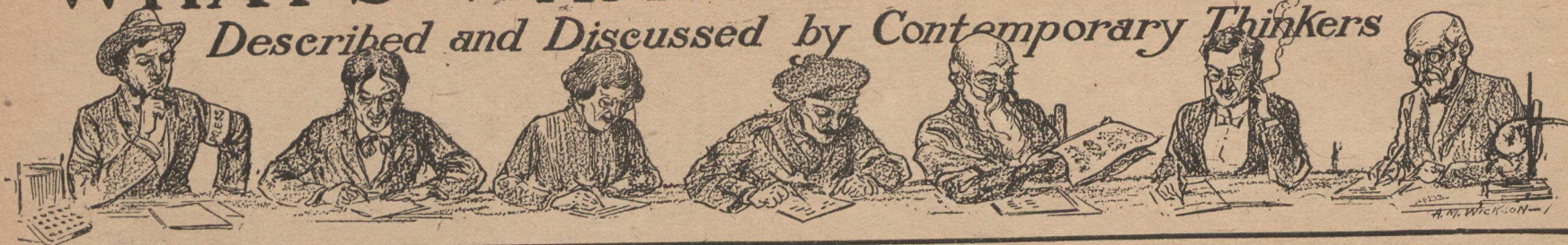


# WHAT'S WHAT *the* WORLD OVER

## *Described and Discussed by Contemporary Thinkers*



### GREEK INTERVIEWS

*Talks with the King and with Venizelos now Made Public*

AT a critical moment of Greek history I had the rare privilege of being formally received by King Constantine, says Count Ferri-Pisani, a member of a noble French family of Italian descent, who has been acting since the beginning of the world war as correspondent for La Depeche, of Toulouse, France, and, a few hours later, of securing an interview with Venizelos.

It was in January, 1916, after the retreat of the Allies' Eastern Army to Saloniki. The Teutons and Bulgars, after the battle of the Cerna, had abandoned their pursuit on the Greek frontier. There, with their army ranged opposite the weak Greek outposts, they seemed to be awaiting reinforcements, or perhaps orders from Berlin, or perhaps an invitation from Athens.

Greece, from the plains of Macedonia to the mountains of the Peloponnesus, was in the throes of anxiety. It was an anxiety that almost made one forget the more distant drama of the vanquished Serbians, struggling, with empty stomachs and cartridge belts, through the snows of Albania.

I had just come direct from the headquarters of General Sarrail. I had not been in Athens two hours—in Athens, which had become a city of fear—before a distinguished man inquired for me at my hotel.

"Do you desire an audience with his Majesty?" he asked.

"Certainly."

"His Majesty will receive you to-morrow at 10. The King wishes to do away with all misunderstand-

The King was standing, leaning against the fireplace, where, in spite of the sultriness of the day, a big wood fire was burning. He was wearing the brown uniform of a Greek Colonel of infantry. With a shivering gesture, he again and again stretched feverish hands toward the blaze. The chamberlain who had conducted me to his presence immediately retired, closing the door behind him.

For what seemed a long while I waited, as etiquette demanded, for the King to speak first. His Majesty seemed not to notice my presence. He gazed fixedly on the big picture that decorated the other end of the room; which, by a strange irony, showed Marie Antoinette, the foreign Queen who proved so fatal to her husband's tenure of his crown.

"Ah, here you are," said the King at last, awaking from his reverie. "You came to me for a statement? I will give it with pleasure. You come at the right moment. I wish public opinion in France to be enlightened. You know that the censorship of the Allies has forbidden the publication of interviews granted by me to your colleagues? Nothing whatever of these has been printed in London or Paris, not even their titles! It is incredible! Yet I have done nothing to France or England. The best proof of this is that I do not believe in the final victory of Germany. But the Greeks wish to remain neutral; they certainly have a right to do that!"

The King spoke jerkily, seeking less for words than ideas. But these seemed to come to him in rapid succession. Now and then he would interrupt himself to place his hand on his side; he was evidently suffering from the wound which has never healed since his last illness. Occasionally, also, his forehead, unusually pale and bald, was reddened by a rush of blood.

I noticed that his Majesty never said "my people" or "my subjects." He always spoke of "the Greeks," as if he were talking of a foreign nation. I was expecting a statement, but all I heard was a succession of confused recriminations.

"I know," he went on, "that there is a desire to sow discord in the royal family. Hopes have been held out to one of my brothers that he might possess the crown of Greece. It is planned to starve out the Greeks by a blockade. Yet the Greeks have no interest in going to war on either side. What has become of the rights of little neutral nations?"

The King was talking in colloquial French. "I am ill, seriously ill," he said. "What they want is my death, is it? I tell you once more: I no longer believe that Germany will be victorious, but there are promises—"

The King stopped short on that word. To what promises was his Majesty alluding? Was there in truth a word of honour given to the Kaiser, as between sovereign and sovereign? I believe so. But in that case, how reconcile these promises with that other word of honour, given earlier to the Serbs, made still more binding by the signature on a treaty of defensive alliance?

It seemed to me that to the King's way of thinking only "the Greeks" were bound by the Greco-Serbian treaty—only "the Greeks" and Venizelos, who had made the treaty in question.

The King, who until that moment had remained calm, suddenly grew animated at the thought of his former President of the Council.

"So foreigners are mixing in the internal affairs of the Greeks?" he exclaimed. "So foreigners wish to force upon me their principal agent—a republican, a revolutionist! In spite of that I surely have the right to select whatever Minister I wish, haven't I? Moreover, the Allies have sent a Socialist General to command at Saloniki! I want no anarchy among the Greeks!"

The King had strode forward toward his desk and was pounding upon it with his fists. Then he kicked at a chair and overturned it. One could feel the strange personal hatred of the monarch for his former Minister. Rather than recall Venizelos, the candidate of the Allies, to power, it was easy to see that he was ready to lose his popularity, all Macedonia,

even his crown.

But must I add, on the other hand, that when the King spoke the words: "Neither should I allow the Greeks to side with Germany" there was in the tone a convincing ring of sincerity. I believe to this day that Constantine, were he placed in the reverse



THE LOVERS.

"The conquered loves the conqueror."—Max Harden.  
—Norman Lindsay, in Sydney Bulletin.

situation, would have resisted the pleas of the Kaiser with as much stubbornness as he now resists those of the Allies.

Ten months after that interview I still find no other explanation for the whole policy of Constantine than the formidable hatred of a sick sovereign for his old colleague. All this no longer comes within the scope of politics or reasons of state. It is a matter of psychology; possibly even a simple matter of pathology. In his Majesty's most casual words there was all the rancour of a despotic sovereign whose despotism has been brought up too hard against a Constitution protected by a republican France and a liberal England.

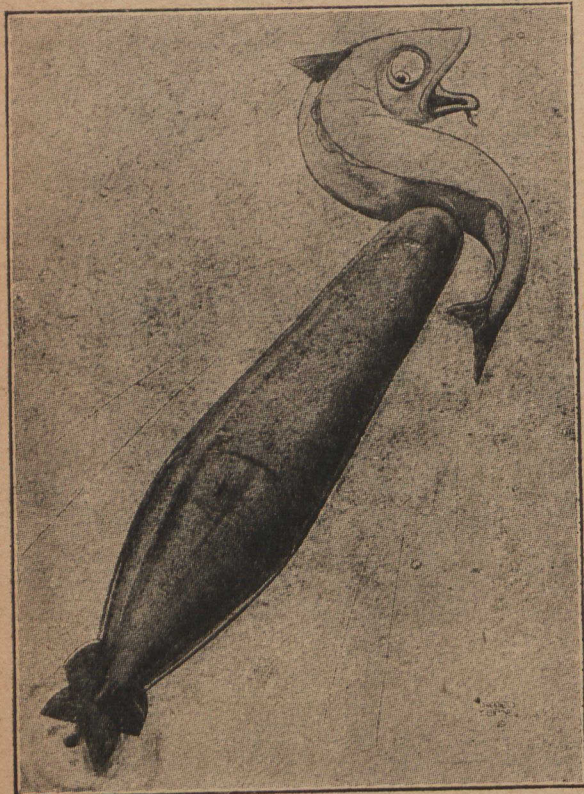
"If the allied Governments," he continued, "forbid once again the publication of what I say I shall state my case to American public opinion! At all events, eliminate nothing of what I have told you. Report every word of it—do you understand me?—every single word!"

The interview was over.

On the same day, a few hours later, I was received by Venizelos. The former Minister, then a mere private citizen—for he had even refused a short time before to present himself as a candidate for the post of Deputy in the new Legislature—received me at the house of a friend whose hospitality he was enjoying. At that time, when his adversaries were threatening him daily with death, no visitor reached Venizelos until he had passed the vigilant Cretan guards and submitted to a cross-examination by the ex-President of the Council's private secretary.

Once these formalities had been complied with, I was conducted to a room that was strangely bare, of a simplicity suggesting ancient times.

With a clear eye and a glance made even more piercing by spectacles, Venizelos came toward me and stretched out his hand. The handshake of Venizelos is the most magnificent handshake I know



ANOTHER NEUTRAL TORPEDOED.

—Drawn by Alfred Leete, in the Sketch.

ings and speak straight out, by means of the press, to the public of the allied countries in general, and France in particular."

At 9.55 next day I crossed the threshold of the villa where Constantine had lived as Crown Prince and where he has been waiting for several years while the old palace of King George is being restored. I was at once ushered into the room where his Majesty does his work.