

THE VLACHS:

The History of a Balkan People

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Hoskin, Peter Mansfield, Oswyn Murray, Robin Okey, Debora Stroud, Michael Ursinus, Elizabeth Warren, Kate Willis and Christine Wyman. Among Balkan helpers I must single out Eleni Averoff, Natassa Drossou, Michael Karamichas and Vasil Marinov, although I am aware that in so doing I have omitted the names of many who have helped me on my way.

Proper names in the Balkans are always a problem, especially where Vlach villages are concerned. The names of these Vlach villages change frequently and in following wherever possible the 1943 War Office, 1:250,000 maps I am aware that I am often, for the sake of consistency, producing names which are rather different from the names by which the present inhabitants know the village in question. Ancient and medieval names are likewise difficult. I have kept Latin names for well-known characters and people who are likely to have spoken Latin, while using Greek names for the remainder. Since this book is about Latin influence in Greece, borderline territories and a little-known subject, dividing lines are hard to draw.

These technical problems fade into insignificance when compared to some other difficulties faced by a historian of the Vlachs. I wax eloquent on these difficulties in my fourth chapter. Primary sources are shown to be partial in one sense of the word, secondary sources partial in the other sense. I am aware that I have not exhausted the immense amount of commentary on the Vlachs, often to be found in obscure journals; it has exhausted me. Very often these articles have a particular axe to grind, and all too often this axe has been sharpened by the complexities of modern Balkan politics. My work has no special claim to make, except perhaps to show through the history of the Vlachs that the writing of the history of the past to provide propaganda for the present is foolish, if not wicked. This is a historical study, and the parallel or auxiliary sciences of archaeology, sociology, philology, economic history and comparative folklore are, through lack of time and expertise, touched upon incidentally or not at all. Much work remains to be done in these areas, although much of the work that has been done is vitiated by a faulty historical approach. The preliminary nature of this book must excuse its many faults, but its pioneer approach may be a compensating virtue.

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CHAPTER ONE

The Vlachs Today

In scattered pockets through the central Balkans are to be found small communities of people speaking a dialect derived from Latin. Known in general by themselves as Aroumanians, by the Greeks as Koutzovlachs, by the Yugoslavs as Cincars, and by the Romanians as Macedo-Romanians, and in particular groups by a whole host of names, they are best called Vlachs, although even this name presents problems. The word *blachos* in Greek can mean merely a shepherd, and this has resulted in confusion between Vlachs and other nomads, notably the Greek-speaking Saracatsans, and a reluctance to admit that Vlachs could be anything other than nomadic shepherds, when in fact they have risen to positions of wealth and distinction as merchants and craftsmen. The word can also have a derogatory connotation, and perhaps this is one reason why most Vlachs with the exception of the Meglen Vlachs do not call themselves by this name, though they recognise it. There have been fanciful derivations of the word Vlach, including the theory that it is a corruption of the Latin word *fellacus*, a tenant farmer, from which we derive the word 'fellaheen', and the theory that it comes onomatopoeically from the sound of a bleating sheep, but it seems safest to regard Vlach as a word derived through the medium of Slav from an originally Germanic word for a stranger, the same root as we find in Welsh and Walloon. Such a derivation is appropriate if hardly helpful to an understanding of this strange people.

The Vlach, in spite of or perhaps because of his virtues, is not greatly loved by his Balkan neighbours, and this is one reason why it is hard to be precise in determining who is and who is not a Vlach. In Slavonic countries Vlachi and Vlasi can refer to anyone who is not a Slav, and even in some cases to

fellow Slavs. Thus the Vlach in Serbian heroic lays is sometimes a Greek, in Ragusan chronicles sometimes an Italian, while in Croatian records he is sometimes oddly and contemptuously an Orthodox Serb. The more obscure derivations of the word Vlach are much favoured by Greek scholars anxious to dissociate Koutzovlachs from the Romanians of Wallachia. The name Cincars has been derived romantically from the fifth legion and from quintani, men who had served five years as a legionary, but although *cinci*, pronounced 'tsintsi', is the Vlach for five, cincars probably earned their name by their sibilant manner of speech. Similarly, while Greek scholars like to think of Koutzovlachs as a special term used by the Turks to distinguish the small body of Southern Vlachs from the larger number of Romanians in the North, and there is a charming derivation of *koutzo* from *crux*, linking the Vlachs with the Crusades, it would seem more probable that the prefix '*koutzo*' is another indication of the halting nature of Vlach speech.¹

The exact number of Vlach-speakers today is hard to determine. A. J. B. Wace and M. S. Thompson in *The Nomads of the Balkans* (London, 1914) estimated that there were half a million, whereas twenty-five years previously the great student of the Vlachs, G. Weigand, in *Die Aromunen* (Leipzig, 1888) with Teutonic precision calculated that there were 373,520. Earlier F. de Pouqueville, *Voyage de la Grèce* (Paris, 1826-7), who only knew the Pindus Vlachs, and for whom much of Northern Greece, as shown by his eccentric map, was a mystery had suggested a number as low as 50,000. Romanian scholars tend to exaggerate the number of Vlachs, and one even said that there were over five million. Writing in 1918 the Serbian geographer J. Cvijić called the Vlachs 'une peuple qui disparaît' and gave the figure of 150,000. In spite of their resilience and philoprogenitiveness which led Wace and Thompson to give a larger figure than Weigand, the Vlachs must have continued to lose ground in the last fifty years,

¹ See A. M. Koltsidas, *Hoi Koutsoblachoi, Ethnologikê kai Laographikê Meletê* (Salonica, 1976), pp. 14-17, for most of the derivations, obvious and obscure. The article 'Vlah' in *Enciklopedija Jugoslavije* (Zagreb, 1971), 8, pp. 514-15, gives some of the Slavonic uses of the name. See also K. Jireček, *Die Romanen in den Städten Dalmatiens während des Mittelalters* (Vienna, 1901), pp. 34-5, and also W. Tomaschek, *Zur Kunde der Haemushalbinsel* (Vienna, 1882), p. 12, for the derivation of *koutzos* from *crux*.

although Romanians still give high figures, and even one Greek Vlach, E. Averoff, calculated that there were between 150,000 and 200,000 Vlachs as late as 1948. Two world wars, two Balkan wars, the Greek Civil War, the Yugoslav resistance, the hardening of national frontiers, the compulsory movements of populations, the growth of universal education and the corroding effects of modern civilisation have reduced the Vlachs to a few remnants, and it is likely that even these will lose their identity within the next fifty years.²

It is of course hard to fix upon any criterion for what determines a Vlach-speaker. Official census figures are hardly a good guide, and we have to make allowances for bilingualism, nomadism, the unpopularity of Vlach and possible confusion with Romanians. Both the pre-war Greek figures for Vlachs and the post-war Yugoslav figures have to be treated with caution for these reasons; both are likely to underestimate the number of Vlachs, even though it would appear that some census figures showed Vlachs on the increase.³ Thus there were 26,750 Vlachs in the 1940 Greek census, more than ten thousand more than in the demonstrably inaccurate 1928 census; in 1951 the number was 22,736. Later Greek census returns do not show a separate figure for Vlach-speakers, but they do show a startling decline in the individual numbers of most Vlach villages. Vlachs who have moved to the big cities, while conscious of their origin, have tended to forget most of their language and customs. At the other end of the scale I have met a few old ladies who spoke no other language than Vlach.

In Greece the Second World War and the Civil War which

² The Romanian, Gradea, is quoted with scorn by S. Papageorges, *Les Koutsovalaques* (Athens, 1909), p. 9. See also J. Cvijić, *La Péninsule Balkanique* (Paris, 1918) and E. Averoff, *Hê Politikê Pleura tou Koutsoblachikou Zêtêmatos* (Athens, 1948).

³ Greek census figures for 1928 and 1940 are shown in H. Wilkinson, *Maps and Politics* (Liverpool, 1951) and later Yugoslav figures in F. Singleton, *Twentieth Century Yugoslavia* (London, 1975), p. 364. Greek figures for 1951 can be found in A. Angelopoulos, 'Population distribution of Greece today according to language, national consciousness and religion' in *Balkan Studies* 20 (1979), pp. 123-32. The Yugoslav figure of over 25,000 in 1971 would seem to involve some confusion of Vlachs and Romanians. The Greek figure for 1928 is shown in Ministère de l'Économie Nationale, *Les Minorités Ethniques en Europe Centrale* (Paris, 1946), p. 29 to include no Vlachs in Thessaly; this is clearly an error.

followed it would appear to have created considerable changes in the way of life of most Vlachs. They continued to migrate between summer and winter quarters, but the towns of Preveza, Grevena, Ioannina, Trikkala, Karditsa, Pharsala, Volos, Larisa and even Athens became more and more their permanent homes, and the Vlach villages in the hills, often forcibly abandoned in time of war, became places for summer holidays. The vast herds of Vlach shepherds are now things of the past, and Vlachs today tend to migrate with suitcases on buses and lorries rather than on foot with tents as they did in the time of Wace and Thompson. The Greek rural bus, at once the comfort and the despair of the indigent researcher, has brought all but the remotest Vlach villages within four hours of the nearest town. All these factors have helped to swell the number of semi-Vlachs living in towns, while inevitably the small number of Vlach women who have attended a Romanian school, or a Greek school which allowed Vlach to be spoken, or no school at all, has dwindled to a handful. Vlach, unlike Welsh, is not allowed in schools, sung in churches, or used in official business. Its survival is all the more remarkable, but more under threat.

In Albania, Bulgaria and Yugoslavia Vlach has never been as strong as in Greece, and the pockets of Vlach speakers have always been more scattered. Vlach individualism and communist regimes are not ideal partners, and the number of Vlachs in these countries has been greatly reduced since the days of the Ottoman empire. On the other hand Albania is proud of its treatment of its Greek minority who are allowed their own schools and newspapers, and there are apparently villages where Vlach is the language of instruction at primary level.⁴ My inquiries about Vlachs in Albania were treated with less interest than my conversation about football and Shakespeare, but with more friendliness than questions about Byzantine churches, all closed because of the official policy of

⁴ A. Tamas, 'La Romanie et la minorité roumaine en Albanie' in *Voix des Peuples Minorités* (Geneva, 1938), 5, pp. 79–89, gives a slightly tendentious picture of the Albanian Vlachs, and his figure of 60,000 is almost certainly too high. Nevertheless there are probably now over 10,000 Vlach speakers in Albania. P. Neiescu, 'Récherches dialectales chez les Roumains sud-Danubiens' in *Revue Roumaine de Linguistique* 10 (1965), pp. 229–37, give quite an optimistic picture of the survival of Vlach in Albanian towns.

hostility to religion, or about ancient fortifications, frequently serving as modern defence posts.

Yugoslavia is also a country with an official policy of encouraging its large racial minorities, and though the number of Vlachs is so small that they sometimes do not figure in the Yugoslav census the pockets of Vlachs in the south of the country have been helped by the fact that as a result of boundary changes and two world wars since 1912 the official language of Macedonia has changed six times.⁵ The small boys of the Yugoslav Vlach village of Malovište sang Macedonian songs with gusto and, prodded by their elders, sang Vlach songs hesitantly, but I almost never heard Greek children sing Vlach songs. Pressure from the Church is also less strong in countries where the church is either discouraged or forbidden. The intensive urbanisation and modernisation programme of the last fifteen years in Macedonia which has transformed cart tracks into motorways and elevated the picturesque slums of Ohrid and Skopje into featureless imitations of Birmingham and Bradford must have weakened the resistance of Vlach, even though old Vlach women in the cheese market of Skopje can still be recognised by the crosses tattooed into their foreheads to protect them from the tender mercies of the Turks who left in 1912.

Vlach has never been very strong in Bulgaria which is not a country with any very large racial minorities after the exchange of populations with Greece following the First World

⁵ From Turkish to Serbo-Croatian after the Balkan wars, and then a change to Bulgarian during the bitterly fought occupation of the First World War; then back to Serbo-Croatian until the Second World War when the Vlach area of Macedonia was divided temporarily and uncertainly between Italian-occupied Albania and Bulgaria under German influence. The establishment of Macedonia as a separate republic with its own language has now lasted for forty years, but Macedonian is a somewhat fragile plant, and the Turkish and Albanian minorities who unlike Vlachs have their own schools have preserved their identity without any difficulty. J. Trifunski, 'Die Aromunen in Mazedonien' in *Balkanica* 2 (1971), pp. 337–47, gives some precise and pessimistic figures for Vlachs in Macedonia during the sixties, and there are probably now only about 5,000 Vlach speakers in Yugoslavia. On the other hand, E. Petrovici and P. Neiescu, 'Persistence des îlots linguistiques' in *Revue Roumaine de Linguistique* 10 (1965), pp. 351–74, are optimistic about the survival of Istrian Vlach, spoken even among children, and J. Kramer, 'Dialektologische Forschungen bei den Aromunen in Frühjahr 1977' in *Balkan Archiv* (1977), pp. 91–180, gives a rosy picture of the survival of Vlach in Malovište.

War. This exchange must have involved Vlachs, and the number of Vlachs in Bulgaria today is likely to be small, almost certainly smaller than the 1,550 recorded in the census of 1926.⁶ In Weigand's time the Bulgar Vlachs, whom he regarded as comparatively recent arrivals from further west, were fairly nomadic, but for fiscal reasons they now have permanent homes. Between the two world wars some Vlachs migrated from other Balkan countries into Romania, although these are becoming rapidly assimilated into the rest of the Romanian population.⁷ As is the case with all people in the Balkans Vlachs also travel further afield both as temporary immigrant workers to Germany, and as permanent exiles to America and Australia. I have talked about cricket to an Australian Vlach in Malovište, just as I have talked about Welsh rugby to a Welsh gypsy in Granada; sport with its universal language is a great leveller, but it hardly helps small languages to preserve themselves.

Like Basque and the Romantsch dialects of Switzerland and North Italy, Vlach would seem to owe its survival to the remoteness of the areas in which it was spoken and to there being more than one language with which it was in competition. The growth of the monolithic national state and the improvement in communications have weakened the chances that Vlach will survive much longer. Unlike Basque and Romantsch speakers who have fought or are fighting for some kind of recognition of their autonomy, Vlachs seem perfectly content with their own position in their various national states. Greek Vlachs are among the most patriotic Greeks in a nation of patriots, and I never heard any Vlachs in Yugoslavia

⁶ This figure is quoted in the article 'Cincari' in *Enciklopedija Jugoslavije* 2, p. 379. I have not been able to find any later census figures in which Romanians and Vlachs are distinguished. Like Yugoslavia, Bulgaria has a fairly large body of Romanian speakers in the north of the country and small pockets of Vlachs in the south. Weigand in *Rumänen und Aromunen in Bulgarien* (Leipzig, 1907) does distinguish the two, but his statistics are less precise than usual, and he was writing before the Balkan and World wars which gave part of Turkey to Bulgaria, and part of Bulgaria to Serbia. My own visits to Bulgaria in 1982 suggested that only a few hundred Vlach speakers were left, of whom most were very old.

⁷ M. Peyfuss, 'Aromunen in Rumanien' in *Österreichische Osthefte* 26 (1984), pp. 313–19 says that in the 1977 Romanian census 644 classified themselves as Aromâni and 1179 as Macedoromâni, but he clearly thinks these figures unrepresentative.

expressing dissatisfaction with their newly-found Macedonian nationhood. In the past national consciousness in the Balkans has been fostered by the presence of national churches, and the absence, except for a brief period before the First World War under Romanian pressure, of any strong movement for a separate Vlach church has meant that the Vlachs have largely stayed clear of the bitter quarrels that have divided Bulgarian exarchists from Greek orthodoxists, or Serbs from Croats in spite of their common language. Although Vlachs tend to marry each other it is idle to claim any particular purity of race for them. The turbulent history of the Balkans is such that claims for racial identity as opposed to linguistic identity are largely mythical. A day in Skopje market where straight-nosed Greek jostles with swarthy gypsy and fair high-cheeked Slav, all speaking nothing but Macedonian, is enough to deter anyone from trying to track down a Vlach race.

The distinguishing feature of the Vlachs, and the feature that makes them interesting for the historian, is not their race, nor their religion, nor their culture, nor their consciousness of a separate identity, but their language. After making due allowance for bilingualism, if we take as a criterion for the determination of Vlach-speakers the regular use of Vlach in the home, a rough estimate of 50,000 Vlach-speakers, 30,000 in Greece and 20,000 in the other four Balkan countries, would not be too inaccurate. The location of Vlachs is easier to determine. Linguistic maps, once the favourite toys of Balkan statesmen, are no longer fashionable, and in view of their wild fluctuations in delineating areas of Vlach speech, perhaps this is no great loss. The classic story of eccentric linguistic cartography in the Balkans, H. Wilkinson's *Maps and Politics* (Liverpool, 1951), records no maps after the Second World War, and more recent maps, deriving from the work of a Romanian linguistic cartographer, S. Pihaescu, tend to overestimate the areas where Vlach is spoken.⁸ Those who were anxious to prove the existence of large numbers of Vlachs took advantage

⁸ S. Pop, *La Dialectologie* (Louvain, 1950), p. 670, and G. Nandris in 'The development and structures of Rumanian' in *Slavonic Review* 31 (1951), p. 7, show the Vlachs in considerable numbers in the Balkans, especially in Albania. The same is true of T. Papahagi's map in *Dictionarul Dialectul Aromin* (Bucarest, 1974), p. 1436, although this map and the dictionary that goes with it is meant to record the Vlachs of the past, and indeed Papahagi has a mournful and useful preface recording the decline of the Vlachs.

of the Vlachs having both summer and winter quarters and of the large areas of uninhabitable mountains near Vlach villages to paint great sections of their maps in Vlach colours. Most of these cartographers were Romanian, whereas map makers from other Balkan countries took advantage of the Vlachs' bilingualism to give them little or no space on the map. On the other hand a few good maps made by neutral observers such as Weigand and Wace and Thompson are still surprisingly useful when it comes to fixing the abode of the Vlachs today. In spite of their reputation for nomadism and the history of the Balkans in the past fifty years the Vlachs have shown remarkable tenacity in holding on, albeit in reduced numbers, to the same areas that were regarded as Vlach both by Weigand and by Wace and Thompson.

CHAPTER TWO

Vlachs in Greece

The Vlachs in Greece are best known for their presence in the Pindus mountains. This is the area in which I have spent most time,¹ but I have tried not to devote too much space to it in the following account since other less well known areas are historically more interesting. Metsovon in the middle of the Pindus range, a town with around five thousand inhabitants, is because of its relatively central position and its relative accessibility almost a Vlach capital and almost a tourist resort. Around it there are a number of villages inhabited all the year round, as are some villages near Konitsa, but in the villages to the north and south, such famous villages as Perivoli, Samarina, Sirrakou and Gardhiki are virtually deserted in winter. Again, except around Metsovon, which is an eparchy on its own with four Vlach and two Greek villages, the Vlachs have suffered through being split up into a number of administrative districts, the capitals of which are usually the starting point for the local bus. Communication between Samarina and Metsovon, and between Metsovon and Gardhiki is difficult, but it only takes three and a half rugged hours by bus from Samarina to Grevena, and from Gardhiki to Trikkala. Metsovon is much frequented by inhabitants of other parts of Greece, both in summer and in the winter sports season, and, though the old men still sit in the square dressed in their

¹ I spent four weeks in Anilion in 1975 and three weeks touring the Pindus by bus in 1977. I made shorter visits to the area in the years 1980-83. Names of villages throughout Greece are constantly changing, and I could not be sure whether a place mentioned as being Vlach by Wace and Thompson had ceased to exist or ceased to be Vlach or escaped my notice. Romanian scholars tend to give the names of villages in Vlach which adds to the confusion. My host in Anilion, Mr Michael Karamichas, was very helpful in telling me which villages were Vlach, and I have relied heavily on his information. See Maps 1 and 2.

traditional Vlach costume, they do not seem to have begotten younger successors. Even in Anilion, a village that is separated from Metsovon by a precipitous walk and an even more precipitous motor road across the Arakhthos, both close enough to a major road to avoid depopulation, and remote enough to avoid corruption by the forces of civilisation, I have felt that the influence of Vlach is waning. Voutonosi has suffered through being on the main road from Kalabaka to Ioannina, but Milea which now, like Anilion, has a daily bus service to Metsovon is another strong Vlach centre.

Between Kalabaka and Metsovon lie the Vlach villages of Kastanea and Malakasi which were once much larger, but still manage to retain a winter population; both are only about two and a half hours by bus from Trikkala. Other villages in or near the upper reaches of the Pinios valley such as Ampelochorion, Korydyllon, Pevke, Sarakenas, Trygona and Orthovouni are even more accessible, but would seem to be of fairly recent foundation; inhabited all the year round they must have originally been mere halting posts on the biannual march between Thessaly and the Pindus, and only became villages when this way of life was abandoned. Panagia, a large village just off the main road, would seem to be on the site of Kutusfliani, previously Libohovo, an important strategic site, with some ancient remains nearby; Kutusfliani would appear to be an older settlement, being mentioned together with Metsovon, Milea, Malakasi and Voutonosi as receiving special privileges from the Turks.

South of Kalabaka there are Vlach settlements at Klinovos and Glykomelea, but the main concentration of Vlachs is to be found in about a dozen villages on the upper reaches of the Aspropotamos and its tributary the Kamnaitikos. Pertouli, Neraidochori, Pirra, Dhesi and Kamnai are well described by Professor N. Hammond, whose *Epirus* (Oxford, 1967) and *Macedonia* (Oxford, 1972) are a mine of information about Vlachs, although he is not specifically concerned with Vlachs, and most of his travels through Vlach villages were conducted in or before the Second World War. A German philological team investigating Pertouli in 1975 found only a few people willing to speak Vlach, although it is possible that the fact that Pertouli was a centre of resistance against the Ger-

mans in the Second World War may have discouraged co-operation.

Other Vlach villages easily reached by taking the daily bus to Khaliki or Gardhiki are Anthousa, Katafiton, Krania, Kalliroi, Milea and Ayia Paraskeve. These villages in thickly wooded country are both attractive and remote, but they are virtually uninhabited during the winter, and the Vlach element in them is not exactly strong. Before the war Gardhiki was the capital of an eparchy, containing the Vlach villages of the Aspropotamos, and had of necessity a permanent population, but it was deserted completely during the war and lost its administrative status. I was told in this village that of the three thousand people who go there in the summer many now speak no Vlach, though some are rather belatedly trying to revive Vlach customs and even to learn the Vlach language rather in the same way as Cornishmen try to learn Cornish. Gardhiki can be reached in slightly under four hours by bus from Trikkala, as can the most remote village of this area, Khaliki, which could be reached on foot from Anilion in about five hours. Khaliki was joined to Anilion by a motor road in August 1980 and together with Anthousa and Katafiton became the last villages in Greece to be joined to the electricity grid in 1982. The three villages claim to have a special dance. In winter they go to Greek towns and speak Greek. Even the older inhabitants have become used to speaking nothing but Greek except in the privacy of their own homes, and as a result the Vlach they do speak has been tainted by Greek idioms.

From Khaliki and Gardhiki one can walk in summer to the famous Vlach villages of Sirrakou and Kallaritai which, together with Matsouki, represent the south-western extremity of the Pindus Vlach territory. In trying to walk from Khaliki, I passed the remains of an older village further up the stream. There is also a circuitous road, by which cars could travel at their peril. Sirrakou and Kallaritai can now be reached by bus from Ioannina, although the road is a hazardous one. Sirrakou and Kallaritai are impressively situated, overlooking the steep gorges of the Kallaritikos river, a tributary of the Arakhthos, and contain many fine nineteenth-century houses, built at a time when the two villages were prosperous centres of a metalwork industry. Sirrakou is almost

entirely deserted in winter, its inhabitants going to Ioannina, Preveza and Athens, but Kallaritai has a winter population of about 300. Little interest is shown in Vlach in this area, and the local schoolmaster of Sirrakou has written a book on his village with scarcely any mention of the affinities between the language spoken in it and Latin.²

To the north of Ioannina lies the well-wooded and well-watered Zagori. Vlach was on the retreat here in Wace and Thompson's day, but on the bus route from Ioannina to Vovousa in 1977 I passed the prosperous-looking villages of Greveniti, Tristenon, Flambourarion, Elatokhori and Makrinion, all of which have been Vlach in the past. Near Makrinion there is an impressive ancient site commanding a strategic position over the valley of the Vardas, a tributary of the Arakhthos, and guarding the pass over the mountains to Vovousa which is situated on the Aoos or Vijose river. Near the road on this pass I saw a collection of about six wicker huts, the old style of Vlach habitation, but now a rare sight. They may have belonged to Saracatsans who still very occasionally rent summer pastures in the Zagori, but would now seem to have vanished almost entirely from the Greek scene.³ Vovousa is in the nomos of Ioannina from which it can be reached by a daily bus, but it has connections by road with Metsovon and through Perivoli to Grevena. Vovousa has a famous bridge and a new church, and some new houses are being built, but in spite of its central position and impressive situation the village is not prosperous and has a very small population in winter. I was told that a Romanian lady lived there, and I was also told that in the villages of the Vardas valley they spoke a different variety of Vlach, but to my disappointment they only spoke Greek in the one café I visited, and I did not meet the Romanian lady.

I made another visit in 1983 and stopped at Flambourarion, where they claimed they only spoke Greek, although I think this claim was false. I then walked through the rain and mud for about four kilometres to the café at Elatokhori to find everyone speaking Greek after church. Shyly I asked whether they spoke Vlach, and my question was greeted by much

² D. M. Ghartzonikas, *Mpourtsoblachoi* (Ioannina, 1971). The strange title is supposed to show a connection with Bruttium in Italy.

³ J. Campbell, *Honour, Family and Patronage* (Oxford, 1964).

laughter, many ouzos and a certain amount of Vlach. There seems to be here a slow and stubborn retreat of the linguistic frontier. Seventy years ago Wace and Thompson recorded all five villages on the way to Vovousa as being Vlach, but now only Elatokhori can be said to be Vlach, with Flambourarion and Greveniti lapsing into the category of formerly Vlach villages which Weigand reported in the Western Zagori. In Tristenon they said confusingly they once had been Albanian.

North of Vovousa, lying near the Aoos or its tributaries we find the villages of Vrisochorion, Eliochoi and Laista, the last of which can be reached by bus from Ioannina. I have not visited these three villages, making the mistake of going instead to Skamneli. Weigand had said this village and others further south had formerly been Vlach, although Wace and Thompson had denied it. I was assured in 1982 that there were Vlachs here, but this was again denied after an uncomfortable early morning bus ride in 1983. It is possible that in both cases there was some confusion with the Saracatsans who were prominent here, although they too have largely vanished. Laista, I gathered at second hand, is reasonably prosperous. It is on a bus route with about fifty houses, and a winter population of 100 increasing to 250 in summer. Vrisochorion and Eliochoi are much smaller and clearly in a more precarious state. A deserted site near Laista called Palaiochoi may have an ancient history, but may have been deserted in the same way as I fear Vrisochori and Eliochoi will soon become deserted, although there is now a campaign to help all the Zagori villages, that have a famous past, but are now suffering from rural depopulation.

An ancient origin is not claimed for these villages any more than for the villages, even further north, which can be reached by bus from Konitsa, or alternatively by a rough mule track from Samarina in the nomos of Grevena. These are Dhistraton (formerly Breaza), Armata, Palaioselion and Padhes. Fourka, a name derived from the Vlach for distaff, is on a more northerly tributary of the Aoos, and it can be reached from Konitsa, although traditionally associated with Samarina. These villages suffered terribly both in the World War and the Civil War, with frequent burnings, flights to the mountains, and brother fighting against brother. In Dhistraton we met in 1982

a 102-year-old lady who seemed to have survived these disasters, and the village, though remote, seemed prosperous now, with a tributary of the Aoos being diverted to make a trout farm. The village has 500 inhabitants in winter, and is the largest of the four. The other three are less remote, and many people from Palaioselion work in Ioannina during winter. I met one monoglot old lady there, admittedly totally deaf, and many people much younger than I were speaking Vlach. In this remote quarter the position of Vlach seems fairly healthy.

On the Eastern side of the Pindus in the nomos of Grevena there are some famous villages, much visited by earlier travellers to the Balkans, namely Samarina, Avdhella, Perivoli and Smixi. There are almost entirely deserted in winter, and the total population of these villages in the 1961 census was 23. In that an annual migration represents the traditional way of life, whereas permanent settlement, just beginning in Wace and Thompson's day, is a comparatively recent innovation, we cannot say that these low figures are necessarily an indication of a decline in the Vlach population. Indeed both the Vlach language and Vlach traditions seem a great deal stronger in Samarina than they are in Gardhiki. Until a fire in the 1930s Samarina bid fair to rival Metsovon as the main centre of the Vlachs, but though there is a vigorous community which produces its own periodical and in August the village is full of former and present inhabitants celebrating the feast of the Assumption, Samarina is too distant from other villages to act as a focus for anyone not connected with the immediate neighbourhood. There was some collusion with the Italians in this area. Smixi has a good book on its history, whose author has a resplendent Roman name,⁴ and it would seem both from this book and from the account in Wace and Thompson that these villages are older than and different from the Zagori villages.

Krania which lies on the direct road from Grevena to Milea and Metsovon is a Vlach village recorded as having 775 inhabitants in the 1961 census: Kipouryio further north is another large village, said by Hammond in the text of *Epirus*, but not his map, to be Vlach, and Grevena itself has a considerable

⁴ G. Nasika, *Hê Smixê, Historia, Êthê kai Ethima* (Athens, 1971).

Vlach population in summer as well as winter, although in this area, even in Wace and Thompson's time, Vlach villages had become semi-Hellenized. The inhabitants had the special name of Kupatshari, derived from the Vlach word for an oaktree, of which the country around Grevena is full, and they were regarded as neither chalk nor cheese. Hammond, in *Migrations and Invasions in Greece and Adjacent Areas* (New Jersey, 1976), confirms that Vlach influence was on the wane in this district, but, though I have not visited these villages, I was assured that Krania was Vlach, and it is possible that in the confused situation after the war there were Vlach migrations from more inaccessible villages to Krania, Kipouryio and Fillipaei.

It is difficult to give any very satisfactory reason why some villages are inhabited all the year round and some not, or why the process of permanent occupation should be more common in the centre of the Pindus than in the south or north, although the presence of the main road from Kalabaka to Ioannina, kept open except in the most difficult conditions, is obviously a factor in making permanent occupation more easy. A glance at the physical map of the Pindus will show that most Vlach villages are situated on or near the upper reaches of the five great rivers which have their source near Metsovon, the Aoos, the Arakthos, the Aspropotamos, the Pinios and the Haliakmon, but it is difficult to make much of this apart from the obvious fact that the Vlachs like their villages to be well-watered. Only the Aoos of these five rivers represents an obvious invasion route from the north, and its upper reaches are so precipitous that the route is hardly an easy one.

Outside the Pindus my own knowledge of the Vlachs of Greece is more sketchy. The Vlachs in Acarnania near Stratos are a long way away from other Vlachs, and are reported to be losing their identity. They came originally from central Albania. So too did a number of settlements in southern and central Thessaly. At Sesklo near Volos Vlach is cheerfully spoken; they acknowledge an Albanian origin and it is possible to trace certain linguistic affinities between their speech and that of other Vlach communities with a similar origin. Much work has been done on this by a team of German philologists led by J. Kramer who also visited Rodhia and Falaina, two quite large settlements near Larisa, both founded after Thes-

saly had become Greek in 1880.⁵ There are also Vlach speakers in Volos itself, on mount Pelion, and in Velestinon; I also found a fascinating community in Aryiropoulion near Tirnavos who claimed to have no settled home until 1880, but who had wandered with their homes on their backs until this period.

The people in Aryiropoulion said they were Arvanitovlachoi. This is a term rather bafflingly used, usually by other Vlachs, of people they feel are rather different from them. The difference does not really consist in knowing Albanian instead of, or as well as, Greek and Vlach, since, though some Arvanitovlachoi do know Albanian, others, such as those at Aryiropoulion, did not. Nor do I think that it refers to any special peculiarities of the Vlach spoken, since, though Kramer has suggested that Vlach speakers of Albanian origin can be detected by certain differences of vocabulary and intonation, the linguistic pool has been so muddled in the past hundred years that this is hard to detect, and there are of course other linguistic differences between various kinds of Vlach which have nothing to do with Albanian. Nor does the term Arvanitovlachoi just refer to some connection with Albania, since, as we shall see when tracing the history of the Vlachs, many Vlachs derive from families who came at one stage from Albania. Rather it would seem that Arvanitovlachoi is in some sense a sociological term used by the Vlachs who had a settled home, or perhaps two settled homes, to describe those less fortunate who were forced like the Saracatsans until very recently to wander the face of the earth, with lawless Albania an obvious focus for their wanderings.

There is a fairly large secondary pocket of Vlachs between Kastoria and Florina, although the three well-known Vlach centres of Klisoura, Nimfaion (Neveska) and Pisodherion did not have much more than a thousand inhabitants in the 1961 census. Klisoura with its tall gaunt white houses still stands

⁵ J. Kramer and others, 'Dialektologische Forschungen bei den Aromunen, 1976', in *Balkan-Archiv* 1 (1976), pp. 7-78. My debt to the work done by this team is obvious, and their description of some villages I have not visited is extremely valuable. In trying to distinguish one kind of Vlach from another by asking for certain words and phrases in different villages I feel they ignore the extent to which speakers are likely to give different replies in the same village, according to the extent to which they remember Vlach, have been taught Romanian, or are sophisticated people.

sentinel in a wonderful strategic location close to what is now a main road between Veroia and Kastoria, but it has obviously declined from its important position at the turn of the century when it had more than 3,000 inhabitants, and in the nineteenth century when it was probably the main Vlach town. It suffered heavily in the war against the Turks in 1912 when part of the village was burnt, and again in 1944 when there was more burning by the Germans, supported by the Bulgarians, and the brutal massacre of 250 women and children. The town has a haunted air, although when I visited it in 1981 I was kindly treated. Before the First World War it was a rival to Kastoria in the fur trade, and the inhabitants owned vast flocks of sheep. The church, built in 1897 and full of intricate wood carvings, stood next to a large Romanian school. This school has now been destroyed and the church converted to the Greek rite. There are a few old houses, and a few new ones are being built. Klisoura stands on a good road from Kastoria to Salonica with a regular bus service. It boasts a small hotel, and non-Vlach speakers come there for the summer. I had the happy experience of telling three soldiers who asked what language was being spoken that the old ladies were speaking Vlach. Some confusion was possible because in Variko some seven miles away they speak Slav.

My inquiries about Vlach were treated with great respect. I met a group of students who claimed that it was their ambition to restore Vlach fortunes. Though a good source of information about Vlach language and history, they spoke to each other in Greek. On history they adopted a Romanian point of view. They claimed that their language was slightly different from that of other Vlach villages, and this may be the result of the strong Romanian influence which seems to have persisted in these parts since the days of the Apostol Margarit, who taught in Klisoura, though born in Avdhella, and was one of the first and strongest arousers of Vlach national consciousness.

I gathered that Vlach was remembered, but not spoken, in Vlasti, a village to the south, and had entirely vanished in Sisanion and Pipiliste, where it was under threat in Wace and Thompson's day. Siatista, now entirely Greek, had also once been Vlach. Some ten miles north of Klisoura is the village of

Neveska or Nimfaion where they still speak Vlach. In 1981 I was unable to drag myself up by the direct route from Skledros, but in 1984 caught a taxi from Aetos. Nimfaion has had electricity since 1976, and a tarmac road since 1973, but did not have a bus service. Perhaps it did not need one, as its inhabitants all seemed very prosperous.

In the cafés the old men and even the middle-aged men spoke Vlach more often than Greek. They were not very good on the history of the village, although there was some dim recollection of some refugees from Moschopolis in Albania joining the original inhabitants around 1800. In the nineteenth century the inhabitants had become very rich through trade, especially with Egypt. I admired one particularly magnificent house, and was told that it had been built by a merchant who had gained the tobacco monopoly to Sweden. Some of the eight hundred houses had crumbled into disuse, but new ones were being built in the same style. The village had not suffered unduly in the World War or Civil War, but records had been burnt. There was a museum in a private house, full of old costumes. Nimfaion has been the subject of a moving if slightly sentimental and pro-Greek monograph which claimed that it had been founded by migrants from Moschopolis, and a similar origin from Albania is claimed for Klisoura. The wealth of these two villages might suggest a foundation from Moschopolis in the days of its prosperity. On the other hand the strategic position of both villages is such that an older foundation is not impossible.⁶

An older foundation is certainly claimed for Pisodherion by one of its inhabitants, who sees its strategic position and the nearby mountain peak of Vigla as evidence of a Roman presence in this area.⁷ He makes the same claim for other Vlach

⁶ For a Greek history of Neveska see D. Pephanes, *To Numphaion* (Salonica, 1964) and for Klisoura G. Trupes, *Kleisoura* (Florina, n.d.) and A. Tsiogios, *Sunoptikê Historia tês Kleisouras* (Salonica, 1962). A. Rubin, *Les Roumains de Macédoine* (Bucarest, 1913), gives a useful account of Neveska and Klisoura from the Romanian point of view. For the Hellenisation of Vlatzi see T. Papahagi, *Dictionarul Dialectul Aromin* (Bucarest, 1974), pp. 9–11. Papahagi quotes Pouqueville, *Voyage dans la Grèce*, vol. 2, p. 422, as saying that Siatista was founded by Vlach shepherds in the twelfth century.

⁷ S. N. Liakos, *Makedono-Armanika* (Salonica, 1976) thinks that the strategic positions of Pisodherion and Klisoura would of necessity be guarded by Roman soldiers. See Map 4.

villages. Pisodherion lies on a more direct but more difficult route from Florina to Kastoria than that which goes by Klisoura and Aetos. The road runs close to the Albanian frontier and is perhaps deliberately kept in a poor state of repair. It runs through well-wooded country, and the place name Dendrochori, where a few Vlachs are to be found, reminds us of the place between Kastoria and Prespa, Kalai Druës, where the Vlachs are mentioned in history for the first time in 976 A.D. This part of the road is unlikely to have been a major thoroughfare in ancient times, but when we get to the district near Lake Prespa we are on to one of the major East–West passages through the Balkans with only the Pisodherion pass and the Tsangon pass being major obstacles. Unfortunately hostility between Greece and Albania has rendered this road almost unusable. There are a few Vlachs at Kroustalopygi on the border.

There are not many Vlachs at Pisodherion. The bitter climate seems to have driven most of them away. The houses are both old and uncomfortable, and there is no inn or coffee-house. The church was built in the late Turkish period, but is on the site of an older church, remains of which are to be seen, housing in rather a grisly fashion the head of Pavlos Melas, the great Greek freedom fighter at the turn of the century. An enormous school nearby has no pupils, but is being restored as a hotel, and this may mend Pisodherion's fortunes. There is a famous monastery, Ayia Triada, about an hour away, dating back to the year 1050, and evidence like the old part of the church of Pisodherion's antiquity. Below the main road there are traces of an ancient track, falsely claimed to be the Via Egnatia.

Vlach is also spoken in one village in the mountains south of Pisodherion, Drosopiyyi, and four villages on or near the shores of Lake Prespa, Kallithea, Ayios Germanos, Vronderon and Pili. The last two are to be found in an extraordinary isolated fragment of Greece, surrounded on almost all sides by Albania or one or other of the two Lake Prespas. They are said to be more purely Vlach than Kallithea or Ayios Germanos where Vlach is competing with Greek, Slav and Pontic Greek. The history of these Vlachs is fairly simple. They were wandering Vlachs with their winter quarters near the Greek coast and summer pastures in the Albanian moun-

tains near Korçë who were caught by the shifting boundaries of Balkan states before, during and after the First World War, being eventually settled in these parts to fill the vacuum left by the retreating Muslim population after the exchange of populations in 1923.

On Mount Grammos near the Albanian border, there are still Vlachs in spite of difficult political conditions. This was the area where the final battles of the Civil War were fought but, in spite of this fact and the unfriendliness of Albania, I gather that Vlach shepherds still tend their flocks in this area, even occasionally crossing the frontier in the process. This was of course the area from which many Vlachs emigrated westwards at the beginning of the nineteenth century, and I have heard Vlachs as far East as central Bulgaria call themselves Gramosteani.

An Albanian origin is certainly likely for the Vlachs near Serres. In the 1928 census considerable numbers of Vlachs were reported in Eastern Macedonia and Western Thrace, and Vlachs in this area receive a mention in the Admiralty handbook of Greece, written during the war, but describing pre-war conditions.⁸ There may be some confusion with Saracatsans here, as the Rhodope mountains used to be the favourite haunt of the latter. I found some Vlach spoken at Ano Poroia, north west of Serres, but have not penetrated further east. The racial composition of these parts has been drastically altered by the influx of refugees from Asia Minor, although according to the Admiralty handbook there were areas where only the hardy Vlachs could make a living.

Further south there are two groups of Vlachs about whose origins there is some controversy. Vlachs on Mount Vermion and Mount Olympus are clearly well placed to guard important passes south of the Via Egnatia, and there is evidence of a considerable Roman presence here in classical times. Hence the romantic theory that the Vlachs on these mountains are the descendants of Roman soldiers. But this is denied by most modern scholars, who see the Vlachs on both mountains as

⁸ The Admiralty, *Geographical handbook series, Greece* (London, 1945), vol. 3, pp. 143–5. The 1928 census showed 66 Vlachs in the Rhodope region, 193 in the nomos of Kavalla, 429 in Drama and 1275 in Serres.

coming from Albania relatively recently.⁹ On Olympus I heard contrary views, and although we need not go as far back as the Roman legions, there is some case for not believing too readily the explanation that all Eastern Vlachs are recent arrivals from the Grammos mountains.

For the Vermion villages of Ano and Kato Vermion and Xirolivadhon I am largely dependent upon the Kramer team¹⁰ who report a gloomy picture of Vlach being rapidly forgotten in Xirolivadhon, uninhabited during the winter. They are a little more hopeful about Ano Grammatikon on the north side of Mount Vermion, although this village was depleted in between the wars when a large party left for Romania. There was a Romanian school here until 1945. The villages of Doliani and Voiada appear to have vanished, but to the north Simovski reports Vlach communities in Patima and Kedhronas.

On Mount Olympus there are two Vlach villages, Kokinnopolis and Livadhion, which Weigand and Wace and Thompson report as becoming Hellenised. This and the fact that a third village on Mount Olympus, Fteri, is now deserted might make one sceptical about the survival of Vlach in these parts, but both I and the Kramer team found even children talking Vlach on Olympus. Both villages are inhabited in winter, with Livadhion having 4,000 inhabitants but Kokinnopolis a far smaller number. Livadhion is very prosperous, and there is considerable interest in its history. There is a museum, a newspaper and three histories of the village. In Kokinnopolis we had to rely on the memories of the village priest. The villagers said they were poor, and they looked it. The village had suffered from the Turks, and in and after the Second World War. Many of the seven hundred houses were given over to animals, and my figure of the total number of inhabitants in 1982 is much less than the Kramer team's figure of 1,500.

There does not seem much love lost between the two villages, and their history is likely to have been very different. In

⁹ See below Chapters Four and Five. Wace and Thompson, p. 221, are fairly dismissive. Maps 3 and 5 show these villages. T. Simovski, *The Inhabited Places in Aegean Macedonia* (Skopje, 1976), is a mine of information about remote villages, although he writes (in Macedonian) from a Yugoslav point of view.

¹⁰ *Balkan Archiv* 1 (1976), pp. 16–19.

Kokinnopolis the church, extensively restored in 1912, was said by the priest to have been built in 1732. He thought the village had been founded by refugees from the Turks at the time of the fall of Constantinople. This was one of the theories put forward by the historians of Livadhion, but they also mention the possibility of still earlier settlements, as well as drawing attention to an influx from the west in the time of Ali Pasha. The museum contains relics of the time before Ali Pasha. Kramer draws attention to marked differences between the language of the two villages, and I noted that in Kokinnopolis he is *atselu* from *ille*, and at Livadhion it is *aestu* from *iste*.

Last but not least we have the Meglen Vlachs. They speak a separate kind of Vlach, and it does not need a trained philologist to detect marked differences in morphology and phonology.¹¹ Some have attributed these differences to Slavonic influences, but this is present in other parts of Greece, and in any case the Meglen Vlachs live in a strange mosaic of languages, since as well as Meglen Vlach there is ordinary Vlach in the village of Megala Livadhia, ordinary Greek and Pontic Greek, Slav and even Turkish, all spoken in an area of about a hundred square miles. Most of the work done on Meglen Vlach has been done by Romanians who tend to see the Meglen Vlachs as half way between Romanian and other Macedonian Vlachs. Earlier commentators on the Meglen Vlachs perhaps exaggerated the difference between Meglen Vlachs and other Vlachs. Some Meglen Vlachs were converted to Islam, but these have now left for Turkey. They call themselves Vlachs and not Aroumanians, but so do other Vlachs. They are engaged in agriculture, but this is probably due to the good soil of the area, which now, thanks to new roads, is being opened up to tractors.

On the other hand Meglen Vlachs are clearly different from other Vlachs, and some have seen them as the last survivors of a much larger population of mid-Balkan Vlachs originally occupying most of what is now Bulgaria. Others have seen the Meglen Vlachs as the result of a particular settlement in

¹¹ I made in 1982 and 1983 a list of Meglen words and phrases following those listed by the Kramer team for other Vlach villages. The vowel shifts were considerable, and the vocabulary also revealed some odd idiosyncrasies, not all of them with a Slavonic base. See Map 6.

Byzantine times. Basil II conquered the Meglen at the beginning of the eleventh century and Alexius Comnenus settled some defeated Pechenegs near Enotia in 1091.¹²

Enotia is presumably Notia, in Vlach Nunte, but this is no longer a Meglen town. It is now inhabited by people from the Pontus. The town suffered terribly at the hands of Germans and Bulgarians during the war, and now has only a few old houses in it. I was unable to find any traces of Notia's Moslem past. There did appear to be remains of an ancient settlement on the east side of the village, and perhaps this was medieval Enotia. From Notia a good road proceeds to Langadhia, Perikleia and Archangelos, in all of which Meglen Vlach was spoken. In the highest village, Archangelos, previously known as Oshani, there had been a Romanian school and about half the population had left for Romania in 1925. In the Second World War the population in the villages in the plain had fled to Salonica, but the people of Archangelos had somehow held on, and in the 1950s a new road had been built, connecting Archangelos with Ardhea, so that it was now possible to reach Salonica by bus in under four hours. This road obviously brought prosperity to the area, and encouraged the people to remain and develop the land, a task made easier when tractors rather than mules could do the work.

Contrary to expectations, aroused by early reports of the inaccessibility and squalor of the Meglen, and later reports of the death of Meglen Vlach, Archangelos struck me as being one of the more flourishing Vlach villages I had encountered. Paradoxically, whereas the remoteness of Anilion would seem to have preserved Vlach, it was the accessibility of Archangelos via the new road which would seem to have saved Meglen Vlach in this area. There are several other factors which may explain the survival of Meglen Vlach. For several years in the war period Archangelos was without a school; although it now has a handsome school where children are taught in Greek, and are now forgetting their Vlach, their parents, people of

¹² For this controversy see G. Weigand, *Vlacho-Meglen* (Leipzig, 1892), K. Jireček, 'Über die Wlachen in Meglen', in *Archiv für Slavische Philologie*, 15 (1890), pp. 91-103, and T. Capidan, *Meglenoromanii* (Bucarest, 1925). The presence of Meglen Vlachs settled in the Dobrudja has been an opportunity for Romanian philologists such as N. Saramandu, *Cercetări asupra Aromânei vorbite în Dobrogea* (Bucarest, 1972) to work on the Meglen Vlachs, but the historical problem is not easy to solve.

my generation, the middle-aged men of the square, could only have thought in Vlach during their formative years. A somewhat morbid inspection of the cemetery would suggest considerable longevity in this area, and my host's pride in his numerous children would point to considerable philoprogenitivity. In addition the inhabitants of this area seem remarkably proud of their special status as Vlachs. The first conversation we overheard in the square was between a Meglen Vlach from Archangelos and an ordinary Vlach from Megala Livadhia, each boastfully claiming that they were the true Vlachs.

On the bus back from Archangelos we heard two beautiful girls talking in yet another language, like Macedonian and yet not Macedonian, just as their beauty was both like and unlike the hard-bitten good looks of the Meglen Vlach ladies. This language turned out to be Russian, and the girls who claimed to speak Russian were descendants of Communist refugees after the Civil War who had settled in, of all places, Tashkent. They informed us (in Greek) that they spoke at home in Tashkent Greek, Meglen Vlach and Russian. There are probably other Meglen speakers in America, Australia and even some survivals from the population exchanges in Turkey, but one would not have thought their language could have survived for long. One would have thought the same about Tashkent, but the return of this girl as a result of the recent amnesty decreed by the Greek government is, like her retention of Meglen Vlach, a romantic tribute to the passionate attachment that all Balkan people, but particularly the Vlachs, feel towards their native soil. So often uprooted they still seem strangely attached to their roots.

From Archangelos one can walk back to Megala Livadhia, a linguistic pool within a linguistic island, where ordinary Vlachs from Albania have settled and after leaving their village in the Civil War have returned in 1960.¹³ One can also walk across a low range of hills to Meglen Vlachs on the other side of Mount Paikos, but this is probably dangerous, as the border area is a little sensitive, and our presence was not welcome in Skra (Ljuminsta), although the village can be

¹³ J. Trifunovski, 'Juridische und Ökonomische Aspect der Transhumanz bei den Aromunen (Mazedo-Rumanen) von Livedz-Megleniten', in *Academie Serbe des Sciences et des Arts* (Belgrade, 1976), pp. 5-22.

reached like other villages on this side by bus or foot from Goumenissa. We did establish that they spoke Vlach in Skra and were told that they spoke it in nearby Koupa. Nearer Goumenissa Grivas speaks Slav, but Karpi, whose inhabitants claimed that their village was eight hundred years old, speaks Vlach. Kastaneri (Barovitsa) was becoming Slav in Weigand's time, and probably like Notia and on the Yugoslav side Sermenin and Konjsko no longer can count as a Meglen Vlach village. Nevertheless Meglen Vlach still survives in eight out of the twelve villages mentioned by Weigand. The area suffered in the First World War; there is a war memorial at Skra to a battle fought in 1916. In the Second World War there is a good account by a British soldier of the hardships on Mount Paikos, although there is no mention of Vlachs.¹⁴ In the Civil War there was an attack from the Yugoslav border on Skra. Some have given up the Meglen Vlachs for lost, but reports of their demise would seem to be premature.¹⁵

There are almost certainly other small pockets of Vlachs which have escaped my notice. A waiter in Corfu told me that he spoke Vlach at home in the village of Kefalovrison on the Albanian border, and no doubt in Epirus, Thessaly and Macedonia there are Vlach settlements, probably of recent date and comparatively little historical interest. There are also Vlachs in all the large towns of the area, particularly Florina, Veroia, Naousa, Trikkala, Larisa, Ioannina and Kastoria quite apart from Vlachs in Salonica, Athens, Canada, Australia, Germany and Russia. It is these Vlachs who are most in danger of losing their language and their identity; much of the strength of the Vlachs in Greece depends upon the strength of the village. At the beginning of the nineteenth century Leake estimated that there were five hundred Vlakhote communities in the Balkans.¹⁶ Now there can hardly be a hundred, and very few of these give signs of linguistic health. Nevertheless in view of the events of the last hundred years any kind of survival is remarkable.

¹⁴ D. Turner, *Kyriakos* (London, 1982). Simovski says there was considerable emigration from Meglen villages to Romania between the wars.

¹⁵ G. Nandris, 'The development and structure of Rumanian', in *Slavonic Review* 31 (1951), pp. 7-39.

¹⁶ W. Leake, *Travels in Northern Greece* (London, 1835), vol. 1, p. 274.

CHAPTER THREE

Vlachs in the Balkans

I visited Yugoslavia under the auspices of the British Academy in 1979, and have made several private visits. In 1981 I went to Bulgaria with the help of the British Council and saw Albania under slightly less promising circumstances with a party of Byzantinists in 1976. At no time did the authorities put any difficulties in the way of my studying the Vlachs, although I did run into certain linguistic difficulties. As explained in Chapter One at any rate since the war Albania and Yugoslavia have had a comparatively good record in the treatment of minorities, although Vlach is such a small minority that it is unlikely to receive much consideration. Nevertheless a deliberate policy of urbanisation in all three countries makes life difficult both for Vlachs and their investigators. It is much easier to find a Vlach in a small village than in a block of high-rise flats, and it is much easier for a Vlach to retain his identity in such conditions. I am aware that much of the information in this chapter is second-hand, and may be out of date, but historically the non-Greek Vlachs are just as interesting as their southern kinsmen.

In Bulgaria a few Vlachs would seem to have retained their identity since the time Weigand wrote about them, in spite of population exchanges between Greece and Bulgaria after the First World War and poor relations between these two countries after the Second World War. There is said to be a Vlach quarter in Sofia and a Vlach presence in the former Greek centres of Melnik and Nevrokop, now known as Goce Delčev. Most of the Vlachs in Bulgaria left for the Dobrudja after a convention between Bulgaria and Romania in 1930. This particular exchange does not seem to have been a success, and I heard sinister stories of children being thrown into furnaces and a failure by the Vlachs to assimilate to their new homes.

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The Vlachs who remained, perhaps rather a biased source, were very contemptuous of Saracatsans. I met some of these Saracatsans who apparently number 12,000, although their main haunts are in the Haemus mountains, further north than the areas I visited.¹ Though now settled in fixed homes, they seem very prosperous, as the Bulgarian government have discovered that only they can manage the flocks on the high mountain pastures.

Confusion between Saracatsans, in Bulgaria known as Karacatchans, Vlachs, Pomaks, who are Bulgarian speaking Muslims, and even Yürüks, Turkish nomads, is likely to have baffled earlier investigators. The Rhodope mountains, in spite of their height, are clearly traversed by excellent mountain passes and have excellent summer grazing. Apparently the high pastures were taken in summer by Vlachs and Saracatsans, and the low pastures by Pomak shepherds. Then in winter the Pomaks went down to the sea, while the Vlachs and Saracatsans moved into the empty low pastures. This must have created a certain amount of racial tension, and I found this even today, although frequently assured that all was now sweetness and light. It must also have created difficulties for the makers of ethnological maps and perhaps explains why the presence of Vlachs and Saracatsans in Bulgaria is largely ignored in such maps, except by a few extremely chauvinist Romanian and Greek map-makers who colour almost all of the Rhodope in Romanian or Greek colours.

There would be little pretext for this now. I found a few old Vlachs in the town of Dorkovo, recorded as being Vlach by Wace and Thompson. This is near Vilengrad, about twenty miles south of the main Sofia-Istanbul railway. There were also Vlachs in Rakitovo in the same area. They fumbled for Vlach when faced with the tape-recorder but were pleased to sing songs of the old days often going back to the time of Ali Pasha. I heard that there were a few Vlachs left in Blavoeograd, formerly Dzhumaia, another Vlach stronghold. These elderly Vlachs were usually quite clear about their origins. Some came from Grammos, some from Pindus. One 93-year-old remembered that his great-grandfather had come from Magarevo

¹ W. Marinov, *Die Schafzucht der Nomadisierenden Karacakatshanen in Bulgarien* (Budapest, 1961). I had the help of Professor Marinov when going round Bulgaria.

in Yugoslavia. As in southern Thessaly, so in Bulgaria. The evidence suggests that the Vlachs are recent arrivals from Albania or the Pindus or southern Yugoslavia, but there are also frequent references in both areas to a Vlach presence in medieval times. As Weigand saw, the Bulgarian Latin speakers present something of a problem.² The Romanians to the north are obviously part of the main block of Romanian-speakers north of the Danube. The Vlachs in the south are called by Weigand Gramosteani and are considered by him to be, like other Vlachs in the centre and east of the Balkans, fairly recent arrivals from Mount Grammos. None of these groups either explains or is explained by the large amount of Latin place names in the centre of the country or the frequent references to Vlachs in medieval Bulgarian history, notably and embarrassingly in references to the second Bulgarian empire.

Oddly enough, exactly the same problem occurs in Yugoslavia, although both the number of Romanians in the north and the number of Vlachs in the south is larger, and the problem is complicated by two other isolated fragments of Latin speech, one dead and one dying, in the far north-west of the country. The Dalmatian dialect, sometimes known as Vegliot, the last speaker of which died on the island of Veglia in 1898, is not really part of the Vlach story, since it is clear from the surviving records of this language that it was very different from other fragments of Balkan Latinity, placing the article for instance before the noun rather than after. Dalmatian, the language of the Latin colonists of the Eastern Adriatic coast, is of interest to students of Vlach for two reasons. It is sometimes difficult to distinguish in Slav chronicles between references to Adriatic Vlachs and inland Vlachs. It is also interesting for students of linguistic islands to note the extraordinary tenacity of Dalmatian, and it is a moot point whether this language survived so long, or finally succumbed, because of the influence of Italian.³

In the far north of the country, on the slopes of Mount

² His *Rumänen und Aromunen in Bulgarien* (Leipzig, 1907) is, as far as I know, the only study of this problem, although see Chapter Four for the historical controversy.

³ K. Jireček, *Die Romanen in den Städten Dalmatiens* (Vienna, 1901), gives the best account of Dalmatian.

Cicarija between Trieste and Rijeka, there are villages whose inhabitants speak a language which is closer to Romanian than Meglen Vlach but which still has sufficient distinctive features to be classed as a dialect on its own. Known by the local inhabitants as Ciribiri and by philologists as Istrian Vlachs, the inhabitants of these villages are both a remarkable linguistic survival and a historical puzzle. Presumably the presence of Slovenian, Croatian, Italian and German in the neighbourhood is one reason for their survival. Moreover Istria has changed hands between Austria, Italy and Yugoslavia in the past hundred years. Nor is it likely that the Istrian Vlachs are autochthonous. It is more probable that they settled in their present abode as a result of fleeing from the Turks in the fifteenth century, although it is not clear whether they fled from Romania proper or whether they are the last vestiges of the Vlachs of Yugoslavia about which we hear in Serbian and Croatian chronicles.⁴ I made a visit to the Istrian Vlachs in 1981 and noted that the impressive list of villages under Mount Cicarija listed as being Meglen Vlach contains many names which are nothing but hamlets. Even one of the bigger villages, Šušnjevića, was hardly full of life. One could dimly detect an old Italian sign for an inn, but there was now no inn to act as a focus for village life. I thought I heard an old woman speaking Vlach to her dog. Earlier in the 60s Romanian scholars had paid tribute to the remarkable resilience of the dialect still spoken by children. They had heard the cry 'resclide uša' on the bus. The northerly outpost of Jeian, separated from the other Istrian Vlachs who seemed unaware of its existence, attracted some attention from Dahmen and Kramer in the 1970s, although they were interviewing people who had moved to Opatija for work.⁵ It would seem that the villages are

⁴ For a bibliography of investigations into the Istrian Vlachs see A. Rosetti, *Istoria Limbii Române* (Bucarest, 1966). P. Neiescu, 'Récherches dialectales chez les Roumains sud-Danubiens', in *Revue Roumaine de Linguistique* 10 (1965), pp. 229-37, is optimistic about the Istrian Vlachs, as are E. Petrovici and P. Neiescu, 'Persistance des îlots linguistiques', in *Revue Roumaine de Linguistique* 10 (1965), pp. 351-74. In the former article Costirceanu and Sucodru, as well as Jeian and Sušnjevića, Noselo, Brdo, are mentioned as Vlach villages. See Map 9. Brdo I have learnt from C. Lavacek, has four elderly Istrian Vlach inhabitants, living in great luxury, supported by a relative in Australia.

⁵ W. Dahmen and J. Kramer, 'Observatii despre vocabulorul Istroromanei vorbite la Jeian', in *Balkan-Archiv* 1 (1976), pp. 78-89.

more under threat than the language, although if the villages die the language has not much hope of survival. These Istrian Vlachs lie on the boundary of Croatian and Slovene. The competition from Italian and German has receded. Undoubtedly these rival claimants for the role of lingua franca have kept Istrian Vlach in business, although it cannot survive all that long.

In the south of the country we find Vlachs who speak the same language as the Vlachs of Greece. I tried out in Malovište tape recordings of songs I had made in Anilion, and found they were intelligible; and the same was true when the inhabitants of Anilion listened to recordings I had made in Malovište. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries many Vlachs moved northwards through what is now Yugoslavia and gradually lost their identity in the big cities, although for a time Belgrade was almost a Vlach city, and Vienna and Budapest had recognisable Vlach colonies. The same process would seem to be happening now in Macedonia. Most of the 10,000 or so Vlachs recorded in the 1948 census now live in cities, and Vlachs can be found in Štip, Prilep, Titov Veles and Skopje. The town of Kruševo, which can now be reached by a road from the west less hazardous than the route from Prilep with its seventeen hairpin bends, had 5,000 inhabitants in 1969, of whom more than half were Vlachs.⁶ In winter Kruševo is a ski resort, but in summer it has a remarkably sleepy air. All the churches and the museum were closed when I went there in 1979, and they were showing Elvis Presley in the cinema. The revolt in 1903, known as the Ilinden rising, against the Turks means that the town is a shrine of Macedonian nationalism, although Bulgarians and Greeks also claim that it was their rising. As a result of the rising much of the town was burnt, although there are still some fine old houses.

South of Kruševo on the slopes of Mount Pelister there are five Vlach villages, as there were in Weigand's day. Three of these villages, Nižepolje, Trnovo and Magarevo, are said, like Kruševo, to be fairly recent foundations; but two others, Gopeš

⁶ N. Saramandu, 'Le parler Aroumain de Kruševo', in *Revue des Études Sud-Est Européennes* 17 (1979), pp. 153-62. J. Trifunovski, 'Die Aromunen in Mazedonien', in *Balkanica* 2 (1971), pp. 337-47, in a generally gloomy picture of Vlach in Yugoslavia gives precise figures for Vlach families in Kruševo (260), Malovište (195), Gopeš (38), Nižepolje (37), Trnovo (21), Magarevo (21) and Belica (10). These were based on visits between 1950 and 1960. See Map 7.

and Malovište, claim much greater antiquity. Turkish records of the seventeenth century cast doubt on this distinction. Weigand detected resemblances between the dialect of Gopeš and Malovište and that of the Meglen Vlachs, but the Kramer team, whose optimism about Malovište has been noted, show that Vlach vocabulary is not all that different in Malovište from that used in Greek Vlach villages. All five villages are close to the route of the Via Egnatia which ran from Lyncidus (Ohrid) to Heraclea (Bitola). It would be fanciful, but not impossible, to consider that these villages are the result of the subsequent flight into the hills of Romans who had been manning these roads. Certainly Malovište would be an ideal site for such refugees; its name presumably means 'difficult to see', and it is almost invisible until one is actually in the village. All five villages are much smaller than they were in Weigand's day. Gopeš is practically deserted, and Malovište has only a tenth of the 2,000 Vlachs recorded by Weigand.

Nižepolje is a prosperous village with many new houses. Its inhabitants speak Vlach, Albanian and Macedonian; many also speak Greek, and my informant spoke fluent Australian. The presence of so many Greek-speakers is due to the fact that in the First World War the village was badly damaged and the inhabitants fled to Greece, whence they returned rather surprisingly in 1923 and built a new church. There is also a small mosque. Vlach is still the language most commonly spoken at home, and presumably retains its predominance through the multiplicity of competitors. In Magarevo and Trnovo, famous Vlach villages in the nineteenth century, I mainly heard Macedonian spoken, although I met a nice old man in Magarevo who spoke both Vlach and Greek. He had fought for the Greeks against the Turks in Asia Minor and had strange memories of the First World War, when French colonial troops, Senegalese and Indo-Chinese, had reduced the town to rubble, although two fine old churches had survived. Nižepolje, Magarevo and Trnovo can all be reached in half an hour by car from Bitola, where there is an intensive urbanisation programme, and the survival of Vlach in these villages can be likened to the winter snows which I saw lingering in the clefts of the mountains on a hot September day.

About a mile above Nižepolje there is a bridge, said to be Roman, but probably Turkish, crossing the left-hand branch

of the river Drazor. Between this bridge and Nižepolje which all lies to the west of the right-hand branch of the river is some good pasture land. It is difficult to see what purpose the bridge could serve except to supply a military post, and indeed the lie of the land is such that a fortress could have existed just over the bridge. There are recorded Roman remains at Trnovo and remains of unknown origin at Malovište. A strong Roman military presence along the Via Egnatia would be essential when the province of Macedonia was being conquered and when three hundred years later it had to be defended against Gothic invasions; but, though a continuous Latin presence is not improbable in this small central section of the Via Egnatia with its high mountain passes, there are still many gaps between the Roman bridge and the year 1300 which the Vlachs of Malovište and Gopeš claim as about the time their villages were founded.

To the east of this group Weigand recorded itinerant Vlachs on the direct route between Ohrid and Resan; and Wace and Thompson said there were Vlachs at Istok in the same area.⁷ Istok appears to have vanished and, though I found the spring where Weigand saw the Vlachs but did not approach them because he was afraid of brigands, I found no trace of either Vlachs or brigands. Weigand said the route was a bad one, and I certainly found it so; but he, and presumably the Vlachs, took it, whereas the modern road takes a great curve northwards. Hammond makes the Via Egnatia follow the modern road, while other scholars make the road curve southwards, and certainly the evidence of the Roman itineraries suggests a fairly long distance between Ohrid and Resan, although it would be tempting to explore the possibility that the Roman road went along the route Weigand took. Between Ohrid and Bitola there were several posts recorded in the itineraries, fairly confidently identified by Hammond, although not yet excavated; and a military post would certainly be expected in the several passes through which both Weigand's road and the modern road runs. In addition it is clear that at one time the frontier between Latin-speaking Illyricum and Greek-speaking Macedonia lay on this stage of the Via Egnatia.

⁷ Weigand, *Die Aromunen*, pp. 40–2; Wace and Thompson, pp. 176–216; Hammond, *Macedonia*, vol. 1, pp. 37–43.

Thus, though there is no evidence for a continuous Roman presence in this area, a considerable amount of Latin was probably spoken in this area at some time.

On the Albanian border north of Lake Ohrid the inhabitants of lower and upper Belica still speak Vlach. These villages are unusual in that Albanian and Macedonian both compete with Vlach in them. Both these former languages are taught in the school, whereas Vlach is not. Wace and Thompson knew the villages as Beala, and said the Vlachs there were Farsherots from Albania and lived among Albanians and Bulgars: thus the three languages are no new phenomenon. Lower Belica is only six miles from Struga along a good road to the prosperous Slav village of Vevčani four miles away. Buses go through the village every two hours. The survival of Vlach in these circumstances seems something of a miracle, and yet I was assured that almost half the village still spoke Vlach. In previous years the proportion had been higher, but there had been much movement to Belgrade and Skopje, and I spoke to a number of inhabitants who had worked in Germany. The village looked thriving with small, quite old farmsteads behind high pallisades and some new houses. Chickens, cows and vegetables seemed everywhere, but I saw no sheep. I might have seen some if I had penetrated to Upper Belica some six miles up the slope of the Jablanica mountain range which divides Yugoslavia from Albania, but I gathered that this was almost deserted, though once a fine village. It was perhaps an influx from Upper Belica which had kept Vlach alive in the lower village, where the first thing I heard was a three-year-old ask his brother in Vlach what was the matter, and the last thing I heard was three small giggling girls sing a Vlach song at the well and then solemnly recite the numbers up to ten in English and in Vlach.

On the Greek border near Gevgelija the three villages of Sermenin, Konjsko and Uma represent the Yugoslav side of the Meglen Vlachs and would certainly repay investigation, although the first two villages can now be reached by a paved road and the last is right on the border. I made an unsuccessful visit by foot to these villages in 1982 and got lost in a barren wilderness, inhabited mainly by tortoises. There is a good account of Konjsko in the 1920s, suggesting that Vlach was at that time moribund in the village, but Meglen Vlachs in

Archangelos said that they thought they still spoke Vlach in Uma, and Romanian scholars report this in 1964, although the language is spoken no longer by children. They also say many people have moved to Gevgelija.⁸ In the east of the country in and near the town of Štip live several Vlachs not commonly included in linguistic maps, although Weigand did mention them in his description of the Vlachs of Bulgaria. I met such a Vlach in Skopje who told me that her parents had had a farm near the Bulgarian border. She denied Weigand's theory that these Vlachs, like the Bulgarian Vlachs, were the result of an emigration from Albania and maintained that they had always lived in those parts. On the other hand the most recent account of the Vlachs near Štip suggests that they were itinerant shepherds, originally from Albania, who had only been settled in small villages after the Second World War. This settlement had not helped their survival.⁹ North of Niš on the east side of the country the Vlasi are of course Romanians, but rumours of Vlachs in Bosnia and the centre of Yugoslavia in the nineteenth century should refer to Vlachs proper, although they would probably have lost their Vlach speech. A district of Serbia is known as Stari Vlahia, and two mountains in Montenegro, Mount Durmitor and Mount Visitor have obvious Latin names. There are other kinds of Roman links in Bosnia and Herzegovina.¹⁰

⁸ For the Vlachs of Konjsko see L. Schultze-Jena, *Makedonien Landschaften und Kulturbilder* (Jena, 1927). Neiescu and Petrovici report on Vlach in Uma, no longer spoken by children.

⁹ Trifunoski, 'Die Aromunen in Mazedonien', pp. 343–5, and also 'Die heutigen aromunischen "Katunen" in Mazedonien', *Sonderausgaben der Wissenschaftlichen Gesellschaft SR Sarajevo* 2 (1963), pp. 200–2. In 1948 all sheep were nationalised, and in 1953 there was a re-organisation of collective farms. Previously Vlachs in the Štip region had taken their flocks to the nearby mountain ranges. D. Antonijević, 'Tradition and innovation at Tzintars in Ovče Polje in the Socialist Republic of Macedonia', *Balkanica* 5 (1974), pp. 319–30, provides some moving photographs, some strange English and a generally gloomy picture. He mentions Alakince, Amzabegovo, Adžibegovo, Ursakovo, Delsinci, Dorfuli, Erdželija, Keseleri, Krivi Dol, Mečkuevci, Mustafino and Sarčievo as Vlach villages. I visited the area briefly in 1985, found one Vlach old lady on the bus to Ovče Polje, a certain amount of collective prosperity, but little evidence of the old Vlach way of life. See Map 8.

¹⁰ Jireček, *Die Romanen in den Städten Dalmatiens*, p. 38, and A. Evans, *Through Bosnia and Herzegovina* (London, 1877), pp. 230–40. The history of the medieval Vlachs in Yugoslavia is discussed in Chapter Eight.

In Albania the draining of the coastal plains around Fier and the erection of large industrial works near Ballshe have meant that it is no longer possible for the Vlachs to migrate from their summer pastures in the south of the country to the coast, and political conditions in Albania with an insistence on the collective farm would hardly seem helpful to the Vlach way of life. Nevertheless I found a Vlach quarter in Fier and heard that in the villages of Andon Boçi near Argyrokastro, Shkalla near Sarandë and Borova near Korçë, Vlach is the language taught in primary schools. Voskopojë, formerly Moschopolis, is the most famous Vlach settlement and indeed in the eighteenth century was one of the largest towns in the Balkans. Reduced to a shadow of its former greatness by Ali Pasha, it suffered heavily again in the Second World War. The main area of Vlach settlement would seem to be in Kolonie, presumably derived from the Latin 'colonia', on the northern slopes of the Grammos mountains, from which so many Vlachs emigrated in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Political conditions here, as with the Greek Vlachs of Mount Grammos, would not seem to be favourable to the Vlachs or their investigators. A Romanian team in the 60s reported a move by Vlachs to the towns of Tirana, Stan Karbunara, Shquepur, Pojan, Bilisht and Korçë, reporting also Vlachs in Karaja, Lusnja, Voskopojë, Drenova and Boboshtica.¹¹

My account of present Vlach settlements does not make any claim to be complete, although other lengthier lists and maps

¹¹ According to R. Marmellaku, *Albania and the Albanians* (London, 1975), p. 3, there were 10,000 Vlachs in Albania recorded in the 1961 census. There is some information about Vlachs in the idiomatically entitled article by C. Vatasescu, 'Macedo-Romanian words in Albanian slangs', *Revue des Études Sud-Est Européennes* 17 (1979), pp. 409–16. This is largely a linguistic article about the specialist vocabularies of itinerant workers, but it has some useful information, perhaps not wholly up to date, on the location of Vlach speakers in Albania. P. Neiescu, 'Recherches dialectales', relating the movement to the towns is probably more accurate. Describing the position before the war, Tamas locates the Vlachs in four main areas, those near Fier on the coast, fast losing their identity, those near Frasher, shepherds living in nine villages, those near Grabova, also shepherds, and those near Moschopolis in fourteen villages. These correspond to the areas mentioned by Weigand, enlarged probably mistakenly by Wăce and Thompson. Tamas supplies some useful information on the existence of a large number of Romanian schools in Albania up to the time of the Second World War.

of settlements tend to be out of date.¹² Given sufficient time, energy, money and co-operation from the national authorities, it would not be too difficult to organise a complete census of Vlach speakers, and perhaps this should be done before they finally disappear. Of course there are wide differences between the various Vlach settlements. Metsovon with its tourist shops and hotels is very different from Malovište with its one rarely open café, although every stranger will be greeted warmly in Vlach villages and any stranger who speaks a few words of Vlach will be regarded with a mixture of amazement and amusement. Cleanliness is another feature which both the richest and poorest Vlach settlements have in common; it was easy to pick out the Vlach quarter in Albanian Fier. After a time it becomes fairly easy to see common features in many Vlach settlements, even allowing for the difference between those which are occupied only in the summer and those which are inhabited all the year round. They are usually set on a steep slope, near a good supply of water, usually near the head of a valley, and they are, or were, rather larger than the average settlement of other nationalities. Many Vlach communities such as Malovište, Gardhiki and Anilion claim that the site of their village was originally elsewhere, and it is difficult to find many traces of permanent settlement lasting for more than three hundred years, though the older Vlach villages claim to be about six hundred years old.

In spite of the romantic story of their survival, the Vlachs are not a romantic people. Thrifty, sober and industrious, they keep their women in a subordinate position, and this is one reason why Vlach has survived. Children learn languages at their mother's knee, and Vlach mothers have little opportunity or inclination to say much more than what they learnt at their own mother's knee. Vlach has no literature worth speaking of, some Romanian-inspired folk tales and poetry being an artificial growth. The language with its broad vowel sounds and explosive consonants is an ugly one, and the staccato sentences of Greek seem a relief after it. There are a few Vlach

¹² The list in T. Capidan, *Les Macedo-Roumains* (Bucarest, 1937), pp. 4-7 is fairly complete, but he was writing before the Second World War, and the names of the villages are inconveniently in Vlach. D. Papazes, *Blachoi* (Athens, 1976) is optimistic, including places like Ohrid and Resan, but not Vovousa.

songs, which old ladies can be persuaded to sing, but neither the words nor the sounds are impressive. The limited vocabulary and syntax of Vlach does not make it a good vehicle for poetry, and one looks in vain for anything to equal the heroic lays of Yugoslavia or Albania, or even the klephtic ballads of Greece.

It is in more mundane skills that Vlachs excel their neighbours. The association of Vlachs with sheep, and perhaps Wace and Thompson's concentration on the Samarina district, has given an unfair impression of Vlachs as simple shepherds, an impression which the skilled wood-workers from Metsovon and metal-workers from Kallaritai would correct. Mules are almost as common a sight as sheep or goats in most Vlach villages, very often laden with timber from the mountains. Small timber factories are quite a feature, and Vlach hospitality makes for excellent innkeepers.

To carry out a worthwhile survey of the Vlach population one would have to do more than make a list of Vlach villages and throw in a few random sociological observations together with some fragments of oral tradition, which must be regarded with great caution when considering the history of the Vlachs. What is needed is some skilled archaeological and philological fieldwork. Each subject has its own pitfalls. Yugoslavia, Albania, Greece and Bulgaria are rich in archaeological resources but poor in the material resources with which to explore them. For reasons of national pride none of these countries is especially interested in the Roman period. Many of the more interesting sites are in sensitive border areas. Philology would seem to be cheaper and safer, but even here there are complicating factors. I found the Vlach I had learnt at Anilion perfectly serviceable in Malovište, except for the word for 'I understand', a word very useful in its negative form, which, as Wace and Thompson noted, is *ahihahescu* in the north and *dukesku* in the south. But more serious Vlach scholars report interesting dialect divergences, and it is all too easy to jump to conclusions by considering only one feature of the varied Vlach spectrum which exists in philology as much as in other areas. Romanian schools in the Balkans during the first half of this century are another complicating factor. Few would deny that the basic structure of Vlach is very close to that of Romanian, or that there is a considerable Greek element in

the vocabulary of most Vlachs. What is disputed is the time at which this element entered the language, and this is very hard to establish when the amount of Greek varies from village to village and from person to person in the same village.

It may be asked why a full scale enquiry is desirable in view of the limited cultural achievements of the Vlachs. The answer is that the history of the Vlachs is still very much a matter of conjecture, and that this history is important for an appreciation of the total history of the Balkan peninsula. Indeed the Vlachs are a good illustration of the idea that the study of the past helps us to understand, and even to improve, the present. Sometimes this idea seems of dubious value. It is perfectly true that to understand the present situation in Northern Ireland we have to know about 1921, and then about Gladstone and Parnell, and so on through the Battle of the Boyne to Cromwell and beyond, but it is not clear how an understanding of Cromwell is going to help our appreciation of Ulster in 1985. On the other hand an understanding of the Vlachs, for which we have to go back to the time of St. Patrick, if not further, would help us to appreciate recent and current Balkan problems. I would like to suggest a much greater Vlach element in the Balkans during the Middle Ages than has been commonly allowed. If this existed, the extreme nationalist claims of Balkan nations to parts of Macedonia on the grounds of history are obviously of less account. Unfortunately, however, in the case of the Vlachs the history of the present has been used to write the history of the past. The Vlachs are imperfectly known and not properly appreciated; most historical accounts of periods in which they were involved are partial in more senses than one.

CHAPTER FOUR

Vlachs and their Historians

The difficulties facing any student of the Vlachs are as forbidding as the austere landscape in which for centuries the Vlachs have made their summer homes. The doings of a remote and inaccessible people are recorded in remote and inaccessible sources. There is a strange and apparently unbridgeable gap between the submerging of the Latin speaking part of the Balkans under waves of barbarian invaders at the end of the sixth century and the first emergence of the Vlachs in written records four centuries later. When the Vlachs do emerge in the eleventh and twelfth centuries we find ourselves baffled by controversial problems about where they were living and what they were doing. The inability of most Byzantine chroniclers to look far beyond the gates of Constantinople, their readiness to regard all those who did not speak Greek as barbarians and their reluctance, encouraged by archaising tendencies, to be precise about the varieties of barbarians whom they encountered are not helpful. We cannot be sure that those who are called Vlachs are necessarily Latin speakers; we cannot be sure that Latin speakers are not lurking under such names as Bulgarians, Mysians or even Scythians; and above all we can place little reliance on any argument from silence to prove that no Vlachs were present. When we come to the thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth centuries the picture is slightly different. There is no shortage of references to Vlachs with the foundation of the Asenid Vlach-Bulgarian empire, the use of Vlachia as an alternative name for Thessaly, and the emergence of Romania north of the Danube; the real problem now arises in distinguishing one sort of Vlach from another. Byzantine sources send their generals marching and countermarching with the Vlachs and against them, but sometimes we feel, as the generals must

played a part in the resistance of the *klephts* to the Turkish authorities; yet they were also the victims of brigandage, often co-operating with the Turks as keepers of law and order. Many a Greek song bears witness to the blurring of the distinction between *armatole* and *klepht*.³⁰ Above all, the Vlachs began to merge with other nationalities: with Greeks in the south, with Romanians in the northwest and with Serbs, Austrians and Hungarians in the northeast.

³⁰ Zakythinos, pp. 70–81, 211–12.

CHAPTER TEN

Vlachs and the Great Powers

The rise of nationalism in the Balkans during the nineteenth century is a complicated story. Even if we take the case of Greece, the first nation to gain its independence and the nation with the most obvious identity, we are faced with a series of surprises. In spite of Byron's talk of Miltiades and Marathon most of the motley collection of people fighting for Greek independence knew little and cared less about their classical ancestors. A leading part in the first struggle was played by the rich Greeks of Romania. After 1832 emigration from newly independent Greece to the Turkish empire took place on a vast scale. The three chief Greek cities of the nineteenth century were Bucharest, Smyrna and Constantinople. One of Greece's first and best prime ministers was John Kolettis, a Vlach who dressed like a Turk and had been court physician to Ali Pasha.¹

The movement for Vlach independence was a fairly late starter among the many nationalist uprisings. We feel that it had something faintly artificial about it, although it is almost impossible to say whether the growth of a Vlach nationalist party was a genuine movement or a spurious one fostered by Romanian politicians. The first glimmerings of Vlach consciousness would seem to have taken place north of the Danube at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Rich merchants from the Southern Balkans, many of them originating from Moschopolis, were likely to be educated men, and thus know Greek, but because of their proximity to Romania they were also likely to be aware of the conflicting claims of Romanian.

The first primer of Vlach was published in Greek characters

¹ Dakin, *The Unification of Greece, 1770–1923* (London, 1972), p. 80. See also the essays by W. G. Forrest and W. St. Clair in T. Winniffrith and P. Murray (eds), *Greece Old and New* (London, 1983).

by a priest from Poznan, originating from Moschopolis in the year 1797. His name was Constantin Oukontas, and his work was published in Vienna. There is one known copy of his book in existence, to be found in Bucarest. In 1808, C. G. Rosa produced in Budapest an enquiry into the Vlachs on both sides of the Danube. In 1813 M. G. Bojadischi published a Vlach grammar twenty-two years before the first Bulgarian grammar. The dialogues which compose a large part of the book are supposed to take place between a visiting Pole and a resident Vlach in Vienna, almost as if Vlach had become a kind of *lingua franca* in Central Europe. The Romanians, still labouring with a Slavonic script, a Greek nobility and the fact that some of their people were under the rule of Austria, some of Russia and some of Turkey, began to take an interest in their Vlach cousins.²

The alphabet must have caused a problem. Though the Latin alphabet did well in Transylvania, where in 1811 the Emperor Francis II had granted permission for Romanian to be taught in schools, in the Turkish-dominated principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia, Cyrillic was initially predominant until Latin was made compulsory in 1863.³ The few records in Vlach we have, mainly eighteenth-century,⁴ are in Greek script, as are most of the early Vlach grammars. Even for one acquainted with both Vlach and Greek the Codex Dimonie with its odd Greek double vowels and double consonants looks very strange, and it must have looked even stranger to those used to Latin or Cyrillic characters. Nevertheless early Romanian writers and revolutionaries like G. Montan and E. Mingu took an interest in the Southern Vlachs, as did the leaders of the 1848 uprising such as N. Balescu and I. Ionescu de la Brad. D. Bolinteanu was the first to stress categorically in 1860 that the Vlachs were not Greeks but Romanians.⁵

In Romania the two semi-autonomous principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia were not united until 1861, and full

² Peyfuss, *Die Aromunische Frage*, pp. 24–7. For information about Bojadischi whose Vlach dialogues are in Latin script, I am grateful to Dr. P. Mackridge.

³ C. Giurescu, *Transylvania in the History of Romania* (Exeter, 1969), pp. 110–13.

⁴ Peyfuss, 'Rom oder Byzanz?', in *Österreichische Osthefte* 12 (1970), pp. 338–51.

⁵ Peyfuss, *Die Aromunische Frage*, pp. 32–8.

independence from Turkey was not granted until 1878. Even then there were still Romanians in Bessarabia, the southern Dobrudja and above all in Transylvania who were living in other states. It is possible to see Romanian agitation in favour of the Vlachs both as reflecting, and as being a reflection of, their feelings towards these minorities nearer home. It is unlikely that Romanian propaganda would have gone to such lengths had it not been for the work of one man, the Apostol Margarit.

Margarit was born in 1832, the year of Greek independence, at Avdhella, and began his career as a teacher in the Greek school at Klisoura. Both these Vlach villages still today reflect something of Margarit's independence. He began trying to teach his pupils in their own language. This aroused the wrath of the Patriarchate in Constantinople, and Margarit left for Bucarest to join the Macedo-Romanian committee that had been set up in 1860. This had already started bringing Vlachs to Romania to be educated, and in 1864 the first Romanian school had been set up at Trnovo near Monastir. Margarit set up schools in Avdhella in 1867 and Grevena in 1869.

Schools continued to be established for the next forty years. Although the numbers attending them were never nearly as high as in the equivalent Greek schools, the Romanian authorities could claim some credit for the large sums they had invested in educating Vlachs, as both the numbers of schools and the numbers at schools increased during the last quarter of the century.⁶ On the other hand Romanian protection was largely confined to education. Apostol Margarit, who died in 1903, did flirt with the Austrian and French authorities and with the idea of creating a Vlach church, closer to the Catholic church, but such an idea never really had much chance of succeeding. In his later years personal, ecclesiastical and even linguistic differences appear to have arisen between the Romanians and Margarit.

The Vlachs might appear to have won a great victory by being recognised as a separate *millet* in 1905. This gave them

⁶ Peyfuss, *Die Aromunische Frage*, pp. 42–7, for the beginnings of Romanian schools and p. 107 for figures just before the Second World War. Greek historians like Vakalopoulos are fairly scornful of the Romanian schools, which sometimes did not survive a Greek attack, or were only summer schools, and were certainly vastly inferior in numbers to the Greek schools.

the right to establish schools and to have representation on administrative councils. In August 1910 the Young Turks called a congress of Vlachs which demanded ecclesiastical rights.⁷ But an autonomous Vlach church, or a church attached to the Romanian church, could never have made much sense. A separate Bulgarian church had had difficulty in establishing itself in areas where the population was plainly Bulgarian-speaking, but where the Greek priest or bishop was the sitting tenant. The Romanian church was much weaker; it had begun its existence with a liturgy in Slavonic characters, and had had to contend with Protestantism and Catholicism as well as Islam.⁸ Margarit appears to have been something of an isolated figure, although there were church services in Vlach first held in Trnovo; in general both manpower and willpower were lacking in any movement for Vlach ecclesiastical independence.

The Vlachs were a very small part of the large Balkan problem. It was not until the latter half of the nineteenth century that nationalist feeling became really bitter in Macedonia, and here the principal source of hostility was the rivalry between the Bulgarian Exarchists who had been granted their own church in 1870 and the Greek Patriarchists. In the early struggle the Vlachs had a difficult part to play. In the early struggles of the Exarchists we find Patriarchists collaborating with the Turks; and we find Vlachs collaborating with all three parties. Thus in 1905 we find Vlachs working with Cretans and Albanians near Korčë, and in the same year Vlachs working with Exarchists near Florina. In 1908 we find Turks uniting with rumanising Vlachs near Veroia against the Greek leader Stavropoulos. These incidents are but isolated examples in an extremely complex struggle.⁹

The various attempts by the great powers to redraw the map of the Balkans created artificial frontiers which played havoc with Vlach trade. In 1878 there was a rising in Thessaly, and after the frontier had been altered many Vlachs found their

⁷ Dakin, *The Greek Struggle in Macedonia*, pp. 236, 405.

⁸ See Hitchins and R. Seton-Watson, *History of the Rumanians* (Cambridge, 1934) for the early struggles of Romanian orthodoxy. See also Seton-Watson, p. 384, for the rather cynical use made by Romanian politicians of the Vlach desire for a Vlach bishop.

⁹ Dakin is the best source for this period, although he tends to favour the patriarchists. Pp. 222, 233, 367 give accounts of the particular incidents.

winter quarters in Greece and summer pastures in Turkey.¹⁰ In 1897 Greece unsuccessfully provoked a war with Turkey and had to submit to a humiliating defeat; both the war and the subsequent further frontier rectification took place in Vlach territory.¹¹ Metsovon was particularly hard hit by these changes. Bulgaria's and Serbia's frontiers created by the Treaty of Berlin in 1878 did not include many Vlachs, though if the greater Bulgaria envisaged at the Treaty of San Stefano had taken place most of the northern Vlachs would have passed under Bulgarian rule.

As it was, most Vlachs remained under Turkish rule until the Balkan wars, the exception being the Vlachs in Thessaly. It may be coincidental that no Vlachs were recorded in Thessaly during the 1928 census, but it does seem on the whole true that the nationalist aspirations of the other Balkan states were obstacles to the survival of the Vlachs.

Our sources for the period between 1832 and the Balkan wars of 1912 are hardly reliable. Heroic freedom fighters become treacherous brigands when the bias of the writer is altered. Post-Gladstonian liberalism and a lack of acquaintance with Turkish sources generally makes the Turk an object of contempt for his cruelty and incompetence, but there were no doubt faults on all sides. The story of the rising at Kruševo is an interesting example of how history can be rewritten. The Bulgarians regard this as a vital day in their struggle for independence, as do the Yugoslav Macedonians who have built a rather odd-looking shrine to what they regard as their own contribution to the cause of freedom. Kruševo was, however, largely inhabited by Greek-speaking Vlachs, and Greek historians tell rather a different story. Certainly it was the houses of the rich Vlach merchants which suffered in the reprisals against the revolt, although it is difficult to see whether this was because they were the real standard-bearers of freedom, or whether their wealth attracted Turkish looters.¹²

One independent and reliable source for Vlach history in the period just before the Balkan wars is the book of Wace

¹⁰ Wace and Thompson, p. 167, recording the efforts of Vlachs to persuade the frontier-makers not to divide them in this way.

¹¹ Wace and Thompson, pp. 168-70.

¹² Dakin, pp. 92-106; N. Ballas, *Historia tou Krousobou* (Salonica, 1962).

and Thompson describing their travels round various Vlach villages. Here we get the impression of villages tending to divide between a Greek and a nationalist party with the Greek party generally in the ascendancy, although Wace and Thompson were working mainly in the south. There does not seem to have been too much hostility between the two parties, although the two Englishmen do record odd instances where their enquiries were not welcome or where attempts were made to conceal the truth from them.¹³ They were, however, writing of a visit they had made just before the Balkan wars.

These wars divided Vlach territory mainly between Serbia and Greece. Lip service was paid at the treaty of Bucarest in 1913 to the treatment of minorities, but both Serbian and Greek governments were fiercely nationalist in spite of, or more probably because of, the large numbers of other nationalities which the fortunes of war had thrust within their borders. In any case the chances of being kind to other nationalities were not very great as the First World War brought further complications. The forgotten Salonica campaign was largely fought along a line which, like the Via Egnatia and the Jireček line, ran close to the northern Vlach settlement. Lake Doiran, the Meglen, Mount Pelister and Southern Albania all figured prominently in the story of the Salonica front.¹⁴

Except in Albania I have been unable to find any reference to Vlachs in these campaigns, and even here they figure in a political rather than a military context. With the collapse of Serbia in November 1915 the Austrians had occupied Northern Albania and the Italians occupied Southern Albania. Greece, still divided between pro-German Royalists and pro-Allied Venizelists, was neutral, and this gives the Italians some excuse for first occupying Northern Epirus which the Greeks had held since the Balkan wars and then sending troops as far south as Ioannina. In the east of Albania around Korçë there were French troops, and it was under French protection that a short-lived republic of Korçë was formed, an odd entity of little interest except to students of Vlachs and philately. Its first president was an Albanian called Themistocles who

¹³ Wace and Thompson, pp. 200–2.

¹⁴ C. Falls and A. Becke, *The History of the War: Military Operations, Macedonia* (London, 1935) has admirable maps, but practically no mention of Vlachs.

turned out to be an Austrian spy. In June 1917 the Italian government asked the Romanians to send men of Vlach origin to Macedonia and Epirus to conduct anti-Greek propaganda, but the Romanians refused.¹⁵

The Italians, intent on many imperial ventures in the Eastern Mediterranean, were the main supporters of the Vlachs at the Versailles peace conference, but their support was unreliable. Romania with more pressing problems nearer home and anxious to be on good terms with everyone, did not press the case of the Vlachs very energetically. There was a delegation from the Vlachs to Versailles, but it achieved nothing. An Italian-inspired article in the Romanian paper *Vestea* of January 1919 said that the Vlachs had declared their independence with an army of 10,000 and a four-man council at Samarina, but this article bore little relation to reality.¹⁶ Vlachs were involved incidentally in the exchange of populations between Greeks and Turks and Greeks and Bulgarians, and there were movements of Vlachs to Romania.

The best Greek source for migrations in the Balkans before, during and after the First World War is Alexander Pallis who was present to see some of the tragedies these migrations involved. He mentions seventeen separate movements of population during these troubled times but does not mention Vlachs either in his article on the migrations or in his book on the formal agreements on the exchange of population between Greece and Turkey and Greece and Bulgaria.¹⁷ Nor does the latest authority on this subject, D. Pentzopoulos, who is able with hindsight to show the migrations, though tragic at times, did in the long run make for stability with a relatively homogeneous population along Greece's northern frontier.¹⁸

In Chapters Two and Three we have shown how Vlachs managed to survive the violent changes brought about by the Balkan wars. I heard of other migrations not recorded by Pallis or Pentzopoulos. The inhabitants of Nižepolje retreated to

¹⁵ N. Petsalis-Diomidis, *Greece at the Paris Peace Conference, 1919* (Salonica, 1978).

¹⁶ Petsalis-Diomidis, pp. 83–4; S. Spector, *Rumania at the Paris Peace Conference* (New York, 1962).

¹⁷ A. Pallis, 'Racial migrations in the Balkans', in *Geographical Journal* 66 (1923), pp. 315–30.

¹⁸ D. Pentzopoulos, *The Balkan Exchange of Minorities and its Impact upon Greece* (Paris, 1962).

Greece when the front line ran through their village, but returned in 1923. Many inhabitants of Magarevo left oddly for Bulgaria. Near Lake Prespa wandering Vlachs from Albania were settled in the vacuum left by retreating Turks. The resilience of the Vlachs can be contrasted for example with another nation tragically hit by war: the Armenians. It can of course partly be explained by the fact that the Vlachs are both used to wandering, and passionately attached to the places to and from which they wander.

However Vlach language and culture received little encouragement in the inter-war years. Protests about their poor treatment were largely confined to scholars such as Capidan. We have seen odd survivals of the reforms of Apostol Margarit, like the Romanian school at Ano Grammatikon, which lasted until 1945, but this was exceptional. Census figures suggest a decline in the number of Vlachs or the determination of both Yugoslav and Greek governments to keep the minority figures low. Both processes were going on at the same time, although visits now to Vlach villages where those over 50 still speak Vlach suggest that Vlach still stubbornly refused to yield much ground between the wars.

During the Second World War and the Civil War which followed it, Vlach territory was again fought over, though this time in guerilla campaigns rather than on a regular basis. In the Italian campaign of 1940 the Italians got as far as Vovousa, but were then thrown back into Albania, so that some of the Albanian Vlachs became briefly part of Greece again. After the German invasion of Greece nationalism became an issue with the Bulgarian occupation of parts of Greece but this, like the floating of an independent state of Macedonia, was neither successful nor permanent. Still less impression was made by the almost comic efforts of the Italians to rouse their fellow Latin-speakers into supporting the cause of the Axis. At least they had some vague idea of who the Vlachs were; the statement by a well-known English historian of the period that the Vlachs, as Slavs of Romanian stock, were natural enemies of the Greeks is hardly encouraging for the study of this period.¹⁹

The war was a tragedy for most Balkan mountain villages.

¹⁹ E. O'Ballance, *The Greek Civil War* (London, 1966), p. 60. Averoff and Saraphis give very different accounts. Much of the history of the World War in Greece and the Civil War has yet to be written.

They were lucky if they were only burnt once. Vlach hospitality, like Greek or Slav hospitality, is a wonderful thing; but even today one is nervous about visiting an unknown village. It may have been burnt down by the Germans or by the communists during the Civil War, and as representative of a race that fought the Germans and the communists one feels one is vaguely acceptable. But the Germans may have burnt down the village for harbouring a British soldier, and the village may have been on the side of the *andartes*. Tact and Vlach friendliness usually smooth over any rough edges.

The hospitality, though overpowering, is perhaps less bounteous than it was. Before the war Vlachs were owners of vast herds; these are now things of the past, consumed probably in the famine that war brings with it. The Vlachs may not have done too badly in this famine. Their reluctance to engage in national or ideological antics may seem a sign of their decline, but it may have been one reason for their survival. Some Vlachs lost their homes in the Second World War or the Civil War or both, but they were perhaps better equipped temperamentally and materially to return to their villages when the trouble was over. The inhabitants of Megala Livadhia returning from Salonica in 1960 and the inhabitant of Tashkent returning to her native Archangelos in 1982 are alike a tribute to Vlach affection for their homes and their determination to visit them.

The census figures for the years 1920, 1940, 1951 and 1961 make interesting reading.²⁰ In the eparchy of Metsovon the four Vlach villages of Anilion, Metsovon, Voutonosi and Milea actually increased in size except for 1951 when there was a slight decline. I was assured that in 1980 the population of both Metsovon and Anilion had increased even more, so that Anilion had 1080 inhabitants, of whom all but 10 spoke Vlach, and Metsovon 3800, of whom all but 500 spoke Vlach. In the more distant villages of the Konitsa eparchy there was a sudden increase in 1940, but numbers in 1961 were roughly

²⁰ I have derived these figures from a comparison of *Stoicheia Sustaseôs kai Exelixeôs tôn Dêmôn kai Koinotêtôn Nomou Ioanninôn* (Athens, 1962), which gives the figures for the nomos of Ioannina from 1920 to 1951 with *Katalogos Dêmôn Koinotêtôn Hellados* which gives the figure for all Greece in 1961. Because of the war 1940 was an odd year, and the figures given for Vlach villages in 1961 do not mean that all the people in those villages spoke Vlach.

in line with those of 1920. In the villages of the Zagori and Kalarritai and Sirrakou there has been a sharp decline, Kalarritai and Sirrakou having 926 inhabitants in 1920, 2,373 in 1940 and 375 in 1961.

An advanced study in the sociology of Vlach villages could clearly be made with these figures as a base. The general conclusion that must be drawn is that Vlachs are always on the move, and that they tend to move where other Vlachs are. This conclusion is perhaps the only explanation for the ability of the Vlachs to preserve their language when all around them were changing or losing theirs. From this we can understand how the Vlachs managed to keep their identity intact in the very difficult sixty years following the First World War. The same explanation would seem to be true of many migrations in the Turkish period, and in the absence of any evidence to the contrary we have suggested that it may be true of the Byzantine period as well.

There may be another explanation for the survival of the Vlachs. We live in an age where universal brotherhood is preached but strident nationalism prevails. The Welsh burn cottages, the Basques plant bombs, and all over the world the ready sympathies of humanitarian liberals are enlisted to support minorities which are threatened with extinction or oppression. There is no movement among the Vlachs to arouse interest or sympathy, and I have rarely been able to find the Vlachs listed among the world's minority groups.²¹ Perhaps the Vlachs' readiness to merge with other nationalities and their reluctance to draw attention to their plight is a sign not of weakness, but of strength. In the Middle Ages the Vlachs are often hard to distinguish from the Bulgars, and in the modern period they are frequently confused with the Greeks; but they have managed to keep their language and some vague consciousness of being different, whereas more powerful and more aggressive nations like the Avars in the Dark Ages and the Armenians recently have been less fortunate.

I write the last pages of this book in 1985, as I wrote the first in 1975, sitting in one of the many small cafés in the

²¹ Vlachs are mentioned by P. de Azcarate, *League of Nations and National Minorities* (Washington, 1945), but not by O. Janowsky, *Nationalities and National Minorities* (New York, 1945). Recently there has been some agitation from Vlachs or Romanians living abroad.

Vlach village of Anilion. Anilion has experienced many changes during these ten years. The road to Metsovon is still precipitous, but now at any rate it has a reasonable surface, and there is even a daily bus. Cars bring materials for new houses which grow apace, and they also bring tourists from Athens and from abroad. The women still work and weep and weave their webs like Penelope, the traveller like Odysseus is still greeted with a charming mixture of curiosity and courtesy, and one still sees and hears the old men like Nestor telling tales of battles long ago, and the young men strutting and sulking like Achilles. Thus the impression of an unchanging age remains as it still remains in many an isolated Greek village, with the difference that the language spoken in Anilion is not the language of Homer and Demosthenes but of Virgil and Cicero.²² And yet this language, and all the history that lies behind it, is now threatened by an enemy worse than savage wars or treacherous enemies. Material progress and an improvement in communications have meant the young men now switch with bewildering variety from Vlach to Greek, or even to English or German, in order to impress the tourists. Men marry Greek girls, and their children speak Greek at home. There is a progressive party in Anilion which believes in setting up tourist traps. In Metsovon there is now a disco surmounted by a garish sign in the worst of Western taste. The old men wear their national dress, not out of pride in their race, but to attract the photographers. We need not deplore these indications at the end of Vlach history, but we must record them, as I have tried to record all Vlach history, *sine ira et studio*.

²² I have borrowed this purple patch unashamedly from the preliminary article I wrote on the Vlachs in *Greece Old and New*. I am hoping to do some extensive work on Vlachs in the modern period with the help of the European Science Foundation, and hope that this will excuse the rather summary treatment of the Vlachs in this chapter.