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Stories of a Revolution, or "Un peuple qui se prépare à devenir nation"

Dimitris Arvanitakis

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Stories of a Revolution, or “Un peuple qui se prépare à devenir nation”

Dimitris Arvanitakis

Benaki Museum

The subheading, a phrase deriving from Adamantios Korais (1803),¹ is intended to indicate that the revolution of the Greeks was, in essence, a critical moment in the long process of shaping a new subject, the political nation of the Greeks; that this turning point contributed to the wider consolidation of the modern concept of the nation, beyond the circle of the intellectual, social and economic elite of the Greek world. The places and times, which are the Cartesian product of history, contributed to a tiered, rather than a homotropical, dissemination of the national idea. “The development of a national conscience,” Spyros Asdrachas wrote, “was completed mostly during the revolution, and not before. What had occurred much earlier abroad [in the Greek communities (*paroikies*) established in Western Europe], in mainland Greece would take place mainly during 1821.”² In that sense, revolution – revolutionary time and the corresponding momentum – created revolutionaries, just as revolutionary and, at the same time, national language, was creating the world of the nation, turning possibility into an active reality.³ Referring to corresponding issues in Italian history, Alberto Mario Banti points out that, even though throughout the Risorgimento, the “patriots were used to assuming an Italian nation, which pre-existed and justified all that, ... it wasn’t too clear what its deeper connective features might be.”⁴ These thoughts, ultimately, are intended to highlight that the interpretive context of the revolution ought to transcend mere events and approach it as a breakthrough clearly defined in space and time (which, however, involves a *longue durée*), as a result of the dialectic relationship between past and present, as a process of a revolutionary nationalist education.

Petros Pizanias, *Η Ελληνική Επανάσταση, 1821–1830*

[The Greek Revolution, 1821–1830] (Athens: Estia, 2021), 272 pp.

This study is intended to provide a comprehensive interpretative context, since the author does not focus so much on narrating the events as on approaching the historical moment as a “revolutionary process”.⁵ Hereto, it begins (13–30) by examining the terms of

constituting the political nation of the Greeks, persisting on the long process of the new self-determination of sections of the intellectual and economic elite of the Greeks (therefore, their gradual other-determination in relation to the “Rum millet” and the Ottoman Empire), the emergence of antiquity, but, primarily, on the concept of “political patriotism”, which served as the foundation of the revolutionary ideology, a fact that connects the political conceptualisation of the nation of the Greeks to the Radical Enlightenment and 1789. Furthermore, he stresses the crucial importance of breaking out of the old mental and historical “regime”, the importance, in other words, of the transition from the “imperial phenomenon” to the modern concept of the nation and the nationalisation of the concept of subversion.

For the author, the revolution shapes the conditions for the “political constitution” of the new subject, as well as establishing a “new political field, of multifarious and multifaceted conflicts” (133). These thoughts provide the context for demonstrating the importance of the introduction of the “République” and the principle of popular sovereignty (56–57), but much more the fact that the persons who exercised the new ruling power were, in good part, the same as the traditional local authorities, which were now functioning objectively as expressors of the revolutionary ideology, transmuting into nationally-defined modern political subjects: the traditional institutions of authority were “liquidised” through the revolutionary structures of political power, since the new institutions now included additionally the “emerging military”, the diverse world of the Phanariots and the popular element (48, 134–35). The author confronts the complexity of the questions, the contradictions and the conflicts, and uses these as a basis to pose critical methodological questions on the historiography of the revolution. For example, he highlights the unique meaning of the class system in pre-1821 Greek societies, points out the importance of “the weight and the influence of old history”, the “long historical period that comprised the incorporated history” of the elite, in understanding their actions and conflicts within the revolution, but, most of all, he persists in understanding the concept, the dimensions and the historicity of locality, which he correctly disassociates from localism.

According to the author, locality was “a historical condition” (68), since, before 1821, populations, in the absence of a central state and without direct connections between them, bore strong local particularities and, therefore, these “localities were social structures instituted over a long historical period. They were, therefore, powerful and incorporated as a conceptual context for understanding the world for every Greek man and woman” (68). They were the product of a historical course, connected to the structure of an agricultural economy, to the nature and the boundaries of local (financial, administrative, armatolic, ecclesiastical) authorities. We must, therefore, consider locality not as a factor opposed to national cohesion, an element hostile to the logic of modernisation, but certainly as a conflicting feature in an evolving historical reality. The above admissions, along with the

observation that, in contrast to the cases of the French or British revolutions, there were no “government institutions that the Greeks could incorporate into their own, under-construction state” (190–94), lead to an important observation as regards the interpretive perspectives of the revolution, since locality/localism, with all the traumatic conflict it brought about, is seen “not as a cultural or political offence or social delay, which is almost the view of Greek presentist historians, but as a strictly scientific descriptive term” (75).

The central role ascribed to the concept of the “momentum of the revolution” is well justified, while of particular interest is the author’s analysis of the processes to convert the “rayah” into modern Greek citizens through the dissemination of the revolutionary ideology. The new consciousness of the peasants was constructed through the experience of war, through the conflicts they were facing, but also through the new language they were being educated in. “After centuries of a self-image which was identified with slavery, they [that is, the revolutionary intellectuals] were referring to them as Greeks, they were speaking to them of their glorious ancient ancestors, and of freedom. In very simple words, they built within the mental world of the peasants a new past, glorious, and a better future” (154). If, then, for the elites, the integration into the new world had begun, to a great extent, in the years leading up to 1821, for the masses this took place alongside the revolution, through and because of it. But how were they incorporated into the national political and ideological context? The author concludes that several factors were essential to that. One factor was the dissemination of revolutionary ideology followed by the catalytic experience of the participation of peasants in the war. This experience gave them citizen rights, not accompanied by financial or property criteria (see indicatively the chapter “The early days of Greek Republic,” 84–90). Moreover, the establishment of family allotments via the nationalisation of Ottoman lands (206) and the interaction of local populations had been essential (172–73, cf. 149). War taught the peasants how to become Greeks, as Pizaniias puts it, “as the old localities were shattered, the world became larger for everyone, the name ‘Greeks’ took on flesh and blood for the peasants” (155).

The analysis proposed by Pizaniias is an attempt at a cohesive interpretation of the revolutionary phenomenon, as the latter was particularised in the Greek experience of 1821, as well as a critical reading of other historiographic approaches. There is, however, a sense that in the interest of cohesion and integrity of the interpretative scheme, the author’s views are often dogmatised (such as his view on the degree of integration of the people into the revolutionary spirit, the view that, despite Ibrahim’s victories, the Greeks managed to turn the situation around, compelling the Great Powers to intervene [127–32], or even that the request for protection to Britain [Act of Submission] was a simple manoeuvre [112–13], etc.), or certain aspects of the events are sacrificed, such as his approach to the civil wars (79–83), or the conflicts in the Kapodistrian period (217–38). As regards the latter, the governor’s clash with the (questionably uniform) “revolutionary leadership” is interpreted exclusively on the basis of the issue of the constitution, disregarding the tensions caused by the reaction of the still-powerful localities to the effort to establish a central administration.⁶

It is still, however, an articulated proposal for understanding and interpreting the revolution as a process of converting the “natural populations” into “political people” (206), a process of education towards the creation of the nation, a dynamic process that evolved through contradictions and conflicts towards the world of nations.

Mark Mazower, *The Greek Revolution: 1821 and the Making of Modern Europe* (London: Allen Lane, 2021), 574 pp.

Published in Greek as *Η ελληνική επανάσταση* [The Greek Revolution] (Athens: Alexandria, 2021), 566 pp.⁷

This book, which has already received several positive reviews,⁸ puts forward a different perspective. The author appears to suggest not so much a comprehensive interpretation of the revolution, but a history of the people, the Greeks, during the period of the revolution, with a core supposition that what saved the revolution was the “resilience” of the revolted populace, which drew the unprecedented sympathy of the societies, and ultimately the intervention, of the Great Powers. As such, it delivers a fascinating mural, a panoramic picture, put together with indubitable skill, a vivid style and fine narrative techniques: virtues uncommon in historiographical texts. The huge wealth of his sources, excerpts of which are integrated effectually into the narrative, the connection of historical time with the present day, the numerous brief individual portraits, sometimes in juxtaposition with one another, the small human stories-expressions of neglected aspects of the “big history”, which are always the story of the people, the realistic descriptions, the masterful closing of the book’s main narrative with several interlinked individual stories from the post-revolution years (449–55), which complete a long historical vector with the unexpected tale of Apostolos Mavrogenis, “a survivor of a vanished world”, the “last surviving holy relic of the Struggle”, who was born in 1798 and died in 1906 (454–55). In service of a multifaceted reading is also the final chapter of the book’s first part, entitled “The Nature of the Struggle” (181–214).

Already in the introduction, entitled “On Heroes, Greeks and Turks” (xix–xxxiv), the author makes it clear that his intention is not to present a glorifying, conventional, easily digestible history, but, conversely, to bring up, to the extent that it is possible, all of the critical moments of the revolution, the aspects that make up the “truth” of historical time. The core of the study, then, is comprised of various contradictions, problems, discordances, retreats – the human reality, in other words, that is commonly lost or “regularised” on the pages of a book. Assuming the purpose is to present the complex process that led to the creation of the Greek state, this is achieved by revealing – not exclusively, but certainly without hesitation – the diverse aspects of the people, regardless of whether they are

heroic. The complexity of the matter is introduced by phrases such as: the Greek Revolution “was not so much a single war as a set of interconnected regional struggles where local topography, traditions and power structures of deeply affected events only gradually converged” (xxxi). The author states in advance his intention to extend his gaze across “variegated post-Napoleonic Europe” (xxxi); when it comes to the field of analysis itself, however, he does not stray far from presenting the revolution with his gaze fixed, primarily, on the Greeks.

The main pillars of the narrative are the role of the Filiki Etairia in preparing for the struggle (70–71), as well as the swift realisation of the need to set it aside; the readjustment of the revolutionaries from laying claim to “Romëiko” to creating a national state; the clash between past and present (through the conflict of the models expressed by Dimitrios Ypsilantis and the Peloponnesian kodjabashis [79–81, 107–8], through the example of the *armatoles* [101–4, 115–19, 164–80] or the issue of instituting a regular army, etc.); the concept of localism and the comparison of local authorities to the central administration under development (on this complexity, see indicatively 80–81, and 111–12 on the dynamics and the role of the Peloponnesian Senate in relation to the first central government); the modernity of the ideas of Alexandros Mavrokordatos and his conflict with the views of the members of the Filiki Etairia or the kodjabashis (see the chapter entitled “The Pisa Circle”, 92–114); the two distinct wings of philhellenism – the first more politicised, and the second of a more Christian-humanist nature – and their significance (especially the latter) in the shift in European politics (217–42 and 326–47); the role, finally, of the revolution in creating “European liberal consciousness” (329), in forming/reinforcing “public opinion” (345, 403 et seq.), in the emergence of women (334–35), in the greater awareness of societies of the issue of slavery (336–37 et seq.) or even in the fate of the “civilian population” during the wars (344), etc.

The tale told by Mazower, however, comes to an end in an unexpected way: with his epilogue, which is entitled “The Economy of the Miracle” (456–62) and centred on the “discovery” of the icon of the Virgin of Tinos in early 1823 and the gradual creation of a large Orthodox pilgrimage centre. This event serves to occasion broader contemplations: that for the Greeks (and perhaps also for the historian?) “the greatest miracle was surely the outcome of the war itself” (460), that “it was ... a religious struggle for both sides” (460; cf. xxvi–xxxix), that the Greeks had believed that Divine Providence was their guarantee, that they believed that “the resurrection of the nation bore within it a tacit eschatology and that, with the success of the revolution, “they would henceforth be emancipated from the historical process itself” (462), but when that was refuted, a “litany of all-round dissatisfaction became a trope that endures to this day” (461).

How are we to understand these pages? If the narrative begins with citing, correctly though not analytically, the modernist concepts in whose name the revolution took place (breaking with the imperial past, self-determination, self-definition, nation-national state, freedom), how do these concepts disappear at the moment when they seem to have

prevailed, with the creation of the nation-state? In addition to this: could we claim that it was a “religious struggle for both sides”? The prominence of the religious element in the case of the Greek revolutionaries (either for the promotion of their struggle in Europe or for the definition of the concept of the citizen – which was decried by Korais) was indubitably present, but it was certainly very different to the “holy war” declared by the sultan.⁹ This by no means negates the fact of the people’s strong religiousness, nor does it mean that the interpretation of history within the scheme of Divine Providence or the faith in the advent of the “Desideratum” had been abolished, that the modern concepts had been universally adopted,¹⁰ but the latter did create the framework, they sealed the entry of the Greeks into the modern political reality, and, as such, the revolution was also an educational process.

At this point, it would be useful to note the absence of any reference to the conceptual preparation of the Neo-Hellenic Enlightenment in Mazower’s study. Without assuming the existence of an internal connection or teleology leading to the revolution, the rupture of historical time cannot be understood without the earlier new significations, without the intellectual rupture, without reference to the “Revolution of the Mind”.¹¹ Even if modern ideas had not outplaced the traditional views and mentalities in the entirety of local societies, it was these that drove people (unevenly, asynchronously, inconsistently) to change their fate. In that context, it would be extremely useful to examine the reception of the revolution itself by the Greeks, and indeed its defining term (“national”) in relation to its Balkan dimension, which still held as strong in the first (at least) years of the revolution.

At the same time, I would suggest that “localism”, despite the author’s correct presentation of its causes and his invaluable observations, ultimately tends to function not as an analytical tool, but as an answer to a contemporary question: *Is localism the enemy of modernisation? Is the traditional/local reactionary and the national progressive?* That seems to be the deduction in various points of the book, whether in connection to the issue of the regular army, or local authorities.¹² Combined with the above, an analysis of local or national assemblies and constitutions could serve as a tool for studying civil education, in whichever way and to whichever extent it was produced, from the training of the Greeks in the modern language of state texts, from the (unsynchronised and inconsistent) steps taken towards the “political existence and independence” of a people that was now transforming into a nation (112–14 and 173–80). In closing, I believe that the iconic, if isolated, presentation of Karaiskakis’ “transition”, which the author attempts (363–65), could function in a disorienting manner, since his acutely romantic portrait comes, not at all implicitly, in contrast with “everyone else” (“he had always been different”: 364), to whom the term “*patrida*” meant (still, always) their own place of birth: “Most [but who are the “few” that are excepted?] of the Moreot notables and chieftains conflated patriotism with defence of their village, valley or region; they spoke the new language of patriotism from time to time, but their actions betrayed their real allegiances” (362). Could it be that Karaiskakis was the only

one to undergo that change? On this point, I believe there is need for an overview of the “production” of the new type of Greek, a profile of the collective portrait under development, in other words, through civil education and the transcendence (to any degree) of the conflicts and clashes.

His view on the continued dominance of localities and close interests, which appear, at some point, to have become completely autonomous of the needs of the revolution, critically undermining it, is also evident in his interpretation of the Kapodistrian period. There (434–38), localisms and the resistance of local elites to their emasculation are suggested exclusively as causes of the opposition, without any reference to the issue of constitutionalism and liberalism, heralded by Adamantios Korais (notable, once again, for his absence).

All of the above allow the author to be led to one of the main conclusions of his study: the intervention of the Great Powers. Without neglecting to mention the significance of Russian policy in the developments and in the drastic change of Britain in 1828 (404 et seq.),¹³ his preceding, explicit and repeated reference to “pragmatist” Canning’s (346) awareness of the danger of Europe’s “barbarization” and the drama of the “civilian populations” (344–47) has already primed the reader for a particular interpretation of the Powers’ intervention, for accepting it as the start of the (historically very questionable, in my view) “humanitarian interventions” by the Great Powers of the world, at any given time.¹⁴

The pages on philhellenism and the intervention of the Great Powers are certainly associated with the role of the revolution in the “creation of contemporary Europe”. There is no doubt, and it is well known from the previous historiographical elaboration, that these are important aspects of the event. However, as Kostas Kostis notes: “I cannot see how we could corroborate the claim of the extraordinary significance of the revolution in the international field.”¹⁵ If, however, there is no corroboration of the critical importance of the Greek Revolution in the “creation of contemporary Europe”, there is still call for another reading, arguably more useful: one where the Greek Revolution is integrated into the large wave of conceptual, political and social changes that swept the world in the aftermath of the American Revolution, making the concept of a “rupture” historically feasible.¹⁶

Aristides Hatzis, *Ο ενδοξότερος αγώνας: Η Ελληνική Επανάσταση του 1821*

[The most glorious struggle: The Greek Revolution of 1821]

(Athens: Papadopoulos, 2021), 640 pp.

This study is the first part of a larger project, as it only covers developments from 1821 to early 1823. It does, however, clearly delineate the framework and main interpretive lines of the author. As is noted, the book adopts “the techniques of American public history”; it is, in other words, “written for the wider public (vivid, engaging), but very well documented,

without sacrificing the science”, in order to present “the conclusions of serious and extensive historical research of recent decades” (596). Indeed, the book draws on an endless wealth of sources and studies, which bring the narrative to life, present uncommon aspects of the events, and serve as food for thought and contemplation. However, the author’s stated decision – as an effect of his overall choice for the book – to not cite any bibliographical or archival references, deems the text oddly one-sided, preventing the reader from verifying, delving deeper, making judgements, and obliging him to submit to the one-dimensional authority of the text, essentially hindering the equal participation of the book in historiographical dialogue and the burden of proof. The very brief “Bibliographic essay” (604–5) and the lengthy but uncommented section “Sources and Bibliography” (606–27) do nothing to fulfil the above needs.¹⁷

The book offers well-written and interesting pages on critical issues connected to: the significance of Alexandros Mavrokordatos’ “Italian experience” in his approach to liberalism (13–56); the conceptual prehistory of the revolution (see the section on the terms “Romios” and “Hellene” in the post-Byzantine centuries [103–9]); the old “Greek plan of Russia” (210–21); the liberal republican blaze that threatened Europe, and especially German universities, shortly before the Congress of Troppau (226–29); Kapodistrias’ plan as opposed to that of the Filiki Etairia (240–50); the “momentum of the times” that the Filiki Etairia expressed and which could not be held back by Kapodistrias’ or Korais’ “conservative wisdom” (252–54); the comparison of Dimitrios Ypsilantis’ paternalistic model to that of the kodjabashis, who “regardless of their deeper motives ... explicitly supported popular legitimation”, seeking “the introduction of popular sovereignty in the peninsula” (376–77, cf. 455–56); the educational role of the first constitution and the republican institutions for the consolidation of the nation and the “new common homeland” (477–92); the reorientation attempted by Mavrokordatos (182, 434–42, 544–48); British policy and the shift brought about by Canning (528–48), etc.

Notable, in any case, is the rather puzzled presentation of a critical issue: that concerning the inception of the revolution and the nature of the relationship between Alexandros Ypsilantis and Kapodistrias, especially as regards the extent of the latter’s knowledge of the details of the plan (174–87 and 270–74). Vassilis Panagiotopoulos has recently provided important data and formulated interpretive proposals not only regarding the extent of Kapodistrias’ knowledge, but also (and mainly) on the significance and the conceptual context of Ypsilantis’ decision to overturn the resolutions of Izmail and launch the revolution from the Danubian Principalities: these propositions compel us to reconsider not only “what Ypsilantis set off to do”, but also the conceptualisation of the “national” revolution at that time – and much later.¹⁸ Another, in my view, problematic area of the analysis is the one concerning the sultan’s response at the moment of the outbreak of the revolution, his decision to execute the patriarch, and the latter’s stance towards the

outbreak of the revolution (342–64). The author, in analysing these issues, is transferring contemporary frameworks of thinking to an entirely different historical time, or applies a mechanical interpretation to changes that were, in fact, radical.

The book seems to be written mainly to stress the role of Mavrokordatos, to demonstrate the uniqueness and appropriateness of his proposal in contrast to the stance adopted by all other expressors of the leading Greek groups. The expression “only Mavrokordatos” is repeated very often, to stress his supremacy with regards to the integrity of his intentions and the benevolence of his aims, his strategic thinking, the constitution of the central government, the reorientation of the Greeks, his educational role in the concept of the nation, his handling of the Great Powers – and, ultimately, in 1823, “Mavrokordatos’ geopolitical scheme for the reorientation of Greece had begun to bear fruit. *The British had taken the bait. Mavrokordatos was the only one who could achieve such a thing, the only one who could use the British for the benefit of the Greeks*” (590; emphasis mine). Though it is true that Mavrokordatos’ role was much underrated in the earlier Greek historiography, a reinterpretation and re-evaluation of his contribution have long been proposed.¹⁹ Promoting the “individual”, however, in contrast or in opposition to all others can easily lead to exaggeration and unilateralism that do not serve the purpose of historical understanding.²⁰

The author notes that his aim is “not only to avoid ‘historical populism’ (I think the term was coined by Asdrachas), but to serve as a kind of antidote to the ‘paradoxical nationalist-demagogic historical image’ (as Gunnar Hering aptly describes it)” (596). At another point, where he refers to Patriarch of Constantinople Gregory V, he writes with greater clarity that “it is now time for a sober evaluation of his role” between the “national historiography and the Church, which canonised him” and “the early liberals and the Marxist and populist left-wing historiography [that] had nothing good to say about him” (354–55). But are these adversaries real (with reference, always, to the academic field) or are they perhaps only invoked in order to facilitate the author’s interpretation? The name of Asdrachas (as that of Hering) in that context is indeed useful – but in another manner: already from the 1970s, on various occasions and in different ways, Asdrachas (as well as Philippos Iliou, Vassilis Panagiotopoulos, Vassilis Kremmydas et al.) attempted systematically to demonstrate the dangers of “populist historiography” in the context of fighting the use of history for ideological purposes. “In its core form,” Antonis Liakos aptly observes, “this line of enquiry [the criticism of “populist historiography”] results from a critical approach to the way history was treated by the Left, from where most representatives of the ‘new history’ and their audience derived”.²¹

The threat, however, of “populist historiography” (which is the equivalent of “populism” in political terms) is substantiated through a broader attempt to re-read history as a whole, through the rigid scheme of a perpetual and unchanging contrast: “modernisation–traditionality”, “progressive–reactionary”. Indicative is the fact that the author, after narrating the devastation of the Battle of Peta,²² cites, by way of closing,

without any comment (so, we are justified in assuming that this also expresses the author's own opinion), William St Clair's requiem (2008): "The ideal of establishing a regenerated nation state with a regular army, central administration, uniform laws and taxation, and all the other characteristics of a liberal Western European country seemed to have been destroyed for ever on the hills of Peta" (572–73). Let's not forget that this defeat has been identified not only with the localists' refusal to see the broader national prospects, but also with the failure to institute a regular army: two aspects that, at their core, are obviously related.

Is, then, prevalent traditionalism understood as reaction and, thus, as "anti-westernism", coded in the DNA of modern Greek society? In other words, is reality understood as an obstacle to the innovative intentions of the enlightened personalities? While the author does not fail to acknowledge the nature of the authority of the local elites (for example, 127–29) or even to accurately point out the contribution of local administrations in the modernisation of the political structure and, in turn, in the course towards the formation of a central administration, he does not follow through with a dynamic reading of the conflicts, choosing, instead, to complete his reading through the contrasting scheme of "national/modernist–localist/reactionary". It is, however, my opinion that such an interpretation does no justice to the complexity of the historical reality and a society (and, indeed, not one but several) in the process of breakdown, which must also be understood as self-retraction: as cancellation and resignification of its former self. None of the terms people–nation, *genos*–nation, imperial (Byzantine, Phanariot/Balkan, Ottoman) model–national state, etc., had the clarity they acquired subsequently in the history books. Particularising, for example, the projected contrast of "modernity–traditionalism" into the "national–local" dipole, we must contemplate whether these terms were as entrenched then as is suggested today, whether this was, therefore, a clash between two conceptualised and ideologically mutually exclusive positions, or the dynamic expressions of a multiple reality that gave rise to conflicts and disagreements. What we have here is no longer just the "leader–people" dipole (where, with a reversal of "historical populism", the weight falls on the enlightened pioneers, striving to guide societies along the "right path"),²³ but also an implicit and ever-present comparison to a regulatory model, which explains the Greek "singularity". What we have here is what has aptly been described as a "history of absences".²⁴

The issue is cast in an entirely different light if, as mentioned above, we were to understand localism as locality, deideologising it, in other words, and apprehending it not as an organised reaction to modernisation/westernism, but as a dynamic reality, where local societies had their roots, and which, in turn, perceived the future in such terms as they were historically able. That localism/locality inevitably entered into a process of destruction of its own self, as it was pulled irrevocably into the vertex of the national idea.

¹ Adamantios Korais, *Mémoire sur l'état actuel de la civilisation dans la Grèce, lu à la Société des Observateurs de l'homme, le 16 Nivôse, an XI (6 Janvier 1803)* (Paris: [F. Didot], 1803), 44.

² Spyros Asdrachas, “Γύρω από τον αρματολισμό κατά την Τουρκοκρατία και το '21” [On armatolism during the Ottoman Domination and '21], in Asdrachas, *Πρωτόγονη επανάσταση: Αρματολοί και κλέφτες (18ος–19ος αι.)* [Primitive revolution: Armatoles and klephts (18th–19th century)], ed. Anna Matthaiou and Popi Polemi, foreword Nikos Theotokas (Athens: Hellenic Open University, 2019), 155 (first published: Athens 1958).

³ Cf. Nikos Theotokas, “1821: Όταν οι επαναστάτες γκρέμισαν τον μόνο κόσμο που μπορούσε να τους χωρέσει” [1821: When the revolutionaries destroyed the only world that could contain them], in *1821: Διακόσια χρόνια ιστορίας. Η δημοκρατική παράδοση. 14+1 κείμενα* [1821: Two hundred years of history. The democratic tradition. 14 +1 texts], ed. Antonis Liakos (Athens: Themelio, 2021), 24–30.

⁴ Alberto Mario Banti, *Il Risorgimento italiano* (Rome: Laterza, 2004), 11–13.

⁵ The book should be read alongside his previous work, *Η ιστορία των νέων Ελλήνων: Από το 1400 έως το 1820* [The history of the modern Greeks: From 1400 to 1820] (Athens: Estia, 2014) and the collective volume he edited titled *The Greek Revolution of 1821: A European Event* (Istanbul: Isis, 2011).

⁶ For certain critical points, also see Christos Loukos, “Πέντε βιβλία για την Ελληνική Επανάσταση” [Five books on the Greek Revolution], *Mnimon* 38 (2021): 253–56.

⁷ The pagination of the original English-language text and its Greek translation are almost identical. Quotations are taken from the English version.

⁸ See, indicatively, Roderick Beaton, “That Greece might still be free: The bloody but decisive transformations of 1821,” *Times Literary Supplement*, 29 October 2021, <https://bit.ly/3MCxMqz>; Roderick Beaton and Mark Mazower, “The Greek Revolution: 1821 and the Making of Modern Europe,” BSA virtual event, 10 December 2021, <https://bit.ly/3Q9hVTh>; Kostas Kostis, “Η γοητεία της Επανάστασης” [The charm of the revolution], *Book's Journal*, 30 April 2022, <https://bit.ly/39qHizp>; Christina Koulouri, “Μελετώντας την Ελληνική Επανάσταση με ενσυναίσθηση” [Studying the Greek Revolution with compassion], *Athens Review of Books* 139 (May 2022): 34–35; Vasilis Gounaris, “Η πληρέστερη αφήγηση για το '21” [The most comprehensive narrative on '21], *Athens Review of Books* 139 (May 2022): 36; Loukos, “Πέντε βιβλία” [Five books], 258–63.

⁹ On the reception of the revolution by the Ottoman authorities, see Leonidas Moiras, *Η Ελληνική Επανάσταση μέσα από τα μάτια των Οθωμανών* [The Greek Revolution through the eyes of the Ottomans] (Athens: Topos, 2020); Ilias Kolonos, H. Şükrü Ilıcak, and Mohammad Shariat-Panahi, *Η οργή του σουλτάνου: Αυτόγραφα διατάγματα του Μαχμούτ Β΄ το 1821* [The sultan's rage: Handwritten decrees of Mahmut II from 1821] (Athens: Hellenic Open University, 2021); H. Şükrü Ilıcak, ed., *“Those Infidel Greeks”: The Greek War of Independence through Ottoman Archival Documents* (Leiden: Brill, 2021).

¹⁰ That, however, is not unique to Greece (see Maria Todorova, “Ελληνική; Επανάσταση; Ιστοριογραφικές πλαισιώσεις ενός ιστορικού γεγονότος” [Greek? Revolution? Historiographical frameworks of an historical event], *Ta Istorika* 73 [October 2021]: 39–68, here 40–42), nor the indisputable fact that the Greeks “regarded theirs as a Holy Struggle and enlisted divine help” (460). In the case of the Greeks, fighting against a non-Christian tyrant, the overemphasis on the religious element obviously had multiple connotations, but with regards to the “sanctity” of all national struggles and the conflation of the religious with the political language of the nation, see, indicatively, Banti, *Il Risorgimento italiano*, 53–61, and, especially, Banti, *La nazione del Risorgimento: Parentela, santità e onore alle origini dell'Italia unita* (Turin: Einaudi, 2000).

¹¹ On the critical importance of the concept in the study of revolutions, see Jonathan Israel, *A Revolution of the Mind: Radical Enlightenment and the Intellectual Origins of Modern Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009). The absence of any reference to the Neo-Hellenic Enlightenment and Adamantios Korais has been noted by Koulouri, “Μελετώντας την Ελληνική Επανάσταση.”

¹² A similar logic is identified in the approach of the issue of the revolution's leadership: see xxxi and 212–13.

¹³ See Loukos' critical observations, “Πέντε βιβλία,” 260–63.

- ¹⁴ Of interest is the reflection on the genealogy of the principle of “humanitarian intervention”: “Near the end of the twentieth century, the so-called right to intervene (later recast as the responsibility to protect) emerged in international diplomacy in connection with humanitarian relief. But it had started out, in the years after 1815, as an instrument of counter-revolution” (398). See also xxxii and 35.
- ¹⁵ Kostis, “Η γοητεία της Επανάστασης.” Let it be noted that, for reasons that are not explained, the guiding and methodologically significant subtitle “1821 and the Making of Modern Europe” is absent from the Greek edition, despite the author putting that dimension forward as central to his interpretive proposal.
- ¹⁶ See, indicatively, Jonathan Israel, *Il grande incendio: Come la Rivoluzione americana conquistò il mondo, 1775–1848* (Turin: Einaudi, 2018), 587–605 (the analysis of the Greek Revolution); published in English as *The Expanding Blaze: How the American Revolution Ignited the World, 1775–1848* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017).
- ¹⁷ The author mentions (604) that, since the book was intended to be published in English, “there was little point in giving useless information to an audience that by definition does not know the Greek language”. Beyond, however, the obvious question of who that “non-specialised audience” might be, that will patiently read such a lengthy book without ever feeling the need to cross-reference a cited source, there is also the issue of how the Greek reader is treated.
- ¹⁸ See Vasilis Panagiotopoulos, *Δύο πρίγκιπες στην Ελληνική Επανάσταση: Επιστολές αυτόπτη μάρτυρα και ένα υπόμνημα του πρίγκιπα Γεωργίου Καντακουζηνού* [Two princes in the Greek Revolution: Letters from an eyewitness and a memorandum by prince Georgios Kantakouzinos] (Athens: National Hellenic Research Foundation; Asini, 2015). How much more complex the issues actually were is demonstrated by Nikos Rotzokos, *Οργανώνοντας την Επανάσταση του 1821: Η Φιλική Εταιρεία, ο Χριστόφορος Περραιβός και τα αυτοκρατορικά συνωμοτικά δίκτυα στην ανατολική Μεσόγειο* [Organising the 1821 Revolution: The Filiki Etairia, Christoforos Perraivos and the imperial conspiracy networks in the Eastern Mediterranean] (Athens: Hellenic Open University, 2021), in the sense of the “interpolative emergence” of the Filiki Etairia.
- ¹⁹ See, indicatively, Christos Loukos, “Οι ‘τύχες’ του Αλέξανδρου Μαυροκορδάτου στη νεοελληνική συνείδηση” [The “fortunes” of Alexandros Mavrokordatos in modern Greek consciousness], in *Η Επανάσταση του 1821: Μελέτες στη μνήμη της Δέσποινας Θεμελή-Κατηφόρη* [The 1821 Revolution: Studies in memory of Despina Themeli-Katifori] (Athens: Society for Modern Greek Studies–Mnimon, 1994), 93–106; Loukos, *Αλέξανδρος Μαυροκορδάτος* [Alexandros Mavrokordatos], in *Οι ιδρυτές της νεότερης Ελλάδας* [The founders of modern Greece], ed. Vassilis Panagiotopoulos (Athens: Ta Nea – Historical Library, 2010); Giorgos K. Theodoridis, *Αλέξανδρος Μαυροκορδάτος: Ένας φιλελεύθερος στα χρόνια του εικοσιένα* [Alexandros Mavrokordatos: A liberal in the days of 1821] (Athens: National Hellenic Research Foundation, 2012).
- ²⁰ The imposed promotion of the role of Mavrokordatos restores the need to revisit the aspects of Liberalism, that is, the distinction between its moderate/conservative expression and that which requires its organic, internal connection with the ideas of republicanism. The author mentions that distinction (33, 468–70), but there is still call for further elaboration. The example of the promotion of a moderate/conservative Korais by a large part of the Greek historical and political science, in the name of his liberalism, is indicative (as pointed out by Philippos Iliou) in terms of the inclusion of different realities under the blanket of a one-sided (or even anachronistic) interpretation of the term.
- ²¹ Antonis Liakos, “Η νεοελληνική ιστοριογραφία το τελευταίο τέταρτο του εικοστού αιώνα” [Modern Greek historiography in the final quarter of the twentieth century], *Synchrone Themata* 76–77 (2001): 79. Cf. Liakos, “Η διαμάχη των ερμηνειών: Η φρονηματιστική ιστοριογραφία στα 200 χρόνια της Επανάστασης” [The conflict of interpretations: The patronising historiography in the 200 years of the revolution], *Efimerida ton Syntakton*, 31 December 2021, <https://bit.ly/3zyqPUp>. On Asdrachas’ relevant interventions, see Dimitris Arvanitakis, *Σπύρος Ι. Ασδραχάς 1923–2017: Εργογραφία και δοκιμή βιογραφίας* [Spyros I. Asdrachas, 1923–2017: Bibliography and biographical sketch] (Athens: Contemporary Social History Archives–Themelio, 2021), no. 178, 191, 194, 212–13, 218–21, 224–25 (indicatively) and pp. 360–95.
- ²² The defeat, according to the author, was a result of Mavrokordatos’ abandonment (“the only one with a specific plan”: 559) by Dimitrios Ypsilantis (who “had started to see the world through the lens of the Moreans”: 568) and the localist “Moreans” (although some of them responded: 559–61, 569–70). He doesn’t

appear, however, to ascribe equal weight to the possibility of a difference in strategies, since, at the same time, the locus-centre of the revolution was in real danger from Mahmut Dramali Pasha's campaign in the Peloponnese (although, as an aside: “the miliary leaders of the Peloponnese did not obey orders to move there [to Epirus]. And this time, they had a good reason: while Mavrokordatos was preparing his campaign to Epirus, Dramali was ready to cross the Isthmus” [567]).

²³ I assume that this interpretation is combined with the view that, in the case of Greece “in general”, the advanced and, by extension, modernist political system precedes a society that is lagging behind and therefore saves it, integrating it into modernity and adapting it to the Western model of modernisation. See Yannis Voulgaris, *Ελλάδα: Μια χώρα παραδόξως νεωτερική* [Greece: A strangely modernist country] (Athens: Polis, 2019).

²⁴ See Liakos, “Η νεοελληνική ιστοριογραφία,” 82; the question of “why Greece did not evolve as the other countries of Western Europe ... in itself points to a history of absences, to a comparison ‘model–failed imitation’ and indeed with the terms, the methods and the implicit value system of the model. In that sense, the three major trends of historiography of that period worked together to formulate a negative question and identify the fundamental dilemma of Greek society: tradition or Europeanisation, inertia or modernisation? The angle was dictated, clearly, by the second leg of the dilemma”; see also 80. Cf. Pizanias, *Η Ελληνική Επανάσταση*, 66–75, as criticism on the “concisely termed modernising interpretation of the revolution, or, put differently, the case of Greece as a (negative) exception in Europe” (66).