

POLITICS, ORTHODOXY AND THE LANGUAGE  
QUESTION IN GREECE  
THE GOSPEL RIOTS OF NOVEMBER 1901

PHILIP CARABOTT

*King's College, University of London*

This article examines the events that led to the so-called Gospel Riots of November 1901 which claimed the life of eight 'innocent' Greeks. The appearance, almost simultaneously, of two different translations of the Scriptures, undertaken by Queen Olga and the Demoticist Aleksandros Pallis, provided the 'ingredients' for an intense confrontation. Public opinion excited by fears of Pan-Slavism and proselytism, and encouraged by mischief makers, political agitators and conservative professors became determined to vehemently oppose the circulation of these 'atheistic' works, demanding the excommunication of the 'culprits'. A series of blunders on behalf of the government and the Metropolitan of Athens eventually led to Athens' 'Bloody Thursday'. Particular emphasis is placed on the examination of the underlying causes of the riots, the interplay of politics and religion, as well as the fierce struggle between the Purists and the Demoticists in regard to the language question.

*During the last few days Athens has been the scene of mob demonstration which yesterday almost assumed the proportions of a revolution . . . Large meetings were held in front of the university buildings . . . The shops and factories were closed and the streets thronged with all classes of people . . . The Government ordered out all the military troops in the city . . . Infantry, cavalry and large bodies of gendarmes were posted at different points and a cordon of marines was thrown about the palace . . . Late in the afternoon the expected collision took place between the authorities and the aroused Athenians, now numbering over 25,000 . . . Shots were fired upon the crowd by police officers . . . The rioters responded with pistols and stones . . . and were only dispersed after a cavalry charge and several carbine volleys . . . The casualties were eight killed and upward of 60 wounded.<sup>1</sup>*

With these words the American Minister Resident to Greece, Charles Francis, described to his superiors the events that took place in the capital of the Greek Kingdom from 5 to 8 November 1901. Undoubtedly, the social diversity of the demonstrators, their sheer number, which according to some sources exceeded 50,000,<sup>2</sup> and the fact that the High Commissioner of Crete, Prince George, had been unable to leave for the island 'owing to the captain and crew of the Royal yacht being employed ashore' to combat the 'mob' [FO 32/729; Egerton (Athens) to Lansdowne (London), no. 99, 23 Nov. 1901], attest to the seriousness of the situation. Although by no means constituting an attempt to overthrow the existing social order, the so-called *Evangelika* are significant if for no other reason than that they led to the resignation of the Metropolitan of Athens, the dismissal of the Head of the Gendarmerie and the Director of the Athens Police, as well as the fall of the Theotokis government. Francis' British colleague, Sir Edwin Egerton, was in no doubt as to the cause of the Gospel Riots.

Accepting the Greek king's interpretation at face value, he maintained that 'great national jealousy of any tampering with the text of the Greek Gospel is the sole honest factor in the excitement of the students and the public' [FO 32/729: Egerton to Lansdowne, no. 96, 22 Nov. 1901 (emphasis added)]. That there existed 'great jealousy' regarding any change in the language of the sacred text, there is little doubt. Looked upon as a national standard, the Gospels' translation, apart from challenging the divine inspiration of the text, struck at the heart of the Greeks' 'imagined' national consciousness—to paraphrase Anderson's terminology. Furthermore, the public's conceptions of the motives of the individuals who undertook the two different translations were hardly calculated to win the applause of the nationally-minded Greeks. Queen Olga, with her Slavic background evoked the Greeks' anti-foreign sentiment, while Pallis' association with England provided a plausible link with Protestantism and prosyletism, thus furnishing the 'necessary ingredients' for the almost Koranic opposition to any translation.

However, Egerton's assertion as indeed those of most of his contemporaries is one-sided and consequently rather misleading [Miller 1905: 8; Garnett 1924: 70–71; Istorica 1906: 372–373; Amiras 1901: 3–4; Daglis 1965: I, 234–235]. As I will attempt to show in this article, the reasons for these 'grave disorders' [DDI 1979: Avarna (Athens) to Prinetti (Rome), 23 Nov. 1901] were neither singular nor—strictly speaking—'honest'. The underlying causes that led to the death of eight 'innocent' citizens, mostly youths, were inextricably wedded not only to the traditional powerful authority that Orthodoxy and, through it, the Greek Church exercised on the collective mentality of the Greeks; or to the customary bickering of political cliques, hurling at each other charges of favouritism, nepotism and corruption; or to the 'infamous' brutality of the Greek police; or indeed to the omnipresence of what the Greeks call the 'foreign finger'.<sup>3</sup> They were also connected to the alleged threat that Pan-Slavism posed for the Greek *Ethnos* as well as to the fierce struggle that was beginning to develop between the Purists (*glossoamintores*) and the Demoticists (*maliari*), in regard to the language question.

### The Historical Setting

It is generally accepted that following the disastrous Greco-Turkish war of April 1897, Greek society as a whole experienced a sense of 'confusion, isolation, introspection and questioning' [Clogg 1986: 94]. This is not the least surprising as the shattering defeat was unanticipated and therefore its consequences were more difficult to tolerate. Greece's international humiliation, the virtual disintegration of the state machine and perhaps more importantly of all the imposition of an International Financial Control Commission which in turn curtailed further the country's independence, contributed to this feeling. The population as a whole became disillusioned, charges were hurled in all directions, recriminations proliferated like a plague and scapegoats were sought even among the least responsible. A wave of anti-dynastic feeling, not based on any ideological conviction, swept the country culminating in an unsuccessful attempt on the king's life on 14 February 1898. At the same time, politicians and army leaders alike were attacked by a most vociferous press which, possibly with the exception of Gavrilidis' *Akropolis*, paid scant regard to its responsibility as the Fourth Estate. In his weekly satirical paper *Romios*, Suris, who 'is never known to miss a point' [Miller 1905: 120], addressed the dire need for change. But like most of his contem-

poraries, he attacked neither principles nor institutions, but rather the individuals who held them and manned them.

Under such circumstances, the 'war fervour' (*polemiko menos*) of the Greeks, dormant after the shattering, albeit temporary, failure of the *Megali Idea*, was channelled to less 'heroic', but perhaps equally significant, 'ventures'. The electoral campaigns between 1899 and 1905 were marred by ugly incidents in which dozens of people were killed and hundreds injured [Moskof 1979: 238]. On 10 July 1900, discharged Major Fikioris and his group of armed followers seized the Gendarmerie headquarters in Sparta; it took the despatch of an army battalion from Athens to evict them [Moskof 1979: 237–238]. In November 1901, the capital was brought to a standstill by the *Evangelika* [Konstantinidis 1976: 218–234]. In May 1902, the summer palace at Tatoi was plundered by its own guard [Moskof 1979: 238]. In late November of the same year, following elections which had failed to produce a clear majority, supporters of Diliyiannis brandishing planks which they had taken from near-by construction buildings (hence the appellation *Sanidika*), roamed Athens, terrorizing and attacking their political opponents; not surprisingly, on 24 November Diliyiannis was sworn in as prime minister [Markezinis 1966: II, 378–379]. A year later, Athens was yet again convulsed when Aeschylus' 'Orestia', adapted into modern Greek, was performed at the National Theatre (of all venues). The ensuing violent demonstrations, known as the *Orestia*, claimed the life of an innocent onlooker from Alexandria [Miller 1905: 8–9]. Between 1900 and 1905, towns such as Corinth, Kalamata and Patras became the scene of violent clashes between the army and the police, on the one hand, and currant growers, on the other, who were badly hit by the depreciated value of their products [IEE 1977: XIV, 170–171]. Last but not least, on 31 May 1905, prime minister Diliyiannis was assassinated by a certain Kostogerakakis whose gambling interests had been seriously threatened by the government's decision to close down all gambling clubs [IEE 1977: XIV, 183].

To these repeated expressions of discontent and to the existing state of lawlessness, the establishment (monarchy and politicians) responded with alacrity but with little if any clear understanding of their causes. Following the attempt on his life, King George toured the country in an effort to rally support for the dynasty. Aware of the fact that his subjects, disappointed from the government and its failures, were vulnerable to demagogy, the king attempted to exonerate himself by putting the blame on the politicians and those who elected them [IEE 1977: XIV, 163]. His assertion served him well as anti-dynastic feeling receded temporarily, only to re-emerge during the *Evangelika*. For their part, the politicians seemed more pragmatic than their sovereign, although the policies they followed were equally predictable. During the premierships of A. Zaimis (September 1897—March 1899) newspaper proprietors were held responsible for exciting the public while attempts were made to curtail the freedom of the press. Socialist or anarchic ideas were suppressed and the nascent Greek socialist movement experienced its first, although not last, period of political isolation and persecution [IEE 1977: XIV, 163]. During his first premiership (April 1899—November 1901), Yeoryios Theotokis sought to follow in the steps of his political mentor, Harilaos Trikupis. Theotokis undertook with vigour, but little imagination, a number of important measures which included the reorganization of the army, the navy and the judiciary and the stabilization of the economy (on the instructions of the IFCC) [Rallis: 196–214]. To deal with the state of lawlessness brought about by the 13,000 criminals and deserters which were roaming all over Greece, Theotokis—with the tolerance of the opposition—

resorted to a measure that was widely applied in Europe at the time. He encouraged and, through secret directives to the police authorities, facilitated the emigration of these lawless individuals, primarily to the United States [Aspreas: II, 5].

An overall evaluation of his policies is still lacking.<sup>4</sup> There is no doubt that he earned the King's sympathy but it is questionable whether he managed to rally public opinion behind him. For despite his good intentions, Theotokis showed 'culpable weakness and selfishness' in the face of the first difficulty [FO 32/729: Egerton to Lansdowne, no. 107, 28 Nov. 1901]. Contemporary sources describe him as a 'perfect gentleman', but one who 'prefers Athenian salons to the drudgery of office' and 'lacks the strong will and the assiduity' of great statesmen [Miller 1905: 32]. His politia was conditioned more on expediency than on a programme of recovery (*anorthosis*) that could capture the people's imagination. Unlike Theotokis, Diliyiannis was a charismatic politician and one who appealed greatly to the masses. But his defect lay in the fact he was led by them, rather than leading them. Furthermore, by the beginning of the 20th century his political career was approaching its end marred as it had been by old age and disastrous failures while in office. Nor was he able to offer a viable alternative of change (*allagi*) to the Greek people, despite his espousal of old fashioned demagoguery and his considerable oratorical abilities. The country was in dire need of change and sound leadership that would accommodate the people's feelings and lift up their spirits after the humiliating defeat of 1897, but neither the king nor the politicians were up to the task.

Similarly, the majority of the Purists, clustered around the University of Athens, continued to air their conservatism, parochialism and ethnocentrism. Unwilling to acknowledge the fact that the debacle of 1897 had revealed the bankruptcy of the ideology which had been nurtured throughout the 19th century, they asserted that it was 'the state that had been defeated and not the nation; its forces [and presumably its ideals] emerged sound and undamaged' [Kazazis 1899: 3–9, cited in Augustinos 1977: 26]. Ostensibly only a change of faces was needed to remedy the situation—if indeed remedy was needed. Determined to defend the basic components of this state-sponsored ideology and to safeguard the nation's values, which were threatened by the *maliari* or followers of the demotic language—who were allegedly instigated by foreigners, and therefore enemies of the nation—the Purists saw no reason for change. For, as it has been aptly put, they 'could not cut the ground from beneath them' [Augustinos 1977: 26]. For them the *Megali Idea* and what came with it should and therefore would continue to offer outlets for the diversion of domestic discontent toward external aspirations as it had done in previous decades. Questioning its premise was not perceived as a healthy approach, but rather one that would shake those very foundations on which the modern Greek state and its corresponding ideology had been established. In fact, any change, structural or otherwise, but especially linguistic, was considered suicidal, at a time when Pan-Slavism was rearing its 'ugly' head in Macedonia.<sup>5</sup> For the Purists, as indeed was the case with the Demoticists, the language question had acquired the significance of a most important component in the more general problem of national liberation and completion [Kordatos 1943: 70–71; Tsukalas 1977: 535].

To demonstrate their case the Purists pointed to the detrimental effects that a possible translation of the Gospels into Vulgate Greek would have on Hellenism's alleged national and political supremacy in the East. In an article entitled 'Odi profanum vulgus et arceo', published in the Athens daily *Keri* on 9 October 1899, Avgustos Zografos vehemently maintained that those who wished to paraphrase the Bible 'dig the pit of Hellenism'. At a time when Russia was fighting Hellenism on all fronts, they were

willing for the sake of change to destroy the Greek language, create a language schism and give rise to a number of heresies. For this reason, Zografos concluded, the nation as a whole should

shout at the gangsters (*simmoritas*): *Down with the blasphemous*, who are committing a crime against Hellenism, who are disgracing the language which was spoken by the Holy Spirit, the Hellenic Spirit.

When one considers that the '*simmoritas*' referred to were the Metropolitan of Athens Prokopios Economidis and two distinguished professors of the University of Athens, that same institution which had produced individuals such as Mistriotis, Hatzidakis and indeed Zografos himself, one is amazed by the tenacity of the Purists' determination not to allow any alteration, modification or revision even if it came from within their own quarters.

In contrast to the Purists, the Demoticists were anxious for change. Being new in the field, to a large extent the product of the economic and social changes that Greek society and the re-emerging Greek Diaspora had experienced from the Crimean War onwards, they had to offer the prospect of a new alternative if they wished to accommodate their followers and attract wide support. Comprising such diverse personalities as Yiannis Psicharis and Ion Dragumis, the adherents of demotic long before the 1897 debacle had begun to question the sacred values of the nation, and especially language. In 1873 the Eptanesian Nikolaos Konemenos had argued that 'language is a means, not an end' and that the nation's adherence to old values and models was 'keeping us static and unhealthy . . . We need to search for a new world, and to form our own new culture' [6 & 55, cited in Mackridge 1990: I, 29]. His plea, although heavily criticized, did not attract much attention at the time and in any case failed to trouble the still waters. This was to happen fifteen years later. In the movement's inaugural manifesto, the famous *To taxidi mu* (published in 1888), Psicharis drew attention to the fact that the language question was foremost a national and political one.

Language and motherland are the same; to fight for one's country or for one's national language, that is but one struggle . . . A nation in order to become a nation needs two things: its frontiers must be expanded and it must produce its own literature [1971: 201 & 37].

This was the call to arms which once answered would not only create Konemenos' 'new culture', but would also result in the materialization of the *Megali Idea*—simply *Idea* for the Demoticists.

Considered in this light, therefore, Demoticism was an intellectual and cultural movement, rather than a proponent of radical social change and transformation [Moskof 1979: 228; Rasis 1980: 20]. Generally speaking, it based its argumentation on a ideological platform which was petit-bourgeois and nationalistic, sometimes acquiring even chauvinistic forms [Kordatos 1943: 160ff; Tsukalas 1977: 547]. Its premises were pretty much the same as those of the Purists (namely the *Megali Idea*), although the question of language, comprising everything, 'country, religion, the whole national heirloom' [Psichari 1902: 60], was set on a new footing: Demotic was to become the vehicle through which the Greeks as a nation would survive and, as Psicharis himself put it, 'shall prosper some day' [Psicharis 1888: 201, cited in Mackridge 1990: 30]. The Demoticists' rhetoric was as nationalistic and perhaps even more so than that of their opponents. Writing from Paris to his friend Argiris Eftaliotis in Liverpool, on the eve

of the Greco-Turkish war, Psicharis saw nothing wrong in the Greeks' hasty preparations for the imminent conflict and joined in the cry: 'Long live Crete, long live *Romiosini*' [Allilografia 1988: 80 (Psicharis to Eftaliotis, 7 Mar. 1897)]. Three months later, in July 1897, with the Turks only prevented from marching to Athens by the intervention of the Great Powers, Psicharis outlined the Demoticists' duty:

This wretched nation needs us and is calling us. You can not imagine how much it pains me. Tell me, my brother. Is it not our duty to teach it what is and what means solid work, iron mind, correct judgement? How many, how many things must we teach it today! [Allilografia 1988: 83 (Psicharis to Eftaliotis, 15 July 1897)]

The movement's sacred mission was propagated. To succeed it had to oust those who for decades had been predominant in educating and perhaps more importantly in shaping modern Greek society. The strength of the demoticist movement was to be tested when four years later, and despite Psicharis' original objection, Aleksandros Pallis translated the Gospels into demotic. The success of such a venture could not be predetermined. However, given the determination of both sides, one thing was certain: that the conflict could not be avoided.

### **The Antecedents of the Controversy**

The controversy surrounding the translation or paraphrase of the Holy Scriptures into what can be described as a kind of demotic, or rather vernacular Greek, antedates the Gospel riots of 1901 [Konstantinidis 1976: 9–36]. The first translation appeared in the 11th century and until the beginning of the 19th century as many as twenty five had been published. Some of these translations were officially solicited by the Patriarchate at Constantinople, while others were the work of prominent theologians and monks. The main characteristic of these translations, solicited or not, was that those who undertook them were members of the Eastern Orthodox Church. Hence, they did not pose a direct threat to the authority of the church but merely a challenge, aiming at making it more open-minded and receptive to the changing times. However, the majority of the translations that appeared in Greek lands from the beginning of the 19th century, and especially those dating from the 1830s onwards, were sponsored and indeed undertaken by the Protestant and Calvinist Foreign Bible Societies, whose philanthropic missions were to be found all over Greece, the Levant and the Near East [Konstantinidis 1976: 37–84; Metallinos 1977; Siotes 1960; Vaporis 1984]. In contrast to earlier ones, these 'works' offered a direct challenge to the unity of the Orthodox Church, its faith and traditions, and consequently they were considered as attempts of proselytism. Given the rigidity of religious doctrine and the conservatism of the Eastern Orthodox Church, these 'atheistic' works were strictly prohibited among the Orthodox flock. Two Patriarchal Encyclicals (in 1836 and 1839), approved by the Autocephalous Church of Greece, maintained that all translations undertaken by the 'enemies of our faith' should be confiscated and destroyed, while at the same time all previous translations, even if undertaken by 'our co-religionists', were condemned [Konstantinidis 1976: 79–84; Siotes 1960: 16–18].

The significance of these two encyclicals should not be overrated. Although they did put an end to the 'translation wave' that had swept the Greek lands, they were but a temporary measure. For they failed to address the main objective of these translations which, irrespective of the alleged ulterior motives of those who undertook them, was

to render the Holy Scriptures in a form of Greek which was not only acceptable to the average Greek, but also, and perhaps more importantly, comprehensible. Furthermore, the condemnation of all translations should be seen more as a precautionary measure against the threat posed by Western proselytism, rather than one stemming from theoretical principles of the Eastern Orthodox Church [Konstantinidis 1976: 85]. The fact that the Patriarchal Encyclicals of 1836 and 1839 were abided by, with minor exceptions, until the late 1890s is undoubtedly proof of the strength that Orthodoxy exercised on the collective mentality of the Greeks, both lay and clerical. But, this does not mean that the Church would be completely unreceptive to any new attempts to translate the Scriptures, provided that these came from 'pious' quarters, once the threat of proselytism had receded. However, neither Queen Olga, with her Slav background, nor indeed Pallis, whose extreme demotic only reinforced the belief that the vernacular language was not suitable to become a literary language [Vaporis 1984: 88], could fall in such a category. The mere coincidence that their translations came out at about the same time added more fuel to a situation which by its nature was bound to acquire inflammatory dimensions.

### The Royal Translation

Following the end of the Greco-Turkish war, Queen Olga, whose charitable activities in the past had done much to revive the popularity of the monarchy, started visiting on a regular basis the hospitals where the wounded were treated. There, sitting by their bedside, she read them passages from the Scriptures, hoping to ease their pain and strengthen their religiousness. But she soon realised that most of the wounded soldiers and their families were not able to understand a single word, for as they put it what she was reading them was 'Roman Catholic' (*Fragika*), 'deep Greek for the learned' [Karolu: 125–126]. It was at this point that the queen, constantly aware of Tsar Alexander's II (her uncle) admonition to love her new country twice more than her own,<sup>6</sup> conceived the idea of translating the Gospel into 'the language of the people, the language that we all speak' [Karolu: 126]. In the event the translation of all four Gospels was undertaken by the queen's private secretary, Iulia Somaki. When in December 1898 the work had been completed, the queen requested the Holy Synod's approval. Four months were to pass before the Synod's reply. In the meantime, the queen formed an advisory committee, composed of the Metropolitan of Athens Prokopios and two professors of the University of Athens (Pantazidis and Papadopulos), to edit Somaki's translation. At the end of March 1899, the Holy Synod of Greece informed Queen Olga that as the Eastern Orthodox Church had 'never approved the translation of the Holy Scriptures into a vulgar and base language', it, regretfully, could not offer its sanction [Karolu: 144–146 (Holy Synod to Olga, 31 Mar. 1899)]. Queen Olga, undoubtedly aware of the fact that the Synod's reasoning was based on false premise, in a further communication to the Synod argued that the reasons that had necessitated the Patriarchal Encyclicals of 1836 and 1839 had ceased to exist [Karolu: 147–149 (Olga to Holy Synod, 2 May 1899)]. Hardly moved by the queen's reasoning, in a lengthy reply the Synod reiterated its previous argument and wanting to put an end to the matter entrusted its president, Metropolitan Prokopios, to explain to Her Majesty the reasons as to why it 'could not do anything else in regard to the matter' [Karolu: 149–155 (Holy Synod to Olga, 4 June 1899)].

Her Majesty, however, was not to be daunted. With that peculiar stubbornness that

usually characterizes people in high places who are not able to understand that there are cases where they should back down [Markezinis 1966: II, 372], Queen Olga persevered. Having acquired Prokopios' verbal permission<sup>7</sup> and with the government's tacit consent [*Embros*, 3 Oct. 1899], at the beginning of February 1901 1,000 copies of Somaki's translation were printed. In order to attract a wider readership, the price of each copy was set at one drachma, far below its actual cost, a practice similar to that followed by the famous 'Society for the Promotion of Useful Books'. By the end of March, so many copies had been sold that the queen was thinking of bringing out a new edition. However, on account of the controversy surrounding Pallis' translation, the plan did not materialize. Indeed, following the events of November 1901, remaining copies of the first edition were confiscated and their circulation was strictly prohibited [FO 32/729: Egerton to Lansdowne, no. 109, 6 Dec. 1901].

Upon Prokopios' insistence the publication had included both the original and the translated text; while, in order to avoid 'any possible misunderstanding', the cover page read as follows: 'Text and Translation of the Holy Gospel for exclusive family use of the Greek people, published by Her Majesty the Queen of the Greeks, Olga' [Karolu: 158]. According to a one-page preface, probably written by the queen herself, 'the present work aspires to the propagation and the spreading of the Holy Gospel among the Greek people in its original language' [Karolidis 1932: VI, 109]. The translation into modern Greek was found necessary so that those who did not understand the original text would not be prohibited from appreciating the Gospels' deeper meaning and therefore loose faith. Finally, it was pointed out, in a clear effort not to invoke the enmity of the Holy Synod of Greece or of those who were against the translation, that the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople had already given its approval to the translation into 'simple katharevusa' of the Gospel according to Matthew, undertaken by the religious society *Anaplasis*.<sup>8</sup>

The queen's strong desire to have the Gospels translated was public knowledge long before the actual work was published. It seems that Olga saw no reason why she should not make the affair known. Indeed, she had sent copies of Somaki's manuscripts to a number of university professors, mostly theologians, asking for their comments and opinion. The responses she got varied from total opposition, on the basis that the interpretation and understanding of the deeper meaning of the Gospels (which was after all what mattered) would not be facilitated by a mere translation into the language of the Greek people [*Keri*, 24 Oct. 1899: Interview with Professor Zikos Rosis of the Theological School of the University of Athens], to sincere congratulations for her 'correct and most useful idea' [Karolu: 142–143 (Professor D. Kiriakos of the Theological School of the University of Athens to Olga, n.d.)]. Hoping to acquire the government's sanction for the circulation and distribution of Somaki's translation in primary schools, Her Majesty approached the Minister of Religion and Public Instruction, Antonios Momferatos. Momferatos argued that before such a step was taken, the translation would have to be approved by the Holy Synod of Greece. He did, however, suggest to the Queen that should the Synod refuse to give its approval, the government would probably not prohibit the publication of an unofficial version of the translated Gospels [*Embros*, 3 Oct 1899]. Apparently, Momferatos could not bring himself to say no to the Queen, although he was perfectly aware of the opposition the translation would encounter and of the national and political ramifications of the issue.

Following the correspondence between Olga and the Synod, a heated debate was conducted in the columns of Athenian newspapers between those who were against the



translation and those who were in favour. The former, who were most vociferous, strongly asserted that any translation of the Scriptures into vulgar Greek was tantamount to a renunciation of Greece's 'sacred heritage' [*Proia*, 14 Oct. 1899]. Elevating the issue into a national one, they vehemently maintained that:

when at the capital of Hellenism, the original Greek language in which the Gospels are written is declared incomprehensible, how can not the same claims be made by the Bulgarian-speaking Greeks? [*Embros*, 4 Oct. 1899; Levidis 1901].

Inherent in their argument was the rather naive belief that if the Gospels were translated then Macedonia would be lost to Greece, for the Bulgarian-speaking peasant would immediately require his own translation and therefore automatically forfeit the only bond which connected him with Hellenism: religion. Naturally enough, they failed to acknowledge the fact that the Scriptures had already been translated into Bulgarian. On the other hand, those in favour of Olga's translation simply maintained that it would strengthen the Greeks' faith, and would enable them to understand the deeper meaning of the Gospels.<sup>9</sup>

Given the fact that from as early as 1892, Professor I. Moschakis of the Theological School of the University of Athens had with the Synod's and the government's official sanction translated into modern Greek passages from the Gospels for the use of the pupils of the *Gimnasia* [*Asti*, 14 Oct. 1899; Karolu: 133]; and that both the Synod and the Ecumenical Patriarchate had approved the translation of the Gospel according to Matthew undertaken by *Anaplasis* [*Anaplasis*, 212 (17 Jan. 1902), 1273ff], one is surprised by the ferocity of the controversy surrounding Olga's translation. As far as the opposition of the Holy Synod of Greece is concerned one can only speculate since its archives are not available.<sup>10</sup> It seems highly probable that its disapproval of the translation was not based so much on principles of religious doctrine. Rather, it centered around the strong belief that since Olga was Russian, it naturally followed that her translation was motivated by Pan-Slavism and therefore it was anti-Orthodox and anti-national. Furthermore, the fact that in her endeavour Olga was supported by Prokopios, the Synod's president, whose appointment as Metropolitan of Athens and thus head of the Church of Greece in 1896 had raised more than a few eyebrows among high-ranking clergymen,<sup>11</sup> goes a long way in explaining the Synod's adamant opposition. The opposition of laymen is more easily accounted for. Fear of Pan-Slavism was one of the main reasons, as was the case with the Synod. In Olga's translation they perceived a sinister plan: To deprive Greece of her rightful claims in Macedonia. It is characteristic that the work, with minor exceptions, was not attacked for any literary or linguistic inadequacies, nor did the main Purists take active part in the debate. Additionally, the laymen, most of whom belonged to the Opposition, by attacking Olga's translation, were in effect, indirectly expressing an anti-dynastic feeling and directly their discontent with the government—although the name of the queen did not appear even once in the heated debates. It is no great coincidence that the individual who expressed in the severest tones his disapproval of the translation was Nikolaos Levidis, one of the most vociferous leaders of the Opposition.<sup>12</sup> Therefore, political demagoguery and its probable electoral gains should be considered instrumental in motivating individuals in their opposition to Olga's translation. However, it should be pointed out that this opposition preceded instead of following the publication of the translation. Once the work came out all talk about it receded, only to re-emerge during the events of the following November.

Again, one can only speculate about the reasons for this sudden silence (probable pressure from the king might account for it). But whatever the reasons, one thing stands clear: It was Pallis' work that again sparked off the controversy surrounding the translation of the Scriptures. However, this time around the alleged threat came not from a benevolent, albeit misguided, sovereign whose intentions had been most probably misunderstood, but rather from those quarters of Greek society that forcefully demanded change.

### **The Demotic Translation**

On Sunday 9 September 1901, *Akropolis*, the most progressive of Greece's newspapers and one 'of the few which cultivates a taste for general, non-political articles',<sup>13</sup> published a five-column title which read: 'The Gospel in the Language of the People—*Akropolis* Continues the Work of the Queen'. In the editorial that followed, Gavrilidis announced that his paper—'starting as of to-day'—planned to publish the Gospel according to Matthew translated into 'the popular language (*eklaikemēni glossa*) by the translator of Homer's *Iliad*, A. Pallis'. The object of the serialisation, as the proprietor of *Akropolis* put it, was to 'propagate to its countless readers the preaching of Christ, which until to-day was sealed with a multiple of seals'. Although Pallis had finished the translation of all four Gospels [Anemudi-Arzoglu 1986: 21 (Pallis to Gavrilidis, 14 Sep. 1901)], the serialisation was terminated with the conclusion of the Gospel according to Matthew on 20 October 1901; a move that most probably aimed at placating, unsuccessfully, the fierce opposition that the work had encountered.

Pallis' translation was vehemently attacked by most sections of the Athenian press, by the Ecumenical Patriarchate, by the Theological School of the University of Athens, by the parties of the Opposition, by leading Purists, by countless other institutions, societies and individuals alike, and eventually by the Holy Synod of Greece. The translation was considered anti-religious, anti-national, full of vulgar words, degrading the true spirit and meaning of the Gospel. The accusations levelled against Pallis himself were equally devastating. He was called a traitor; one who has no *patrida*; an agent of Pan-Slavism; a foolish and despicable merchant of ivory and indigo; a sleazy person who alongside the *maliari* was attempting to dislodge *katharevusa* as the official language of the state; an evil little creature who ought to be excommunicated. On 8 October, the Ecumenical Patriarchate issued an encyclical addressed to the Holy Synod of Greece in which, after denouncing Pallis' translation and all those who favoured it, asked the Synod to take all necessary measures to prevent the circulation of this 'most vulgar and degrading translation' [*Ekklesiastiki Alithia*, 45 (9 Nov. 1901), 444–445]; while on 3 November, the Theological School of the University of Athens addressed its own admonition to the Holy Synod of Greece, in the form of a lengthy memorandum [*Ieros Sindesmos*, 21 (15 Nov. 1901), 241–256; Krumbacher 1905: 192–228]. Both the Patriarchal Encyclical and the memorandum aimed at negatively predisposing the Synod in whose hands the matter now rested. But although the Synod in its meeting of 17 October had condemned as sacrilegious any and every translation of the original text of the Gospels into simpler modern Greek, its decision was only communicated in the form of an encyclical three weeks later (7 November 1901) [Strangas 1969: I, 522–525]. At first sight, such a delay seems inexplicable. Indeed, the official explanation that was put forward at the time verges on the ridiculous. It was maintained that before the conclusion

of the meeting of 17 October, Prokopios had to go 'away on account of his mother's illness', without signing the minutes. The remaining members of the Synod thought that 'without (Prokopios)' signature the decision would not have the authority that (it) ought to have', and therefore did not make it public until Prokopios returned from his mother's bedside to sign the minutes [ESV: 15–16 (session of 10 Nov. 1901); *Ieros Sindesmos*, 22 (30 Nov. 1901), 285–286; FO 32/729: Egerton to Lansdowne, no. 101, 24 Nov. 1901]. However, even if this was the case, it does not explain why the Synod's encyclical was issued on 7 November, at the midst of the riots, when it is an established fact that Prokopios was in Athens at least two days earlier [Sotiriu et al. 1902: 35–36]. A more probable explanation seems to be that Prokopios objected to the Synod's decision; for the way the encyclical was phrased made it absolutely clear that the Synod's condemnation did not refer exclusively to Pallis' translation but 'to any and every translation', a phrase which undoubtedly encompassed Queen Olga's translation as well. Bearing in mind that Prokopios had been favourable towards the latter, overriding the Synod's instructions, one can understand his objection, although one can not exonerate him. For it can be argued that if the Synod's decision had been made public at the time it was taken, then the whole issue might have been diffused.

If Prokopios appeared dilatory, so did the government. For, despite the fierce opposition that Pallis' translation encountered, Theotokis failed to take those measures that most probably would have appeased public opinion. For example, no attempt was made to coerce Gavrilidis to discontinue his serialisation, although state censorship had been effectively practised in the past, resulting in some cases in the imprisonment of editors and journalists alike. Nor did the government think it necessary to expedite the publication of the Synod's decision of 17 October, although it had knowledge of it. For according to the Synod's statutes of 1833 and 1852, the Royal Commissioner, that is the representative of the Executive (the sovereign and the government), had as his duty to participate in the meetings of the Synod, without the right to vote, and to countersign its decisions [Metallinos 1988: 128–129; Levidis 1910: 30–31]. Although Royal Commissioner D. Vulpiotis must have informed Theotokis of the Synod's decision, the prime minister did nothing to convince Prokopios to sign the minutes, presumably for the same reason that the Metropolitan had failed to do so: namely, fear of publicly condemning the queen's translation as well. Of course, later Theotokis laid the blame on Prokopios [ESV: 15 (session of 10 Nov. 1901); Rallis: 235], but his assertion can hardly vindicate him, all the more since he had been informed beforehand of the urgent necessity to make public the Synod's decision if violent repercussions were to be avoided [Levidis 1926: 31–32].

Aside from Prokopios' and Theotokis' responsibility, or rather lack of it, other factors also contributed to the deterioration of the situation. To the Patriarchal Encyclical of 8 October, Pallis responded with a highly ironic and sarcastic letter, composed in the purest form of *katharevusa*, in which he asked the Patriarch to 'elucidate the sin that I have committed' [*Asti*, 24 Oct. 1901]—adding, therefore, on top of the long list of his alleged sins, that of impudence. For his part, Gavrilidis did little to diffuse the situation. Throughout the whole of October, in the columns of *Akropolis*, he continued emphatically to link Pallis' translation with that of Queen Olga, pointing out that the former was merely the continuation of the latter. In fact, he phrased his articles in a way that implied that the queen herself was actually behind Pallis' translation. Worse yet was to come. On 5 November, in an editorial, titled 'Memoran-

dum Mania', referring to the memorandum of the Theological School, Gavrilidis delivered his own Philippic:

The contemporary Scribes and Pharisees got together and said: *Down with the Gospel*. [It] is not for the people. It is only for us, the learned . . . Who are those who do not want it? Theologians! But all who believe in God, are theologians . . . No, my Christians. They are little men, with their little interests, their little passions, their little children—identical, like you and me . . . [And they wish] to excommunicate the Queen who wants to take the word of Christ down to the greengrocer and the butcher. These are the Theologians! And from such *high* ideals their *kutosofa* memoranda are inspired!

From that point onwards the situation got out of control and events moved swiftly.

### The Riots

In the early afternoon of Monday, 5 November, an excited crowd of students, from all schools of the University of Athens, paid a visit to the offices of *Akropolis*.<sup>14</sup> Amidst cries of 'Down with the Blasphemous, Down with the Sacrilegious', they forcefully demanded that the paper retract the accusations and the insults levelled against the professors of the Theological School and discontinue the publication of Pallis' translation. The paper's chief-editor, Y. Pop, sarcastically reminded them that the serialisation of the latter had already been discontinued, pointing out that the attack against their professors was not personal, but referred to the opinion they had expressed in regard to the translation of the Gospels. Unsatisfied by Pop's 'rude reply', the students threatened to set fire to the building. They were prevented from doing so by the presence of the Chief of the Athens Police, D. Vultsos. Before leaving the premises, however, they did not fail to break windows and burn copies of the paper. From there they moved to the offices of *Asti*, an Athens daily that had not only published Pallis' ironic letter to the Patriarch but was also favourable towards his translation. Again the police prevented them from destroying the paper's premises. Undaunted, the students marched to the Metropolitan's residence, demanding the Synod's condemnation. Prokopios, with a certain degree of duplicity, assured them that he was one hundred percent behind them and that he would 'support their demand at the Synod'. Somewhat distrustful of the Metropolitan, and fearing that they were being deceived, the students decided to re-assemble the following morning in front of the University.

The next day saw the students, now numbering well over one thousand, joined by some civilians, paying their customary visits to the offices of *Akropolis* and *Asti*, burning copies of the papers and throwing stones at the windows. Once more they were prevented from completely destroying the premises by the presence of the police and the unexpected appearance of mounted troops, brandishing their swords. Probably on the instigation of one of the editors of *Akropolis*, who had told them that if they 'wish to find the real culprit, they should address themselves to higher quarters' [*Akropolis*, 6 Nov. 1901; Karolu: 63], the students moved towards the Palace, the guard of which, surprisingly enough, had not been reinforced. There, they requested to see the king, the one who had once said: 'My power is the love of the people'. Apparently, King George was attending to matters of greater urgency, and therefore could not see them. His private secretary, however, assured them that he would immediately inform the king of their two demands; namely, that the government prohibit the circulation of the translations and punish the proprietors of those 'two old rags' that had insulted their

professors. From the Palace a few hot-headed demonstrators paid yet another 'friendly' visit to the offices of *Akropolis*, while the main body of the students returned to the University. Early in the afternoon the Senate of the University informed them that it would try to get in touch with the proprietors of *Akropolis* and *Asti* and force them to retract their insults. The students agreed to the Senate's mediation, maintaining however the right to take up the matter themselves, if by ten o'clock next morning the issue had not been resolved to their satisfaction. At around the same time, professor Moschakis urged the students to peacefully disperse, giving them his word of honour that if the Synod failed to condemn the translations within the following twenty-four hours or so, he would place himself at the head of the demonstrators against the Church and the State. Giving him the benefit of the doubt, and since by the time Moschakis had finished his speech it was raining heavily, the students considered following their professor's advice. But rumours spread that the government was planning to occupy the University, under cover of darkness, whereupon the students decided to spend the night there, 'vigilant trustees of ancestral traditions'. Fifty of them even possessed 'noisy rifles'. The battle-ground was set.

The following morning a large crowd of students and civilians assembled in front of the University. Seeing that in effect the students had taken possession of 'a national building, containing so much of value' [ESV: 15 (session of 10 Nov. 1901)], without having the right to do so, the government ordered its forces to surround the University in order to prevent the arrival of additional demonstrators. At the same time, Theotokis informed the Senate that he had sent Vultsos and the Head of the Gendarmerie, Staikos, to the offices of *Akropolis* and *Asti* 'begging that satisfaction be given'; both papers promised to do so and on 8 November 'a full, satisfactory explanation was published' [ESV: 15 (session of 10 Nov. 1901)]. Later in the day, Theotokis forwarded to the Senate the Synod's condemnation of the translation of the Gospels.<sup>15</sup> Dean Sakellaropoulos read it aloud to the excited crowd, urging them to disperse peacefully, since 'the issue of the translation of the Gospel did not exist any longer'. His last words were met with silence when, suddenly, the crowd started shouting: *Excommunication! Excommunication!* This was the anticipated battle-cry. A huge mass of angry and excited people started moving towards the Metropolis, where the Synod's offices were situated. They were prevented from marching more than a few yards by a cordon of policemen and gendarmes, infantry and mounted troops. The crowd responded by throwing stones and planks, umbrellas and branches cut from nearby trees, insulting and abusing the troops. The cavalry, apparently without orders—but most probably in fear of their lives, for already half a dozen had been wounded—galloped into the crowd, brandishing their swords. In the ensuing melee, intensified by around ten shots fired from the rear of the crowd, three demonstrators were seriously wounded. However, torrential rain soon forced both sides to collect their wounded and retreat. In the meantime, news came that the Guilds of Athens and Piraeus had decided to actively support the 'struggle of the students'. To this effect they declared their intention to stage a joint demonstration the following day at 2 p.m. at the Columns of Zeus to demand that the Synod excommunicate those who had desecrated the Holy Gospels. The Guilds' decision was favourably received by the students who retreated into the University to regroup and gather strength for Thursday's mass meeting.

Learning of the proposed rally and of the Guilds' support, the government decided to take firm action. Until then the opposition against the translation was composed almost exclusively of students, partly motivated by national and religious principles,

partly instigated by their purist professors. They were only indirectly voicing a kind of political discontent in that the government had failed to take in advance those measures that would have satisfied them. Their resort to hooliganism was not perceived as an open defiance of the state and its laws, and was put down to the irresistible impulses of youth. However, the unfortunate incidents of Wednesday afternoon, the use of rifles and most importantly of all the appearance on the scene of the Guilds, convinced the government that the question 'had gone beyond the circle of the students and of those who were prompted by purely religious ideas' [ESV: 17 (session of 10 Nov. 1901)]. The political ramifications of the issue could no longer be avoided, not least because the Guilds were controlled and instigated by the Opposition.<sup>16</sup> Bound to preserve order but also fearful of its own survival, the government brought from Piraeus 500 marines to reinforce its troops in Athens. In the early morning of Thursday 8 November it communicated to the students a peculiarly worded order which, although allowing them to go to the rally, absolutely forbade the 'procession in the town of large groups of demonstrators', authorizing Staikos to use force to break them up. However, the prevention of 'massing of large crowds', as Theotokis himself put it, meant in effect that the rally could only take place provided that its participants reached the Columns of Zeus in leisurely groups of two's and three's, if they were not to disobey the government's order [ESV: 17 (session of 10 Nov. 1901)]. The order's ambiguity did not escape the students. Highly irritated by this 'childish and unconstitutional proclamation' and with the Guilds' unanimous consent, they decided to go on with the rally as planned. Their determination to defy the order was most probably reinforced by the contents of that morning's newspapers. *Skrip* published an interview of Prokopios and the Bishop of Andros, in which both churchmen adamantly declared their opposition to the excommunication of those who had translated the Gospels; while *Keri*, in its editorial, urged the students to 'burn the translation of the Slav'.<sup>17</sup> Bearing in mind that by that time 'excommunication of the culprits', both Queen Olga and Pallis, was the key demand of the students and the Guilds, their defiance is not the least surprising.

### **Athens' Bloody Thursday**

Around 2 p.m. a crowd of approximately ten thousand, students and civilians alike (for Thursday 8 November happened to be a religious holiday, the feast of St. Michael and St. Gabriel!), started moving along Panepistimiu Avenue towards the Columns of Zeus. Before reaching their destination, the demonstrators were forced to change their route twice, for cordons of marines and mounted troops had blocked their way. Eventually, and after exchanging verbal abuse with the troops, they reached their place of rendezvous where they were met by the Guilds' members and their families. The latter, numbering approximately fifteen to twenty thousand, had been assembling there from the morning and their procession had failed to attract the troops' attention (presumably because they had reached their rendezvous-point in a leisurely manner). Highly charged and emotional speeches were made, condemning all translations of the Gospels and demanding the 'culprits'' excommunication. A resolution was passed and a committee of students, selected on the spot, was authorized to see to its execution. Then the demonstrators decided to return to the University. On their way back, some skirmishes took place with the troops, which were carefully monitoring their movements from close range, but these were in no way indicative of what was to happen forty-five minutes later. In front of the University fresh speeches were made, whereupon one of

the representatives of the students, praising the tolerance the demonstrators had displayed, asked them to disperse peacefully. But then, suddenly, a voice was heard, urging the crowd to pay a visit to Prokopios' residence. Immediately, around 1,000 people crossed Panepistimiu Avenue into Korais street. Staikos shouted to them: 'I mean to enforce my orders'. The crowd paid no attention to him and attempted to break the cordon of mounted troops. The cavalry retreated for a few seconds, pending orders from their commander. But before Staikos had time to reflect, pistols were fired by the demonstrators, whereupon the officer in charge of the marines shouted: 'Fire'! Panic ensued. The marines and troops fired volleys of blank and then live cartridges. The crowd responded by stoning and firing at the troops. In the midst of the confusion, Theotokis had a narrow escape, as he drove up under heavy fire to his own house nearby. The cavalry charged, while unidentified persons started firing at the crowd from the windows of the Ministry of Finance.<sup>18</sup> The crowd was forced to disperse. Some ran for cover down the side streets, while others sought asylum in the University. The man to man battle was brought to an end. At 6 p.m., on the orders of the king, the troops withdrew from the streets of the capital, their hands drenched in the blood of their victims. Athens' 'Bloody Thursday' had claimed the life of eight people.<sup>19</sup>

### The Aftermath

The government's response to the bloodshed was immediate and predictable, but indicative of the sluggishness and naivete that had characterized its attitude in regard to the translation of the Gospels since 1899. Prokopios, whose objection to the Synod's outward condemnation should be seen as the crux of the matter, was forced to resign; a move which, irrespective of its unconstitutional nature,<sup>20</sup> was doomed to failure as it had come too late. Staikos and Vultsos were dismissed, playing the part of scapegoats, despite the fact that both had merely followed Theotokis' orders. However, these measures of expediency had little, if any effect. The government came under heavy attack from the Opposition in parliament [ESV: 2–36 (session of 10 Nov. 1901)]. Theotokis himself was personally accused by Levidis of negligence for failing, 'during the last two years, to [lay his] hands on the impious persons' who had translated the Gospels, while other members of the Opposition called him an 'assassin'. Shaking with emotion and on the verge of tears, in his *apologia* Theotokis attempted to diffuse the issue, laying all blame on Prokopios, arguing that the troops had only fired in the air, 'that the bullets extracted from the bodies of the dead and wounded were simply those of revolvers, and not of government rifles, nor of the weapons used by the police'. The troops had manifested the quietest forbearance. Those responsible for the tragic events of Thursday afternoon should be looked for elsewhere. They were neither the students, nor the troops;<sup>21</sup> they were certain 'elements of disorder' (*stihia ataksias*) who had been motivated by their desire to embarrass the government and eventually bring it down [Rallis: 239].

After the conclusion of the debate, at the ensuing vote of confidence the government got a majority of 22, compared to 37 it had secured a week earlier on the occasion of the election of the President of Parliament. Theotokis perceived this result as a clear indication of the fact that he could not remain in office without risk of further bloodshed. In the early afternoon of Sunday 11 November, he visited the Palace and handed in his resignation. King George, at length convinced by the strength of his prime minister's arguments, accepted his resignation [Rallis: 240–241]. On Theotokis' insistence, however, the king 'who has good reason to distrust Diliyiannis who has together with

his friends certainly formented the present agitation',<sup>22</sup> did not send for him but for Zaimis, whose party held a mere 14 seats. It was agreed, that he would be supported by Theotokis, until order had been restored and elections could be held [DDI 1979: Avarna to Prinetti, 26 Nov. 1901]. On 12 November Zaimis was sworn in as prime minister; while to avoid further complications parliament was prorogued for 40 days by royal decree. The next morning, the students evacuated the University, while 11 days later, following yet another mass rally organized by the students and the Guilds, the new minister of Public Instruction issued orders to the administrative authorities to the effect that 'they should take steps to seize all copies of translations of the Gospel and to forbid the circulation of any kind of Gospel translation whatever' [FO 32/729: Egerton to Lansdowne, no. 109, 6 Dec. 1901]. Finally, on 25 November, priests read from every pulpit in Athens and all over Greece a decree of the Holy Synod which prohibited, 'on pain of excommunication', the sale or reading of any translation of the Gospels.<sup>23</sup> Thus, with the threat of excommunication looming above the heads of those who sold or read the translations, but not those who had undertaken them, the opposition that had brought Athens to a stand-still for more than one month was itself brought to an end.

However, the political ramifications of the issue were far from over. When parliament reconvened in late January 1902, a storm was very nearly caused. As two new deputies were taking the oath, members of the Opposition shouted that the Gospel on which the oath was taken was a translation. This necessitated an inspection of the book by other members, whereupon it was found that it was an edition of the Foreign Bible Society in the original, not in translation, and therefore acceptable [FO 32/736: Egerton to Lansdowne, no. 14, 10 Feb. 1902]. Significantly enough, until the fall of the Zaimis cabinet in November 1902 and the holding of general elections, the issue of the translation of the Gospels was raised a number of times in parliament and in the press. Only when Diliyiannis was appointed prime minister in late November, following the *Sanidika*, did it fade, temporarily into the background, to re-emerge in 1911 during the deliberations for the drafting of a new constitution. Indeed, such was the strength of the controversy surrounding the issue that prime minister Venizelos was forced to include in article 2 of the constitution the following paragraph: 'The text of the Holy Scriptures shall be maintained unaltered. Its rending into any other language type, without the Patriarchate's sanction, is absolutely forbidden' [Kakullidi 1970: 23]. In the constitutions of 1927 and 1952, the approval of the Autocephalous Church of Greece was added. Finally, a minor alteration occurred in the constitution of 1975 where in article 3 'its rending into any other language type', was substituted by 'its official translation into any other linguistic form' [Constitution 1975: 3].

## Conclusion

In retrospect and with most of the pertinent material at our disposal, we can safely argue that the responsibility for the Gospel Riots of November 1901 lies with many quarters, whose motives and interests were not in the least identical. Queen Olga, who believed that her royal position gave her the right to override the unwritten, sacred laws of the Greek *Ethnos* and disregard the traditional lack of confidence of her adopted subjects towards their foreign sovereigns. The members of the Holy Synod of Greece, whose mistrust, obscurantism and pedantry made them unreceptive to the probable needs of their flock. Metropolitan Prokopios, whose weak character and oscillating attitude did nothing but harm, to what was most probably a well-meant cause. Greece's Purists and



university professors, who saw danger everywhere, and with their inflammatory 'literary' works and speeches fanaticized the country's youth. Pallis who, despite Psicharis' admonition not to meddle with the Church and religion for fear of harming the Demoticists' *Idea* [Allilografia 1988: 405–409 (Psicharis to Eftaliotis, 23 & 24 Oct. 1901)], produced a translation which, irrespective of its literary or linguistic merits, was far ahead of its time [Triantafillidis 1963: V, 390–398]. The students, who saw as their sacred mission the preservation of the nation's ideals and contrary to all expectations sided with the 'forces of darkness'.<sup>24</sup> The press, whose political dependence and want of circulation found expression in yellow journalism. The policemen and gendarmes, the soldiers and marines, who panic-stricken took the law into their hands and enforced it with great savagery. The government of the day, which showed an exceedingly naive understanding of unfolding events and reacted only when it felt its position threatened. Finally, the politicians of the Opposition, individuals like Levidis, who in their quest for power orchestrated a plan to oust their opponents, mobilizing their simple-minded followers, whom they were ever ready to sacrifice on the altar of their great cause [Eleftherudakis 1944: 252–253], only to realize that at the end of the day what mattered was not which party held the majority of seats, but which enjoyed the sovereign's favour. All of them were accountable for Athens' 'Bloody Thursday'.

However, it would be a gross oversimplification to argue that individuals alone were to be blamed. For Prokopios and Theotokis, Levidis and Diliyiannis, the professors and their students, Staikos and Vultsos, the marines and the soldiers, the policemen and the gendarmes, Gavrilidis and his colleagues, even King George and Queen Olga, did not live and act in a vacuum. All of them were products, to a greater or lesser extent, of a society, a system, an establishment which nurtured individualism and parochialism, conservatism and pedantry. An establishment that had exhausted its resources and was fighting hard to retain its control over the masses. It was precisely this establishment that individuals like Psicharis and Pallis, who had grown up, been educated and 'matured' in foreign lands, came to challenge. Admittedly, neither their subject, nor their timing were well chosen. But then, they had to start from somewhere if they were to entertain the hope of changing such a static society. At least after Athens' 'Bloody Thursday' both sides knew where they stood.

Considered in this light, therefore, the events of November 1901 could be seen as a manifestation of what has been characterized as a power vacuum between 1897 and 1909, that is 'the absence of a political force which could articulate a credible hegemonic vision' [Andreopoulos 1989: 198–199], over and above the traditional concepts of motherland, religion and sovereign. Additionally, the long-term issues of the riots can be related to the comparative weakness of liberalism in Greece in as much as the 'battle' was between two rival nationalisms as between 'static conservatism' and 'liberal dynamism'.<sup>25</sup> This fierce process passed through various stages, unleashing each time 'forces' of various shades and 'sentiments' of varying degrees, before eventually leading to the Gudi revolt of 1909. However, although the underlying forces of Greek liberalism found expression in the 'golden years' of Venizelism, the battle was yet to be won, as is evident by the *Ethnikos Dihasmos* of the late 1910s and the inter-war period. To this extent, therefore, the Gospel Riots of 1901 were perhaps the first, albeit not last, manifestation of a fratricide struggle, the disastrous dimensions of which have been unimaginable even for those few who did not propagate it. But this is another story.

## Notes

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1. NARS: Francis (Athens) to Hay (Washington), no. 39, 22 Nov. 1901. All dates in this article, with the exception of dates cited in foreign diplomatic documents, correspond to the old style calendar, then in use in Greece.
2. *Asti*, 9 Nov. 1901; Konstantinidis 1976: 220–221. For data on the population of Athens, see Tsukalas 1977: 164–180.
3. A lucid account of these ‘forces’ and ‘traits’—already in evidence 25 years earlier—in Tuckerman 1878: *passim*.
4. For some opposing, but superficial views see: Aspreas: II, 4; Kordatos: XIII, 18–22; Rallis: 338–341. The writer and early socialist Konstantinos Theotokis accused his namesake of ‘flattering the corrupt elements of the people’ and of embezzlement; see Hurmuzios 1979: 22.
5. See the response of Professor Pavlos Karolidis on his view regarding the *Megali Idea* and the nation’s ideals, *To Periodikon mas* (May 1901), 105–106. Also see the anonymous article of a distinguished theologian, ‘Οι Πανσλαβισταί και η θεολογική Σχολή του Πανεπιστημίου’, *Neologos* (13 & 14 September 1899), and Augustinos 1973: 444–453. For the *Megali Idea* see Kitromilides 1990 and Kofos 1990.
6. Eleftheroudakis 1944: 252, wherein the author refers to an interview he had with Olga in Rome, probably in 1923–1924.
7. Karolu: 158. Prokopios’ attitude has been heavily criticized by contemporaries and historians alike. Most sources depict him as the ‘Palace’s stooge’; an individual of ‘weak principles’; the queen’s lover (!) and an agent of Pan-Slavism, for he had studied in St. Petersburg. Although most of the accusations levelled against him were false, to say the least, his *politia* seems to indicate that he was indeed a man of weak personality and that his close association with the Palace, being the personal tutor of the king’s children and owing his appointment to the queen, could not bring him to say no to Her Majesty.
8. Konstantinidis 1976: 107–118. Also see the interview of M. Galanos (general secretary of *Anaplis*) in *Akropolis*, 1 Nov. 1901.
9. Selectively see: *Asti*, 14 Oct. 1899; *Akropolis*, 17 Oct. 1899. Also see two articles by Kostis Palamas, ‘Διά το ζήτημα της μεταφράσεως του Ευαγγελίου’, *Akropolis*, 9 & 16 Oct. 1899; and ‘Η ελληνική ψυχή, Ομηρος και Ευαγγέλιον’, *Akropolis*, 31 Oct. 1899, reproduced in Palamas: II, 511–520 and XIV, 149–153 respectively.
10. Efforts to consult the Synod’s archives met with failure. As the Secretary of the Synod told me: ‘Unfortunately, we were not given permission’!
11. Strangas 1969: I, 481–489, 525–527. Prokopios was appointed, rather than elected, Metropolitan of Athens on the insistence of Queen Olga.
12. Apostolopoulos 1939: 3, wherein Levidis is named as the main figure behind the opposition to the translation of the Gospels. Also see Levidis 1901; Levidis 1926. Unfortunately, Levidis’ papers, although deposited almost 50 years ago at the Filologikos Sillogos Parnassos, are not yet available for consultation.
13. Miller 1905: 119. Also see Mayer 1957: I, 187ff. It should be noted that *Akropolis* was heavily subsidized by prominent Demoticists, including Pallis and Eftaliotis.
14. Unless otherwise stated, all factual information for the events of 5–8 November, is derived from Sotiriou et al. 1902: 28ff.
15. ESV: 15 (session of 10 Nov. 1901). According to Konstantinidis (1976: 243), who was granted permission to consult part of the archives of the Holy Synod of Greece, the minutes of the meeting of 7 November were *not* signed by Prokopios. Indeed, it seems that the Metropolitan of Athens was not present at the meeting which was chaired by the Bishop of

- Syros, Tinos and Andros, Methodios. Interestingly enough, the official publication of the Church of Greece maintains that the encyclical was signed by Prokopios; see Sinodikai 1955: I, 15–17. Also see Strangas 1969: I, 522–525.
16. FO 32/729: Egerton to Lansdowne, no. 96, 22 Nov. 1901; AMAE: Ormesson (Athens) to Paris, no. 135, 24 Nov. 1901. The Honorary President of the Association of the Guilds of Athens and Piraeus was A. Skuzes, a close associate of Diliyiannis and member of Parliament. It was most probably the Guilds' total dependence on the Opposition and their dissatisfaction with the government's austerity programme that induced them to side with the demonstrating students.
  17. Konstantinidis 1976: 234–235; Mayer 1972: I, 96–98. Kordatos (1927: 106–108) maintains that a number of newspaper proprietors were bribed by the German Embassy in Athens to fanaticize their readers by arguing that Olga's translation was inspired and sponsored by the Russians. It was hoped, that in this way the prestige of the king and the queen would be diminished and eventually George might find it necessary to abdicate in favour of his son, Constantine, whose wife, Princess Sofia, was the Kaiser's sister. To substantiate his argument he quotes a passage from the unpublished papers of K. Topalis, Minister of Justice in the government that succeeded Theotokis: 'Nobody should learn the role of [Sofia] in the *Evangelika*. For tomorrow she will become queen, the wife of that individual who embodies the ideals of the Race . . . If the majority of journalists were speculating on patriotism, at a time when a foreign embassy connected with the future queen lavished upon them material and moral *parohas*, it is in the country's interest and especially the *ethnos*' interest to let these things fall into oblivion'. Since nobody else has been given the opportunity to look at Topalis' alleged papers, and since K. Lulos, who has written a book on German policy in Greece based almost exclusively on German documents, has not found any information whatsoever pointing to such an allegation, one is tempted to put down Kordatos' argument on the Greeks' obsession with the so-called 'foreign finger' factor. For more details see IEE 1977: XIV, 176–177; Lulos 1990: 48–54.
  18. The issue of these 'unidentified persons' dominated the debate of 10 November in parliament. The Opposition maintained that they were 'bravos' of the government, ordered to shoot and kill. Theotokis denied that this was the case: 'Is it possible to think that a government which had employed so many means to prevent an encounter and bloodshed, could arm bravos to attack the people? What advantage would the government derive from such a course of action? Nothing but ill'. Despite the fact that the events of 8 November are exceedingly well documented, it is impossible to arrive at a safe conclusion as to the nature of these 'unidentified persons', not least because no public inquiry was conducted in the aftermath of the riots.
  19. Significantly enough, none of the victims and only a small percentage of the wounded were students.
  20. See Konstantinidis 1976: 235–244. Prokopios' resignation was not handed to the Synod, the only competent body which had the authority to deal with it, but to the government.
  21. If this was the case, one wonders why both Staikos and Vultsos were dismissed. At least King George thought otherwise. For as he told Egerton, Vultsos was 'useless and incompetent', and should be held responsible for the death of the demonstrators; see FO 32/729: Egerton to Lansdowne, no. 106, 28 Nov. 1901.
  22. FO 32/729: Egerton to Lansdowne, no. 102, 24 Nov. 1901; AMAE: Ormesson to Paris, no. 135, 24 Nov. 1901. Also see NARS: Francis to Hey, no. 103, 9 Dec. 1902, for 'the well known unfriendly sentiments entertained by [the king] towards Delyanni [sic]'.  
23. NARS: Francis to Hay, no. 45, 9 Dec. 1902. It is worth noting that the opposition in regard to Pallis' translation was not confined solely to Athens, although it was only at the capital that violent demonstrations took place.
  24. Interestingly enough, among the students who were opposed to the translation of the Gospels into demotic, were M. Triantafillidis and D. Glinos, both of whom were later to become the main leaders of the demoticist movement; see Hristidis 1984: 171–173; Iliu 1983: 12–13.

25. I wish to thank Dr M. Mazower for drawing my attention to the long-term issues of the Gospel riots.

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