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MOSCOW, THE THIRD ROME

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*Москва- всем городам мать.
Москва – царство.
Москва не город а целый мир.*

Summary

This article discusses the origin and history of the concept of Moscow as the “Third Rome” – the successor to Constantinople as the head of the Orthodox World. It then looks at the reasons that Moscow has not been accepted universally as the Third Rome and the possible effect it would have if Moscow were to be regarded as such.

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On May 29th, 1453, the Ottomans captured Constantinople, later renamed Istanbul. Contrary to legend successfully disseminated worldwide, the greater part of the Capital City most likely capitulated and was not, therefore, taken by assault. At least this is the version with which two very old janissaries provided the Sultan Selim I in 1520¹ - and it makes sense, given that the only church to be made a mosque after Mehmet II entered Constantinople was *Ayasofya*, i.e. the famous one dedicated to the Holy Wisdom². Had the City been taken by assault, no church would have been left to the Christians.

There is one more piece of evidence for this. The icon of the Virgin Mary, the same one of the Strategos Protector³ of Constantinople and the Byzantine armies, was neither destroyed nor desecrated when the Ottomans entered the Capital : it was kept in the church of the Pantocrator convent. But when the convent was turned into the Zeyrek Camii⁴, the nuns left the icon there, in a cavity made in the wall of the church. Many years later, the Moslem epistates, i.e. the person in charge of the administration of the mosque, came upon the icon; and presented it to a woman, his neighbour. This woman, being in need of money, sold the icon to a Greek clergyman named Gabriel, the protosyngellus of the Jerusalem Patriarchate. And this Gabriel the protosyngellus, after having been provided with an encyclical letter issued by the Patriarch of Constantinople Paisius I⁵ certifying that this icon was none other than the Strategos Protector, presented it to the Czar of Russia, Alexis I Mikhailovich, the father of Peter the Great, in the early 1650s.

* * *

The Patriarch was eloquent in his encyclical. The Virgin Mary, the Strategos Protector of the Byzantine capital, had abandoned Her city not long before the Ottomans captured it. Why? For sins that only God knew, Paisius said.

Strangely enough, the sources agree with the Patriarch's assertion. In fact, when the Christian dwellers of Constantinople tried to recite a litany in late May 1453 with the Strategos Protector icon at their head, hailstones scattered the crowd and the icon fell to the ground. In vain did some Christians try to pick it up. Moreover, the capital city was covered in fog; and the besieged Constantinopolitans readily grasped the divine message: enveloped in the fog, the Virgin Mary was leaving the city. Almost simultaneously, a flash of lightning was seen above the dome of *Ayasofya*; other mysterious lights were discerned behind the Ottoman lines. No satisfactory explanation for these phenomena has so far been put forward⁶. At any rate, Constantinople was seized early in the morning of the 29th of May, 1453.

I

To be sure, the capture of Constantinople by the Ottomans was a major turning point in the history of Europe and Christendom, for the capital city of the Byzantine Empire was the New Rome, i.e. the second one.

As far as the tradition of the Christian Church is concerned, there is no doubt that it is obligatory for the ecclesiastical administration to follow the political one. Thus, when the Christian religion began being protected by the Emperor in the early fourth century, the three Patriarchates then existing⁷, namely Rome, Alexandria, and Antioch, simply reflected the administrative reality (and the political one as well) of the Roman Ecumene. Constantinople, the New Rome, was designated a Patriarchate only in 381 – thanks to the strong personality of Gregory of Nazianzus, its bishop at that time, and the religious ardour of the Emperor Theodosius I⁸. It was in that way that the initial Triarchy of Christendom was changed into a Tetrarchy; nevertheless many complaints arose out of that. Constantinople was by no means the capital of the Empire as a whole, but only that of the eastern part (*pars orientis*) of the Roman world⁹. It was not possible for the Emperor to control the western part (*pars occidentis*) of the huge state from the shores of the Bosphorus. The New Rome, moreover, was not a hub of commercial routes as the Old one

was. In truth, its chief advantage consisted in its being easily defended: only by being assaulted on every side, simultaneously, by land and by sea, would Constantinople be captured¹⁰.

All of the above concerned, of course, mainly traders and military officers. Nonetheless, the religious aspect of the New Rome was far more important: the new capital had nothing to display in comparison with the –so to speak– original Rome: No martyrs; no disciples of Jesus Christ founding a local Church; no “agape” tables, no catacombs, nothing at all. The result was that in the late seventh century, the Roman Pope’s stubborn refusal to recognise the equality of the two Romes brought about a war in Italy. Imperial troops, in fact, moved against the Papal See but were not able to arrest Sergius I, the seditious Pope who had dared to not endorse some of the canons of the 692 Council in Trullo thereby undermining the primacy of Old Rome¹¹.

Moreover, things had already become critically complicated in 451, when Jerusalem, too, was created a Patriarchate. The reasons for this turbulent promotion were never made clear¹². It was adjudged, however, that the very spot on which Jesus Christ was put to death was deemed worthy to be a Patriarchate. Nevertheless, because of the two additional Patriarchates, namely Constantinople and Jerusalem, the creation of which was due mostly to decisions of the secular power, the original Triarchy became a Pentarchy. The resulting tension soon reached its climax, because the subjects of the Byzantine Emperors insisted upon calling themselves “Romans” (*Rhomaioi* > *Romioi* > *Rumlar*). Where now was Rome, the true one, to be found? In Italy or at the eastern extremity of Thrace? In other words, it was no easy matter for Constantinople, the New Rome, to consign the old one to oblivion.

The Pentarchic system, however, sealed the fate of the Eastern Church: for it exists even today, regardless of the fact that Antioch is all but an unimportant city in Turkey; that very few Christians are to be found in Alexandria, and that Jerusalem is not Christian any more. But the the Pentarchy’s meaning changed long ago. In point of fact, in the framework of the initial Triarchy, Rome (the Old One) had a right of advance, a so-called primacy vis-à-vis the other Patriarchates; for it was at the very centre of imperial authority.

The removal of the imperial seat from Old Rome to the New One, i.e. Constantinople, embroiled matters. The point was where now was to be found the spiritual centre of the Ecumene: In Old Rome, saturated with the blood of Christian martyrs, or in the New Rome where Emperors were to dwell henceforth?

That was how things were when new causes of friction appeared. In 858 Photius, a layman but at the same time a protégé of Bardas, the regent of the Byzantine Emperor Michael III, became Patriarch of Constantinople in merely ... five days¹³! Actually, the ‘incident’ was only to be expected for it was not possible for the Church to avoid constant imperial interference in her affairs. The Byzantine version of Roman law, in fact, was explicit in the matter: “Law is everything that pleases the King”¹⁴. But the problem was now that the layman in question and henceforth the Patriarch of the New Rome had clear-cut ideas as far as Greek Philosophy and Christian Ecumene were concerned¹⁵. He admired Aristotle¹⁶. The latter, nonetheless, was to be hailed (and with good reason) in the twentieth century by Marxist thinkers, as a “titanic mind” and the real father of Materialism¹⁷. That is why Photius’ literary (and spiritual) predilections had the impact of a catalyst. The monks, always numerous and influential in Constantinople, suspected that, thanks to Photius, Materialism was entering the Christianized Roman Empire through the ‘back door’. The outcome was easily foreseeable: the Pope of Rome, Nicholas I, had to intervene; and, needless to say, his involvement in the Photius affair was regarded as a hostile act by a significant part of the Byzantine ‘public opinion’; and so there was opened a vicious circle of hostility between the Eastern and the Western Churches.

Had the Rome/New Rome dispute been limited to purely spiritual matters, most probably it would have been sooner or later resolved. But Photius proclaimed himself to be “Ecumenical Patriarch”¹⁸ and wanted his jurisdiction to reach the limits of the ancient Roman Empire¹⁹. In other words, no place was left for the Old Rome in his worldwide imaginings. As a result, the Roman Pope reacted virulently, and the result was the schism proclaimed in 867 between Western and Eastern Christendom.

The schism crystallized in 1054; things reached a new low in 1204, when the Byzantine capital was seized by Crusaders.

II

The creation of the Latin Empire of Constantinople presaged the election of a Latin Patriarch there. It was a violent break with the Byzantine past that then took place: *the inconceivable had happened*²⁰. But now, at least one thing was clear: New Rome, if resuscitated, would have nothing more to do with the Old One. The Schism, in fact, was henceforth irreversible. No matter that the Emperor Michael VIII Palaeologus, after he had driven the Frankish conquerors out of Constantinople, composed a profession of faith to be read at the Council of Lyons in 1274, in which he *acknowledged* [and] *accepted* the papal primacy²¹; no matter that the resourceful Emperor, anxious to make a reality of the reconciliation of the – once more Byzantine- Second Rome with the Old One, proclaimed John XI Beccus Patriarch of Constantinople, who would prove to be an ardent partisan of the unionist efforts. The populace however did not endorse the union of the Churches under the Papal primacy. And the 1453 capture of Constantinople by Mehmet II sealed the break up of Christendom into two hostile camps: the Catholic, i.e. universal²², in other words the one obedient to the Roman Pope, and the ecumenical, i.e. universal as well²³, faithful to the Constantinopolitan Patriarch. The latter, nonetheless, had a serious problem. In point of fact, the Ottoman conquest had strengthened his position so much (for it had unified under his own jurisdiction the Patriarchates of Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem, previously under secular sovereigns other than the one in Constantinople) that he considered it necessary to restore the old Patriarchal Pentarchy in place of the remaining Tetrarchy. But what city would be in a position to supersede the Old Rome? The answer was fairly obvious: Moscow, i.e. the seat of the Orthodox Czar.

In fact, the idea was in the air prior to the fall of the Byzantine Empire. It arose thanks to the famous correspondence between the Patriarch of Constantinople Anthony IV (1389-1390, 1391-1397) and the Grand Prince of Moscow Vasily I Dimitrievich. The Grand Prince, son of the famous Dimitry Donskoy who had defeated the Tatars, asked the Patriarch whether the Constantinopolitan Emperor, already a vassal of the Ottoman sultan, would henceforth be capable of ruling Christendom²⁴. And the Patriarch, assuming the protection of the Emperor, stated that the corollary to the existence of the Church was the

very existence of the Empire. For Church and Empire formed an indissoluble unity. It was inconceivable –and monstrous- to have the Church without having the Empire. The evidence? The famous passage of Peter’s First Epistle where it is written: *Fear God. Honour the king*²⁵, and not “kings”. For there must be only one King on the [Christian] earth. *Один только царь...*²⁶. Given, therefore, that an Emperor still existed, he should be revered by Christians. Strangely enough, the arguments then used by the Patriarch of Constantinople would prove to be the best ones for the creation of a Third Rome. For as early as 1441, the Grand Prince of Moscow Vasily II Vasilyevich explained to the Byzantine Emperor John VIII Palaeologus that Rus too²⁷ could boast a glorious tradition of Christian Orthodoxy, given that Saint Vladimir Svyatoslavich the Great, Grand Prince of Kiev (958-1015), was comparable with and to the Emperor Saint Constantine I the Great²⁸. Though the letter in which the above statement was made never reached Constantinople (for the Grand Prince believed that the Emperor had already fled to Italy²⁹), the next step was foreseeable: some years later, the Church of Russia was already autocephalous³⁰. Matters came to the boil when in 1451, Jonah foretold the “capture and death” of Constantinople³¹. In other words, the Third Rome was now clearly emerging on the horizons of Eastern Christendom.

Rus, nonetheless, was agitated by strong anti-Latin sentiment. It was common knowledge that the Orthodox *Zemlya*³² of North-Eastern Europe, the Land of Rus (and later Russia), was being liberated from the Tatar yoke without help from Western Europe. So, why were the Byzantines ready to leave the sacrosanctity of their Christian Orthodox Faith, of their existence, in order to be helped by the Papacy against the Ottomans? That help-to-be-given would soon prove to be nothing but a tissue of lies³³.

It was under these conditions, nonetheless, that the 1438-1439 Synod of Ferrara/Florence took place; that Synod marked a shift in the predilections of an important part of the Byzantine political and church establishment. For as the Russians had already foreseen, the upper stratum of the rulers of the moribund Empire did endorse the idea of a reconciliation with the Old Rome. Of course, this implied the recognition of Papal supremacy; and this was done (in vague terms, truth to tell), on 6 July 1439 by the archbishop of Nicaea, Bessarion, a fervent Platonist³⁴, who was the leader of the Greek delegation³⁵. But the populace, guided by monks, reacted violently and nearly rose up

against the Palaeologi Imperial House which openly favoured the union with Old Rome. In point of fact, the attitude of the nucleus of the Greek Church was now quite different from the one it had adopted almost six centuries earlier, during the Photian dispute. Then the Roman Pope had been regarded as the protector of Orthodoxy and the defender of Eastern Christians; now he was regarded as the latter's foe *par excellence*. And this enmity was probably Fatih Sultan Mehmet's latent but most effective weapon against the last Byzantine Emperor for decaying Constantinople, where merely 50,000 people dwelled, capitulated after the Emperor's death and the withdrawal of his Italian fellow-fighters. Not long after the Mystras Despotate had been abolished and the Morea became an Ottoman dominion, the Constantinopolitan Patriarchate, without coercion on the part of Mehmet II, made the Greek Church a pillar of the Sultan's sovereignty in the Balkans. How was this effected? By the Church assuming voluntarily the obligation to pay an annual tribute to the Porte³⁶. In other words, and given that Church and Empire had been since ancient times an indissoluble unity, it was clear that the Constantinopolitan Patriarchate endorsed the idea of Mehmet II being the successor of the Roman Emperors.

III

The Patriarchate of Constantinople, nonetheless, was playing a somehow double game. While seemingly accepting wholeheartedly the idea of the Porte's sovereignty in the Balkans, it was simultaneously trying to undermine it; and its underhand ways culminated in Moscow being created the Third Rome. This march towards the Third Rome was greatly spurred on by the wedding of Zoe Palaeologina (renamed Sophia), a niece of the Emperor Constantine XI, to the Grand Prince Ivan III Vasilyevich. For it was then that the imperial insignia of Byzantium were inherited by Moscow.

According to Greek tradition, Bessarion, the one-time Nicene archbishop and now a Greek cardinal of the Roman Church (1439), was the one who had conceived the idea of that marriage³⁷. For Bessarion, after the Ottomans had captured the Capital City of the Byzantine Empire, was anxious to unite the Church of Russia, henceforth the most powerful Orthodox Church in the world, with the Church of Rome. This 'achievement'

would signify, of course, the recognition of the Pope's primacy by the Russians; and the 'institutional' basis of this grandiose plan would be the endorsement of the Church-union canon proclaimed at the end of the Ferrara/Florence Council held circa fourteen years before the fall of Constantinople. But this very chapter of the unionist effort had already taken an ominous turn. For when Isidore, the Metropolitan of Kiev and Moscow, a Greek appointed to those sees by the Byzantine Emperor, endorsed the Ferrara/Florence union-canon and proclaimed it in the Kremlin, he was deposed and put in prison³⁸; and, as already mentioned, the Russian Jonah was subsequently elected then Metropolitan of Moscow without any Constantinopolitan interference or approval.

Zoe Palaeologina (Sophia) who, after the Ottomans had taken Mystras in 1460, fled to Corfu and then to Rome and put herself under the protection of the Pope, agreed to be the means by which the unionist rapprochement between Moscow and Rome might be achieved. But neither she nor Bessarion nor the Pope Paul II, her mentors, had taken into account the Russian reaction – in spite of the ominous Isidorian prologue to the unionist plans of Old Rome. In point of fact, the sovereign, Sophia's husband and the Russian clergy as well took advantage of the wedding ceremonies, in 1472³⁹, to declare *urbi et orbi* that Russia did not recognize the Ferrara/Florence Synod⁴⁰; and the taking of Constantinople by the Turks was God's answer to the betrayal of the Orthodox Faith by the Greeks⁴¹. The Patriarchate of Constantinople, therefore, had no "right of supervision" over the Russian Church anymore⁴². Yet it was in that way that a major paradox of Modern Times arose: thanks to the wedding of Ivan III to Constantine XI Palaeologus' niece, Moscow, instead of entering the sphere of influence of the Papacy, became the Third Rome. In point of fact, this state of affairs was reached in 1498, when Simon, Metropolitan of Moscow, proclaimed Ivan III Czar, and gave him the responsibility of caring for the souls of Orthodox Christians⁴³. Eastern Christendom was headless no more; and a New Rome, other than Constantinople, came into being.

The final step was to be taken in 1589⁴⁴, when the Constantinopolitan Patriarch Jeremias II raised Moscow to a Patriarchate to supersede the Old Rome (the union with which was now an anathema). Job, since then Metropolitan of Moscow, was now created a

Patriarch of Moscow in full legitimacy, i.e. by means of the publication of a Synodical Tome by the Patriarch Jeremias⁴⁵. Nonetheless, of the utmost importance were the arguments the Greek Patriarch used in defence of his action: the First Rome had fallen because of heresy; the Second was held by the Turks; Moscow, therefore, capital of a Kingdom more pious than the previous “Christian Kingdoms”, was undeniably the Third Rome⁴⁶. In other words, Jeremias II reiterated the statement that the famous monk Philotheus, the hegumen of the Yelizarov monastery in Pskov, had made in 1511: instead of Rome and Constantinople, Moscow was now the shining light in the firmament of Christendom... For the two previous Romes had fallen, but the Third one was standing; and a Fourth one would never rise⁴⁷. It was an apocalyptic *Weltanschauung* which was to have a considerable impact not only on Russian spiritual and intellectual life but on the Greek one, too.

Nonetheless, Patriarch Jeremias’ declaration was somewhat inconsistent: If Moscow was recognized as the Third Rome, then why was the Russian Patriarchate placed on the bottom rung of the ecclesiastical hierarchical ladder? In point of fact, Moscow must be substituted for Rome; but the Russian capital was demoted disrespectfully to the bottom of the Patriarchates’ list, i.e. after Jerusalem. The message was clear: All right, the Czar was taking the place of the Byzantine Emperor; but the Patriarch of Constantinople was to be regarded as the spiritual head of the Christian Orthodox world – a supremacy that the Czar must always have taken into consideration.

Nevertheless, the Russian autocrats were not eager to follow the example of their Byzantine predecessors. If –the ninth century- Photius was the symbol, even the beacon of the secular power’s victory over the Church, in many cases quite the opposite had taken place. And as we have seen, in the final decades before Constantinople was taken by the Ottomans, the Patriarch had assumed the rôle of the Emperor’s protector. Would the monarchs of Russia accept such a protection, such an intervention in their affairs?

The answer is easy to come by: the elevation of the Russian monarchy implied that, sooner or later, it would be in bitter animosity with the Church. The phenomenon was quite common in Byzantium, where the improvement in the relationship between the Emperor and the Patriarch was, as a rule, the corollary of the decline of the secular power. It seems,

nonetheless, that the reforms of Patriarch Nikon, thanks to which the Russian Church was “harmonized” with the Greek one, paved the way to the final clash. As a matter of fact, the rejection of the Slavic –or rather Slavonic- tradition would inevitably bring about the emergence of a Russian Papacy. But who would be the Russian ‘Pope’ : The Patriarch or the Czar? The clash between Nikon and Czar Alexis I Mikhailovich was, truth to tell, the prologue to the peculiar development of the Russian Church.

Had not the Moscow Patriarchate been surreptitiously abolished by Peter I the Great at the beginning of the eighteenth century⁴⁸, Peter would not have been able to secure his position as Emperor of All the Russias – after his proclamation in 1721. To study the system running the Russian Church after the reforms of Peter the Great would be beyond the scope of this paper. The point, nonetheless, is the following: did Moscow continue to be the Third Rome after the removal of the Russian capital from Moscow to Saint Petersburg? The answer to this critical question is a quite unexpected one: yes, because of the Greeks!

IV

After Mehmet II had abolished the Byzantine Empire in 1453, the Mystras Despotate in 1460, and the Trebizond Empire in 1461, an important migration of Greek populations ensued. Although this may sound somewhat paradoxical, the main stream of this exodus of Greek people was oriented toward Spain and not Italy. In point of fact, the latter had been the country of refuge *par excellence*, when in the eighth and ninth centuries the iconoclast Emperors persecuted people venerating the icons. In every probability, large numbers of Byzantines, i.e. Greeks or Graecized people, then settled in Southern Italy (where Greek was the second spoken language as late as the eighteenth century). In the fifteenth century, nonetheless, these populations were in the process of assimilation; but their one-time brethren in the Balkans had henceforth other ideas about the Papacy’s spiritual jurisdiction. The Roman Pontiff was no more the *defensor Orthodoxiae*. In point of fact, the 1054 Great Schism and the subsequent Frankish occupation of Byzantine lands in the thirteenth century had made Eastern Christendom a bitter enemy of the West. Now, when the last Emperor was killed on the walls of his Capital City, the most turbulent

elements among the dwellers of the Southern Balkans were ready to swallow the necessity of cohabitation with «the Papalins »; but this did not mean that they intended to live too close to the Papal See. As a corollary, Italy was excluded in principle, while Spain was emerging as an attractive alternative.

Sedes ubi fata quietas ostendunt... It is all but a truism that the Spanish crown was benevolent vis-à-vis Orthodox Greeks, for it believed that they were able of filling the vacuum created by the expulsion of Moslems and Jews from 1492 onwards. The Spanish monarchs proved to be right; but there was another advantage favouring the Greeks. They were particularly valued as seamen - and the Kingdoms of Castile and Leon was in almost desperate need of such people after America was discovered. Be that as it may; even in the seventeenth century, Christian populations of the Southern Balkans used to make representations to the Spanish Crown, if they had any complaints to make against the Sublime Porte⁴⁹. But Spain was embroiled in the Americas; and after Czar Alexis I Mikhailovich was presented with the icon of the Strategos Protector, the Russian Czardom appeared as the new Power to be entrusted with the protection of the Orthodox populations in the Balkans. And this turn of events was accelerated when Peter, Alexis' son, became Czar.

Needless to repeat here the story of the wars of Peter the Great against the Ottomans; for the point is that from the eighteenth century on Greeks began to see Russia as their natural protector. The wars of the Russian Empire against the Tatar remnants in the Crimea created new population vacuums in Southern Russia. Greeks were most welcome as settlers there; and Moscow (not Saint Petersburg) took on the dimensions of a Mother City for them. It was only natural therefore that in 1751 the “Prophecies”⁵⁰ of Hieronymus Agathangelus began circulating in manuscript⁵¹.

These “Prophecies” had a huge impact, both spiritual and intellectual, on the Greeks practically till the beginning of the twentieth century. In handwritten editions in the 1700s and the early 1800s, and in printed form from the 1830s on, they culminated in Greece fighting on the side of Russia in the 1853-1856 Crimean War. Nonetheless, the story narrated in the “Prophecies” is quite a strange one. According to the Prologue, Hieronymus Agathangelus was a Greek monk who lived in Messina, Sicily; and it was there that he wrote down, in the year 1279, a “Vision” he had had. This “Vision” was first

published in Italian in 1555, in Milan, and afterwards translated and published in Greek, in the mid-1700s, by Theocletus Polyeides, suffragan bishop somewhere in Southern Macedonia and epopt of the Greek church at Leipzig as well. Of course, all these composition, publication, and publication stories of the “Prophecies” proved to be false ones. It is most probable, therefore, that the “Prophecies” had been written in Greek not by Hieronymus Agathangelus, whose existence is questionable, but by Theocletus Polyeides: in other words *Agathangelus* is simply a *nom de plume*.

The text, divided either into nine or into twelve chapters, is about 50-60 pages long. In point of fact, it is a naive imitation of the *Revelation of Saint John the Divine*. For starting from the very point where Saint John *turned to see the voice that spake with him*⁵², Agathangelus (in fact Theocletus) saw a lion with some parchment in “its hands” (*sic*), where there were written events soon to unfold in Europe. To be sure, the lion with the parchment reminds one of the emblems of the Venetian Republic, well known throughout the Archipelago and mainland Greece; but the contents of the parchment codex has to do not with Venice but mostly with Russia and Germany. The latter is the Country that though dramatically divided will “revenge the Truth” – in other words will successfully disseminate and impose the Truth on Europe; while the former, namely Russia, will in the beginning be an “Evil Empire”⁵³ but finally she will “wake”⁵⁴ and reform the “whole planet”⁵⁵. No doubt left or permitted therefore that Germany and Russia are the very essence of Europe.

That was the state of affairs, when the 1768-1774 Russo-Turkish war broke out. This conflict was a peculiar one, because it proved to be disastrous for every participant concerned. For the Russians failed to destroy the Ottoman Empire and did not even capture Constantinople. The Ottoman Fleet, on the other hand, suffered a crucial defeat at Çeşme that heralded further defeats in the Archipelago during the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries. But the status of the Southern Balkan Greek populations was not ameliorated. The Morea was literally devastated by Moslem-Albanian irregular troops: in theory in the service of the Porte but in practice in pursuit of loot. Neither an autonomous nor an independent Greek State, therefore, was established at that time. To be sure, the outcome of the war proved to be to the advantage of some Archipelago islands; for thanks to the famous Küçük Kaynarca treaty the Christian Orthodox subjects of the Sultan were given

the right to sail under the Russian flag. But this privilege concerned mainly the Albanian-speaking populations of tiny islands such as Hydra and Spetsa. The Christians of the Morea, of Mainland Greece, and of Epirus suffered terribly in and on account of this war; and as a corollary constant streams of emigrants headed for the Romanian Principalities (then under Ottoman suzerainty but not sovereignty), the Habsburg Empire and Russia.

It was then that Agathangelus Prophecies began being read ‘systematically’; and far more important was the fact that –mostly- oral comments were being added to the manuscript editions circulating secretly. Not until the end of the eighteenth century did the comments prevail over the original text – the corollary being that great importance was attached to an allegedly “Blond Race”⁵⁶ which was to come to the Southern Balkans to assist the Greeks in building again a great Christian Orthodox statehood. Of course, the Russians were supposed to be this very “Blond Race”.

Be that as it may; the 1828-1829 Russian-Turkish war emphasized these beliefs and hopes – and things reached a new pitch when in 1850 the Greek Church was recognized by the Constantinopolitan Patriarchate as an Autocephalous one. Thus, the ecclesiastical head of the Greeks was no longer to be found at the Phanar (which was literally hated by Theodore Kolokotronis, the generalissimo of the Greek Armies in the Morea during the 1821-1829 Revolution and the virtual leader of the Russophile party). And when Greece, thanks to King Otho (who was a member of the Bavarian Wittelsbach House), aligned herself with Russia in the 1853-1856 Crimean War, the Agathangelus Prophecies seemed to be as good as realized. A Greek Legion fought alongside the Russians inside the besieged Sebastopol. And when things turned against Russia, and Otho’s monarchy was doomed following the occupation of Piraeus⁵⁷ and Athens by French and British troops⁵⁸, the populace of Greece still kept a somewhat messianic concept of the Russian Czardom. The true ‘Pope’ of the Orthodox Christians was the Emperor of All The Russias⁵⁹. No matter that King George I of the Hellenes, who succeeded Otho (overthrown in 1862⁶⁰) proved to be a sincere admirer of Western Europe’s liberal régimes; the very fact that Olga, his Queen consort, was a Russian Grand Duchess was likely to guarantee that the “Blond Race” of the North would never abandon their little brethren in the Southern Balkans.

V

The occupation of Constantinople by Allies troops at the end of WW I virtually meant the end of the Porte – in other words the fall of the Ottoman Empire. Mustapha Kemal singled out the Greek Patriarchate as being among those factors trying then to dismember Turkish State⁶¹ - and most likely with good reason⁶². It was all but natural, therefore, for the Turks not to admit to the existence of the *İstanbul Rum Patrikhanesi* after the conclusion of the 1919-1922 Greek-Turkish war. Eleutherios Veniselos, the chairman of the Greek delegation at the Lausanne conference, was ready to abandon the Patriarchate – in fact accept its abolition by the new Turkish nationalist authority. And the Constantinopolitan Patriarchate seemed doomed unless a *deus ex machina* provided it with the necessary support. Quite unexpectedly this saviour was to be found in the person of George Nathaniel Curzon, the prestigious Marquess of Kedleston, who -though the openly pro-Greek Lloyd George coalition government⁶³ had fallen when the Lausanne conference began- remained at the British Foreign Office⁶⁴. As a matter of fact, Curzon *fought hard not only for British interests but for Greece*⁶⁵. So, thanks mainly to the adamant British attitude in this matter⁶⁶ and in spite of Veniselos, who was quite recalcitrant⁶⁷, the Greek Patriarchate continued to exist at Constantinople (renamed İstanbul) – regardless of the fact that this city was a capital one no more and only 100,000 Greeks were finally to remain along the “Bosphorus littoral”⁶⁸.

For the historian, the key problem is Curzon. Why did he defend in so determined a way the cause of the Constantinopolitan Greek Patriarchate? The only rational explanation for this is likely to be found in the Phanar’s international connections. Even so, nonetheless, how is it possible that an as of then meaningless Greek religious institution at İstanbul, i.e. an ex-Capital, an ex-Imperial City, was able to enjoy such international support and backing? If one rejects the Knights Templar’s interpretation of the fact (not so nonsensical as it sounds⁶⁹), the only plausible explanation remains the geopolitical one. And when one speaks of the “geopolitical importance” of the İstanbul Greek Patriarchate, one is referring to the doctrine propagated mainly by Halford McKinder (1861-1947), a Scot and a professor at the University of London. According to him, if the State the territory of which occupies the heart of Eurasia (the so-called “Heart Land”), gains the

control of Eurasia's sea coasts, then the said State may achieve global domination. There is but one State which has so expanded at Eurasia's heart; and that State is Russia⁷⁰.

Two corollaries arise from H. McKinder's thesis. The first is that Russia must be obstructed from gaining control of the Balkan shoreline; and the second one is that a formal Russian alliance with any other important Power, like Germany, must be prevented at all costs.

The systematic approach to the second of these corollaries, being borne out in both World Wars, in spite of the Wilhem II/Nicholas II and Hitler/Stalin friendship, is beyond the scope of this paper. So let us instead put forward the implied meaning of the first corollary – connecting it with the importance of the İstanbul Patriarchate. As a matter of fact, that famous Patriarchate, which is really nothing more than a bumped up little bishopric which could have been removed from Turkey many years ago, is the main obstacle to Russia achieving an alliance with the Turks and, further, the control of at least a part of the Archipelago shorelines.

A Russo-Turkish alliance may be considered to be a *condition* (but not a *sine qua non*) of a Russian advance to the Macedonia coastline. To be sure, the impact of such an advance would by no means imply a threat to the Turkish sovereignty of Anatolia's seashore. For Asia Minor is inhabited by compact Turkish populations, with a fierce national conscience; while Macedonian are inhabited mainly by Slavs who, in spite of the frightful oppression they had to suffer during the twentieth century, they still regard (even if under compulsion) the İstanbul Patriarchate as their religious leader. So, if the leadership of the Christian Orthodox World were to be handed over to its natural recipient, namely to the Patriarchate of Moscow and All the Russias, *ipso facto* (so to speak) Russia might well put forward her candidacy for world leadership. This seems to be the main –if not the only- reason why such an absurdity as the “Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople and New Rome” is given such wide support and assistance internationally.

VI

The 1821-1829 Greek Revolution against the Porte is a chapter of the World History worth studying over and over again. There is no doubt that large segments of the Greek Orthodox populations in the Southern Balkans were avid defenders of their religious and cultural identity – and therefore ready to rise against any prolongation of the Sultan’s sovereignty in their lands. (The Kolokotronis clan and the Christian Albanians in Southern Epirus and in some ones of the Saronic Bay islands may be regarded as typical cases.) But it is fairly well known, on the other hand, that the majority of the populace in the Greek lands wholeheartedly accepted, even at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the idea of being Ottoman subjects. Given that, one may grasp the key point of the Greek Revolution: it would have failed, in spite of the insurgents’ initial spectacular achievements, had not the Great European Powers eagerly intervened; and this intervention culminated at the famous Navarino naval battle (October 1827), the result of which clinched the independence of Greece and, simultaneously, the final destruction of Moslem sea power. The Sublime Porte was henceforth at the mercy of the Great Western Powers; and her destruction was already in sight, despite the reforms of Mahmut II and the sagacity of Abdul-hamit II.

Russia too took part at the Navarino battle and declared war on Turkey in 1829, because she did not want to stand by from what was already emerging as a “European Concert”. And the attitude that Otho, King of Greece, endorsed, as well as the international situation as crystallized in the early 1830s, seemed to justify the options of Russia. We know very well why King Otho lost his throne in 1862⁷¹; but we do not know the details of the ultimate enmity between Russia and the Porte on one hand and Russia and Germany on the other. Even so, nonetheless, we know the main obstacle to Russia’s development today: the utter refusal to recognize her as the leader of the Orthodox Peoples and Nations. In other words, the absurdity of the existence of the İstanbul Greek Patriarchate⁷² is the symbol of the so-called “Atlantic World’s” stubborn refusal of Russia’s right to have a stable, permanent foothold on the Eastern Mediterranean littoral.

Truth to tell, a Russian ‘descent’ on the Archipelago coastline would be beneficial to Turkey, too. As a matter of fact, the İstanbul Greek Patriarchate, which is acclaimed as “Ecumenical” by the Western Press and Public Opinion (albeit that its influence over Eastern Christendom is quite insignificant), would not countenance the establishment at the

Phanar of an “Orthodox Vatican”, as Adnan Menderes proposed to Constantine Caramanlis, during the latter’s visit to Turkey in 1959⁷³. The Patriarchate’s main point is most likely the internationalization of İstanbul – and such an event would be to the detriment not only of Turkey but of Russia and Greece as well. For a new seat of corruption and international antagonism would emerge in a part of our globe already saturated with such ‘benedictions’. Contrary to any pusillanimity, Russia seems to be in our time a natural ally of Turkey - as she was during the years 1919-1922. But Russia, for her part, needs not only prosperity (likely to be achieved in our lifetime) but also her recognition as the leading Power of the Orthodox World, i.e. of Eastern Christendom. Moscow is the Third Rome – regardless the world- wide campaign to hush up this fact. According to the Christian Tradition, the Church’s administration follows the political one. Today, İstanbul means nothing to Christians. Its primacy, therefore, and the subsequent ‘injury’ inflicted on Moscow creates a rotten international situation which will soon prove to be harmful to Christians - as well as to non-Christians alike.

¹ Steven Runciman, *Hē Megalē Ekklēsia en aichmalōsia* (= The Great Church in Captivity). Translated into Greek by N. K. Pappadopoulos, vol. II (Athens: Bergadēs, 1979), pp. 372-373.

² *Ibidem*, p. 371.

³ In Greek: *Hypermachos Stratēgos*.

⁴ Most probably in the fifteenth century and before the death of Mehmed II.

⁵ On Paisius I, see Vasileios Stavridēs, *Historia tou Oikoumenikou Patriarcheiou, 1453-sēmeron* (=A history of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, 1453-today), Salonika: Kyriakidēs, 1987, p. 269. See the text of his encyclical letter in Б.Л. Фонкич, «Привоз в Москву иконы ‘Богоматерь Влахернская’», *Многоценное сокровище. Иконы Богоматеры Одигитрии Влахернской в России* (Moscow, 2005), pp. 12-14, 17-20.

⁶ S. Runciman, *Hē halōsis tēs Kōnstantinoupoleōs* (= The capture of Constantinople). Translated into Greek by N. C. Pappadopoulos, vol. II (Athens: Bergadēs, 1972), pp. 227-228.

⁷ Although the term « Patriarchate » prevailed in the fifth century

⁸ *Tēlemachos Loungēs, Episkopēsē vyzantinēs Historias* (=An overview of Byzantine History), Athens: Synchronē Epochē, 1998², p. 53.

⁹ Ibidem, p. 53.

¹⁰ Ibidem, pp. 53-54.

¹¹ Ibidem, pp. 176-177.

¹² Ibidem, p. 91.

¹³ According to some sources in as few as three.

¹⁴ Hoper areskei tō vasilei nomos esti. See mainly Dēmētrios Sfaellos, *Ho politeiakos charaktērismos tēs morphēs tou vyzantinou Kratous* (= The character of the Byzantine statehood), Athens, 1977, p. 21 ff.

¹⁵ See mainly Dionysios Zakythēnos, *Hē vyzantinē autokratoria, 324-1071* (= The byzantine Empire), Athens, 1969, p. 288.

¹⁶ Karl Krumbacher, *Geschichte der byzantinischen Literatur*. Translated into Greek by G. Sōtēriadēs (Athens: Pápyros, 1964²), p. 523.

¹⁷ Ariadna Camariano-Cioran, *Les académies princières de Bucarest et Jassy et leurs professeurs* (Salonika : Institute for Balkan Studies, 1974), p. 181.

¹⁸ Tēlemachos Loungēs, *Hē ideologia tēs vyzantinēs autokratorias* (=The ideology of the Byzantine Empire), Athens : Herodotos, 1993), p. 95. Constantinolitan Patriarchs were self-proclaimed “ecumenical” from the thirteenth century on. (Oikoumenikon Patriarcheion, *Hēmerologion* 2004 [= Calendary of the year 2004], p. 72.)

¹⁹ T. Loungēs, *Hē ideologia tēs vyzantinēs autokratorias*, op. cit., p. 94.

²⁰ Aristeides Papadakis, *Crisis in Byzantium. The Filioque Controversy in the Patriarchate of Gregory II of Cyprus (1283-1289)*, New York: Fordham University Press, 1983, p. 13.

²¹ Ibidem, pp. 15-16.

²² From the Greek word *katholikos*.

²³ From the Greek word *oecumene*, i.e. the “part of the earth inhabited by human beings”.

²⁴ Н.В. Синицына, *Третий Рим. Истоки и Эволюция русской средневековой концепции (XV-XVI вв.)*, Moscow: Индрик, 1998, p. 61; Georges Ostrogorsky, *Histoire de l'État byzantin*. Translated into French by J. Gouillard (Paris : Payot, 1969), pp. 575-576.

²⁵ I Peter 2. 17.

²⁶ Н.В. Синицына, *Третий Рим*, op. cit., p. 61.

²⁷ And not only the Graecized Eastern Roman Empire.

²⁸ Полное Собрание Русских Летописей. Том шестой. Выпуск 2. Софийская Вторая Летопись (Moscow: Языки Русской Культуры, 2001), 92

²⁹ S. Runciman, *Hē Megalē Ekklēsia en aichmalōsia*, op. cit., vol. II, p. 565.

- ³⁰ In 1448. (Diptycha tēs Ekklēsias tēs Hellados, 1992 [= The Diptychs of the Church of Greece], Athens: Apostolikē Diakonia, 1991-1992, p. 437.)
- ³¹ S. Runciman, *Hē Megalē Ekklēsia en aichmalōsia*, op. cit., vol. II, p. 568; Н.В. Сеницына, *Третий Рим*, op. cit., p. 100.
- ³² Zemlya= Land.
- ³³ Cf. S. Runciman, *Hē Megalē Ekklēsia en aichmalōsia*, op. cit., vol. II, pp. 566-567.
- ³⁴ S. Runciman, *Hē Megalē Ekklēsia en aichmalōsia*, op. cit., vol. I (Athens: Bergadēs, 1979), p. 264.
- ³⁵ G. Ostrogorsky, *Histoire de l'État byzantin*, op. cit., p. 584.
- ³⁶ See Nica Polychronopoulou-Cladas, "Les exigences financières du Patriarcat de Constantinople envers le monastère d'Oblos". Article under publication in the journal *Mnēmosynē* (Athens).
- ³⁷ Dionysios Rōmas, "To hellēniko Fōs" (=The Greek Light), *Radiōfoniko Theatro* (=Radiophonic Theater). Edited by Phaedon Bouboulidēs, Athens, 1991, pp. 19-25.
- ³⁸ S. Runciman, *Hē Megalē Ekklēsia en aichmalōsia*, op. cit., vol. II, p. 567.
- ³⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 569.
- ⁴⁰ Cf. *Полное Собрание Русских Летописей. Том шестой. Выпуск 2. Софийская Вторая Летопись*, op. cit., 94.
- ⁴¹ S. Runciman, *Hē Megalē Ekklēsia en aichmalōsia*, op. cit., vol. II, p. 567.
- ⁴² *Ibidem*.
- ⁴³ *Ibidem*, p. 570; Н.В. Сеницына, *Третий Рим*, op. cit., p. 122.
- ⁴⁴ Or in 1588. See Diomēdēs Kyriakos, *Dokimion ekklēsiastikēs historias* (= An essay on the History of the Church), Athens: Ch. N. Philadelphus, 1872, p. 353.
- ⁴⁵ *Diptycha tēs Ekklēsias tēs Hellados...*, op. cit., p. 437; cf. *Oikoumenikon Patriarcheion, Hēmerologion*, 2004, op. cit., p. 160.
- ⁴⁶ S. Runciman, *Hē Megalē Ekklēsia en aichmalōsia*, op. cit., vol. II, p. 580.
- ⁴⁷ *Ibidem*, pp. 570-571.
- ⁴⁸ D. Kyriakos, *Dokimion ekklēsiastikēs historias*, op. cit., p. 354.
- ⁴⁹ See mainly José M. Floristán Imízcoz, *Fuentes para la política oriental de los Austrias. La documentación Griega del Archivo de Simancas (1571-1621)*, vol. I-II, Universidad de León, 1988
- ⁵⁰ Literally : the "Vision" .
- ⁵¹ *Optasia tou makariou Hierōnymou Agathangelou* (=The Vision of the blessed Hieronymus Agathangelus). Edited by Dēmētrēs Michalopoulos, Athens: Hellēnikē Eurōekdotikē, 1991.
- ⁵² *The Revelation of Saint John the Divine*, 1. 12.

⁵³ Frikton Imperion.

⁵⁴ Rōsia exypnēson... ek tou hypnou.

⁵⁵ Anamorfōsai ton planētēn.

⁵⁶ In Greek : Xanthon Genos. The meaning of the Greek word genos, untranslatable in English, is wider than the one of the term “race”.

⁵⁷ Piraeus is the port of Athens.

⁵⁸ Dimitris Michalopoulos, “The Crimean War and Greek Society”, War and Society in East Central Europe, vol. XIV: The Crucial Decade: East Central European Society and National Defense, 1859-1870 (Brooklyn College Press, 1984), pp. 331-337.

⁵⁹ Cf. Carl, Prince Royal de Suède, Je me souviens... Souvenirs d’une longue vie. Traduits du suédois par Étienne Avenard (Bruxelles : La renaissance du livre, 1936), p. 72.

⁶⁰ D. Michalopoulos, Vie politique en Grèce pendant les années 1862-1869 (University of Athens : Saripoleion, 1981), p. 50ff.

⁶¹ Kemal Atatürk, Nutuk (Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi, 2005), pp. 1-2.

⁶² Cf. Alexis Alexandris, The Greek minority of Istanbul and Greek-Turkish relations, 1918-1974 (Athens: Center for Asia Minor Studies, 1983), p. 55ff.

⁶³ Lloyd George had always been pro-Greek and he hated the Turks. (Leonard Mosley, Curzon. The End of an Epoch [London: Longmans, Green and Co, 1961], p. 213.)

⁶⁴ Douglas Dakin, The unification of Greece, 1770-1923 (London: Ernest Benn, 1972), p. 242.

⁶⁵ Ibidem.

⁶⁶ A. Alexandris, op. cit., p. 90.

⁶⁷ Phaidon Boumpoulidēs, Ho Eleutherios Venizelos kai hē politikē katastasis tēs Hellados. Agnōsta kai anekdota engrafā tōn etōn 1920-1922 kai 1934-1936 (= Eleutherios Veniselos and the political situation in Greece. Unknown and unpublished documents of the years 1920-1922 and 1934-1936), Athens : Liberal Club, 2000, pp. 163-164 (Letter of E. Veniselos to Callinicus, metropolitan of Cyzicus, Lausanne, 2/15 December, 1922.)

⁶⁸ Ibidem, p. 87.

⁶⁹ The Constantinopolitan Patriarchate is supposed to have given help and support to the Order of the Poor Knights of Christ and the Temple of Solomon during the first obscure years of its existence, in the 12th century. For the Roman Papacy had no connection with that Order and finally suppressed it in 1312.

⁷⁰ Orestēs Vidalēs, *To synchrono geōpolitiko perivallon kai hē ethnikē mas politikē* (= Contemporary geopolitical conditions and Greek national policy), Athens: Euroekdotikē, 1988, pp. 23-29. (This book was awarded a prize by the Academy of Athens.)

⁷¹ D. Michalopoulos, *Vie politique en Grèce...*, op.cit., pp. 50-72.

⁷² See Anna Comnena, *The Alexiad*, I. XIII. 4.

⁷³ Dēmētrēs Michalopoulos, *Hellada kai Tourkia, 1950-1959. Hē chamenē prosengisē* (= Greece and Turkey, 1950-1959. The lost rapprochement), Athens: Roes, 1989, p. 169.