarships for those who attained the

identity of the fascist, free meals, school uniforms, and resources as incentives (Margari, 2011; Filosofofou, 2010).

During the occupation, Italian propaganda, through articles in the newspapers and books, aimed at capitalizing on other issues: the long term Greek-Italian relationships, based on historical, archaeological and literary evidence, and the undermining of the Greek- English relationship by projecting the political and cultural exploitation of Greece by England (the sale of Parga, the archaeological treasures such as the Elgin Marbles, the use of the money of the Greeks in the Ionian Islands to make grand monuments, harbouring of guerrillas in Greece) (Margari, 2011; Tsirpanlis, 1987).

Italian propaganda, controlled by the Ministry of Popular Culture (Ministero della Cultura Popolare)<sup>12</sup>, presented the conquerors as continuators of the acculturation work of Venice in the Ionian Islands, which were meant to be annexed to Italy through a systematic and intensive attempt to dehellenize the populations linguistically and culturally (Kontostanos, 1949). It also found historical continuity in the Cyclades, where the presence of the Roman Catholic Church, a holdover of the Venetian and French past of these islands, was another alibi legitimizing occupation (Lecoeur, 2013). Similar actions were observed in other places under Italian rule, such as Epirus (with the Chams) (Voglis, 2010), Thessaly (by stirring up the issue of the Vlachs<sup>13</sup>) (Tanampasi, 2017) and the Dodecanese which were also intended for permanent annexation (Kirkis, 2004; Papadopoulos, 2011; Tsirpanlis, 2007). Italy aspired to annex the Ionian Islands and the Dodecanese even before the fascist regime. The relevant propaganda was organized through schools managed by Roman Catholic monk orders whose primary target was to teach the Italian language and to instil Italian customs into the daily routine of the people (Antoniou, 2011; Konomos, 1962).

In the towns and villages of the Ionian Islands (as well as in the Dodecanese) the Italians organized fascist celebrations and instilled fascist habits (such as Fascist Saturday), organized cultural festivities (theatrical plays, concerts, films), issued fascist publications (and forbade the circulation of others), built utilities and public buildings, operated a radio station, which they controlled to transmit fully inspected messages, and forbade listening to other radio stations. They propagated that the 'Ionian race', to which the people of the Ionian Islands belonged, was not identical to the Greek one and that this identification was the result of English propaganda which attributed Greek character to the islands and led to their annexation to Greece in 1864 (Margari, 2011). They used arguments of common racial ancestry and history to create a common historical narrative between the Ionian people and the Italians, to build a desirable common identity and change the national consciousness of the islanders (Margari, 2011).

The Greek flag and its rituals, the Greek national anthem and state ceremonials were also under attack, as a set of symbols and beliefs of the Greek national identity (Manolakou, 1985; Filosofofou, 2010). On the contrary, Germans, who didn't seek the Germanization of the Greek population, considered that all means that would reinforce the national sentiment of the Greeks were rightful as a prerequisite for combating the communist threat (Philosofofou, 2010).

The education policy of the Italians was arbitrarily exercised without any cooperation with the Greek Ministry of Education during the occupation (Philosofofou, 2010). They attempted to control the organization, the management, the personnel, and the contents of education by appointing their own supervisory authorities. Initially, they attempted to corrupt the educational community with benefits and a friendly approach (Margari, 2011), but then gradually their attitude got harder, with pressures and persecutions exerted on teachers and pupils who could not be bought (Margari, 2011). They appointed Italians to be principals of high schools and teachers, they replaced the pictures of Greek heroes in Greek schools with those of Mussolini, the Italian king, and Italian fascists as well as with fascist slogans ("Vinceremo", "Salute romanamente"), they imposed the Italian salute in and out of school, a

fascist almanac abolishing the Greek one, and they obliged pupils and teachers to parade in central streets singing Italian marches (Margari, 2011). They modified the curricula and the teaching materials and adjusted them to the Italian fascist models. They limited the teaching of ancient Greek (censorship forbade the teaching of Pericles' Epitaph) and of history and replaced them with classes in Italian and Latin (Margari, 2011). They particularly provided for preschool children for whom they implemented a fascist education filled with propaganda (Philosofou, 2010). They founded coastal stations (*colonia marina*) for the entertainment of poor pupils aged 8-12, camps for children, baby nests, where a fascist education full of propaganda was provided along with the raising of the Italian (Philosofou, 2010). At the end of each school year, they organized school celebrations with exhibitions of craftworks and play performances, poetry recitations, speeches, and songs in Italian with a Roman salute (Margari, 2011).

In general, the Italians fought anything that connected Greek education with the Greek national ideology. They had followed the same policy in the Dodecanese (Gkikas, 1982), where they removed school supervision from the local churches, appointed an Italian supervisor and subsidized only the schools that had modified their program and their teaching to the Italian standards, had increased the hours of teaching Italian, had taught only Italian history, and whose teachers were obliged to learn Italian. In 1937, they abolished the teaching of the Greek language in primary schools, maps of Greece, Greek publications, and the possession of the Greek flag and were frustrated with the number of Dodecanese students studying in Greek universities (Kirkis, 2004). Sunday schools played a big part in this harsh era by secretly operating as Greek language learning centres. Greek pupils were pushed out of Greek schools and into the Italian ones for financial and cultural reasons<sup>14</sup>, while they were given the opportunity to study at Italian universities with promises of future professional progress (Kirkis, 2004).

The architectural work in terms of buildings and town planning as well as spatial interventions and designs during the era of Italian occupation at the Dodecanese is also impressive and was presented as an indication of the superiority of Italian culture (Kolonas, 2002). The same intention can be ascribed to the foundation of the "Ionian School of Fine Arts" in Corfu in December 1942 (Kontostanos, 1949).

### **German orientation to cultural hegemony: The Greek case**

From the beginning of Nazi control, Germany prioritized the exercise of a cultural policy. Its systematization and intensification, which before the war aimed at advertising and internationally recognizing the new status quo, as well as at neutralizing the English and French cultural policies, can be attributed to the Third Reich. With the institution of cultural exchanges, the Reich paved the way for financial and political penetration of the countries that it was interested in obtaining footholds. The cultural policy of Germany developed around the following axes: disseminating the German language (Koutsoukou, 2008a; 2008b), cultivating scientific relations with other nations (Zarifi, 2010) and promoting German cultural production, mainly of music, cinema<sup>15</sup> and theatre, as well as of advances in archaeology (Kalogerakis, 2017; Schultheiß & Chrysos, 2010). During the governance of Metaxa its ideological connection with the regime elicited intense German interest as far as the cultivation of cultural relations and exchanges were concerned, even though no positive results have been recorded. In occupied Greece the Germans produced a plethora of Nazis publications and organized concerts of German music (Zafiri, 2010).

During the occupation, the attitude of the German conquerors towards Greece and the Greeks fluctuated from worship to racist assault (Thanopoulos, 1987). The initial expression of admiration for the victories of the Greeks against the Italians and the favourable and



tolerant attitude toward the Greek population so as to earn their sympathy were replaced with the adoption and implementation of repressive mechanisms and harsh retaliation when the Germans were affected by the actions of resistance organizations (Philosofou, 2010). 19th-century theoretical weapons were drawn and instilled in officials and soldiers so they would not hesitate to turn against the Greeks. Theories of culture and blood were employed. Invoking J. P. Fallmerayer's theory, Greeks were presented as culturally inferior and racially degenerated due to their mixing with Slavs (Fleischer, 1986b).

Any documented attitude of the Germans tolerant to issues of national consciousness of the Greeks can be attributed to two factors. On the one hand, to the fact that their interest in the country only concerned their imperialistic target of its economic exploitation and its strategically significant geographical position. On the other, to the fact that the German attitude sabotaged the plans of the Italians to create an Italian protectorate in Greece. However, German policy was opposed to the idea of dehellinization and of the annexation of Greek lands to Italy or to Bulgaria but not to the occupation of the country and its exploitation in general (Fleischer, 1986a).

What was also promoted by German propaganda was the ideological form of 'country, religion, family'<sup>16</sup> as a counterweight to communism (Kalogerakis, 2017, p. 304, 271). The peril of communism was often employed to justify atrocious acts and executions and to force teachers to assume specific duties as 'enlighteners' of the people (Kalogerakis, 2017, p. 503):

"The teachers, under the orders of the German Commanders and with the contribution of the Primary School Inspectors ... are obliged to participate in the German plans... They participate in all committees (Provisioning, Agricultural Mobilization, Political Enlightenment, Economic Mobilization, Hard Labor, Grain Tax Collection, Charities, Loan Raise, Fund Raising, Food Distribution, Agricultural and Economic Mobilization, etc.). They participate in Community meetings where they are called to enlighten the village residents on matters of sabotage, mandatory work, and the risk of "Bolshevism and Communism." ... The teachers are also committed to enlighten population on matters of the surrender of firearms, prompting citizens to preserve sanitary conditions ..., providing for the preservation of peace in the prefecture (accusing the men of the National Resistance of the various sabotage made), collecting and bringing in the fines imposed by the occupation forces, supervising archaeological excavations by German archaeologists-antiquity smugglers..."

The actions of arrogant German cultural policy unfolded in occupied Greece. These actions accompanied a mythical Nazis narrative that the land belongs to the real heirs of Greek antiquity – not the indigenous population, but the German people<sup>17</sup>, – who were to undertake the work of civilizing the inferior Greeks and to assume cultural hegemony over the whole European continent, which would mean the displacement of English and French hegemonies. Foundations such as the German Archaeological Institute, the German Academy, and the team 'Sonderstab Athos'<sup>18</sup> became centres of cultivating a mono-cultural German propaganda "downgrading the work of cultural diplomacy to a neo-colonization mechanism of power" (Fleischer, 2013, p. 5). This propaganda was exercised more intensively in areas that Nazis Germany targeted to be annexed to its dominion, such as Thessaloniki and Crete, as they were strategic pockets for the German hegemony in Eastern Mediterranean (Müller-Hillebrand, 1941).



## Conclusions – Epilogue

To summarize, education in Greece during the occupation was a victim of military violence, as well as a field of exercising the educational and cultural policies of the occupying powers which had long-term aims. These policies were formed based on geopolitical criteria which were shaped according to imperialisms guided by the extreme nationalisms of the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Italy acted with the intention of spreading its dominance through its imperial-fascist vision. It openly sought to annex Greek territories by Italianizing their inhabitants and by instilling fascist elements into their political consciousness. Behind this policy one can detect the same spirit of the famous expression attributed to the Italian politician of the Risorgimento Massimo d' Azeglio: "We have made Italy. Now we have to make Italians" (Hobsbawm, 1990: 44). The model it used was colonialist and based on the narrative of racial and cultural inequality between the occupied populations and their conquerors. Italy presented its past as superior, connecting it to the Roman Empire and Venetian domination. Bulgaria, a small satellite country, fastened to the German chariot, developed policies of revisionist irredentism with regard to Macedonia and Thrace, which by WWII were orphaned of Slavic and Bulgarian people and whose inhabitants were at that time immigrants from Asia Minor to a large extent. In this sense, the appeal of the deliverance of people of the same nationality concerned only a few of the inhabitants of these areas, which indicates the pretentious and revanchist nature of this particular policy. The mechanism of education was used in a calculating and determined way so as to replace Greek national conscience with a Bulgarian one through the imposition of the Bulgarian language and the help of the Bulgarian Church. Cruelty against Greek populations and the extremely aggressive attempt to Bulgarize them can be characterized as practices of ethnic cleansing.

Germany's intention was the imperialistic exploitation of the advantages of the country and its financial depletion, without ignoring distant geopolitical aspirations for the annexation of Thessaloniki and Crete. It supported Greek nationalism as appropriate, applauding symbolic acts of its reinforcement as a necessary counterbalance to the infiltration of communism in the country, as well as to the geopolitical aspirations of Italy and Bulgaria. Nevertheless, in an overbearing way - as did Italy- and with an obvious sense of cultural supremacy it built a network of institutions which exerted language and cultural propaganda aiming at the Nazi Germany's ideological and cultural sovereignty over the Greek and the European world.

The language issue was at the heart of the battles that took place in the field of education during the occupation years. As language "is a marker of ethnic identity; a vehicle for expressing a distinct culture; a source of national cohesion; and an instrument for building political community" (Safran, 2004, p. 1), all four aspects: ethnic identity, a distinct culture, national cohesion, political community, were at stake in occupied Greece during WWII. As national life is made possible only by a vast collective symbolism maintaining the nation's unity and cohesion, other symbolic expressions of nationhood, national symbols which as sociocultural practices produce, disseminate and support ideology -the national anthem, the flag - or ceremonies such as national day and the commemoration of national heroes were also under attack. These symbols are of a high value for a nation as they refer "to claims of historical continuity and established rights to a designated territory, passed from one generation to another since time immemorial" (Elgenius, 2005, p. 46) and automatically activate concepts and feelings associated with nationhood. The larger the territorial gains sought by the occupying forces were, the more aggressive and/or interventionist were the policies pursued in the field of education.

Teaching and academic staff, school teachers, and university professors, central figures in the nation-building process, as well as the Greek intelligentsia, found themselves in

a critical position during WWII. Some teachers died in the war, others joined the resistance groups, others were fired, and others continued to work under adverse conditions and under the supervision and orders of the occupation authorities. Many university professors and the Greek intelligentsia refused any cooperation with the conquerors. The same spirit of resistance ran through the majority of the country's student population, especially the older ones.

Modern political scientists, like Joseph Nye (2004), distinguish between "hard power" and "soft power". The former includes violence that one country exerts to get what it wants. The latter relies on cultural appeal and the attractiveness of the political and/or ideological values at play. Education and cultural policy are considered instruments of soft power in times of peace. Nevertheless, fascist Italy, fascist Bulgaria, and Nazi Germany implemented policies which showed that in times of war these fields can be altered to hard power fields through totalitarian manipulation. For Hitler's propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels, art was not a "mere peacetime amusement, but a sharp spiritual weapon for war." (Dennis, 2014). The imperialist targets of the occupation powers were aborted in Greece because Greek politics were not geopolitically aligned with them and most of the Greek population fiercely fought every attempt of purposeful dehellanization or of penetration of totalitarian ideologies.

## Σημειώσεις

<sup>1</sup> For the Balkan nationalisms see Kitromilides (1990). [doi.org/10.1177/026569148901900203](https://doi.org/10.1177/026569148901900203)

<sup>2</sup> As Smith argues, there were 'ethnies' in pre-modern times, that is, "human populations with shared ancestry myths, histories and cultures, having an association with a specific territory and a sense of solidarity". For the role of "ethnies" in the Ottoman Empire see Roudometof (1998). On the issue see also Lekas (2005).

<sup>3</sup> Before WWII 77,377 Jews lived in Greece. During the war "86% of Greek Jews lost their lives as a result of Nazi actions, transfers to concentration camps, extermination and killings" (Issue dedicated to the Holocaust of the Jews of Greece, 2006). Policies toward Jews differed among occupiers. Italians did not approve of German atrocities (Bowman, 1986). Bulgarians adopted an ambivalent and crafty policy: they aligned with Germans in the Greek territories, while preventing the persecution of the Jews in Bulgaria (Marinova-Chistidi, 2011).

<sup>4</sup> After the Crimean War, Russia sought to make Bulgaria the gateway to the conquest of Constantinople (Katsovska-Maligudi, 2004).

<sup>5</sup> There are modern Bulgarian historians who continue to claim that there was no occupation in the Greek territories using the term 'presence' instead of that of 'occupation'. On the issue see Hadjianastasiou (1998).

<sup>6</sup> Bulgarian intentions in West Macedonia contrasted with those of the Italians who claimed some of the same territories (e.g. Kastoria and Prespa) for themselves preparing a future Great Albania as a protectorate of Italy. Germans did not share the intentions of their allies. See Fleischer, 1986a; Iliadou-Tachou, 2017.

<sup>7</sup> A similar policy was pursued by the Nazis in Poland. See Hansen (2006).

<sup>8</sup> See Vadoros, 2015.

<sup>9</sup> See Manta, 2008.

<sup>10</sup> See Tsirpanlis, 1987; Kagioglou, 2014, especially 152ff.

<sup>11</sup> Even before the war, in the Royal School of Patras there were photographs of Mussolini and his children dressed in military forms. In the Santaroza School students were recruited in the National Fascist Party and every Thursday ("Fascist Thursday") afternoon screenings of propaganda films took place (Philosofou, 2010).

<sup>12</sup> It was the Italian analogue of the German Reich's "Ministry of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda".

<sup>13</sup> Italy attempted twice, in 1917 and in 1941-43, to create an autonomous canton in Greece, the "Principality of the Pindus," through changing the Romanian-leaning Vlachs of the region into Italian-leaning ones (Tanampasi, 2017). Before Italia, Romania had tried to win over Vlach populations in the Southern Balkans. To promote the idea of Romanian identity, the Romanian state

(created in 1859) funded the operation of Romanian schools in the region of Macedonia and Epirus. These schools continued to operate even when a part of the territories of Macedonia and Epirus passed to Greece in 1912 (Tanampasi, 2017). During WWII Italy tried again to convert Vlach-Romanian relations to its advantage. Italian diplomacy promoted the idea that the Aromanian Vlachs were descendants of the Ancient Romans absorbed and assimilated in the Greek community. A Vlach "Roman Legion" supported the Italian army and the idea of a "Principality of Pindus" resurfaced. On the issue see Averof – Tositsas, 2016.

<sup>14</sup> In December 1942, the Italians founded the "Ionian School of Fine Arts" in Corfu in order to showcase their cultural supremacy (Kontostanos, 1949).

<sup>15</sup> In Crete, e.g., summer cinemas were built through forced labor, where propaganda films were screened (Kalogerakis, 2017).

<sup>16</sup> Kalogerakis, (2017).

<sup>17</sup> Fleischer (1986b: 383) commenting on an epic description of the German soldiers by Erhard Kästner (*Griechenland. Ein Buch aus dem Kriege*, Berlin, 1943) writes: "The logical consequence is the fighters of the Wehrmacht to present themselves as the genuine descendants of the ancient Greeks: 'There they are! The blond Achaeans of Homer, the heroes of the Iliad,' who finally came to Greece to claim their heritage..."

<sup>18</sup> This scientific team, led by byzantinologist Franz Delver, had the mission to control the area of Mount Athos (Fleischer, 1998).

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