

The Cambridge and Soviet Histories of the Byzantine Empire

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Religious History and Theology

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Recently a paper by the Soviet academician Sakharov, one of the creators of Soviet nuclear power, was published in which he discussed the "convergence" between the Soviet and capitalistic social systems, based on the obvious fact that such a convergence has already occurred on the level of scientific research—ideologies having very little to do with the technical processes upon which scientific progress depends.

Unfortunately "convergence" is much more difficult to promote in the humanities, and particularly in the historical field. Nevertheless, the gradual development in the Soviet Union after the Second World War of Byzantine studies—a field which had been for all practical purposes suppressed in the late twenties and the thirties because of its association with Russia's religious history—shows that there is convergence even in this area. The very fact that a detailed collective history of Byzantium could appear in 1967 without being restricted to socioeconomic history, as earlier Soviet research frequently had been, is a remarkable sign of what has happened in the past decades. Ecclesiastical and religious history is given relatively large attention in this

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work. Moreover, Professor Z. V. Udaltsova, the associate editor, in her concluding chapter, "The Place of Byzantium in World History," writes, "Naturally, Byzantine influence [on world civilization] has been particularly strong in the field of ecclesiastical ideology, canon law, liturgy, liturgical literature, hymnography, ecclesiastical music, ecclesiastical art. . . ." Such a judgment would usually be accompanied in standard Soviet historiography by the evaluation of Byzantium as a "reactionary" civilization, but Professor Udaltsova concludes her chapter by saying, "[Byzantium] rightfully occupies an eminent place in the *progressive* development of human society" (3:341, italics mine).

Anyone familiar with the word "progressive" in Marxist vocabulary will realize that its use in this context clearly shows an evolution in the understanding of religion as a historical factor. This evolution has obviously contributed to a more objective and less dogmatic approach to the history of Byzantine society, even if the treatment of many individual aspects of religious and ecclesiastical history are still determined by Marxist presuppositions. At least now it is really possible to compare a Western and Soviet treatment of religion in Byzantine history; the Soviet side has ceased to deny its very existence.

The difference in the chronological scope of the Cambridge history (which starts with the year 717, as J. B. Bury's first edition did) and the Soviet history (which begins more logically with Constantine) is of some importance to their respective treatment of church history, for it was under Constantine, Theodosius, Justinian, and Heraclius that the place of the church in Byzantine society took its permanent shape. This was not entirely overlooked by the editors of the Cambridge history (see Professor Hussey's introduction, p. ix), and two introductory chapters have been added, "The Formation of the East Roman Empire, 330–717" (by H. St L. B. Moss) and "The Christian Background" (by G. Mathew). Valuable in themselves, these partially overlapping chapters are far from adequate in their treatment of church-state relations in early Byzantium. Practically nothing is said, for example, about the legislation of Justinian in the field of religion, which had a permanent influence on the entire history of Byzantium. In contrast, in the Soviet history there are two chapters specifically devoted to religion in the early Byzantine period: one by M. Ia. Siuziumov on "The Christian Church in the IV–VI Centuries" and another by Professor Udaltsova on "The Ecclesiastical Policy of Justinian." It can therefore be said that the Soviet history follows, on this point and for this period, a more coordinated and consistent methodology. The same is not true for its treatment of religion and the religious institutions of medieval Byzantium.

Besides the necessary attention it gives to religion in Byzantine internal

and external policies during the later period (iconoclasm, missions, etc.), the Soviet history, in its treatment of Byzantium in the ninth through twelfth centuries, contains only two subchapters, "The Church and Monasticism" and "Theology," both by A. P. Kazhdan, and also a full chapter on philosophy and theology during the Palaeologan period by Siuziumov. But there is no real treatment of church institutions, liturgy, music, and other forms of Christian civilization; the ecclesiastical schism between East and West is mentioned only peripherally. In contrast, the Byzantine volume of the Cambridge history devotes an entire chapter to the ecclesiastical competition between Constantinople and Rome (by F. Dvornik) and, in its second part, four chapters to ecclesiastical problems: "The Secular Church" (Emil Herman), "Byzantine Music and Liturgy" (E. Wellesz), "Byzantine Monasticism" (J. M. Hussey), and "Byzantine Theological Speculation and Spirituality" (Hussey and T. A. Hart). In addition, great attention is given to the church and theology in the chapters on Byzantine administration and literature. Actually, it is the first time that problems related to institutions and intellectual life are treated as autonomous subjects in a general work on Byzantium written in English. In this respect the *Cambridge Medieval History* can serve for both the scholar and the student as a partial substitute for the remarkable French volumes by Louis Bréhier on Byzantine civilization and institutions. Nothing of that sort can be said about the Soviet history, which is rich in well-documented facts of a political, military, economic, and social nature, but relatively weak in cultural and religious fields. The only area of cultural history in which the Soviet volumes are noticeably fuller than the Cambridge history is in art. While the *Cambridge Medieval History* offers only one chapter of forty-five pages on Byzantine art (by A. Grabar), its Soviet counterpart has four chapters (by E. E. Lipshits and A. V. Bank) and offers a number of illustrations which, though mediocre technically, are often original and use monuments from Soviet museums which are not frequently reproduced.

This preferential treatment of art—mostly religious and ecclesiastical—is worth noting, because it reflects a pattern in contemporary Soviet historical scholarship: Byzantine and medieval Russian art have now become open fields of research in the Soviet Union. Unfortunately this cannot yet be said about medieval thought, theology, literature, and music.

Whatever its superiority over the *Cambridge Medieval History* in plan and organization, and whatever progress it represents when one compares it with earlier Soviet publications, the new Soviet history, especially in the chapters dealing with the church, is still dependent upon basic Marxist presuppositions—or rather prejudices—concerning religion. Thus we can read the following sweeping description of religious development in Siuziumov's

chapter on fourth-century Christianity: "The religious ideas which were born out of the contradictions of a disintegrating society of slaveowners, penetrating into the people, were becoming a material force which the hierarchs of the church, the monks, and the preachers of heretical sects then strove to use" (1:163). This orthodox Marxist view of religion is particularly annoying when it leads even such a sophisticated and well-informed historian as Kazhdan to explain the rules of monastic obedience imposed by the great eleventh-century mystic Symeon the New Theologian, upon the brotherhood of Saint Mamas, with the following brief sentence: "All these ethical norms fully corresponded to the mores of the Byzantine court with its servility and its despotism" (2:365).

Such superficial and anachronistic judgments can easily be disregarded whenever they are found in the context of a solid scholarly analysis of facts. Thus Professor Udaltsova, while remaining in the framework of basic Marxist presuppositions, gives a competent and fundamentally objective review of Justinian's legislation on religion (1:267-81). Her sound judgment and skillful selection of secondary sources make her work unquestionably useful to the historian, whatever his religious and philosophical persuasions may be. Unfortunately the chapter on "The Christian Church in the IV-VI Centuries" by Siuziumov fails to deal with the material with any degree of competence; the extremely complex phenomena of the early church is reduced to a struggle for power by a greedy and bureaucratic clergy, to which the author even ascribes the deliberate plan of allying the church to the state, so that the clergy's desire for domination might be satisfied more easily (1:148). In his tendency to simplify issues, Professor Siuziumov quite misleadingly ascribes to "the sect of Gnostics" the refusal to believe in the "life beyond" (p. 147), and one wonders on what sources he bases his description of an elected presbyterate and its competition with the bishops concerning church property (p. 152). These examples show that Siuziumov's approach to church history not only is biased ideologically but also is inadequate from the purely scholarly point of view.

It appears, therefore, that at least some of the Soviet Byzantine scholars who deal with questions of ecclesiastical and religious history still feel obligated to adopt the ideological clichés which prosper in the popular and semipopular antireligious publications used in party cells or as textbooks in secondary schools. One must mention that Kazhdan is also a regular contributor to that particular literature, which is generally snubbed by reputable Soviet scholars. Fortunately, a comparison between the *Istoriia Vizantii* and earlier Soviet publications in the same field generally shows greater freedom from clichés and naïve schematizations concerning the history of religion. Such

evidence suggests a general trend toward a more objective and internationally more acceptable approach to Byzantine history.

This last remark leads me to my concluding judgment. The *Cambridge Medieval History* and the Soviet *Istoriia Vizantii* are addressed to two different publics. They are the products of two schools of historiography which unfortunately developed in artificial isolation from one another in the last half-century. In the Soviet Union the field of ecclesiastical and religious history, more than any other medieval field, suffered from the obligation imposed on all historians to accept the universal validity of the Marxist interpretation of religion—that is, as a means of exploitation of the poor by the rich. Whatever the partial truth of this interpretation in the history of medieval ecclesiastical institutions, few Western historians will accept the application of this criterion to all religious phenomena, and most Soviet historians will admit today—at least privately—that during the decades of obligatory Marxism, Russian Byzantine studies suffered greatly. Against this background the new Soviet history is a significant breakthrough. Even in the field of religious and ecclesiastical history, ideologically the “hottest” issue, in spite of the deficiencies and flaws mentioned above, the trend toward “convergence” with Western approaches is quite apparent—for example, in the work of Udaltsova and in the chapters on art history.

Seen against its own historiographical background, the *Cambridge Medieval History* reflects a trend toward a positive evaluation of Byzantine Christianity in its hierarchy of religious values, in its attitude toward society and the state, and in its competition with Western Christendom. Few traces of Gibbonianism or of the traditional Western attitude of condescension toward the “schismatic” Byzantines are found in the brilliant studies on Byzantine religion by Mathew, Dvornik, Hussey, Herman, and Wellesz. Some Western historians may even find that the trend which these authors represent needs to be balanced by a more critical approach as well. In any case, whatever its defects of composition, the *Cambridge Medieval History* is certainly a major and up-to-date source of information about the Byzantine Church, and the best available in English. *Istoriia Vizantii* is vastly inferior if one applies to it the same criteria, but if seen as a step toward a more objective approach to Byzantine scholarship in the Soviet Union, it may one day be recognized as an historiographical event of the greatest importance.

Intellectual History

IHOR ŠEVČENKO

The Cambridge Medieval History is a household word for medievalists and sends its message in familiar language.¹ The Soviet *Istoriia Vizantii* is more intriguing, for it is unprecedented in Soviet historiography, in both format and size. Moreover, it is couched in a language inaccessible to the majority of Western readers. Hence my remarks will be more useful if they stress the characteristics of the Soviet work.

Some points, however, will not be stressed here. Were we dealing with the comparison of histories written in the remote past, we would be greatly interested in discovering the “true” views of their authors—which was the true Procopius, that of the *History* or that of the *Anecdota*? Given the nature of things, I shall not ask such questions about the authors of our histories.

Furthermore, I shall not refer expressly to historical materialism, nor shall I correlate the dates of the preparation or publication of the Soviet history (its first volume was sent to the printer in May 1966, its third appeared in November 1967) with political events in Russia. To be absolutely fair, I would also have to speculate on the effects which Harold Wilson’s return to power in 1964 may have produced on the writings of Miss Hussey—patently an unprofitable undertaking.

On contributors to both works I shall say only that while the fourth volume of the Cambridge history was an international venture and hardly drained the collective energies of Western Byzantinists, the Soviet history was a national enterprise. Although it drew upon scholars from only three Soviet cities (Moscow, Leningrad, and Sverdlovsk) it did involve a sizable proportion of the Byzantinists active in the Soviet Union.

The two works differ in some features of organization. The principle of division adopted in the Cambridge history is topical, and chronological within some of the topics; this made it possible to group chapters on law, music, spirituality, literature, science, and art together in the second volume, the only one that concerns us here. The principle of division adopted by the Soviet history is chronological, and topical only within each chronological unit.² Since in practice the Soviet history distinguishes four periods in

1. In subsequent notes the abbreviation *CMH* refers to vol. 4, part 2.

2. The following chapters of the Soviet history deal with Byzantine intellectual history: Volume 1, chap. 17 (pp. 379–94), “Byzantine Science and Education in the IV–VII Centuries” (E. E. Granstrem, Z. V. Udaltsova); chap. 18 (pp. 395–408), “Neo-Platonic Philosophy of the IV–VI Centuries” (K. V. Khvostova); chap. 19 (pp. 409–34),

Byzantine history as a whole—the fourth to the seventh century, the seventh to mid-ninth century, the mid-ninth to the end of the twelfth century, and the thirteenth to the fifteenth century³—the same topic, say scholarship and education, is treated in it four times. Both systems have their advantages and shortcomings; and since the difficulties inherent in both apply to any attempt at a classifying treatment of any civilization, I shall not pursue the subject further.

In the technique of exposition, the second part of the Byzantine volume of the Cambridge history is neither fish nor fowl. Essays—sometimes brilliant, sometimes lacking in depth—appear alongside chapters which attempt full coverage. At best, the latter are valuable reference tools; at worst, they belong to the genre of a Sears, Roebuck catalogue. The technique adopted in the Soviet history is sometimes that of abstract statements, founded on what a Western reader regards as aprioristic truths. Fortunately, however, in the chapters on literature and art the technique is not that of coverage but of teaching by example. The choice of representative *exempla* is conventional: When fifth to sixth-century Ravenna is treated, we read a detailed description of the Mausoleum of Galla Placidia, the two Baptisteries, and the churches of San Apollinare Nuovo and San Vitale (1:456–65). This method, outdated by the availability of first-rate reproductions in our time, has not yet been superseded when it comes to acquainting a nonspecialist with the art of a given epoch or area, especially if—as in the Soviet Union—neither the author nor the reader has easy access to the monuments themselves or to good reproductions of them. In literature, where the counterpart of visual reproduction is translation, the method is even more justified. Accordingly, the Soviet history devotes more than one page to recounting the contents of a representative *Vita* of a saint (2:88–89, 372 [Life of Basil the Younger], 373–74), or as many as two pages each to vignettes of outstanding literary figures:

“Byzantine Literature of the IV–VII Centuries” (S. S. Averintsev); chap. 20 (pp. 435–80), “Byzantine Art of the IV–VII Centuries” (A. V. Bank, E. E. Lipshits). Volume 2, part 1, chap. 6 (pp. 80–102), “Byzantine Culture Between the End of the VII and the First Half of the IX Centuries” (Granstrem, Averintsev, A. Ia. Syrkin, Lipshits). Volume 2, part 2, chap. 16 (pp. 354–68), “Science and Education” (Granstrem, A. P. Kazhdan); chap. 17 (pp. 369–86), “Literature” (Kazhdan); chap. 18 (pp. 387–420), “Art” (Lipshits, Bank). Volume 3, chap. 14 (pp. 219–33), “Science and Education” (Lipshits); chap. 15 (pp. 234–56), “Philosophy and Theology” (M. Ia. Siuziumov); chap. 16 (pp. 257–73), “Literature” (Averintsev); chap. 17 (pp. 274–88), “Architecture and Painting” (Lipshits); chap. 18 (pp. 289–302), “Applied Arts” (Bank); chap. 19 (pp. 303–41), “Specificity of the Social Development of the Byzantine Empire: Byzantium’s Place in World History” (Udaltsova). See, in addition, the first chapter of each volume and part, which deal with sources and thus discuss individual Byzantine authors.

3. This is the division followed throughout in single chapters of the Soviet history. In the final chapter, however, Z. V. Udaltsova distinguishes only three periods in Byzantium’s history: fourth to mid-seventh century, the mid-seventh to the beginning of the thirteenth century, and the Latin conquest to the end of the empire (3:304).

Michael Psellos, Johannes Italos, Theodoros Metochites, Nikephoros Gregoras, or Demetrios Kydones (2:361–63, 365–66, 3:225–30). In short, the Cambridge history, while not claiming to be a reference work, is not apt to be read in one sitting. The authors of the Soviet history offer their readers more incentive for continued perusal.

As often happens in collective enterprises of this kind, what the two works have in common are their flaws. On occasion, both works offer outdated information.⁴ The date of Metochites's birth is off by ten years,⁵ that of the Chora mosaics by almost twenty, that of the Deesis in Saint Sophia by a century (the latter two flaws are in the Soviet history alone),⁶ and that of the church in Constantinople now known as Kalenderhane by three centuries.⁷ Second, on occasion both works indulge in empty statements, an overly apologetic tone, and a tendency toward the "hard sell," no longer necessary in a mature discipline like ours. Since this is a harsh statement, it must be substantiated by a few examples—first from the Cambridge history: the rigidity of Byzantine legal developments is more apparent than real (p. 55); the repetition of formulae in Byzantine music is no proof of the lack of creative imagination, but rather the outcome of the integration of art and theology (p. 160); Byzantine religious poetry contains, along with artificial elements, passages of genuine literary merit (p. 210); Byzantine etymology was of no value, although "it would be unfair to blame the Byzantines for this" (p. 248); Photius was a theologian of note, although he took a great deal of his *Amphilochia* word for word from other sources (p. 218); without Leo the Mathematician of the ninth century, the revival of mathematical studies in the West would have been almost inconceivable (p. 265).

The Soviet history's *captatio benevolentiae* is aimed at a different ear. It sees in Neo-Platonism a natural reflection of ideological changes in its period (1:395); it describes the liturgical poetry of the Byzantines as popular in spirit (1:426–27, 3:328); it hears a folkloristic tone in the writings of the seventh-century John of the Ladder (1:429), a tone which very few of that author's Western readers would detect; it praises the painters of the Menologium of Basil II for borrowing details from surrounding reality (2:402), and

4. In some instances, correct answers were available in print long before, say, 1965; sometimes such answers were being formulated at the time of printing. In the latter case, no blame should be cast upon the authors of these histories.

5. *CMH*, pp. 240, 246, 276; *Ist. Viz.*, 3:222. Metochites was born in 1270.

6. Chora: *Ist. Viz.*, 3:261. The date of 1303 proposed there is a misunderstanding. "Ca. 1320" is the dating accepted today. St. Sophia Deësis: *Ist. Viz.*, 3:278; for the date of 1260–80, generally accepted today, see, for example, O. Demus, *Die Entstehung des Paläologenstils in der Malerei* [= *Berichte zum XI. Internationalen Byzantinisten-Kongress München 1958*, vol. 4, part 2], pp. 16 and 29–30, n. 67.

7. *CMH*, p. 332 (Akataleptos, ninth–early tenth century); *Ist. Viz.*, 2:392 (late ninth century); investigations of the church which have been going on since 1966 support the twelfth-century date for its central structure.

the artists of the eleventh-century mosaics at Hosios Lukas for being inspired by everyday life, but gives the antique motif of the Bath of the Child in the Nativity scene there as an example of such inspiration (2:405). It sees fine psychological characterizations of each of the persons represented in the mosaics of John II and Irene, and of their son Alexius in Saint Sophia—too subtle an insight into these conventional faces (2:408). One of the authors of the Soviet history lets her enthusiasm run away with her when she claims that Demetrios Kydonēs's horizon was close to that of the most prominent representatives of the Italian Renaissance (3:230). Finally, once, but only once, the Soviet history slips into the Hellenic hypothesis to which the Cambridge history is beholden throughout,⁸ and sees no change between Aristophanes and one—phallic—passage in the fourteenth-century animal story of the Quadrupeds (3:267).

In the interest of constructing a harmonious whole, both works sometimes give too positive an answer to moot questions. Thus they create the impression that the Quadrivium was a regular feature of the Byzantine educational system throughout the early and middle periods,⁹ although our first definite evidence for a textbook reflecting the system dates only from the eleventh century, even if the term *mathēmatikē tetraktys* occurs in the ninth.¹⁰

My next point purportedly involves the mind, but also tends to arouse the emotions: it is the comparison of both histories' conceptual framework. Neither of the works contains programmatic statements; the Cambridge history, by the nature of things as they are over here, the Soviet history, because it has no preface and plunges right into its subject. However, one does not have to read far ahead in order to sense that the Soviet contributors are applying certain conceptions to all of their material, while the Westerners

8. On this hypothesis—which I would prefer to call fallacy—which assumes that after the seventh century the Byzantine Empire, including its territories in Asia Minor, came to be a Greek empire and, in terms of culture, an heir to classical and Hellenistic Greece, and which further assumes that this empire was ethnically Greek, encompassing, to be sure, several minorities, notably the Armenians, see my review of the first part of the Cambridge history, "New Cambridge History of the Byzantine Empire," *Slavic Review*, 27, no. 1 (March 1968): 109–18, esp. p. 110.

9. *CMH*, pp. 265, 266–68 (but "Stephen's" text may be as late as 800!), 268, n. 1, 270, and 272 (*CMH*'s first sure information on the Byzantine Quadrivium); *Ist. Viz.*, 2:83, 354–55.

10. I have in mind a teaching system, rather than the theory of a fourfold division of mathematics, which is attested in introductory courses of philosophy (e.g., Ammonius) about the year 500. See Aubrey Diller, "The Byzantine Quadrivium," *Isis*, 36 (1945–46): 132; for *mathēmatikē tetraktys*, cf. *Vita Nicephori* by Ignatios (ninth century), p. 149, 27, ed. De Boor. Allusions to a teaching program similar to the Quadrivium do occur in other ninth-century Lives of saints (e.g., the Slavic *Vita Constantini*, § 4). The next occurrence of the term *tetraktys tōn mathēmatōn* known to me dates from the twelfth century (Anna Comnena, *Alexias*, Prooemium, 1, cf. *CMH*, p. 194). For later examples see, for example, V. Laurent in the edition of Pachymeres's Quadrivium in *Studi e Testi*, 94 (1940): xvii–xxiv.

have not consciously posed any conceptual questions at all.¹¹ Hence the Soviet work gives the impression of regularity, and of greater editorial uniformity; the reader of various chapters soon detects the same general principles which presumably operate in various aspects of Byzantine civilization—above all in art and literature. The Cambridge history has a more haphazard choice of topics—for instance, it devotes no special attention to education, a recurring feature of the Soviet work. It contains factual contradictions and fortuitous repetitions—for some reason it refers several times to Leo the Mathematician's artificial singing birds.¹² The illustrative material of the English work is superior in quality; however, in selecting, it reflects preserved monuments—hence the prevalence of sacred topics. When secular monuments are chosen, such as the mosaics of the Great Palace in Constantinople, the selection is dictated by aesthetic considerations. In the Soviet history, illustrations—even of the same monuments as those used by its English counterpart—are selected instead for their technological or social content: a water mill, an anchor, a fishing scene, a goat being milked, workers tilling the land or pruning vines (1:78–79, 88, 2:239, 243, 245).

The Soviet history's conceptual position is both conveyed and detectable through key words recurring in the body of its text. There are two series of them: those with bad and those with good connotations. Categories such as generalized, symbolic, spiritualistic,¹³ conservative, and self-effacing are undesirable things; they are complementary to such categories as individualized, realistic, rationalistic, democratic,¹⁴ everyday life, plebeian,¹⁵ humanistic, and conscious of self, which are desirable things. When reality does not fit neatly into one of the two series, the category of "contradiction" is introduced.¹⁶ The historical development in literature and the arts, especially between the ninth and twelfth centuries, moved from one set of categories to the other, but was arrested by the catastrophe of 1204 (2:386, 411; cf. 3:330).

Moreover, the Soviet history regularly correlates changes in culture and world outlook with changes in the social structure of the empire. Such a procedure, standard in Soviet scholarship, causes some discomfort to the

11. In all fairness, it must be reported that Dr. Kazhdan, a Soviet critic of the Cambridge history, did detect in it a common and, in his opinion, unduly valued point of view—namely, that Byzantium was a centralized monarchy or "beneficial autocracy." See A. P. Kazhdan, "The Byzantine Empire," *Past and Present*, 43 (1969): 158–69.

12. Examples of factual contradictions: Romanus the Melode was both a Jew (p. 143) and a Syrian (p. 254); on page 202 Barlaam was victorious in his dispute with Gregoras, but on page 277 Gregoras was victorious. Manasses's Chronicle was composed in fifteen-syllable verses (p. 236, correct) and in twelve-syllable verses (p. 250). On Leo's automata: *CMH*, pp. 302, 328, 355. The Soviet history is equally impressed by these automata, but at least it mentions them with cross-references: 2:28, 86, 96.

13. *Ist. Viz.*, 2:384, 403, 407, 411, 412, 414, 3:274–75, 285, 329.

14. *Ist. Viz.*, 1:434, 458, 2:100, 102.

15. *Ist. Viz.*, 1:428.

16. *Ist. Viz.*, 1:381, 402, 458, 2:81, 84, 361, 401, 3:325.

uncommitted reader; he does not object to correlation in itself—he himself practices it on occasion—but to correlation without proof. He may remember from his epigraphical readings that fifth-century Aphrodisias was a city harboring pagan intellectuals of Neo-Platonic tinge,¹⁷ but he is not satisfied with a flat statement to the effect that while Christianity served the needs of a centralized state, Neo-Platonism objectively served the needs of the conservative, urban, slaveowning patriciate (1:396, 398, 404, 408). He knows that Palamas and Kantakouzenos were allies, but wishes there were some proof for the statement that Palamism was the ideology of reaction, that it spread defeatist moods of thought, and that it was helped by foreign intervention and the defeat of popular movements in the forties of the fourteenth century (3:235, 249). He feels cornered by the statement that Palamism was an ideology of acquiescence to the Turkish conquerors, while anti-Palamism was an ideology of concessions to the Italian trade capital (3:249). He is bewildered when he learns that with the development of feudalism the interior structure of church buildings underwent an evolution: inner partitions formed badly communicating rooms, thus reflecting the rise of social differentiations (2:94–95).

The uncommitted reader does not object to the use of general categories, only to those which strike him as anachronistic. Even Dr. Kazhdan's excellent contributions in the Soviet history suffer from his search for signs of religious and social skepticism and irreverence in texts where I, for one, find none (2:376, 378, 382–83). Not in the tenth-century dialogue, *Philopatris*, which does not mock, but rather praises, the Trinity;¹⁸ not in the twelfth-century *Timarion*, where the seating of Emperor Theophilus beside the pagan judges of the Nether World reflects the legend of Theophilus the Benefactor and the Just Judge (*dikaiokritēs*)—a legend, incidentally, published by a Russian pre-revolutionary scholar.¹⁹ The uncommitted reader finds it hard to reproach the twelfth-century historian Niketas Choniates for not criticizing the class structure of society, for speaking with scorn of popular masses, and for condemning popular uprisings,²⁰ since he still has to be shown a Byzantine author who *praises* such uprisings.

17. Louis Robert, "Deux Épigrammes d'Aphrodisias de Carie et Asklépiodotos," *Hellenica*, 4 (1948): 115–26.

18. See *Ist. Viz.*, 2:376, and *Philopatris*, §§ 12–13. The text describes the puzzlement of Kritias; being a pagan and a "fall guy," he at first does not comprehend the dogma of the Trinity, but is set straight by Triephon, who had been converted by Saint Paul himself. As the text purports to be by Lucian, all is couched in pagan terms, but intermingled with concealed quotations from the Psalms and the Credo.

19. *Ist. Viz.*, 2:382. Cf. W. Regel, *Analecta Byzantino-Russica* (St. Petersburg, 1891), pp. xix and 40–43. The legend is also reflected in the Byzantine Chronicles. Thus Theophilus's having been an iconoclast has nothing to do with his choice as judge in *Timarion*, and no comic device is involved in that choice.

20. *Ist. Viz.*, 2:386. Cf. p. 381 (the very concept of equality was alien to Theodoros Prodromos [twelfth century]).

Finally, when the uncommitted reader comes across such *epitheta ornantia* as “valiant Russes” and “conceited Normans” put side by side in one paragraph where both peoples are actually doing the same thing, namely, attacking the empire (3:321–22), when he learns that Russian masters infused Byzantine art with the creative genius of the Russian nation, and introduced optimism, humanism, and sympathy for the simple man into it (3:339), or that Byzantine anticlerical satirical works penetrated into the popular strata of nations influenced by Byzantium and contributed to the development of free thought there (3:341), he hears echoes of a past which he hoped would never recur in Soviet historiography.

Fortunately such nuggets are not representative of the body of the Soviet history’s chapters on culture. Rather than flog a dead horse, I wish to make three points on the conceptual framework of both histories. First, eyebrow-raising statements, including those of the patriotic variety, occur primarily in the chapters by older contributors to the Soviet history and are counterbalanced by “unpatriotic” ones. Second, the Cambridge history has its own blinkers.²¹ The third point, somewhat controversial, is that though citizens of the Soviet state suffer from handicaps as historians, they, and especially the Russians among them, enjoy certain unique advantages when writing about Byzantine culture.

Ad primum: When the Soviet history describes the vestment of the fifteenth-century Greek Metropolitan of Moscow, Photius, it notes not only that the vestment has portraits *both* of the Emperor John VIII and of Prince Vasilii Dmitrievich but also that John VIII and the Byzantines are the only ones to have halos and enjoy a prominent position (3:293). We are also expressly informed that the fifteenth-century revetment of Our Lady of Vladimir is by Byzantine artists, not Russian, “as was previously attested by some scholars” (3:299).²² Finally, the church of Saint Sophia in Kiev is discussed in one of the chapters on Byzantine art (2:405–6).²³

Ad secundum: In the 1923 edition of the Cambridge history, J. B. Bury assigned to Byzantium the role of bulwark of Europe against Asiatic aggression, the latter being patently a bad thing (pp. xv–xvi). Bury must have known that Byzantium was not interested in being the bulwark for any power, but only in expansion or survival; however, this self-centered metaphor could be accepted in the twenties of this century, the period of unchallenged Western domination. It is more astonishing to hear the same expression of parochialism eight times in the new edition of the Cambridge history. It, too, assigns to

21. This is above and beyond the preconceptions which struck Dr. Kazhdan (see note 11 above).

22. The statement concerning the Byzantine origin of the revetment is credited to M. M. Postnikova-Loseva.

23. However, Saint Sophia is regarded as an achievement of both Byzantine and Old Russian art.

Byzantium the role of bulwark of Christendom against the onslaughts from the East, against inundation by Islam, or by the Arab flood—all of them bad forces, by implication and by choice of metaphor (pp. 45, 363–64, 366–67, 374); it praises Byzantium for having preserved the classical legacy “for Europe”—not for “the world,” or for “us”—and it equates the Europe thus defended with Western Europe (pp. 247, 262; cf. pp. 265, 374). As for peoples of Eastern Europe, the Russians are said—on some unspecified genetic authority—to have been of a simple and less independent stock than the Greeks or the Hellenized Anatolians (p. 374). On the whole, the Soviet history is free from such self-serving constructions. It does go along with the bulwark theory, at one single point, but does so with a difference. It says that for centuries the Byzantine Empire, *like Old Rus'*, served as a barricade for Western Europe and broke the onslaught of Turkic and Mongol hordes moving in from the east (3:322).

Ad tertium: Living in a centralized state as a member of its cultural elite gives one certain insights into the characteristics of Byzantine culture. One takes for granted that higher education in Byzantium was controlled by imperial power; one realizes that jurists were needed in the state apparatus (Soviet history, 1:388). When it comes to imperial power itself, one is able to go beyond the Cambridge history's mere listing of the ruler's prerogatives, for one has an idea, based on parallel experience, of how traditions and groups around the emperor shaped his activity and limited his autocracy (juxtapose *CMH*, p. 10, with the Soviet history, 3:157–59, 312–13). Finally, when describing the general traits of Byzantine literature between the seventh and ninth centuries, one can tell the local reader that these traits developed within the framework of Christian ideology, that scriptures determined the movement of thought, that parallels to all events were sought in the Bible, that quotations from the Bible and Church Fathers were the best expressions of one's own views, that literature and art were didactic in character, and that the creative task was not to reflect and explore the world, but to propagate aprioristic ideals, to edify and to expose vices (Soviet history, 2:81). The reader has but to substitute appropriate terms for “Christian,” “Bible,” and “Church Fathers,” and he is on familiar ground.

He is also on familiar ground when he is told that a centralized state needed a centralized ideology, and that Christianity, rather than Neo-Platonism, was the ideology for such a state (Soviet history, 1:396). The awareness of the power of “scientific” ideology may have determined the inclusion in the Soviet history of two chapters on Byzantine philosophy, a topic absent from the Cambridge history. The Soviet contributor's previous training enabled him to consider the Neo-Platonist Proclus's Triad as an anticipation of Hegel's thesis, antithesis, and synthesis, a parallel which would hardly have occurred to a Western Byzantinist (1:399, 401, 408).

To formulate the purpose of Byzantine art as subduing the soul to the all-embracing power of the state—as one contributor to the Soviet history does—may be too much of a good thing, but it is paralleled, and may have been suggested, by the use made of art in her country (3:337).

The fact that he is living in a multinational empire helps a Soviet scholar to realize the multinational character of Byzantine culture: he receives the message through the Byzantine monuments of Armenia, Georgia, and the Ukraine and has no trouble applying the same principle to literature.²⁴ While the Cambridge history subscribes to the fiction of the “Greek-speaking East,”²⁵ the Soviet history’s chapter on early Byzantine literature reasonably distinguishes, along with the predominant Graecophone current, works in Latin, Syriac, and Coptic (1:409). And when it comes to the system of education, the Soviet history is able to go beyond the Greek horizon and refer to the fifth and sixth-century statutes of the Syriac school at Nisibis, the earliest known statutes of a medieval institution of higher learning (1:392).²⁶

The Russian scholar speaks a language which still embodies, through the mediation of Old Church Slavonic, many elements of Byzantine Greek. Hence he is able to offer translations of Byzantine literature which surpass in faithfulness and texture those made in any other language known to me. Since that scholar shares with his reader a culture greatly influenced by Byzantium, he is able to make his point by drawing on analogies or information familiar to both.²⁷ The charm of the Soviet history’s literary chapters and their superiority to that by the late Franz Dölger, a great specialist on the subject, consists simply in this: their author gives superb translations of Byzantine poets—whether of Gregory of Nazianzus, John of Damascus, Theodore of Studios, or the poetess Kassia; and he is able to draw not only upon Church Slavonic translations of Byzantine ecclesiastical hymns but also on poetic reworkings of

24. See *Ist. Viz.*, 1:453, on the “polyethnic” character of Byzantine art. Cf. 3:325, 341, on multinational roots of Byzantine civilization, and on contributions to it made by Slavs, Armenians, and Georgians.

25. *CMH*, p. 1. Cf., however, page 34 for the sensible observation that the Byzantine bureaucracy and church contributed, through the official use of Greek, to the Hellenization of foreign elements in the empire; page 139 for liturgy in multinational ecclesiastical communities; and page 206 for the crushing of indigenous languages on Byzantium’s periphery by central authority.

26. For translations of the text see, for example, E. Nestle, “Die Statuten der Schule von Nisibis aus den Jahren 496 und 590,” *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte*, 18 (1898): 211–29, and F. X. E. Albert, “The School of Nisibis: Its History and Statutes,” *Catholic University Bulletin*, 12 (1906): 160–81. Incidental intelligence: these first statutes uphold, *inter alia*, the principle of autonomy in academic governance.

27. *Ist. Viz.*, 2:371 (on the fate of *Stephanitēs* and *Ichnelatēs* in Old Russian literature); 3:265 (parallel between the *Rhodian Love Songs* and the Russian seventeenth-century popular novel [*Lubochnyi roman*]); 3:268 (parallel between the *Porikologos* and the story of Ersh Ershovich). Less felicitous is the parallel, drawn on page 266, between couplets in politic verse and the *chastushki*.

similar texts by modern Russian poets, Pushkin and Aleksei K. Tolstoy (1:413, 421, 2:88).

I do not wish to overwork the categories of ideology and cultural vantage point; if external pressures are not too strong, it is not they, but the living individual's competence, talent, and enthusiasm which determine the quality of his work. On the whole, the best chapters, whether in the Cambridge or the Soviet history, are those written by specialists on specialized subjects. Here the Cambridge history is easily superior in three fields: law, music, and science. It is not only that the Soviet history has no separate chapters devoted to these topics: the very names of Scheltema, Wellesz, and Vogel are a guarantee of that superiority.

Vogel's chapter on science in the Cambridge history is the best overall treatment of the subject anywhere. He is precise and reliable: he tells us, to give but one footnote, that the Byzantines took over the system of decimal fractions in the fifteenth century—that is, soon after its invention in Samarkand in 1427 (p. 279, n. 3). This footnote is a better testimony to Byzantine versatility than many an empty statement about change under the cover of conservatism.

In art, André Grabar is pitted against Mrs. Lipshits, whose achievements lie in other fields. The result is that the most convincing sociological assessment of Byzantine art—of its propagandistic character, of the role of government and church as the two main sources for commissions, and of the patronage by the Byzantine elite—stands not in the Soviet history but on the first two pages of Grabar's chapter. When it comes to minor arts, however, Mrs. Bank, a curator at the Hermitage, who was able to draw on objects in Soviet collections, offers a most informative presentation. The Leningrad paleographer, Mrs. Granstrem, gives a "materialistic," but correct, explanation of the revolutionary change from the uncial to the minuscule script—disappearance of the papyrus, the high price of parchment, and the concomitant need for writing in smaller letters and using ligatures (2:86)—while the very term minuscule is absent at least from the index to the second volume of the Cambridge history.

In literature, S. S. Averintsev's talent and enthusiasm are coupled with empathy for Byzantine texts and authors, with able stylistic and formal analyses, and with wide-ranging juxtapositions—such as that of Palladius's *Historia Lausiaca* with the *Fioretti* of Saint Francis of Assisi and that of the Life of Saint Anthony with Flaubert's work (1:413, 421). Taken together, they outweigh Dölger's experience and tip the scales in favor of the Soviet scholar.

Having distributed praise and blame, I turn to my last point. It has to do with the awareness shown by each side of the other's scholarship. Judging by items quoted, the Cambridge history comes in a poor second. The bibliog-

raphies of the second volume are some one hundred pages long; yet they register only eight Soviet works by seven authors. The Soviet history's footnotes—it has no bibliography of its own—contain, except for art, numerous references to the most recent Western literature.

It follows that despite a few instances of antiquated views, the Soviet history's main text does incorporate new results attained in the West. Here, however, a subtle selectivity is at work: new finds—such as those of stained glass in the Pantocrator Church in Constantinople by Peter Megaw—are reported, but, in this instance at least, the reader is not told who made them (2:418).²⁸ The main text of the Soviet history gives uneven treatment to the names of foreign scholars. Discussing Theodoros Metochites, that text speaks of his “most recent investigator, Georg Beck.” On the next page, however, it refers to another student of Metochites merely by saying “the *author* of one of the most recent investigations correctly notes . . .” (3:225–26). Ostensibly, the criterion for the admission of a modern scholar into the Soviet history's general index is the occurrence of his name in the text or in the footnotes of the work. Yet André Grabar, quoted in both, has not been included. It is also of interest to report that only a few American scholars are found in the index of the Soviet history, although several of them are well represented in its footnotes.

Neither the Cambridge nor the Soviet history reflects the present stage of thinking on Byzantine culture in its own constituency. The Soviet history comes somewhat closer, perhaps because at least half of its contributors are even today under fifty years of age. Still, whoever wants to acquaint himself with the latest word in Soviet scholarship on Byzantine culture should turn not to the Soviet history but to Alexander Kazhdan's *Byzantine Culture* of 1968.²⁹ This small but remarkable book looks for the principles which explain Byzantine culture as a functioning system, tells us what Byzantines ate and drank (mostly bread, pulse, and wine), and operates with such terms as “model,” “alienation,” and “vertical [we would say “upward”] mobility”—all notions familiar to recent Western historiography, but not often heard in Western works on Byzantinology and never encountered in the Cambridge history. The latter work, seventeen years in the making, was written by luminaries who stood out, to be sure, in their time; by 1967, however, many of them were Emeriti Professors and Sometime Fellows of this or that, and much of the Cambridge history was antiquated before its first word was printed. The younger generation of Western Byzantinists has still the chance, and the duty, to say what it thinks about Byzantine culture.

28. Cf. A. H. S. Megaw, “Notes on Recent Work of the Byzantine Institute in Istanbul,” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 17 (1963): esp. 349–64.

29. *Vizantiiskaia kul'tura (X–XII vv.)* (Moscow, 1968).

Foreign and Military Relations

PAUL J. ALEXANDER

Since the Cambridge and Soviet histories of the Byzantine Empire are both general in character, it would seem legitimate to compare their treatment of Byzantium's foreign and military relations with its neighbors.¹ However, this approach may in fact weight the scales in favor of the Western work. Indeed its editor, J. M. Hussey, remarks in her introduction that "the main emphasis . . . is placed on the history of Byzantium itself," but quickly qualifies this statement by adding, "it has been possible to include . . . a brief account of some of the near neighbours of Constantinople and their relations with Byzantium" (p. ix). In fact, the foreign relations of the Byzantine Empire occupy almost half of part 1 of the Western work and play a large role in the other (narrative) section. Several outstanding chapters, such as those by B. Lewis and G. E. von Grunebaum on Arab civilization under the Abbasid dynasty, even present the material without much regard for Byzantium, although the balance is partly redressed by M. Canard's contribution on Byzantine-Arab relations. The foreign relations of the empire thus dominate the first part of the Cambridge history, and its subtitle, "Byzantium and Its Neighbours," expresses its subject more adequately than the editor's programmatic statement.

The Soviet history is strictly a history of the Byzantine Empire, and the contributors interpret their assignment as limited rigidly by the frontiers of the empire. The Soviet history, therefore, unlike its Western counterpart, has no separate chapters on Byzantium's relations with its neighbors, with one noteworthy exception—Byzantine-Russian relations, which naturally are of special interest to the Soviet scholars and their readers and are treated in two chapters by G. G. Litavrin (pp. 226–36, 347–53). Otherwise the genesis, movements, and internal developments of foreign peoples are rarely discussed, in fact neighboring peoples usually appear on the Byzantine horizon fully formed, as did Athena from the head of Zeus. This is particularly striking in the Soviet treatment of the Russians of Kiev, who in Litavrin's chapters are introduced from the beginning as Byzantium's enemies in the Black Sea region, without any mention of the thorny problem of the origin and character of the Kievan state and society on which, as is well known, Soviet scholars hold well-defined positions.² Another corollary of the Soviet fixation on the Byzantine Empire is that the particular conditions of a foreign state at a given

1. Unless otherwise indicated the references to the *Cambridge Medieval History* are to vol. 4, part 1; for *Istoriia Vizantii* they refer to vol. 2.

2. For a brief statement on the controversy between "Normanists" and "anti-Normanists" see D. Obolensky, *CMH*, p. 504.

time in history—its strength or weakness, the solidity of its political structure, or the presence of disruptive tendencies or civil war—are rarely referred to as causes for Byzantium's victories or defeats or as explanations for advantageous or disadvantageous clauses in Byzantium's agreements with these peoples. Examples will be given presently; here it must suffice to emphasize that the Soviet historians are of course fully cognizant of these foreign factors and do in fact mention them occasionally, but the organization of their scholarly enterprise, as well as their marked preference for Byzantine internal history, apparently produce this geographical concentration on Byzantium. No such limitations prevail in the Cambridge history.

Another obstacle to a successful comparison of the two histories concerns chronology. The Soviet work encompasses the entire duration of Byzantine history from Constantine the Great to the Ottoman Conquest. The editors of the Cambridge history, on the other hand, felt compelled to adhere to the time limits laid down by J. B. Bury for the first edition of the fourth volume of the *Cambridge Medieval History* and to begin the account with A.D. 717—although Miss Hussey herself states in her introduction that “probably few scholars would still consider 717 to be the best starting point for a history of the Byzantine Empire” (p. ix), an understatement of the situation if ever there was one. The Soviet scholars were not hampered by a past publication, and therefore began with Constantine the Great. Moreover, the planners of the Soviet work adhered strictly to a chronological framework. Their periodization as expressed in the chapter headings is, on the whole, unobjectionable, and for each period the contributors discuss the historical sources, social and economic conditions, foreign affairs, and cultural developments. In the Cambridge history chronology is the ordering element only in the first narrative section of part 1. In the remainder of this part, especially in the discussion of Byzantium's relations with its neighbors, one or several chapters are devoted to each foreign people, and although within each chapter the contributor frequently arranges the material in chronological order, this regional approach often makes it inconvenient to understand the international situation at a particular point of time in its totality.

As in the matter of the chronological limits, the Cambridge work was flawed in the planning stage by the decision that since the economic history of the Byzantine Empire would be covered fully in the *Cambridge Economic History*, it could be excluded from the new volume 4 of the *Cambridge Medieval History*. The relevant volumes of the former work appeared before the publication of volume 4, but as Miss Hussey sadly but correctly remarks (p. x), they did not provide the full coverage of the subject that had been expected.³ Al-

3. J. Clapham and E. Power, eds., *The Cambridge Economic History of Europe*, 3 vols. (Cambridge, 1952–63), with chapters on Byzantine agrarian conditions by G. Ostrogorsky (1: 194–223, 579–83) and on Byzantine trade and industry by S. Runciman (2: 86–118, 529–30).

though Miss Hussey does not say so specifically, the situation is hardly better in the area of social history, a topic which, apart from casual references in the narrative chapters and elsewhere, is discussed in one single chapter (in part 2) by the late R. J. H. Jenkins. It is interesting and attractively written, but it scarcely does justice to the complexities of the subject and to the changes that occurred in Byzantine society over the centuries. The sad fact is that the economic and social history of the Byzantine Empire still awaits its Rostovtzeff, and one suspects that it is this circumstance, as much as the distribution of subject matter between volume 4 of the *Cambridge Medieval History* and the *Cambridge Economic History*, that explains the exclusion of economic and (virtually) of social history from the former. This is an important consideration, for it is precisely in the interrelationship of socioeconomic history with foreign developments that the Soviet historians make their greatest effort and their most interesting contribution.

For if in West European and American scholarship the economic and social history of the Byzantine Empire has been and still is an underdeveloped field, particularly if compared with the remarkable growth in the areas of political and intellectual history, the opposite is true of Russian Byzantinists. The Soviet historians inherited from their tsarist predecessors a strong interest in economic and social history, which was intensified by the revolution.⁴ This is clearly evident in the Soviet history of the Byzantine Empire. In each of the chronological subdivisions of this work, chapters on socioeconomic and internal history precede those on foreign developments and set the tone for the latter. What is more, these sections on socioeconomic and domestic history are usually more detailed and original than those on foreign developments, which make a somewhat skeletal impression. The greatest effort of Soviet scholarship, both on the part of individual contributors and of their predecessors, whose conclusions they incorporate, has obviously been in the area of socioeconomic history. Thus if the treatment of Byzantium's neighbors is especially successful in the Cambridge history and weak in the Soviet work, the opposite is true of the coverage of social and economic history.⁵

4. For the prerevolutionary period see, for example, B. Panchenko, "Krestianskaia sobstvennost' v Vizantii," *Izvestiia Russkago arkheologicheskago instituta v Konstantinople*, 9 (1904): 1–234, and V. Vasilievsky, "Materialy k vnutrennei istorii vizantiiskogo gosudarstva," *Zhurnal Ministerstva narodnogo prosveshcheniia*, 202 (1879): 160–232, 368–438; 210 (1880): 98–170, 355–440. Among the most useful Soviet publications in the field of Byzantine social and economic history are the translations of relevant primary sources in *Sbornik dokumentov po sotsial'no-ekonomicheskoi istorii Vizantii* (Moscow, 1951), and M. Ia. Siuziumov's editions, translations, and commentaries on Byzantine legal texts of a socioeconomic character such as the *Book of the Prefect* (Moscow, 1962).

5. So far as I can judge, no aspect of history was formally excluded by the Soviet editors. One topic, however, that receives less than its due share is Byzantine imperial ideology. Much work has been done on it in recent decades in Western Europe and in the United States, and the Cambridge history naturally pays a good deal of attention to it. Nobody, however, would gather from the Soviet history, for example, with what

To measure the results of a general history, one should probably apply two principal criteria. A general history is mainly designed to give the reader an up-to-date, reliable, and informative synthesis of past scholarly work on the subject. Second, the organizers of a cooperative history usually hope that to some degree the enterprise will break new ground, develop original points of view, and arrive at new conclusions. If I apply the first of these criteria to the treatment of foreign and military affairs, I find that volume 4 of the *Cambridge Medieval History* does justify the high expectations with which it was awaited during its long period of gestation. To mention but a few stellar examples, the late H. Grégoire's chapter on the Amorians and Macedonians is, among other things, a well-organized and excitingly written synthesis of his own researches in the period of the Macedonian dynasty and of those of his Brussels school. F. Dvornik's chapter on Byzantium's relations with the Papacy is inspired by his many now classical works on Byzantine ecclesiastical history and political thought with which he has revolutionized the discipline. One of the most exciting parts of the entire enterprise is D. Obolensky's chapter on "The Empire and Its Northern Neighbours, 565–1018," in which he discusses the complex story of Byzantine diplomatic, military, and cultural contacts (particularly with the Slavic, Turkish, and Russian peoples) in lucid and imaginative fashion and within a generously broad historical framework. C. Toumanoff, in his chapter on Armenia and Georgia, offers a convenient orientation through the bewildering jungle of Caucasian history; and the three chapters already mentioned by Lewis, von Grunebaum, and Canard on the Abbasid Khalifate and its contacts with the Byzantine Empire are highly instructive on Byzantium's most powerful and dangerous enemies in the Near East. Von Grunebaum's "Muslim Civilisation in the Abbasid Period," in particular, is a masterpiece of concision and informativeness on a subject of many facets that is not easily accessible to a non-Arabist.

It is more difficult to give an idea, within the limits of a short paper, of specific new conclusions reached by the contributors. Partly they concern details (a revised piece of chronology, a recent archaeological discovery, etc.) and are therefore of interest primarily to the specialist. Many contributors, very reasonably, were selected because they had already made notable discoveries concerning the topics assigned to them. Consequently they considered it their primary and most attractive task to incorporate their earlier results into the larger framework of a general history and thereby make them accessible to a wider audience. Thus Grégoire's sections on the statesmanship of "St. Theoctistus the Logothete" and "The Personal Rule of Michael III" are

jealousy the Byzantines guarded the exclusiveness of their claim to a universal empire and that repeatedly in the course of the centuries they resorted to war, for instance against Franks, Bulgars, and Serbs, to maintain it.

as suggestive and brilliant as anything he ever wrote, although his synthesis is based primarily on a great number of detailed studies that he had published previously on the history of his beloved ninth century. Obolensky in his excellent chapter on Byzantium's northern neighbors sees the historical importance of the Viking capture of Kiev in the 850s in the setback suffered by Oriental influences in that area and their replacement by the lure of Byzantium (p. 495), an interpretation that I do not remember having seen before. Most chapters in the new volume of the *Cambridge Medieval History* combine earlier results with new discoveries.

If I now turn to the Soviet history and apply the same criteria to its chapters dealing with foreign and military affairs, the situation looks very different. In many respects it is reversed. Here we find, as in the Western volume, a competent, clear outline of Byzantium's relations with its neighbors, especially of its warfare and diplomacy,⁶ but the picture is extremely schematic, and one misses, for example, the detailed chronological presentation of Byzantium's warfare with Bulgarians, Arabs, and other peoples that figures so prominently, and so usefully, in the Cambridge history. Whatever is needed for a grasp of the ups and downs of the Byzantine imperial position is there, but the Soviet historians see the mainsprings of historical dynamics elsewhere. Thus none of the chapters or sections concerned with Byzantium's foreign relations is outstanding in the way of the best chapters on the subject in the Cambridge work or of the most original discussions of domestic developments in the Soviet work. One might expect, in particular, that G. G. Litavrin's two chapters on Byzantine-Russian relations would be full of new interpretations or challenging points of view, but in fact they reproduce in chronological fashion the well-known data in the accepted way (with which, on the whole, no Westerner will wish to quarrel) and avoid the larger issues.

Still, it is easier to give examples from the Soviet work of new insights on Byzantine foreign relations than it is from the Cambridge history, largely because the Soviet synthesis relies heavily on previous Soviet scholarship, which is likely to be less familiar to a non-Russian. Again, much of the more original material concerns details. For example, Dvornik describes in the Cambridge history how in the second half of the seventh century, during the "Byzantine period" of the Papacy when a long series of popes were of Eastern origin and cooperated especially with the Emperor Justinian II, the people of Italy began to revolt against the empire (p. 441); while M. Ia.

6. One of the most comprehensive and successful chapters on Byzantine foreign relations is the one by Kazhdan (*Istoriia Vizantii*, pp. 188-205) on the period from the middle of the ninth to the middle of the tenth century. It includes, for example, fairly detailed discussions of Byzantine warfare against the Arabs in Sicily and southern Italy and of the ecclesiastical mission to Moravia.

Siuziumov makes the complementary observation in the Soviet work that the Byzantine revolution of 711, which ended Justinian II's second reign, was at least partially directed against the increasing influence of the Papacy at Byzantium (p. 46). He also suggests that the fall in 838 of Amorion (the second most important city of the empire and the place of origin of the ruling dynasty) to the Arabs was due to the hostility of the heretical Paulicians; but here one of the rather rare footnotes informs one that this conclusion was reached as early as 1903 by Vasilievsky (pp. 75–76). Furthermore, although in the Cambridge work there is a great deal of emphasis on the triumphs of Byzantine diplomacy on the northern frontier (p. 507), the Soviet historian A. P. Kazhdan observes that down to the mid-tenth century the Byzantines practically never resorted to armed force in that sector but built up their influence largely by diplomatic means (p. 203). Litavrin also offers a detailed account of the unsuccessful revolt in 1040 of Peter Deljan in Bulgaria, which at one time engulfed most of the Bulgarian peninsula (pp. 265–66). Finally, Kazhdan makes use of a remarkable passage from Michael Psellos (p. 279). This famous (or infamous) philosopher and statesman wrote in 1058 in a letter to the Emperor Isaac Comnenus, who had just won the first resounding victory over the Pechenegs after a long series of Byzantine defeats: "How many heads of barbarians would you call the equivalent of the loss of one Roman soldier, whether a lancer or a slinger or a messenger or a trumpeter? How much better would it have been if none of our men had fallen on the field of battle and if the barbarians had submitted as a result of peaceful negotiations!" Kazhdan sees in this passage evidence of fear on the part of the court aristocracy that its revenues and influence would be reduced by what it considered excessive expenditure for the army—hence its opposition to the emperor's foreign policy.⁷ Yet despite these and many other interesting observations made by the Soviet scholars in their coverage of Byzantium's foreign affairs, my personal conclusion is that in this area the Cambridge history offers an infinitely richer, more systematic, and more stimulating account than its Soviet counterpart.

This judgment must, however, be revised considerably if one turns to the more difficult matter of the general approach toward Byzantine diplomatic and military history that is adopted by the two works. The matter is particularly difficult to discuss for the Cambridge history, simply because it

7. Psellos's language, incidentally, resembles that of a statesman who lived eight centuries later, Otto von Bismarck, who in a speech to the Reichstag on December 5, 1876, warned against Germany's getting involved in the imminent Russo-Turkish War "unless we see danger to an interest that would be worth the healthy bones of even one Pomeranian musqueteer" (as quoted by Erich Eyck, *Bismarck*, 3 vols. [Zurich and Erlenbach, 1940–45], 3:225). Psellos and Bismarck had indeed more in common than words, above all a dazzling intelligence and a thorough lack of moral scruples.

follows the tried and proven methods of Western historical scholarship. A few lines must therefore suffice for the approach of the Cambridge history, in order to reserve space for the less congenial and more interesting discussion of the Soviet approach. The peculiar strength of the Cambridge history lies in its scope and the generosity of its geographic framework. Byzantine foreign affairs are seen as part and parcel of the general medieval scene, and although the emphasis is on Byzantium, its foreign and military entanglements are regularly discussed within the wider perspective of Western, East European, and Near Eastern history. This broad horizon is acknowledged in the plan of the Cambridge history, in the subtitle of part 1, and in the careful discussion of political, social, and cultural conditions in the neighboring states.

Another manifestation of this wide outlook is that while the Soviet history tends to minimize the significance of internal developments in the neighboring states in explaining Byzantium's diplomatic or military triumphs and defeats, the Cambridge work places great stress on such external factors. Thus Canard states explicitly that it was the internal weakness and the centrifugal tensions in the Abbasid Khalifate from 842 onward that made possible successful Byzantine operations against the Arabs in the late ninth and tenth centuries (p. 711).⁸ The Soviet historians, on the other hand, are generally inclined to explain Byzantine successes or failures in the foreign domain in terms of the internal development of Byzantine society. There is one notable exception. While in the Cambridge history Obolensky infers from Byzantium's commercial treaties with Kiev that between 911 and 944 "the balance of power was shifting in favour of Byzantium" (p. 511), in the Soviet volumes Litavrin describes Byzantine-Russian relations as revealing from the beginning a steady strengthening of the Kievan state, even in periods of Russian disasters such as the defeat of Prince Sviatoslav by the Emperor John Tzimisce, and he views Prince Vladimir's conversion to Christianity as an act of farsighted Russian statesmanship rather than a triumph of Byzantine diplomacy (p. 235). Here Russian patriotism may have won out over ideological principles and historical method.

By and large the geographic perspective is admirably wide in the *Cambridge Medieval History*, and underdeveloped in the Soviet volumes. One even gets the impression that the organization of scholarship in the Soviet Union may discourage it. However, another approach toward Byzantium's foreign affairs predominates in the Soviet history—the attempt to see Byzantium's foreign policy, diplomacy, and military activities as a function of her domestic development and domestic conflicts. This approach is not practiced with the same consistency by all contributors to the Soviet work, but it is of course related to the Marxist theory of history and therefore appears, in

8. The same point is made in *Istoriia Vizantii*, p. 190 (Kazhdan).

one form or another, in all its chapters. The general pattern is the following. For each Byzantine emperor the Soviet historians ascertain what social group or groups supported his government or opposed it, and they then explain his foreign and military activities in terms of his domestic support or opposition. Leo III, "The Isaurian," for example, according to the Soviet authors, owed his throne to the provincial aristocracy, and their backing was the cause of his and his son's extraordinary military successes against the Arabs, which saved the core lands of the empire in Asia Minor from the Muslim conquest (p. 51). Nicephorus I's fiscal and military reforms were directed against the provincial aristocracy, and therefore this aristocracy sabotaged the emperor's warfare in Bulgaria (p. 67). The civil war between Michael II, who was supported by the Constantinopolitan aristocracy, and the rebel Thomas the Slav, supported by the provincial aristocracy and small farmers, weakened the Byzantine armed forces, especially the navy, and thus was responsible for the loss of Crete and Sicily to the Arabs (pp. 71–74). According to Kazhdan, it was the aristocracy of Asia Minor who under Leo IV prepared the offensive against the Eastern Arabs (p. 190). Later on, writes Litavrin, under Nicephorus Phocas and John Tzimisce, this policy was continued by an alliance of Constantinopolitan aristocracy with the wealthiest representatives of the provincial aristocracy (p. 216). In this connection, incidentally, the Soviet historians missed an opportunity by failing to note, as did the non-Marxist historian Carl Neumann as early as 1894, that the Eastern expansion of the empire in the tenth century was due to the land hunger of the large landholders of Asia Minor who found their economic expansion in Asia Minor slowed because of the legislative protection granted to small freeholders by the emperors of the period.⁹ One further aspect of the Soviet historians' tendency to consider Byzantine warfare the result of domestic forces and tensions is the pinning of group labels on Byzantine historical sources, partly on the basis of the foreign policies which these sources approve. Thus Kazhdan sees Michael Psellos as an ideologue of the Constantinopolitan aristocracy and Michael Attaliates as an ideologue of the Eastern provincial aristocracy (p. 290).

These findings of the Soviet historians are clearly in harmony with Marxist historical theory. It should be mentioned, however, that perhaps less consistently, yet quite frequently, the Soviet volumes display the reverse approach—a tendency to explain Byzantine domestic happenings by foreign occurrences. They state, for example, that it was the effective military protection of Asia Minor by the rulers of the "Isaurian" dynasty, especially the victory over the Arabs at Akroinon in 741, that made possible the rise of a large

9. Carl Neumann, *Die Weltstellung des byzantinischen Reiches vor den Kreuzzügen* (Leipzig, 1894), p. 24.

landholding class in Asia Minor (p. 50). Siuziumov also explains certain provisions of Leo III's law code, the *Ecloga*, concerning slavery, distribution of booty, and landed property by the requirements of warfare against the Arabs (p. 51). Among the causes of the Macedonian legislation concerning small peasant property K. A. Osipova mentions the terrible Bulgar invasions of the early tenth century (p. 118). She also suggests that the membership of military officers in the village communities side by side with rank-and-file soldiers contributed to the transformation of military subordination into personal dependency of a feudal kind in the Byzantine countryside (p. 121). According to R. A. Nasledova, the emergence in the ninth century of new markets for the products of Byzantine industries among the developing feudal aristocracies of the Germanic and Slavic states strengthened the urban populations of the Byzantine Empire (p. 134). Finally, the Soviet historians are well aware that Byzantium's new enemies of the eleventh century (Seljuqs, Pechenegs, Normans) were instrumental in bringing to power representatives of the military aristocracy, notably the Comneni (p. 270).

Thus in their approach to the historical materials discussed in these volumes the Soviet historians demonstrate considerable flexibility and freedom from ideological preoccupations. It is noteworthy, in this respect, that they seem to avoid the terms "class" and "class conflict," although these words do slip in occasionally. Usually, however, they speak of "circles," "groups," "groupings," "strata," and so forth, clearly in an effort to avoid conflicts with ideology. Furthermore, they shun the word "bureaucracy," perhaps because the notion of a bureaucracy in medieval times does not fit into Marxist-Leninist historical theory. This word, too, occurs occasionally, although its place is usually taken by the phrase "aristocracy of dignitaries in the capital," which is not the same thing.

These examples of the Soviet historians' interest in linking foreign and domestic developments are meant to indicate the importance which this approach may have for Byzantine studies if the procedure followed by the Soviet historians proves valid. But is it valid? How does one define the composition of a given social group or ascertain its domestic and foreign program? As already pointed out, Kazhdan calls Michael Psellos and Michael Attaliates ideologues of the urban and provincial aristocracies respectively. He even writes that Attaliates formulated the domestic program of the provincial aristocracy: liberal concessions to aristocracy and church (p. 290). Psellos's works are often cited as evidence for the goals and views of the court aristocracy, which he undoubtedly represented, but one wonders whether it is really permissible to identify an intellectual, particularly an individual as extraordinary as Michael Psellos, with a social group or party and use his statements or actions as evidence for its program. Many Western scholars

will probably be inclined to question so thorough an identification of individual with group.

In other instances, many Western readers will feel bewildered by the kaleidoscopic fragmentation and shifting of social groups and subgroups in the Soviet work. There are "military circles" under Justinian II (p. 41), an "aristocracy of rank at Constantinople" as well as a wider group called by Siuziumov "the patriciate of the capital" (p. 44), a "provincial military landholding aristocracy" and the "popular masses" in the capital (p. 52). Elsewhere, though rarely, one finds mentioned in the second half of the tenth century a "bureaucracy of dignitaries" (p. 206) and in the second quarter of the eleventh century "commercial-usurious circles in the capital" (p. 265), a "working population" (pp. 265–66; p. 71: "working masses"), and an "aristocracy of service" (pp. 283–84). These groups and their composition are nowhere defined, and the views of the contributors on when they emerged are not always consistent. Thus if I understand him correctly, Siuziumov claims that Justinian II was supported by "a new military landholding aristocracy"; but he remarks in a later chapter that only in the early ninth century did wealthy landholders begin to play a large role in the provincial aristocracy (pp. 44, 69).

Then there is the question of evidence. The Soviet historians make heroic efforts to explain which social groups supported or opposed each emperor. According to them Leo III owed his throne to the provincial aristocracy (p. 51), and power returned to this group during the reign of Leo V (p. 68), after several decades of joint rule by an alliance of provincial aristocracy and urban patriciate at the end of the eighth century (pp. 62 ff.). During the revolt of Thomas the Slav the urban patriciate and the thematic aristocracy stood solidly behind the Emperor Michael II of Amorion and helped him suppress this terribly dangerous attempt, with the result that the provincial aristocracy emerged from this conflict with increased strength (p. 73, but cf. p. 71). It lost out, however, to the urban aristocracy after the death of Emperor Theophilus in 842 (p. 76). In the tenth century the Emperors Nicephorus Phocas and John Tzimisces belonged to the provincial military aristocracy, but the circumstances of Tzimisces's accession to the throne forced him to adopt domestic policies constituting a "capitulation" before the aristocracy of dignitaries (pp. 211, 217). Finally, with Basil II the power of the provincial aristocracy was broken and the emperor governed in the interest of the "aristocracy of dignitaries" (p. 219).

Some or even many of these views Western historians will probably be willing to accept, in fact several of these insights have been part of the traditional view of Byzantine history. Yet here too there are difficulties. In the absence of statistical data on the composition of the various social groups

mentioned by the Soviet historians, they are reduced to accepting as evidence of the composition of these groups the occasional anecdote regarding a more or less prominent individual, the casual remark of a contemporary source, or inferences from actions of individuals and groups. Naturally this kind of evidence is ambiguous, and the Soviet historians therefore resort to considerable complexities and even paradoxes to explain historical events. The iconoclastic Emperor Constantine V, for example, was supported by the provincial aristocracy, but by his attempts to win over the population of the capital and by conducting highly successful military operations he is said to have strengthened his domestic opponents, the patriciate of Constantinople, and thus to have undermined the social basis of his power (pp. 59–60). What Siuziumov calls “the first mass antifeudal rising at Byzantium,” that of Thomas the Slav, was paradoxically supported on the one hand by certain members of the provincial aristocracy dissatisfied with the slowness of the process of feudalization and on the other by the “broad masses” (rural masses?) who were the victims of that process (p. 71). Basil II is said to have pursued the same objectives as the aristocracy of dignitaries, but the influence of the Senate composed of these same dignitaries declined under this ruler, he bestowed favors on lower strata of feudatories, the cataphract cavalry that won his wars against Bulgaria, and during the last years of his reign the provincial aristocracy gained new influence (pp. 220–21). Now, because these conclusions are complex or paradoxical they need not be wrong, for complexity and paradox are the essence of history. It does seem, however, that the social categories used by the Soviet scholars are not refined enough and not articulated with sufficient clarity to serve as explanatory devices and that their standards for evidence are sometimes not rigorous enough.

Finally, there is the problem of a causal nexus between social groups and foreign policy. The Soviet historians are unambiguous in postulating domestic causes for foreign developments and allowing for other types of causation only sporadically. Why was Leo III able to fight the Arabs to a standstill in Asia Minor? The Russian scholars reply confidently: because the provincial aristocracy, which was then emerging, was acquiring large landholdings and was introducing seigneurial forms of exploitation, and therefore supported the formation of a strong governmental power (pp. 50–51). Nothing is said here of the military aid received from Bulgars and Khazars, nothing of the personality and diplomatic skill of the new emperor, nothing of the beginning of dissension in the Ummayyad state. The one-dimensional character of the Soviet approach is even more striking in the treatment of Leo’s son, Constantine V. Here Siuziumov speaks of the strengthening of the central power and of the imperial expansion as “the principal goal of the provincial aristocracy,” and refers only in passing to the fact that the internal

disturbances in the Khalifate “contributed” to Constantine’s military triumphs over the Arabs (pp. 56–57). This is surely a severe understatement of the catastrophic effects of the civil war that rent the Arab Empire asunder during the reign of Constantine V at Byzantium and thus enormously facilitated the task of the Byzantine emperor on the eastern frontier. Of course Siuziumov is fully cognizant of the great importance of this factor, and in a later passage he contrasts Byzantium’s weakness in the eastern theater of warfare at the end of the eighth century with its strong position under Constantine V (p. 62). Yet in general the postulate of internal explanations for foreign developments proves too powerful to permit the Soviet historians a more balanced presentation of the problem of causation. This same tendency of relating causally military events to internal conflicts appears frequently in the Soviet history. Thus, for example, the fall of Crete and Sicily to the Arabs in the early ninth century is explained by the civil war against Thomas the Slav and the resultant weakening of the Byzantine navy (p. 74). Other factors such as the long history of centrifugal movements in these islands, the fiscal pressure exercised there from the capital, and the iconoclastic leanings of the central government under Michael II are left unmentioned in this regard. Similarly, the only cause for the fall of Amorion to the Eastern Arabs in 838 adduced by the Soviet history is the hostility of the persecuted Paulicians toward the Byzantine government (p. 75)—surely a lopsided view of the matter.

This same insistence on domestic causes for foreign developments moreover induces the contributors to the Soviet work to advance complex hypotheses with regard to the relations between different social strata. Kazhdan, for example, attributes the territorial conquests of Nicephorus Phocas and John Tzimisces in the tenth century to an alliance of the aristocracy of the capital with the most powerful representatives of the provincial aristocracy, but immediately qualifies this conclusion by adding that the aristocracy of the capital quickly became alarmed at the growing power of the provincial aristocracy and therefore exploited existing rivalries within it in order to prevent it from putting an end to the domination of the “bureaucracy of dignitaries.” The same historian represents Basil II as a determined exponent of the policy of the aristocracy of dignitaries in the capital but adds that he reduced the influence of the Senate in foreign and domestic affairs—that is, of the institution through which this aristocracy could express its wishes and determine policy (pp. 216–17, 219–20). In fact, when Kazhdan comes to discuss Basil II’s wars against Bulgarians and Arabs, the emperor’s supposed relation to the aristocracy of dignitaries is ignored. These and other examples raise the question whether the domestic groups that loom so large in the pages of the Soviet history did in fact represent specific foreign policies

and, if they did, whether their foreign policies could not with relative ease be ignored or overridden by an energetic monarch. Again this need not necessarily be so, but it seems rash to postulate on a priori grounds a foreign policy dimension for the various social groupings at Byzantium.

In conclusion, then, so far as Byzantium's post-717 foreign and military relations with her neighbors are concerned, the *Cambridge Medieval History* offers an infinitely more lively, richer, and more variegated account than the Soviet work. In particular, unlike the latter, it places Byzantium's foreign relations within the general framework of medieval Mediterranean, Balkan, and Near Eastern history and recognizes the interdependence of peoples and governments in those areas. In these respects the Soviet history ignores or at least de-emphasizes all elements not directly related to Byzantium, offers little more than a textbook account of wars and diplomatic agreements, and sees the causes for Byzantine diplomatic and military activities primarily in the domestic conditions and conflicts of the empire.

Here, however, I am touching not only on the limitations but also on the strength and importance of the Soviet approach. The question whether and in what way domestic factors influenced Byzantium's relations with her neighbors is worth asking, whether one accepts Marxist-Leninist ideology, as the Soviet historians do, or rejects it. The Soviet Byzantinists have investigated these problems for several decades, have commented on and translated historical sources from this point of view, and have obtained some promising answers from this scarce and recalcitrant material. They seem to have moved too fast, and their undue haste has produced three principal types of shortcomings. In the first place, they have insisted on finding answers to their questions even when the sources are insufficient or inadequately studied to provide them. Second, these social groups have not been defined with sufficient rigor, or their composition studied with the desirable accuracy, to consider them satisfactory tools for historical investigation. Third, the Soviet scholars have often assumed rather than proved a certain interest of groups and individuals in foreign and military policy and have frequently neglected or even ignored other types of explanation. Thus it will be difficult, in many cases, for Western Byzantinists to accept the substantive findings of their Russian colleagues. Yet if they wish the study of Byzantium's foreign and military relations with the empire's neighbors, as well as of many other aspects of their discipline, to progress, they will do well to remedy the relative neglect of economic and social history and to pursue with more refined tools the problems so energetically raised by the Soviet Byzantinists.

It is not by accident that I invoked at the beginning of this paper the great name of Mikhail Ivanovich Rostovtzeff. He was born and trained partially in Russia, but was thoroughly versed in the traditions and requirements of

Western scholarship and spent many productive decades of his life in American universities.¹⁰ If Byzantine historians, both East and West, should in the future investigate the fields of Byzantine social and economic history with the energy and imagination now evidenced by the Russian historians, if at the same time they continue to work in the areas of political (including ideological) and intellectual history with the same intensity as Western Byzantinists are already doing, and if they succeed in avoiding the dangers of one-dimensional history and adhere to the highest standards of conceptual rigor and historical evidence, then the path may be smoothed for the future Rostovtzeff of the Byzantine Empire, who is sure to stand, as did Mikhail Ivanovich, on the shoulders of both his Western and Eastern predecessors. The contributors to the Cambridge and Soviet histories of the Byzantine Empire have demonstrated both the need and the potentialities of such an enterprise even for the study of Byzantium's relations with its neighbors.

10. For critical evaluations of Rostovtzeff's work, see, for example, the moving and informative article by A. Momigliano in *Cambridge Journal*, 7 (1954): 334–46, reprinted in *Studies in Historiography* (London, 1966), pp. 91–104, also his *Terzo Contributo degli Studi Classici e del Mondo Antico* (Rome, 1966), pp. 787–91; Sterling Dow, "The Social and Economic History of the Roman Empire After Thirty-Three Years," *American Historical Review*, 65 (1959–60): 544–53, with further bibliography.