

Nationalism and Byzantine Greece

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TO HELLENIC HISTORIANS, there is by now fairly general agreement on the proximate causes of the Greek national revolution. Among these causes, the chief to stand out would be the atrophy of Ottoman institutions with its accompanying military and administrative inefficiency and arbitrariness; the rise of *chifliks*, which produced a land-hungry and restive peasantry; the growth of commerce and industry, which led to the emergence of a significant bourgeois social element possessing new and dynamic ideas; and the great increase in the number of contacts with the rest of Europe, which brought a corresponding increase in the influence of foreign ideologies, especially those of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution.

To other historians, however, and more particularly those reared in the Western European historiographical tradition, there has been an unfortunate, if not entirely gratuitous, tendency to take as axiomatic the proposition that the French Revolution and Napoleon *decisively* stimulated all the nationalist movements which have arisen since then. Taken at random from the now voluminous literature on nationalism there is, for instance, this view of a leading historian of modern Africa: “. . . the revolts of West and East Africans against the British and French Empires in the 1950s, [no less than] the revolt of Greeks and Serbs against the Ottoman Empire in the 1820s, belong to the same historical process.”¹ That writer, Hodgkin, may very well be right in thus describing the anti-colonial revolts of the XX century, as well as the revolts of most central and eastern European peoples against the multi-national empires of the Hapsburgs, the Romanovs and the Ottomans. However, a fairly recent work of modern Hellenic scholarship has suggested most emphatically that at least the Greek revolt of 1821 was *sui generis*: it was by no means exclusively, or even

¹ Thomas Hodgkin, *Nationalism in Colonial Africa* (London 1956) 17.

primarily, the first stage in an explosive chain reaction deriving its operative ideas from France; nor was it fundamentally the result of those proximate changes which took place in Ottoman and Greek society during the XVII and XVIII centuries. On the contrary, the argument neatly woven by its author, Professor Vacalopoulos,² is that the Greek independence movement was no more than the belated culmination of a nationalist movement whose essential elements were already present as early as the XIII century. Vacalopoulos' conclusions are important as much for their contribution to the history of nationalism as to the history of Greece.

The over-riding influence of the French Revolution on the development of modern nationalism has been such that, ever since then, historians have conceived it not only as the striving of a people for free, independent and sovereign status, but also, and even mainly, as a striving for political liberty. This aspiration towards political liberty has certainly been striking, and sometimes crucial, but of course it really tells no more than a small part of the story of the genesis and growth of national feeling. A far more comprehensive view is that offered by Hertz³ in his now classic formulation, which sees national aspiration as being composed of four fundamental elements: "(1) the striving for national unity comprising political, economic, social, religious and cultural unity, community and solidarity; (2) the striving for national freedom, which comprises independence from foreign domination or interference, and internal freedom from forces regarded as un-national or derogatory to the nation; (3) the striving for separateness, distinctiveness, individuality, originality or peculiarity. The most significant example is the value attributed to a separate national language; (4) the striving for distinction among nations, for honour, dignity, prestige and influence, which easily becomes a striving for domination. The striving for distinction is probably the strongest of all four aspirations, and seems to underlie them all."

Vacalopoulos (p.43) agrees with the doyen of modern Hellenic historical scholarship, Pappasregopoulos, that a starting-point for the study of modern Greek nationalism can readily be found by tracing a continuous evolution of the Greek language and, parallel with it, a

² A. E. Vacalopoulos, *Ιστορία του Νέου Έλληνισμού I* (Thessaloniki 1961). An English version under the title *History of Modern Hellenism*, transl. I. N. and P. Moles, I (New Brunswick [pending]) is soon to appear.

³ Frederick Hertz, *Nationality in History and Politics* (London 1944) 21.

popular literary heritage from modern times back to the period of the Fourth Crusade (A.D. 1204). This was a time of anarchy and confusion which nonetheless also witnessed a marked revival of native Greek communal institutions, as well as the emergence of popular resistance to the Latin conquerors. In other words, the conventional interpretation of the late Byzantine period as a time when the ancient world, and Hellenism along with it, finally faded and expired was found not to hold true. On the contrary, this was a time when the Greek world, under pressure from potent new internal and external forces, was really transformed and rejuvenated.

Hellenism was one of those forces, and so Byzantine Hellenism, far from being interred with the remains of the Empire, was rather imperceptibly transmuted, becoming a transitional stage between mediæval and modern times, a bridge to modern Hellenism. Many distinctive features of modern Greek nationalism, so Vacalopoulos maintains, can never be wholly discerned, let alone described, without initial reference to their origins in late Byzantine (Palaeologian) times. Equally, many problems of historical exegesis around which scholarly controversy has subsequently swirled can never be wholly grasped, let alone explained, without prior identification of their Byzantine elements: factors in the ethnic composition of the modern Hellenes, precedents for those types of social organization which later arose under the Turkish occupation, indicators of both the mundane pursuits and common national aspirations of the modern Greek people, as well as their customary religious observances, their new artistic and intellectual orientations, their legends and traditions (p.11). Here, too, earliest reasons will be found for the modern geographical reconstitution of the Greek nation, the devastation of Greek lands, the flight of populations and the founding of new colonies; here, and indeed only here, is it possible to become acquainted at all with some of the more remote communal institutions of modern times, such as the *ἀμαρτωλοί* which later disappeared in the murk of history (p.11). Like Pappas, and to a lesser extent Amantos and Voyatzides, Vacalopoulos is therefore firmly convinced that the Byzantine antecedents of modern Greek nationalism are as substantial as they are incontrovertible. In this sense, the year 1204 is seen as a watershed not only in the history of modern Greece but of the entire civilized world. Is it a thesis which stands up to scrutiny in the light of Hertz's criteria for evaluating national sentiment?

The Striving for National Unity

Although the Greek peninsula received successive waves of invasions and migrations from the beginning of the VI century, and most conspicuously during the seventh, Greece was not engulfed by the flood, nor was the continuity of Greek history radically disturbed. The upheavals and dislocations of war proved neither permanent nor irreversible—as rarely in history they are. According to Vacalopoulos (p.40), such are a few of the inescapable conclusions of the human geography of Greece. Anthropological research, moreover, has only confirmed these conclusions: nowhere in Greece do alien ethnic elements form more than a minority of the local population. “The genetic homogeneity of the Greek race has been preserved from neolithic to modern times.”⁴ A process of gradual adaptation of foreign elements to the dominant Hellenic tradition was continually at work. One irresistible inducement to assimilation was Greek civilization itself—ever present, ever resplendent. The Greek language also survived as a vital living organism through which the essence of this civilization was preserved and transmitted. Orthodox Christianity, ceaselessly propagated by the Greek clergy, provided a common framework of religious belief for all peoples from the Haemus to Asia Minor. Finally, the unity of the Byzantine (and later, no less, the Ottoman) *imperium* sheltered a complex of social and economic relationships, tending to promote not only the interdependence of all peoples within it but also the hegemony of the majority Greek economic interest (p.41).

Geographically, the Greek peninsula formed a large and important province of the Byzantine Empire, but politically it was scarcely more than a remote and outlying protuberance. This very isolation was also a key factor in the survival and consolidation of Hellenism in the region for, far removed from the centre of the Empire at Constantinople, there was less likelihood that the Greek peninsula would be overrun by barbarian invaders. The great City proved a magnet to uncivilized peoples and a fortress against whose walls generations of barbarians battered themselves in vain. In this sense, Constantinople was both the shield and protector of Athens, though paradoxically the capital, of course, also represented those forces in the Empire which anathematized Athens and her long associations with paganism. Indeed the

⁴ This quotation appears only in the English edition. Vacalopoulos is citing A. Poulianos, *‘Η Προέλευση τῶν Ἑλλήνων* (Athens 1960) 111.

very name 'Hellene', with its automatic evocation in men's minds of the ideas and religious beliefs of the ancient Greeks, was once synonymous with 'pagan'. Naturally, as adherents of Christianity multiplied in Greece, there was a strong counter-tendency towards the use of *Romaïos*, 'Roman', in place of the national appellation (p.45).

Despite its pejorative overtones, however, the word 'Hellene' remained in popular use. Even when officially proscribed, it lived on in legend and tradition as the epitome of all striving towards unity, community and solidarity; as the touchstone, in fact, of national precognition. Indeed it acquired other popular connotations as well: surrounded on all sides by the ruins of imposing monuments and buildings, the Greeks recalled their ancient forbears as a race of towering intellectual and physical stature, and so 'Hellene' was invested with the further meaning of 'giant', an impression which remained locked in the demotic memory down to the XX century (p.46).

The Striving for National Freedom

It was not the Ottoman conquest which first awakened in the Greeks a yearning for independence from foreign domination. The Byzantine Empire was brought to its knees by the invaders from the West in 1204, but not for want of resistance by the Greeks. Indeed, the importance of the Crusades—the Fourth Crusade in particular—is not that they restored a severed connection between the two principal segments of European civilization, but rather that they led to the final estrangement of 'Frank' and Greek.

Nor was it only the bond of common resistance against the West which drew the Greek nation together. As the Byzantine Empire was dismembered, Hellenism curiously flourished in each of its truncated parts—Nicaea, Trebizond, Epirus, Macedonia and Morea. Vacalopoulos argues that, since it was the grass roots of Hellenism that were the most hardy, these were only strengthened as the Byzantine tree was pruned. Or, to put this another way, Greek traditions burgeoned locally in a way which seemed inversely proportionate to the withering of Roman traditions in the Byzantine Empire. In this sense, the disappearance of the Byzantine state was actually prerequisite to the emergence of modern Hellenism.

With the political disintegration of the Empire, social, economic and religious differences between East and West were exacerbated.

National awareness was forged in the crucible of impassioned resistance to the Latin invader. To Vacalopoulos (pp.56–59), it was the unremitting struggle for survival, underpinned at all times by the consciousness of an illustrious past, which was the principal catalyst in the emergence of modern Greek nationalism. And it was the Latin invader who first provided this catalyst.

The Striving for Separateness

If national distinctiveness and individuality are most clearly manifest in the value attributed to a separate language, Greece of all the nations in Europe could lay the earliest claims to self-expression of a peculiarly modern nationalist kind. On the one hand, the priceless treasures of Greek literature, ancient and mediaeval, were preserved and handed down in unbroken continuity; on the other hand, the demotic language kept alive many of Greece's most venerable cultural traditions. Customs, habits, crafts, songs, even architectural forms, all survived in the folk-lore and common memory of the people. Indeed, the modern Greek language is replete with expressions and individual words which relate to archaic social situations or which are themselves the fossilized remnants of ancient modes of expression (p.41).

A variety of forms of literary and artistic expression which were specifically and self-consciously Greek, and which were at once cause and effect of a growing consciousness of national identity, unmistakably arose within the civilization of the Byzantine world. Among these, the *Digenis Akritas* occupies perhaps the pre-eminent position of importance, at least in the popular affections of the Greek people. A good deal of the folk-lore on which it draws, as well as the epic itself, is still current in our own day. For centuries, the bravery of the ἀκρίται was praised in tales kept vividly alive in the vernacular language. Gradually, this language established itself as a vehicle of literary expression until by the X century, or perhaps as early as the IX century, 'akritic' poetry had evolved definite forms not unlike some modern refinements. In a word, Vacalopoulos maintains (p.50) that modern Greek literature stems from popularly-inspired epic poetry of which *Digenis Akritas* may be considered the apotheosis.

He goes further to suggest that since the struggles of the people of Anatolia not only provided the source of this inspiration but also served to arouse the impassioned sympathy of Greeks everywhere, the birth

of modern Hellenism may be said to coincide exactly with that of epic poetry. The deeds of the principal 'akritic' heroes—Digenis, Constantine, Andronicus—transcended the narrow limits of those particular regions in which their exploits took place: they appealed to all Greeks as universal symbols of bravery in what was therefore essentially a national struggle (pp.50f).

The Striving for Distinction

The political and intellectual leaders of the mediaeval Greeks looked upon classical civilization as the ideal expression of their own national individuality and identified themselves ever more closely with it. It was a past which seemed all the more brilliant and distinct in the light of chaos and disunity surrounding them; it was a past not only of unparalleled achievement but of unexampled nobility and courage; it was a past which thus could inspire all Greeks to overthrow the contemporary oppressors of their race. Here Greeks found vicarious fulfilment of a striving for honour, dignity, prestige and influence among nations, even domination over them. Nowhere was this awareness more marked, nowhere was the past more venerated and exalted, than in the Kingdom of Nicaea (p.66).

The immediate and most apparent consequence of a growing emphasis on the former achievements of the 'nation' was the revival of the name 'Hellene' after 1204. Its widespread adoption in place of 'Roman' was naturally stimulated by a realization of cultural differences rendered keener by the very presence of alien conquerors among the Greeks. Numerous instances serve to demonstrate this precipitation of national feeling, particularly among the Lascaris and the scholars of Nicaea. On one occasion, for example, when Theodore II Lascaris worsted Berthold von Hohenburg, emissary of the German Emperor Konrad IV Hohenstauffen, in a philosophical debate, he considered this no less than a national triumph—"a victory of the Greeks over the Italians."⁵ Indeed, with his unshakable faith in the destiny of the Greek nation which was translated into a steadfast ambition both to reconquer Constantinople and reunite all Greeks under the imperial sceptre, Theodore II Lascaris may be regarded as the true originator of the 'Great Idea' (p.72). He was the first sovereign to be depicted with the double-headed eagle of Byzantium which, in

⁵ Vacalopoulos 71, quoting N. Festa, *Theodori Ducae Lascaris Epistulae CCXVII* (Firenze 1898) 52.

Voyatzides' opinion, represented the projection of imperial claims towards both Europe and Asia.⁶ The eagle thereafter became the emblem of the Byzantine state; later, during the Turkish occupation, the eagle also became the cherished *motif* of all Greek *rayahs*, signifying their national aspiration to be free from foreign domination.

Following the imperial restoration in 1261, Michael VIII Palaeologus and his heirs found themselves powerless to stanch the Turkish flood. Apart from the egregious error of allowing the administrative reorganization of Theodore II Lascaris to fall into decay, the very removal of the throne from Nicaea back to Constantinople in fact meant that the capital was now severed from the most vital nerve-centre of Greek civilization. In the ancient capital of the Eastern Roman Empire, Roman traditions quickly reasserted themselves. The Orthodox Church also reaffirmed its traditional stance of close association with the imperial polity. These were circumstances in which the growth of Hellenism was now temporarily arrested: the centuries-old traditions of the Byzantine Empire, bolstered by a complaisant Church, combined in effect to postpone the nationalist *dénouement* (p.74).

But it was clearly only a postponement. The incipient nationalism of the Greeks owed so much of its character to the will to resist that, in the face of increasing Turkish pressure during the following century, it gathered the kind of momentum which was to prove irresistible despite, or more accurately because of, the apparent Turkish *coup de grace* in 1453. Indeed, to reiterate a point already made, the revival of the national spirit took place in inverse ratio to the contraction of the frontiers of Byzantium. Greek nationalism, in other words, was articulated as the boundaries of Byzantium shrank to what were in fact the predominantly Greek regions of the empire (p.75). Increased use of the words 'Hellene' and 'Hellas' epitomized this development; not only that, it is in this period of the Palaeologian restoration that the two words are brought into definite and cognate relationship with 'nation' (*ἔθνος*). John III Ducas Vatatzes appears to have been the first to effect this particular conjunction (p.76). Simultaneously, during the last two centuries of the Byzantine Empire, the word *γένος* ('race') appears constantly and interchangeably with *ἔθνος* in various texts; and what this of course signified was that the national-racial equation,

⁶ Vacalopoulos 72, quoting I. K. Voyatzides, 'Η Μεγάλη Ἰδέα in *L'Hellénisme contemporain* (Athens 1953) 307-08.

so distinctive a component of the modern nationalist mystique, had already been made (p.77).

Despite a common misinterpretation of eschatological teaching whereby the Church has been assigned a supra-national or even anti-national role, and Byzantinism in general has been held to be "much more biblical than Greek," Orthodoxy, too, was inseparable from the growth of modern Hellenism (p.153).⁷ At first, of course, Orthodoxy reeled before the Muslim advance. The ordeals and afflictions of everyday life moved the clergy to search for theological explanations and hence to preach spiritual reformation as the only salve of society's misfortunes. How to explain the decadence of the State and what appeared to be the accompanying atrophy of the Christian spirit? In theological terms, the answer was soon given as arising from Christian sinfulness, ingratitude towards God and deliberate infraction of His commandments.

The Christian past was therefore understandably idealized. In contrast to the forbears of the Greeks who were just, honest, wise, generous, humble and, above all, avid for God's Truth, contemporary Christians had strayed from the path of God. Divine retribution was being exacted in the form of a merciless enemy who pillaged the land, killed the people and made them captive or, at best, treated them harshly and drove them from their cities and homes. The appeals of the people, their prayers for deliverance, all went unanswered, for God and the saints were indifferent to the fate of such unworthy mortals. Nor was it merely that people had chosen of their own volition to forsake the path of righteousness; they showed no interest in redressing their wrongs, and sinfulness was thus compounded. That was why there was scant hope for salvation. The triumphs of the enemy, moreover, stemmed from the profligacy and even apostasy of the clergy themselves. Monks in Crete and other islands frequently lived in concubinage. The sacerdotal life had become a refuge not so much for those who sought to realize in it a genuine vocation, but rather for those who sought profane comforts and gain (p.133).

Those were all plausible explanations, and it would therefore seem almost a paradox of Byzantium's decline that the closer it approached final collapse, the less satisfied were the clergy with them. Sinfulness, it was true, could not be denied, but was it after all a reasonable diag-

⁷ It is principally the view of Professor Mango that Professor Vacalopoulos is disputing. See the latter's article, "Byzantinism and Hellenism" in *Balkan Studies* 9 (1968) esp. p.110.

nosis of Orthodoxy's woe (certes, it was not a comforting one) when Muslim and Catholic both adopted it as the main weapon in their own arsenals of religious proselytism? The search for an answer fed a spirit of mysticism which had suffused the life of the Orthodox Church since at least the time of the Hesychast movement; and it was the revival of this spirit, inspired by renewed study of the New Testament and Byzantine theological literature, which in turn led to the proposal of an alternative solution to the problem of Orthodoxy's predicament. The spread of Islam and injustices at the hands of the Turk were really portents foretelling the imminence of Armageddon.

Thus, as Vacalopoulos points out (p.137), the general confusion accompanying the Turkish advance provided fertile ground for the vigorous reassertion of eschatological ideas after 1204; but these, contrary to Mango's interpretation, while in one sense averting the Church's gaze from the mundane plight of its flock, paradoxically led to an identification with it that was more intimate than ever before. The spirit of eschatological teaching within the Church was adapted to the new conditions. Far from being evidence of divine displeasure, Byzantine misfortunes were held to be no more than the consequence of her geographical location—and perhaps the envy of Satan. That is to say, God had not prevented the coming of the 'false prophet' Mohammed, nor the spread of his teachings at the expense of Christianity, because the coming of the Antichrist was but an announcement of the end of the world and the inauguration of God's Kingdom. Those peoples who welcomed the teaching of Mohammed would be destroyed along with the Antichrist himself. It was therefore not the place of Christians to despair but rather to prepare. The time of waiting was at an end and the reign of God in His eternal Kingdom about to commence. God was therefore punishing them now in order that those admitted to everlasting glory might first be tested. Persistence in the faith was the only road to salvation and to the redemption of each individual soul.

Ideas of this kind were perfectly consonant with Church tradition, representing a genuine attempt to return to the original doctrines of Christianity. They thus exercised a restorative influence upon religious life and thereby prepared the Church inwardly for the struggles and sacrifices still to come. In turn, the Church strove to imbue its flock with the same implacable resolve. The faithful were taught that they must endure everything, even the sacrifice of their own lives, for the

Church: the eternal glory of the heavenly life only awaited them. Those to whom faith and devotion brought the radiant crown of martyrdom were to be especially revered and blessed. Years of persecution and torture unlike any that had been known since Roman times had truly returned.

The call to sacrifice and martyrdom did not go unheeded, and in responding to it the people's determination to resist conquerors was not only confirmed but strengthened. In this most palpable sense, Professor Vacalopoulos maintains (p.142), the 'modern martyrs' of the Church in truth became national heroes. All in all, by sharpening religious zeal and sustaining a popular Christian conviction of moral primacy in the struggle with Islam, Orthodoxy contributed positively, if indirectly, to the movement of national resistance. Equally, by its own inflexible stance before both Catholicism and Islam, the Church joined forces with modern Hellenism as well as providing a rallying point for it; indeed, a common loyalty towards Orthodoxy was probably emerging as the nation's most lasting cement (p.155).

Finally, in George Gemistos, modern Hellenism also had its own Byzantine Mazzini, a man who both embodied and projected Greek nationalism. At a time when many scholars thought of past glories only in order to invite invidious comparisons with a lamentable present, Gemistos of Mystra raised his voice just as determinedly on behalf of a contemporary orientation towards the state's problems. The Greek spirit would be emancipated not merely by invoking examples from the past, even less by directing plaintive appeals for assistance to the West, but rather by impulses emanating from *within* the nation.

After a rich and varied experience in the bracing political and religious atmosphere of Constantinople, Gemistos settled in Peloponnesian Mystra some time before 1414, where he was appointed to a superior judgeship. His talents in the ministration of law brought him to the notice of the Despot Manuel II and led to his designation as trusted mentor of Manuel's son, Theodore II. From this influential position at court, Gemistos became intimately acquainted with, and deeply involved in, the affairs of the city, while his judicial office offered an unparalleled vantage point from which to perceive the manifold problems of the despotate. His philosophy, Platonist in inspiration, hinged upon a fundamental concern for the reform of government and society. The re-organization of the state especially was the *sine qua non* of any effective solution of its economic, social and

political ills. To Gemistos the past was still sacrosanct; but it was no longer enough (p.173).

Hellenism, social justice, opposition to conquerors: these became the three pillars of his thought. The state could be saved both from the tyranny of its own nobility and the depredations of its external enemies if, on the one hand, the spirit of Hellenism among his compatriots were revived and strengthened; but, prerequisite to this, there was an urgent need for the adoption of radical reform measures. In particular, it was 'bad government' which was principally the source of Greek misfortunes. The ruling nobility had abdicated the responsibilities of leadership by its ruthless exploitation of a miserable peasantry. Moreover, by opposing any concentration of power in the hands of the Despot, the nobility had succeeded in thwarting that which was needed above all else—the creation of a unified state. And the perfect state, the ideal form of government, according to Gemistos, could only be a monarchy "advised by those who were truly wealthy, and having excellent and valid laws" (p.175). Apart from the Platonist strain evident here, Gemistos may also have been influenced by prevailing political trends in Italy: he is known to have interested himself in certain of the forms and functions of government as implemented by rulers in that country. As for the 'truly wealthy', where else would they be found except in the ranks of the middle-class? ". . . The best advisers are the educated men of the middle class . . . those who are neither very rich nor very poor, but whose economic condition is a median one. The former, from sheer habit of wealth and love of it think only how to turn a profit and want nothing else; the latter, from sheer poverty, are unable to think of anything save escape from want. It is those in between who may be expected to look to the common weal" (p.176).

Gemistos is unmistakably a modern. Recalling Hertz, a fifth important factor in nationality is also the striving for a certain measure of equality within the nation. The creed of the French Revolution, expressed in the slogan 'Liberty, Equality, Fraternity', summarized what ever since have become essential elements of nationalist aspiration. In this sense, Gemistos clearly saw that equality was indispensable for unity and liberty, as well as being implied in those aims. Thus, long centuries before the symbolic beginning of the modern nationalist era in 1789, Greece had its own spokesman for a bourgeois, liberal, national revolution.

In sum, the Greek nationalist awakening was born of a national nostalgia for the past and opposition to the appearance of foreign conquerors. The external menace threatened to destroy the nation, subvert its religion and obliterate the traditions and customs of the commonalty. In the face of such a threat, scholars turned again to the past, but now with more than mere nostalgic interest, in order to find the sort of guidance and example which would enable the nation to cope with its contemporary difficulties. Others, like Gemistos, felt that the lessons of the past could be supplemented by an urgent re-appraisal of existing conditions, that dangers from within were hardly less subversive than those from without. Whatever the scholarly predilection, however, the solution proposed was invariably the same: Greeks needed desperately to resurrect a spirit of resistance, freedom and unity. After 1204, an efflorescence of national feeling in these terms thus co-incided—*prima facie* a bizarre concurrence—with the political and economic decline of Greek Byzantium. Hellenism, that is to say, appeared as a national and cultural organism which continued to thrive independently of its decaying environment; or, in Vasiliev's words, "at the time of its political and economic decay, Hellenism seemed to gather all its strength to show the viability of classical culture and to give grounds for the hope for the future Hellenic renaissance of the nineteenth century."⁸

But it was only a *renaissance* of that which had already quickened in Byzantine times. Modern Hellenism had approached its hour of fulfilment only to be held back by the advanced decomposition of the Empire and the new external threat. Far from being stifled, however, Greek nationalist consciousness flourished in the conditions of foreign occupation—until finally, sound and intact, only more vigorous, it triumphantly burst those bonds in 1821. Such is the thesis which Professor Vacalopoulos develops with persuasiveness and skill; in doing so, he has also proved himself something of a pathfinder among historians of nationalism. It is not by any means that Vacalopoulos has ignored those other proximate causes of the nationalist revolution in Greece, but he has given, quite legitimately and in a most welcome way, due weight to a view of its *ultimate* causes so far only dimly held (or at least not emphasized enough), but which in the end may well command scholarly consensus.

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⁸ Vacalopoulos 186, quoting A. Vasiliev, *Histoire de l'empire byzantin* II (Paris 1932) 390.