

Douglas Dakin, *The Greek Struggle for Independence, 1821-1833*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1973, pp. 344.

More has perhaps been written on the Greek War of Independence than on any other period of modern Greek history. Paradoxically, however, our understanding of important dimensions of the turbulent beginnings of the modern Greek state still remains woefully incomplete.

Douglas Dakin's latest work constitutes a determined effort to fill some of these gaps in our knowledge, and to «give a narrative and interpretation of the events which led to the establishment of the modern Greek kingdom». To this task, Professor Dakin brings his long familiarity with modern Greek history, his unrivalled knowledge of the sources for the period he examines, and his lucid prose. The result is a thorough, scholarly and stimulating, but ultimately uneven work. Of particular interest are Professor Dakin's account of the so-called three intrigues concerning the future monarch of Greece, and his analysis of the labyrinthine setting of the Third National Assembly. His ability to go beneath the surface of events, moreover, gives the reader a glimpse into the often chaotic but fascinating dynamics of revolutionary Greek politics.

It is precisely in this area, however, that more could and should have been done to give the subject its due. Despite brilliant side observations and brief analyses which are highly suggestive, Professor Dakin tends to shy away from full-scale treatment of topics which would have significantly added to our understanding of the period. Thus, the highly intricate system of clienteles and alliances which constituted the social reality of the period is only incidentally and indirectly alluded to. At the same time, the significant differences in goals and orientations which separated indigenous traditional elites from the westernized Greek modernizers are relegated to passing references and to a brief discussion in the epilogue. The difficulties created by the incidental treatment of such crucial dimensions of the war are exacerbated by the lack of documentation which could have at least served to guide the interested student, whether layman or specialist, to the pertinent sources. It is precisely because modern Greek historical studies are still in an early stage of development that scholarly studies such as these ought to be accompanied by proper documentation.

Finally, I would take issue with Professor Dakin's decision to regard the Kapodistrian regime as an integral part of the War of Independence, and with his use of the rather antiquated notion of «national character» to explain the actions and behavior of contemporary Greeks. While no one will question the important territorial gains made in Western Greece after Navarino, the radically different approaches to state-building followed by the westernized Greek modernizers before 1828, and by Kapodistrias thereafter argue for making that year a dividing point and for treating the two periods separately. As for «national character», a proper understanding of the dynamics of clienteles and alliances referred to earlier offers a better explanation for individual or collective behavior of the Greeks than references to their «natural curiosity» or their «nimble-wittedness» - notions which evoke images of the kind of configurational historical literature that Professor Dakin's work has never been identified with.

This book represents the first western attempt in a long time to write a thorough history of the Greek War of Independence. It has a lot to recommend it to the student of modern Greek history including its scholarly nature, its insights and its intimate knowledge of the events it describes. What it regrettably fails to do, however, is to provide us with a much needed comprehensive synthesis of the conditions and forces involved in the establishment of the modern Greek state.