

Athanasios Souliotis-Nikolaidis and Greek Irredentism: A Life in the Shadows.

By John Athanasios Mazis. Lanham: Lexington Books, 2022. vii, 195 pp. Appendix. Notes. Bibliography. Index. \$95.00, hard bound.

doi: 10.1017/slr.2023.296

John Mazis' new book is a biography of a relatively obscure figure in Greek historiography. Little known even among historians Athanasios Souliotis was, according to Mazis, a crucial figure in Greece's irredentist project in Macedonia in the early twentieth century. Mazis argues that Souliotis was almost as crucial as his more famous friend Ion Dragoumis, the subject of an earlier book by the author (Mazis, *A Man for All Seasons: The Uncompromising Life of Ion Dragoumis*, 2015). This is an interesting new look into the struggle for Macedonia that focuses on the urban organizations Souliotis set up in Thessaloniki and Istanbul rather than the more common approach of looking at the armed bands that advanced the claims of the Balkan states on the European regions of the Ottoman Empire.

This short book is divided into nine chapters and an introduction. The first chapter begins with the death of Athanasios Souliotis in an Athenian sanatorium in 1945. His official military record appeared unremarkable despite the turbulent period during which he had served, but it was what was not included in the official record that made the dying officer unique. Mazis provides in the second chapter an overview of modern Greek history in a concise and rather traditional manner, while the third chapter is a very brief account of the family background of Souliotis.

It is with chapter four that we truly get to the heart of the book as Mazis first takes us into the complex "Macedonian Question" and introduces us to Athanasios Nikolaidis, who is of course Souliotis under an assumed name. Souliotis arrives in Thessaloniki to set up a clandestine organization to promote Greek interests by any means necessary. Souliotis-Nikolaidis proved remarkably successful in this role, creating a wide-ranging network in the city that collected information, countered Bulgarian activities, and disseminated propaganda in favor of Greece. While such activities are familiar, Mazis adds to this knowledge by unveiling the urban side of the conflict as well as the scope of activities that ranged from assassinations to Souliotis' efforts to Hellenize the city through the promotion of Greek in its economic activities.

Souliotis' effectiveness led his superiors to transfer him to Istanbul to create a similar network in the capital of the Ottoman empire. He repeated the methods he had developed in Thessaloniki in the more complex environment of the Ottoman capital, once more with some success. He was also able to navigate the Young Turk revolution, became involved in the parliamentary politics of the Ottoman empire, and managed relatively well the difficult relations with the Patriarchate of Constantinople until he was forced to leave Istanbul with the eruption of the First Balkan War.

The next chapter delves in the friendship of Souliotis and Ion Dragoumis, which lasted from their meeting as operatives in the fight for Macedonia until the latter's murder in 1920. Dragoumis of course is well-known as a political and intellectual figure in Greece but Mazis makes a credible case that Souliotis should be considered if not his equal than at least a partner in the ideological formulations of what is known as the Eastern Federation concept. The next two chapters (seven and eight) recount the life and service of Souliotis from the Balkan Wars to his death, his inevitable involvement in the interwar political divisions of Greece, and his flirtation with

ideas stemming from fascism. The final chapter offers some concluding thoughts on Souliotis and especially his ideological make-up.

Overall, this is an interesting biography of a relatively unknown but significant figure and Mazis uses the opportunity to explore some underexamined aspects of Greek and Balkan history, such as the urban aspect of the Macedonian conflict, the impact of alternative nationalist ideas, but also the effect of this conflict on the lives and careers of its participants. The book could have benefitted from more careful editing, as there are some repetitive passages, while the 30-page historical background chapter seems overly long for such a short book. Nevertheless, Mazis succeeds in exposing the significant role of individuals like Souliotis in the convoluted and often tragic political developments of Greece in the first half of the twentieth century and sheds new light on a field that is often perceived as exhaustively researched.

EVDOXIOS DOXIADIS
Simon Fraser University

Socially Engaged Art after Socialism: Art and Civil Society in Central and Eastern Europe. By Isabella Galliera. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2022. xx, 384 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Illustrations. Photographs. \$34.95, paper. doi: 10.1017/slr.2023.297

Now available in paperback, Isabella Galliera's ground-breaking study *Socially Engaged Art After Socialism* presents a long overdue examination of socially engaged art practices in east central Europe since the end of socialism, focusing on art in Bulgaria, Hungary, and Romania. The author demonstrates how arts practitioners, their collaborators, and participants were empowered by using their social capital to shape civil society and "advocate for a dissenting civil society" (17). Galliera contends that socially engaged art projects offered the possibility to both *work towards* and *act within* this new civil society (3).

The choice of these three countries from which to examine these artistic practices is a unique one, and brings attention to not only a lesser studied area of the region, but also some lesser-known projects and, in the case of Bulgaria, one woefully understudied art scene. Galliera is clear that these countries do not stand for the entire region of central and eastern Europe, rather, they present an opportunity to examine specific factors that played a role in the emergence of these types of art practices in the region (9). An example is the reliance on informal local networks and foreign funding, the backdrop of rapid and dramatic restructuring all with an aim to integrate into the neoliberal market and the EU (9). Juxtaposing the experience of artists in these three countries puts these similarities and differences into sharp focus, demonstrating both the shared experiences of artists in the region and the manner in which local conditions affected artistic production.

Rather than organize the book chapter by country, Galliera focuses on issues that are relevant to the discussion of socially engaged art projects and examines how artists in the region dealt with or addressed them, for example, the local and the transnational, the "counterpublic," belonging, and institutions and self-institutionalization. Those familiar with socially engaged art projects in general will find the discussion of these specific and perhaps lesser-known projects, due to their geographical origin, of interest, and those familiar with the projects will find a healthy analysis of the works within the context of both post-socialist east central Europe and the literature of socially engaged art.