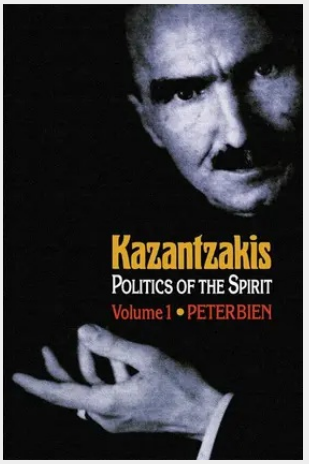
Bien

Kazantzakis, Volume 1

Politics of the Spirit



"No author who lives in Greece," writes Peter Bien, "can avoid politics." This first volume of his major intellectual biography of Nikos Kazantzakis approaches the distinguished--and controversial--writer by describing his struggle with political questions that were in reality aspects of a fervent religious search. Beginning with Kazantzakis's early career in fin-de-siècle Paris and his discovery of William James, Nietzsche, and Bergson, the book continues by describing his experiments with communism in turbulent Greece, his visits to Soviet Russia, and the publication of his epic Odyssey in 1938. Bien demonstrates that politics and religion cannot be separated in Kazantzakis's development. His major concern was personal salvation, but the method he employed to win that salvation was political engagement. Did deliverance lie in nationalism? Communism? Fascism? He eventually rejected each of these possible solutions as morally appalling. Abused by both left and right, he insisted on an "eschatological politics" of spiritual fulfillment. This compelling biography will be essential reading for Kazantzakis scholars and for a wide audience of those who already admire the Greek author's work. In addition, it will provide an introduction to the first three decades of Kazantzakis's career for those who have yet to enjoy such passionate and stirring novels as Zorba the Greek, The Greek Passion, and The Last Temptation of Christ.This first volume provides an introduction to the initial three decades of Kazantzakis's career for those who have enjoyed such vibrant and stirring novels as Zorba the Greek, The Greek Passion, and The Last Temptation of Christ.

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