THE ROUTLEDGE HANDBOOK ON CONTEMPORARY TURKEY

Edited by Joost Jongerden

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group
LONDON AND NEW YORK

First published 2022
by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

and by Routledge
605 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10158

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

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British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
A catalog record has been requested for this book

ISBN: 978-0-367-20902-5 (hbk)
ISBN: 978-1-032-02369-4 (pbk)
ISBN: 978-0-429-26403-0 (ebk)

Typeset in Bembo
by Newgen Publishing UK

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REFUGEES OF THE 1923 POPULATION EXCHANGE BETWEEN TURKEY AND GREECE

Greek efforts for integration and assimilation

Eleni Kyramargiou

Introduction

An exchange of populations between Greece and Turkey was first suggested by Mr Venizelos in 1914 as a way of solving the difficulties which had arisen at the beginning of that year between the two countries. Relations had become strained owing to the refusal of Turkey to recognize the Greek annexation of the Aegean islands opposite the Anatolian coast. In order to put pressure on the Greek Government, the Turks proceeded to expel the Greek inhabitants of a large number of towns and villages in Eastern Thrace and on the Western Anatolian littoral, installing in their place Moslem emigrants from Macedonia. These Greeks, amounting to 270,000, were forced to take refuge in Greece. [...]

A similar situation, this time on a much larger scale, arose after the Smyrna disaster in 1922. Over 800,000 Greeks and Armenians from Anatolia took refuge in Greece during and immediately after the operations, while the whole of the Greek and Armenian population of Eastern Thrace, another 200,000, trekked over into Greek territory before the country was re-occupied by the Turks in accordance with the terms of the Moudania Convention. Thus the position, when the delegates of the belligerents met at Lausanne to discuss terms at the end of that year, was that there were over a million Greek and Armenian refugees in Greece for whom neither land nor houses were available.

[...]

It was inevitable, under the circumstances, that Mr Venizelos should revert to the old idea of an exchange of populations. Under the arrangement, the Moslems of Greece (excepting Western Thrace) were to be forced to emigrate, thus making room for the refugees. This proposal was accepted by the Turkish Government and embodied in the Greco-Turkish Convention signed at Lausanne in January 1923.

(Archive of Alexandros Pallis, Institute of Historical Research/National Hellenic Research Foundation)

The above description comes from a presentation made by Alexandros Pallis, member of the Joint Commission on Population Exchange, in 1925, just one year after the completion of the exchange in accordance with the provisions of the Lausanne Treaty. In this presentation, Pallis seeks to provide context for the Greek–Turkish relations and, more generally, the relations between the newly formed Balkan states following the recent military expeditions in the region. The Balkan wars of 1912–1913 and the First World War that followed are events that defined the development and formation of the Balkan states and influenced the relationships among them. The beginning of the Greek–Turkish war in 1919, the end of the war in 1922 with the defeat of Greece, the disorderly retreat of the Greek army in tandem with the flight of the Orthodox population from Asia Minor, which led, in turn, to the agreement for the population exchange between Greece and Turkey in January 1923, are all events that defined modern Greek and Turkish history and influenced the formation of not only the modern Greek state but also modern Turkey.

Pallis' description indicates that the idea of the population exchange was not merely the result of the Greek–Turkish war of 1919 and the violence perpetrated throughout it by both warring sides. Instead, Pallis highlights how the population exchange actually sealed the demographic and political shifts initiated by the dissolution of two empires at the beginning of the twentieth century, the Russian and the Ottoman; events which forced thousands of people to move according to ethnic or religious criteria and led to the creation of the Balkan nation states as well as the establishment of the Turkish state. The Greek–Turkish war of 1919–1922 and the ensuing population exchange brought an end to a long period of instability within the wider Ottoman Empire, during which the multinational elements of the Empire faded, thus rendering the coexistence of different population groups impossible. That was the moment when Greece became Greek and Turkey became Turkish.

In September 1922, Greece did not merely lose a war; its grandiose dream of expanding its borders and creating the "Greece of two continents and five seas" was virtually devastated. The defeat was so overwhelming that the Greek state had to manage not only the disintegration of its disbanded army, but also the arrival of thousands of refugees in a state of shock. During the negotiations that began in the next few months and resulted in the Treaty of Lausanne, an agreement for a population exchange was characterised by Greek diplomats and officials as the only solution, since it allowed the Greek state to accept within its borders the Christian population of the Ottoman Empire – with the exception of the Christians of Istanbul where the Patriarchate is located. At the same time, the departure of Muslim populations, with their respective exceptions in Thrace, would create the spatial and economic conditions necessary for the refugee resettlement.

Although Greece and Turkey came to the agreement of the exchange of population, for different reasons and with different ideological motives, in the end, both countries utilised it to lay the foundations for the formulation of their national ideology in the twentieth century and the constitution of their national history. In Greek historiography, the exchange is not the crucial historical fact. The destruction of Smyrna in September 1922, and the exodus of Christians are portrayed as the decisive historical events. Similarly, for Turkish historiography, the victory in the Greek–Turkish War and the national independence of 1923 are presented as monumental historical events (Alpan 2012, Mpaltsiotis 2006, Yildirim 2006). The focus will be on the policies of social integration and more particularly their implementation in urban and rural areas, the multiple ways the departure of Muslims from Greece created ample space for a process of "Hellenization" and the pivotal importance of refugee settlements in forging a novel Greek, social and demographic, map.

The refugees of the Balkan wars and the First World War

The Balkan wars not only changed the geography of the Balkans by forming the borders of the states, but mainly gave rise to national ideologies and nationalist movements which made it impossible for different ethnic/religious groups to coexist within the same country.[1] The possibility of a population exchange among Greece, Bulgaria and the Ottoman Empire was posited for the first time shortly after the end of the Balkan wars and before the beginning of the First World War. By that time, it had already become evident to the political leadership of all three sides that the preceding wars had broken the bonds among the various populations of the Empire, leading to violent incidents between different ethnic groups, while thousands of people had been forced to relocate either within the newly formed states or the Ottoman territory. In the summer of 1914, a joint commission of Greek and Ottoman officials was formed in Smyrna to discuss the issue of population movement between the two states for the first time. The Greek side had not yet resolved to proceed with this solution, nor were the Greek people of the Empire ready to abandon their homes and livelihoods, despite the violence that had been inflicted upon them. Then, the Ottoman Empire entered the First World War and the commission was suspended (Archive of Alexandros Pallis).

At the diplomatic level, the ensuing First World War, the Treaty of Sèvres and the Greek–Turkish war interrupted any attempts at an agreement between the two states, while also encouraging violent clashes between their populations, especially in the areas of Pontus and Asia Minor. It is worth noting that, as the Ottoman Empire had been shrinking since the mid-nineteenth century with the Crimean War and up until the Balkan wars, thousands of Muslim people had been forced to find refuge in Asia Minor and other fertile areas of the Ottoman Empire, exacerbating the conflicts between different ethnic groups and making coexistence particularly difficult. According to Stanford J. Shaw, Muslim refugees to the Ottoman Empire were called muhacir or muhajir. In 1914, the muhacir of the Balkan wars constituted 20% of the population of the Ottoman territory, equal to the percentage of Christian minorities living in the Empire at the time (Shaw 1980). These populations had multiple effects on the Ottoman Empire. Although some of them transfused the spirit of European modernization to the Ottoman society, they also contributed to the rise of religious nationalism and the Islamization of the political life of Ottomans and Young Turks. The Balkan wars muhacir, carrying the fresh trauma of their expatriation, joined the ranks of the Neo-Turks and became involved in a violent process unfolding within "a political framework which linked ethnicity with land ownership", thus adding a new dimension to the national conflict. Within this framework, an element of class resentment towards the affluence of Christians further fanned the violence against them (Liakos 2019).

As a result, part of the Christian populations of the Ottoman Empire were forced to abandon their houses and livelihoods, permanently or temporarily, because of the continuous and particularly extreme incidents of violence which were taking place mainly in the area of Pontus and Asia Minor and to seek refuge in Greece, adding to the Greek refugee populations of the Balkan wars. In order to deal with the refugee movement, the Greek state scrambled to set up the required administrative organization and to obtain the financial resources necessary. Until the beginning of the twentieth century, the funds for refugee assistance had been raised by charities. A central committee was established in Thessaloniki in 1914 to take on the care and rehabilitation of 174,000 refugees who had settled in Macedonia. It was the first organized state aid to provide assistance to Orthodox newcomers from the Ottoman Empire. In 1917, 60,000 refugees arrived in Greece from the areas of Caucasus and Pontus. In the same year, the Greek state also set up the Ministry of Relief to address the issue of refugee arrivals in a more

organized way, while a number of laws contributed in the same direction (Karamouzi 1999, Kontogiorgi 2006). The arrival of the refugees obligated the Greek government to establish the necessary structures in order to manage the new reality and, in this way, the welfare of the refugees became a state concern.

The constant influx of refugees throughout the First World War also forced the Greek government to reconsider the possibility of the voluntary relocation of populations from one country to another. In the Treaty of Neuilly, signed between the Entente powers and Bulgaria on 27 November 1919, there was a provision for "a kind of voluntary mutual exchange of populations". Greece and Bulgaria seized this opportunity by signing a separate protocol and exchanging a large part of their national, religious and linguistic minorities. More specifically, 30,000 Orthodox Greek-speaking people moved from Bulgaria to Greece, and 53,000 Orthodox-Exarchist Bulgarian-speaking people moved from Greece to Bulgaria (Aktar 2006). The majority of the refugee populations, which had been arriving in Greece since the Balkan wars, settled in 365 settlements in rural areas of Macedonia without the necessary care and assistance by the State (Archive of Alexandros Pallis). Greece was still in the middle of a war, the state administrative organization was inadequate and the financial resources very limited. The attempts to organize the refugee settlements were left unfinished and there was no central planning for their creation. It was with their own money and labour that the majority of the refugees built their new homes.

The refugees from the Asia Minor catastrophe (1922)

On 25 August 1922, the Greek army was crushed in Afyonkarahisar in western Asia Minor and retreated. The defeat marked the end of the Greek–Turkish war. Following the routing of the Greek army, the Orthodox population of many parts of Asia Minor – most of them Greek-speaking – abandoned their homes and villages for fear of retaliation by the Turkish army. Most of the civilian population and the army left for Greece from the port of Izmir. The islands of the eastern Aegean were the first stop for the majority of refugees, while at every Greek port arrived thousands of people who had been travelling for days, packed in ships with little water and often without food. In September 1922 alone, more than 40,000 refugees arrived at Piraeus Port, the largest Greek port. At the same time, refugees also arrived in Thrace from the country's northern borders.

The government of Petros Protopapadakis resigned shortly after the defeat, while in the army leadership there was a general upheaval. At the same time, King Constantine I was pressured to give up the throne. Under these conditions of political instability, the political leadership had to manage the arrival of refugees at the national level and negotiate a ceasefire at the international level. The newly appointed government of Nikolaos Triantafyllakos, in collaboration with the crown, had to immediately accommodate the 150,000 refugees already on the Aegean islands and the tens of thousands of people who had reached or were heading to the Greek ports. Since the end of August 1922, the Ministry of Relief, in cooperation with other ministries, had been working to coordinate the transportation, settlement and care of the refugees throughout the country.

The provision of free meals, the efforts to decongest the ports and transport refugees to the mainland to temporary camps, the appropriation of public and private buildings to house the most vulnerable of the refugees, as well as the organization of a nationwide fundraiser were the first public relief measures. The seizure of houses and the coexistence with refugees was the biggest and most immediate change in the daily lives of the natives (Kyramargiou 2019).

Despite the ministry's efforts to swiftly transfer the refugees from outdoor camps to sheltered or official temporary accommodation, the camps remained overcrowded due to the constant influx of refugees. On 30 September 1922, the minister of relief, Apostolos Doxiadis, "was granted dictatorial power towards the accommodation of refugees within eight days". It had now become clear that the Greek administration was in a state of emergency which could only be resolved through urgent measures. What was originally a temporary decision was turned into law at the end of November, giving the minister of relief the opportunity to complete the effort he had begun.

In every Greek port, in the centres of the cities and in neighbouring settlements, dozens of refugee camps were erected either by state and municipal agencies, providing barely decent living conditions, or by the refugees themselves. These camps were particularly flimsy and shoddy, as indicated by the description of Henry Morgenthau, who served as president of the Refugee Rehabilitation Committee:

> At the Piraeus, the port of Athens, eleven miles away, the beach was lined with the tatterdemalion encampment of other thousands of refugees. Misery is always picturesque, the one sorry virtue of human sorrow. Shoes made of pieces of discarded automobile tires became almost the standard footwear of the refugees. Clothing made of flour sacks was a fashion born in of necessity, and was hard-pressed for first place by garments improvised out of burlap or pieced together from mere rags. The simplest implements were hard to come by. Tin cans served for cooking utensils. Rusty nails were substituted for pins, and a real needle was as valuable a curiosity as it is to an Esquimau.
>
> *(Morgenthau 1929, 51)*

At the same time, the government had sought the assistance of the International Red Cross, international charity groups and European governments. This assistance included not only food, blankets and meals, but also the creation and maintenance of makeshift camps and hospitals, and began at the end of October 1922 (Diplomatic and Historical Archives of the Hellenic Ministry of Foreign Affairs). As a result, the aid during those first months was entirely based on internal resources, public and private, which were decidedly inadequate to cover the total needs of the more than 500,000 refugees who arrived in Greece in 1922. The arriving refugees had been highly mobile since the first days of their arrival. They moved either individually or in groups, sometimes of their own accord, other times by state order, depending on the potential for settlement and work. This first period was particularly fluid and rife with practical problems that had to be resolved immediately through state aid and private charity. The majority of refugees had not been able to rescue their property and move it to Greece, and even those who were, in theory, able to cover their living expenses and secure decent accommodation, were unable to follow individual accommodation strategies, due to the lack of available options and alternatives.

The signing of the Lausanne Treaty in January 1923, sealed not only the end of the Greek–Turkish war, but essentially of a whole decade of military conflicts and population movements, imposing for the first time a compulsory population exchange based on religion. For the refugee populations, the treaty signified the permanence of the new reality to which they had to adjust, while for the Greek government, it underlined the urgent need for permanent solutions towards the housing and professional rehabilitation of refugees. It is important to note that the Greek–Turkish population exchange was the first compulsory population

exchange between two countries which was ratified through an international treaty. As Aslı Igsiz points out,

> population transfers and resettlement policies had occurred before, but the 1923 exchange was the first of its kind in that it has set an international legal precedent whereby forced migration was legitimised as a solution for a greater good: peace. Such legitimisation implies that the segregation of different groups will restore a peaceful order.
>
> (Igliz 2018, 4)

On the other hand, the social realities of the refugee arrival posed a novel threat to the internal order of the defeated Greek state. The anxiety that if left alone the destitute newcomers would pose a threat to the unstable Greek political and social realities is often repeated in the rhetoric and writings of those involved in the policies of rehabilitation. In the words of Charles P. Howland, chair of the Greek Refugee Settlement Commission, "relief of despair on such scale is as much a political necessity as a humane responsibility" (League of Nations 1926). The politics of "relief" entailed two major, and intertwined, goals: providing housing and work to the hundreds of thousands that had arrived in the modern Greek state.

Urban settlements

Housing was the biggest and most immediate of the problems that the state needed to resolve after September 1922, while after the signing of the Lausanne Treaty it became clear that any solutions suggested would have to aim towards the permanent accommodation of both the refugees already in Greece and the ones expected to arrive imminently due to the population exchange. The refugees had to be allocated throughout Greece, as well as obtain housing and work. Basically, the refugees could pursue one of the following solutions in their attempt to solve the housing issue: 1) settlement in the buildings constructed by the Refugee Care Fund and the Ministry of Relief, 2) long-term hospitality in requisitioned houses, 3) self-accommodation with state intervention and 4) self-accommodation without state intervention. This last category included, on the one hand, the wealthiest of the refugees, who settled at their own expense in the centres of Greek cities, and on the other the poorest, who fled to deserted or uninhabited areas, which the government gradually ordered to be expropriated and requisitioned. "There were those who could not, and those who did not want to settle in refugee settlements and requisitioned houses" (Gizeli 1984). By 1927, in the cities and villages of Macedonia and in the greater Athens and Piraeus region, almost 35,000 refugee families had built houses – standard or nonstandard – at their own expense (League of Nations 1927).

On 3 November 1922, the Refugee Care Fund was established by the Greek state. This organization reflected the need for a genuine solution to the issue of refugee settlement at a central political level and aimed to develop a comprehensive rehabilitation plan. According to its foundational law, the Fund, which was directed by a ten-member council, operated under the Ministry of Relief and was intended to manage and dispense inheritances, donations and bequests collected for the care and accommodation of refugees. (Government Gazette 227, 9.11.1922). The decision to set up the Fund and the attempt to resolve the issue of refugee settlement through solutions more permanent than expropriation, was linked to the political assumption that the refugees would remain in Greece and not return to Asia Minor. The subsequent Lausanne Treaty confirmed the permanence of the situation. The Refugee Care Fund operated from November 1922 to May 1925 and constructed 6,500 buildings, most of

which – almost 4,500 – were located in Athens and Piraeus, on land owned by the state or newly requisitioned (Gizeli 1984).

In June 1923, the Law "On the granting of public property and the forced requisition of private properties towards the urban settlement of refugees" was passed and allowed the forced requisition of public and private land outside the city plan for the settlement of refugees (Government Gazette 153, 9.6.1923). This law enabled the Refugee Care Fund to secure the space for the creation of its settlements. At the same time, it allowed the Ministry of Relief to requisition land already occupied by refugees, as well as land adjacent to existing settlements, so that refugees could retain their makeshift homes and the state could then expand existing refugee settlements and establish new ones. After the dissolution of the Fund and for the following five years, the Greek Refugee Settlement Commission undertook the task of rehabilitation.

The Greek Refugee Settlement Commission was an organization established with the Geneva Protocol (29.9.1923) under the auspices of the League of Nations and with the participation of the Greek state. The Committee was governed by a four-member council and had at its disposal all exchanged Muslim property, monastic and public lands, the land that was requisitioned through the act of Agricultural Reform of 1924, as well as the two refugee loans received by the Greek government in 1924 and 1928.[2] In addition, the government granted the Committee parcels of land in and around cities to build urban settlements and transferred administrative and technical personnel from the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Relief to staff its services.

In the cities, the Committee implemented a multistage housing programme, while in the countryside, it handled the housing and the occupational rehabilitation of refugees. More specifically, the Committee undertook the completion of the residences which the Fund had begun constructing, while at the same time implementing a comprehensive programme of urban rehabilitation in four areas of Athens and Piraeus (Nea Ionia, Kaisariani, Vrion and Kokkinia) and managing a number of refugee buildings constructed by the Ministry of Relief. In these four settlements, the Committee ensured the creation of water and sanitation networks, the opening of roads and the construction of public spaces and buildings (where stipulated). The refugee families who were rehabilitated in the Committee's residences purchased their homes either in instalments of promissory notes, or in bonds received in exchange for their property according to the terms of the Lausanne Treaty.

For the total cost of the rehabilitation effort, the Greek government received a series of refugee loans from the League of Nations, which were managed directly by the GRSC in an effort to avoid the time-consuming Greek bureaucracy and expedite its work. The rationale behind the decision to charge refugees for housing was based on the fact that the rehabilitation effort would continue long after the loans had run out to accommodate as many refugees as possible. The result was, of course, that a large number of refugees were excluded from rehabilitation projects, as they could not afford the corresponding sum. These refugees resorted to self-housing on the outskirts of the cities, expanding the urban boundaries and forming communities composed by makeshift shacks and hovels.

The Committee allocated 40 industrial plots to the refugee settlements of Athens and Piraeus, where mainly carpet and cotton factories were established, employing young girls and older women from Asia Minor and Pontus. The GRSC's decision to refrain from any essential involvement in the issue of urban employment is reflected in its tri-monthly reports, even as it recognized its necessity since almost half the refugees who had arrived in Greece resided in cities and towns (Vogiatzoglou 199, Kritikos 2000). In spite of the lack of support by the GRSC, industry and manufacturing thrived in the years following the refugee arrivals, since a large part of the refugee business elite had managed to transfer their funds to Greece in time

and were able, using their connections as well as the support of the National Bank in the form of loans, to establish industrial and manufacturing units, usually in the vicinity of refugee settlements in order to take advantage of the labour supplied by refugees, the majority of whom were converted to industrial workers despite not having previous work experience.

Rural settlements

At the same time, the Greek Refugee Settlement Commission attempted the implementation of a comprehensive programme for the housing and professional rehabilitation of refugees in agricultural areas, mainly in northern Greece and especially in Macedonia and Thrace, where until then the Muslim and Slavic-speaking populations were the demographic majority. After ten years of military conflict in the wider area of northern Greece and the forced movement of the Muslim and Slavic-speaking populations as a result of the wars and their aftermath, the areas of Macedonia and Thrace had lost a large proportion of their population, farming had ceased and agricultural production had collapsed, affecting the economic life of the country as a whole. Simultaneously, the mass settlement of Greek-speaking Christians from Turkey in the area would change the ethnic/religious composition of the population, transform the Greek Orthodox element from a minority to a majority and, thus, prevent any territorial disputes by neighbouring countries.

The programme for agricultural rehabilitation included both housing and professional rehabilitation schemes and stipulated the allocation to refugees of residences, plots and animals, as well as tools, seeds, fertilizers and so on. The refugees settled either in new settlements freshly established by the GRSC, or in settlements and residences abandoned by the Muslim and Slavic-speaking populations of Macedonia. According to the GRSC, by the time the Committee was terminated, 1,381 new settlements had been established in Macedonia and 236 in Thrace, comprising 50,396 residences in total and housing 552,000 refugees (GRSC 1928). These residences usually consisted of two main rooms, a stable, and ancillary spaces. The farmhouses were built either by the Committee or by the refugees themselves with materials supplied by the Committee. At the same time, the GRSC, in collaboration with the Joint Commission for the Exchange of Population and the Ministry of Agriculture, undertook the distribution of Muslim houses in addition to the registration and distribution of land property. In this case as well, the refugees had to purchase the property in numerous, small instalments at a price similar to the ones stipulated by the urban rehabilitation schemes (Kontogiorgi 2006, Salvanou 2018).

For the refugees who arrived in Greece right after the military defeat, the whole process was more hurried and disorganized, not only due to the adverse conditions they were already living in, but also because of efforts to relocate them according to origin or ancestry. In contrast, in the case of the refugees who arrived after the exchange, the process was relatively better organized, with whole villages moving to Greece in coordinated fashion and settling in areas and settlements that had already been designed and were subsequently constructed by the refugees themselves, or that had been abandoned by the exchanged Muslim populations. During these first years, a large number of refugees moved to several areas regardless of their original place of settlement, either in an effort to reunite with their extended families and neighbours, or in search for better living conditions and professional opportunities.

When Greece became Greek

The more than one million refugees who arrived in Greece between 1922 and 1924 were not a socially or economically homogeneous population, nor had they been homogeneous (culturally

and socially) in their places of origin. Even that large part of the refugees who resorted to the rehabilitation and state welfare programmes did not constitute a homogeneous social group, but was instead a mosaic of diverse people with different social backgrounds and professional skills, who had nonetheless all lived through the experience of forced movement and adjustment to a new, different reality. The urban and agricultural rehabilitation programmes described earlier were the two major policies implemented by the government and carried out mainly by the Refugee Rehabilitation Committee. However, beyond the logistical aspects of the rehabilitation process, there was also the issue of the refugees adjusting to the new reality and coexisting with the country's native populations. Both these processes were lengthy and complex, affecting refugees and natives alike.

In Greek historiography, it is often stressed that the choice by the GRSC and the government to grant arable land to the refugees who settled in the countryside, mainly in Macedonia and Thrace, was made in an effort to establish a class of small landowners in order to prevent revolutionary movements. The land the state granted to refugees from Turkey through the GRSC's rehabilitation programme came from properties abandoned by populations who fled or were exchanged, the expropriation of large estates and church property that remained uncultivated, as well as from the agricultural reform which had begun in 1917 and was concluded in 1923 (Liakos 2019). The claims by the natives on agricultural land which had hitherto belonged to Muslim populations and was granted to refugees was the main cause of the rivalry between natives and refugees, especially in mixed settlements where they had to coexist (Alvanos 2019).

One of the most serious and bloodiest clashes between natives and refugees took place in November 1924, in the county of Phyllis in the Prefecture of Serres. More specifically, native residents of the village Kioup-Kioi (now called Proti) attempted to cultivate agrarian land that had been expropriated by the General Administration of Macedonia for the agricultural rehabilitation of refugees from Turkey in the village of Tserepliani (now called Iliokomi). After they were chased away by the refugees, the villagers of Kioup-Kioi returned with reinforcements and attacked the refugees. The scuffle quickly escalated and several of those involved were injured. Although the refugees retreated and fled to the neighbouring village of Rotholivos, the natives destroyed part of the abandoned refugee settlement, vandalizing and burning residences. Both Kioup-Kioi and Tserepliani were mixed population villages, especially Tserepliani, where 495 out of the 972 residents were refugees (Mavrogordatos 2017). This incident is indicative of the tensions which arose between the natives and the refugees who received land distributed by the state.

In the cities, a large proportion of the refugees found employment in industry and manufacturing in low-skilled positions as they lacked any relevant work experience. The refugees offered cheap and unskilled labour that led to rifts with native workers, while the Greek economy experienced moderate development in the immediate aftermath of the 1922 military defeat. Gradually, the refugee labour fuelled the impetus of local industries that had to accommodate the rapid expansion of the internal market, leading to a brief period of capitalist expansion in the late 1920s and early 1930s. At the same time, the shared labour and social experiences forged a new equilibrium between refugee and native workers, leading to the growth of industrial-based labour unions. In essence, proletarian workers, regardless of their origins, had much more in common due to their life and work conditions, which led to a faster normalization of their relations in cities, especially in the worker–refugee settlements. (Kyramargiou 2019)

The 1920s were a particularly challenging period of transition for Greek society as it attempted to strike new balances and develop new bonds among its populations which were

now almost entirely Greek-speaking and Orthodox Christian. To this purpose, an older central political decision to Hellenize the toponymic map was put into effect. The population movements which took place from 1912 until 1924 affected the residential map of the whole country, especially in northern Greece: a series of settlements ceased to exist, others acquired new residents, while new settlements were established to house exclusively refugee populations. These changes now had to be reflected in the toponymic map of the country. The numbers testify to the extent of the phenomenon: in the three years between 1926 and 1928, 2,479 toponym changes were implemented, most of them in Macedonia. To illustrate just how high this number is, it is worth noting that between 1913 and 1961, 4,075 toponym changes occurred in the entire country, more than half of which were in the period between 1926 and 1928 (*Statistical Annals of Greece 1930*). The hurried nature of the name changes can be also seen in the usual practice of translating "foreign-like toponyms" or in the corruption of existing names towards a more Greek-like version.[3] The following examples are indicative of how toponyms were renamed in inland Macedonia:

Gerakartsi → Gerakareio	Mantalevo → Mandalon
G(k)oumentza → Goumenitsa	Gioupsevon → Gypsochorion
Liparinovo → Liparon	Mantar → Manitari

The epicentre of this activity was the region of Greek Macedonia where Muslim populations had been removed and had been replaced with a large number of Christian refugees. Between 1926 and 1928, 201 toponymic changes were recorded in the Prefecture of Drama, 118 in the Prefecture of Thessaloniki, and 213 in the Prefecture of Kilkis (IHR/NHRF Database. http://pandektis.ekt.gr/pandektis/handle/10442/4968). The populations who were living in settlements entirely made up of refugees advocated for these toponymic changes and welcomed them with satisfaction and relief, since the new, euphonic Greek toponyms in many cases transplanted their past settlements on these new lands (Nea Trapezounta, Nea Santa, Nea Zichni, Assiros) (Kyramargiou, 2015).

Conclusion

In 1924, with the completion of the process for the exchange of populations, a "violent modernization" which had begun in 1912 reached its final conclusion for Greece and Turkey. The Balkan wars, the First World War and the Greek-Turkish war that followed resulted in the destruction of the Muslim communities in the Balkans and the Christian communities in Anatolia. The population exchange finalized the transfer from the West to the East of the nation-state model; a model based on the widest possible homogeneity among citizens. Everything that happened between the two countries from 1912 until 1924 was a consequence of the Western, not the Eastern, Question (Toynbee 1922, Liakos 2019).

By 1924, the Ottoman Empire had given way to Turkey, and the Great Idea of a Greece that would sprawl over two continents and five seas had forever been abandoned in the most painful way. The idea of a demographically and religiously homogeneous nation state had definitively prevailed and the borders and populations of the two countries had been finalized. It was the year when the two countries turned over a new leaf in their modern history, attempting to leave their military conflicts in the past. In Greece, which had ended up on the winning side of the Balkan wars, but had lost the subsequent Greek–Turkish war, the efforts towards the rehabilitation and assimilation of refugees proved particularly complex and time-consuming. Eventually,

it was a new war, the Second World War, which would bring refugees and natives together, first in the barracks and then in the resistance, ushering in a new era in Greek history.

Notes

1 At the beginning of the twentieth century, Greek populations from Eastern Romania began to arrive in Greece. It was the first time that the Greek state had to take care of the housing and professional rehabilitation of populations that were not related to the Struggle for Independence but rather to more general political developments and the emergence of nationalisms in the Balkan Peninsula. A large part of this population settled in Thessaly despite experiencing major problems due to the existence of swamps in the area, which made the terrain completely inappropriate for habitation and the living conditions extremely difficult (Karamouzi 1999).

2 The two major refugee loans from the League of Nations had a particularly high interest rate (7%); as a result, by 1931, repayment costs and the costs of refugee rehabilitation in general constituted 40% of the yearly budget (Tounta-Fergadi 1986).

3 Spyros Asdrachas' remark on this phenomenon is of particular interest. Referring to the paraphrasing or translation of foreign toponyms in Greek, he points out that these toponyms take on new meanings and are misinterpreted: "misinterpretations and mistaken etymologies that derive from a standard intellectual demand, the meaning of names, while the historicity of names is an absent witness" (Asdrachas 1995, 139–140).

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6

THE MAKING OF A NATIONAL CITY

From Mezre to Elazığ

Ali Sipahi

Introduction

Modern nation-states have aspired to create homogeneous national spaces by planning alike cities and towns decorated with material symbols of nationalist ideology. Turkey was not an exception. Dozens of Anatolian cities, the new capital Ankara being in the first place, were replanned by the new regime in the 1930s, an ambitious period for infrastructural investments, comprehensive plans and public works projects. However, from the locals' point of view, such periods are exceptional, temporary and rarely as transformative as they seem at first sight. Towns have a life also when they are not on the agenda of the central governments. If we highlight only flashy events like large military operations or top-down projects, even if it is for critical purposes, we may end up reproducing the nationalist state's narrative. In this regard, Elazığ is an ideal case to study because it seems like a quintessential "national town." Yet, this chapter shows that, in most of its history, this town was carved out by local people in the face of utter indifference by the central state. It is a story of reluctance, negligence and foot dragging, rather than that of interventions, constructions and inventions. The first part of the chapter tells the story of the making of Elaziz in the nineteenth century as an elite enclave for Armenian and Turkish notables, whereas the second part explains the nationalization process in the town in the twentieth century and the local take on the government intervention.

El-aziz: emergence of a modern imperial town

Mezre: a hamlet of landlords

In the imperial world, places used to rise and fall because the official positions travelled to where the person in charge resided, as opposed to nation-states, where people move to fill fixed positions. At the end of the eighteenth century, for Diyarbekir Province, the rising place was Keban simply because the directors of the Imperial Mines lived here. They had exceptional privileges that put them at a more powerful rank even than the nominal governors in Harput and Diyarbekir. In the beginning of the nineteenth century, however, Keban lost its privileged position to a new place called Mezre, the origin town of Elazığ.[1]