

Steven Runciman, *The Fall of Constantinople, 1453*. Cambridge, At the University Press, 1965. Pp. 256, with illus., plans and one map.

Byzantine studies owe much to Sir Steven Runciman. As a pupil of J.B. Bury, Sir Steven inherited an enthusiasm and sympathy for Byzantium, and has given us over the last thirty-six years a series of volumes devoted to its history and distinguished by great qualities of synthesis and brilliance of style.

This book deals with a great historical epic, the last days of the long life of the Byzantine Empire. The dramatic story of the fall of Constantinople to the Ottoman Sultan Mehmet II on May 29, 1453, after a siege of some eight weeks, has been told many times, ever since the contemporary Greek historians Sphrantzes, Ducas, Critobulus, and Chalcocondylas recorded the event. In our century, Sir Edwin Pears has given us a full and authoritative account in his *Destruction of the Greek Empire and the Story of the Capture of Constantinople by the Turks* (London, 1903), upon which G. Schlumberger's subsequent book is almost entirely based. Since the publication of Sir Edwin's work, however, a number of new sources have come to light (e. g. unpublished works of Gennadius Scholarius, the short Byzantine chronicles edited by S. Lambros and C. Amantos, and the Barberini Codex Graecus 111, containing a Chronicle regarding the Turkish sultans and edited by G. Zoras), and the research of scholars such as F. Babinger, D. Zakythinos, G. Zoras and H. Inalcik have illuminated many aspects of the subject.

Sir Steven has diligently studied this new evidence and literature together with what was already known to Sir Edwin Pears, and has produced a fresh account of the fall of Constantinople, told in an unsurpassed narrative style.

The book contains thirteen chapters. The first four cover the events which led to the siege and subsequent fall of the Byzantine capital, examined from the Byzantine, Ottoman, and Western points of view. The once mighty Byzantine Empire has been reduced to a small and insignificant state comprising little more than a declining city which desperately appealed to the West for aid against the rising power of the Ottoman Turks, whose territory covered the greater part of the Balkan peninsula and portions of Asia Minor. With the Byzantines unable to defend themselves, the Eastern and Western Churches divided, and the Latins unable or unwilling to recognize the seriousness of the situation and respond effectively to the Byzantine pleas, the way was paved for the Ottoman triumph. The next six chapters, the main part of the book,

recount the story of the siege itself. The heroic defense, which commands our full admiration, especially since the fall of the city seemed inevitable, is described here stage by stage in detail and with a vividness and dramatic power, reminiscent of Gibbon's stirring account. The last three chapters discuss the repercussions of the fall of Constantinople for the conquering Turks, the vanquished Byzantines, the rising Orthodox Muscovites and the shocked Western Christians. Two appendices are included, one surveying the principal historical sources, and the other the fate of the city's churches under the Ottomans. A number of plates and plans and a map adorn the volume.

All in all this is a successful book, based on thorough knowledge and scrupulous use of Greek, Slavic, Western, and Oriental sources. One might add to Sir Steven's impressive list the collection of Armenian sources on the fall of Constantinople edited with a Russian translation by A.S. Anasjan, *Armjanskie istočniki o padenii Vizantii* (Erivan, 1957). In addition to the poem of Abraham of Ancyra, this work also contains the text of the poems by Arakel of Bageš and Jeremias Čelebi Keomurdžjan.

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Kosmas Thesprotos and Athanasius Psalidas, *Γεωγραφία Ἀλβανίας καὶ Ἠπειρώς* [Geography of Albania and Epirus], edited with an introduction and commentary by A.C. Papacharisis. Ioannina, Editions of the Society of Epirotan Studies, 1964. Pp. XXXI + 125; 8 maps.

The Society of Epirotan Studies at Ioannina has displayed in recent years noteworthy activity. Among other scholarly projects the Society has undertaken the publication of a series of volumes dealing with various aspects of the rich historical and cultural traditions of Epirus. Thus, under the general editorship of Dr. L. Vranousis, Director of the Mediaeval Archives of the Academy of Athens, a number of handsomely printed volumes in Greek have appeared so far, including *The Population of Ancient Epirus* (1962) by the late Professor D. Evangelidis, *The Literary Figures of the Despotate of Epirus* (1960) by Professor N. B. Tomadakis, *The "Κομισκόγρης ὁ ἐξ Ἀρβάνων" in the Alexiad of Anna Comnena* (1962) by Dr. Era L. Vranousis, *The Chronicles of Epirus from the Mediaeval and Ottoman Eras* (1962) by Dr. L. Vranousis, and *The Learned Tradition in Epirus* (1960) by the well-known literary historian Dr. C. Th. Dimaras, who has also edited in the same series *The Collection of*