

GEORGE KALLOUDIS

FROM THE *ETHNIKOS DIKHASHMOS* TO THE *ETHNIKE KATASTROPHE*
(1916-1923): ELEFThERIOS VENIZELOS AND KING CONSTANTINE I

The Greek political landscape, from the beginning of World War I, was characterized «by a mixture of conflicting foreign policy objectives, fundamental constitutional controversies, personality clashes, and sheer emotionalism. Its chief protagonists were two strong-willed men engaged in a power duel accentuated by different perceptions of the national interest:

«King Constantine I, hero of the Balkan wars and recent ascendant to the throne following the assassination of his father, George I, and Eleftherios Venizelos, the country's Prime Minister and its most powerful political personality»¹.

The relationship between these men was of paramount importance in regards to two of the most significant events in modern Greek history; the *Ethnikos Dikhasmos* or National Schism and the *Ethnike Katastrophe* or National Catastrophe. While King Constantine I wished for Greece to remain neutral during the war, Prime Minister Eleftherios Venizelos wanted to enter the war on the side of the Allies. Venizelos' policy had crystallized by the end of 1914. «It was

¹ J.O. Iatrides (ed.), *Ambassador MacVeagh Reports: Greece, 1933-1947*, Princeton [New Jersey], Princeton UP, 1980, p. 12.

Abstract

1916 to 1923 was an important period in the history of the modern Greek state and the Protagonists were two strong-willed men, Prime Minister Eleftherios Venizelos and King Constantine I, engaged in a power struggle which was accentuated by different perceptions of the national interest. Their relationship much contributed to the *Ethnikos Dikhasmos* or National Schism and the *Ethnike Katastrophe* or National Catastrophe; events with serious short- and long-term consequences for Greece.

George KALLOUDIS (gkaloudis@rivier.edu) Ph.D. in 1981, Professor of «History and Political Science» (Rivier College, Nashua, New Hampshire, USA). He teaches courses ranging from Civilization in Western Perspective to International Relations to the New Globalism and to the History and Politics of Modern Greece. He has presented papers at national and international professional conferences and has published numerous articles and books about Cyprus, the United Nations, modern Greek democracy, the Greek military dictatorship of 1967-1974, and the Greeks of the diaspora in the United States.