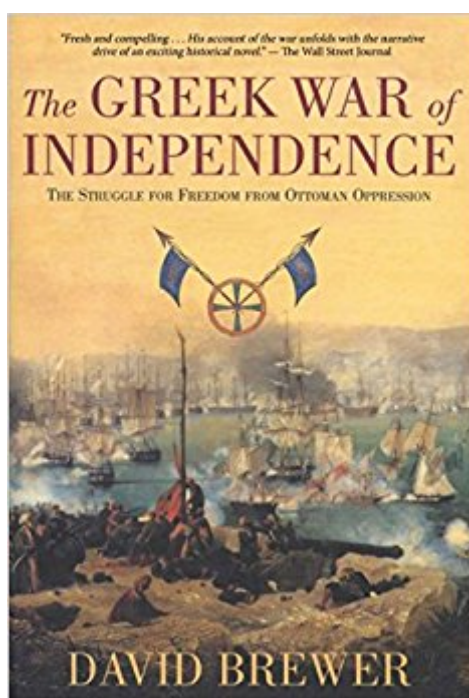


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The Greek War Of Independence: The Struggle For Freedom And From Ottoman Oppression



Synopsis

In what is certain to be the standard history for many years to come, David Brewer has captured the period brilliantly, from the ground up—the heroes and villains, the victories, and the tragic defeats. Greece was, as Byron said, a land with a special destiny: “Freedom—its home, or Glory—its grave.” The Greek War of Independence is a masterful work—the first comprehensive study in thirty years—of one of the most heroic and bloody struggles for independence any people has ever waged. This was the revolution of the Romantic Age, inspiring painters, poets, and patriots the world over, fired as much by Lord Byron’s ringing words and Delacroix’s brilliant paintings as by Greece’s seemingly hopeless plight. For nearly four hundred years the Ottoman Turks governed Greece, subjecting the country to crushing and arbitrary tax burdens and its peasants to serfdom; the glories of the ancient past were gone, and under Turkish rule Greece was poor and backward. But inspired by the examples of the American and French revolutions, Napoleon’s victories, and the Latin American wars of liberation, the Greek people rose up against their Turkish masters in 1821. For twelve brutal years—a time of terrible violence and bloody massacre—the Greeks and the foreign volunteers who flocked to their cause fought until independence was won in 1833.

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Customer Reviews

At the beginning of the 19th century, the Ottoman empire extended far into Central Europe,

occupying nearly all of the Balkan Peninsula. Three decades later, it would lie fragmented, thanks to the efforts of Greek patriots who, after a bloody struggle, forced their Turkish rulers to acknowledge Greece's independence. Classics scholar David Brewer tells that story in this comprehensive account, the first on the subject to appear in many years. The Turkish empire, Brewer writes, was "one of the most impressive that the world has ever seen," the product of generations of conquest and control. By 1800, however, it had declined in power and influence, and, lacking wealthy client states to feed its treasury, the Ottoman government inaugurated a severe program of taxation on such essential Mediterranean goods as sheep, olives, honey, and grapes, compounding the injury by drafting young Greeks to serve in the imperial army. Resistance grew, especially as Ottoman functionaries such as the Ali Pasha (whom Lord Byron, the British poet and champion of Greek freedom, called "a remorseless tyrant, guilty of the most horrible cruelties") carved out bits and pieces of Greece as private fiefdoms. Inspired by the American and French revolutions, the Greeks finally revolted, touching off a terrible war that would cost hundreds of thousands of lives, involve the major European powers (which, as in later troubles in the Balkans, proved ineffectual), and hasten the downfall of the Ottoman empire. Brewer takes an evenhanded view of the struggle, noting acts of heroism, cruelty, and treachery on both sides. Students of modern European history will find his study of a largely forgotten conflict to be of much interest, especially given recent events in the region. --Gregory McNamee --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

In 1821, Greek revolutionaries began a War of Independence fueled by longstanding grievances against their Turkish occupiers and Enlightenment ideals. In 1833, Greece became the first nation-state to win its independence from the Ottoman Empire, the centuries-old nemesis of Christian Europe. This volume is former Oxford classics scholar Brewer's detailed narrative of this achievement. Brewer effectively employs historical analogies to place the struggle within an understandable context. For example, he likens the popular support of Europeans, if not their governments, for the Greek struggle to 20th-century support during the Spanish Civil War, and he describes the effect on European public opinion of a vivid painting by Delacroix, based on the Turkish capture and pillaging of Mesolongi, a Greek fortress town, as similar to that of Vietnam War-era photographs that aroused antiwar passions. Brewer comprehensively describes the military campaigns, but he is most engaging when examining the internal and external political factors that influenced the war's outcome. Both the difficulties in forging a coherent Greek effort (despite deep divisions among Greek factions) and the complex set of historical relationships that informed the political stances of European governments are set out in close detail. The latter factor was pivotal,

as it was the joint intervention of England, France and Russia that finally forced the Ottomans to accept Greek independence. At times, the details are too dense; although it is no fault of Brewer's, the betrayals, massacres, impalements, decapitations and mutual depredations of the combatants will leave readers profoundly depressed. Nonetheless, Brewer's effort will be worthwhile for those interested in European history. Illus. and maps. Copyright 2001 Cahners Business Information, Inc.

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This book gives a very detailed account of the Greek War of Independence vs. the Ottoman Empire. But for all the detail, where are the maps? The author writes as though we are supposed to know where battles took place, places I've never heard of. Not having maps left a void. Most interesting to me from reading this book is that the Greeks, as in WWII against the Germans and Italians, fought each other as well. Same thing happened during the fighting with the Turks, which occurred more than 100 years before WWII. If you're interested in the Greek struggle for independence, I do recommend this book; having a detailed map of Greece while you are reading it will help.

A clear and interesting explanation of this war including political, international and military aspects of it. I think it's also an accurate and unbiased one that explains the reasons and military deeds. It explains also the massacres and atrocities done by both sides without cursing either of both sides.

undeniable historical facts.

I purchased this book as I wanted to know more about the Greek struggle for freedom from the Ottomans, and if you want to know about that, this is the book for you! It talks about the suffering Greeks endured during Ottoman rule, and other revolts such as the 1770 revolt to succeed, but none were successful. Finally, they began a full scale uprising against the Turks in March 1821, and in 1833 they became an independent state. Read it immediately!

After reading many books of Europe, Latin America and America, I am realizing that after the American Revolution and the French Revolution, the paradigm was spreading all over the globe. Greece was no different. Greece wanted independence from the Ottomans. This book outlines the 15 years or so that it took to gain independence. The most mismanaged independence movement, it seems, of all of them. There was a civil war within the Greek community. There were botched naval battles, stolen funds and corrupt financing out of London. It took a treaty between the European

Powers and The Ottomans to conclude the war and provide independence to the Greeks. Any interesting read. Not sure if it the best one, but it was good. The writer was very passionate about the subject, which helped (some of his ancestors figured in the stories, although not prominently as he shared).

In a possibly apocryphal but highly instructive story a traveler asks a nineteenth-century Balkan peasant if he considers himself mostly Bulgarian or mostly Greek. The peasant answers that he has no idea what the traveler is talking about and goes on to say he is Christian, by which he means he is not a Turk. (He had no clue about being of either nationality.) Most people in the Balkans at that time had no sense of belonging to a nation but they knew they were part of a non-Christian empire and that they were an oppressed people. Little wonder, since the notion of nation-state with a common language, religion, ethnicity, was still largely a Western idea of which the Greeks and their neighbors had little practical sense. For most of their long histories empire and foreign domination was the political and economic reality. This means that any account of the beginnings of modern Greece has to deal pretty heavily, perhaps insistently, on the whole issue of "nation building." David Brewer does an admirable job of weaving this theme into his account of the Greek war of independence. The situation at the time was a general disaster of decline and decadence in the Ottoman Empire, warlords and ignorant peasants in the homeland, bandits in the mountain passes, and wealthy Greeks who wanted the Turks out so they themselves could take over as oppressors of the have-nots. Brewer begins with a brief description of the church and its hierarchy as unifying elements in the struggle against the oppressors, and then moves on to the more interesting (because less well-known) intellectual underpinnings of the war. The important figures here are the wonderful Adamantios Korais (educated in France, invented the Modern Greek language almost single-handedly, believed the outbreak of hostilities should be postponed at least a generation) - and Rhigas Phaeos (poet-patriot cruelly executed after betrayal by his own). The author examines the roles played in the war by a variety of people, including Ali Pasha of Jannina, the savagely cruel but culturally refined Albanian despot who ruled Epirus with an iron fist and had a thousand concubines and fifty young boys. He traces out the problems involved in organizing the secret society known as the Philiki Eteria and in getting new recruits who could be trusted. Not everyone could be. Greece was liberated only gradually, the Peloponnese being the area of earliest conflict and first liberation. The country did not attain its present borders until well into the twentieth century. Theodore Kolokotronis is the major military figure of the war, or at least the most memorable. But once he had power in his grasp he was unwilling to yield it to the civil authorities, as were most of

the other military leaders. In fact Greece underwent a dreadful civil war even before it even became a country. The still fighting new nation had a series of constituent assemblies that were unable to work out a governmental structure to curb the selfish interests of the military and the wealthy grandees. Brewer has a special talent for making history dramatic, and he uses it well in describing battles, especially sea battles, of which there were many. Yet he never includes any superfluous details. As a backdrop to the whole story he includes material on the various alliances, sometimes "holy" and constantly shifting, among such other European powers as England, France, Austria, and Russia. He is probably correct in his assessment that Great Britain was Greece's closest friend and most generous ally in the war of independence. But he also explains how the story of England's two enormous loans to the new nation turned into horror stories of nineteenth century capitalism gone wrong. The generosity of those English and French Philhellene idealists (most notably Lord Byron) who sacrificed their well being and sometimes their lives to the cause of Greek freedom is depicted honestly and with feeling. This fine work of history can be recommended to the informed general reader but those with a solid background in historical studies will also enjoy it.

Most amateurs (I would consider myself one) go into a history book with a slight apprehension - because you don't know what pre-assumed knowledge is there, or if you'll be lost at the end of the first chapter. Rest assured - not so here. Although this book is quite difficult to find, I received mine from my grandfather, who purchased it at an Athens bookshop -- his place of residence. The citations are numerous but appropriate and yet not overwhelming, and the level of reading is not unbearably high. I, in all of my ignorance, had no idea what century the Greek Revolution was in before this work, and still found everything readable and comprehensible. The major players are emphasized, and gladly Brewer stays away from the unnecessary tangents that plague a lot of other writers. His narrative is focused and precise, and not disguised in the detail that we as readers don't want to know. I found this highly enjoyable - and one gets a true sense of what a mangled and disorganized "revolution" Greece really had, and how close the campaign was to defeat on numerous occasions. As in all history, the fate of men hangs by but a thread, and such a piece could be the difference between life, death, left, right, up, down, or nothing at all. It remains true here.

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