

From Tragedy to Achievement: The Case of the Refugees of the Asia Minor Disaster in the Modern History of Greece. Refugees' Access to Education

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Abstract: *The Asia Minor catastrophe of 1922 changed world history. The mass displacement of Greek Orthodox and Muslim populations troubled the world community. The fate of these populations was tested, forcing the Great Powers of the time, who bore significant responsibility for this disaster, to hasten the process of concluding an agreement between Greece and Turkey: the well-known Treaty of Lausanne. Hastily signed on January 30, 1923, it included an agreement on the exchange of Greek and Turkish populations as an integral part of the Treaty of Lausanne, signed six months later. This massive uprooting dramatically changed the geographical, population, and social map of Greece and marked the violent exclusion of Greek cultural elements and spirit from historical areas of the ancient Greek world. The refugees faced enormous problems in Greece, such as survival, housing, finding work, and educating their children. Political leadership was divided, and education was shaken.*

Keywords: Education, Refugees, 1922

INTRODUCTION

The swan song of the Great Idea of Greece and redemptionism has a name: the Asia Minor disaster. The violent uprooting of the Greek element from areas with a history of more than three millennia was a major event in Greek and world history. The Asia Minor disaster left Greece militarily defeated, politically divided, financially ruined after a decade of continuous wars from the Balkan Wars (Pentzopoulos, 2002), to the Asia Minor campaign, diplomatically isolated in the international environment, unprotected by the European powers, without allies, or more specifically, with enemies among its former allies. Neighboring countries like Italy, Albania, and Bulgaria claimed Greek territories. Yugoslavia and Romania seized the opportunity to present various absurd demands, while the rise of Turkish

nationalism, allied with Greece's former Allies (Entente) who betrayed Greece for economic reasons (Bierstadt, 1997), psychologically impacted the country. Adding to this was the arrival of more than one million two hundred thousand refugees from Asia Minor, a number that exceeded 25% of the existing Greek population. The burden of refugee rehabilitation, under the auspices of the League of Nations through the Rehabilitation Committee, prioritized agricultural and later urban rehabilitation. Education took second place to the significant survival problems faced by refugees. The lack of education shot up the illiteracy rate in Greece, a problem that grew over time. There was a need for immediate reforms, especially in the field of education.

Purpose of the Task

The purpose of the research is to determine the conditions faced by the refugees during the Asia Minor disaster upon their arrival in Greece. The modern history of Greece presents the problems faced by the refugees regarding their rural and urban rehabilitation, with the main concern being finding housing and work. However, there is insufficient information about the education sector and the educational changes implemented at that time by each political leadership. This study seeks to investigate the staffing of educational institutions, the ratio of native and refugee students in classes, the coexistence of both native and refugee students in the educational process, and their educational level through historical sources and the testimonies of the refugees.

Clarification of Terms

Education

Education is the transmission of knowledge, skills, and character traits. It is the attempt to achieve specific objectives through which the personality of the trainee is shaped and his performance in the field of training and education is improved.

Refugees

A refugee is a person who has been forced to leave his or her country of origin or provenance against his or her will and cannot return due to adverse conditions and fear for survival.

3.3. 1922

1922 is a year of suffering for Hellenism due to the Asia Minor disaster, the massive movement of refugee populations, and the pain caused in the hearts of Greeks by the loss of Greek regions with thousands of years of Greek culture.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology was determined based on the nature and type of our research material and the ultimate research objectives. It was necessary to follow the historical pedagogical method, with additional source analysis. In the field of education, the content of historical research is broad, covering various fields such as: a) the history of education, which studies educational systems, institutions, organization, and administration of educational units;

b) the study of the levels of education, classes, etc.; c) individual educational issues and problems at different times, such as educational programs, subjects taught, teaching methodology, pedagogical tools, educational evaluation, teaching manuals, teaching staff, discipline or punishment as pedagogical tools, etc.; d) critiques of educational systems, educational planning; e) educational policy at different times, and so on. (Borg & Gall, 1989).

This historical research belongs to qualitative research and specifically deals with the systematic investigation and study of issues and problems of the past concerning the Asia Minor disaster of 1922, which marked the end of the Great Idea and the shrinking of the Greek element. It explores clearly the problems that the refugees of Asia Minor faced upon their arrival in Greece, especially in the field of education, in conjunction with their primary concern of survival. Through archival primary texts, it studies the educational institutions of the time and how they treated the refugees, as well as how the refugees themselves felt in this new situation. It investigates related problems that arose, the subjects taught the teaching methodology, the pedagogical tools, the textbooks, and the teaching staff.

According to D. Mavroskoufis' definition, primary or direct sources "are those that come from a specific period of the past, contemporary with the one the historian is studying," and secondary or indirect sources "are the later interpretations" (Mavroskoufis, 2005). This research is characterized as difficult to approach, theoretically and practically, because it is based on data or materials for the construction of knowledge (Verdi, 2015), which may not be complete, on causal factors that have now been eliminated, and on conditions that have now been altered or lost. In this respect, the scientific view is valid that "the more remote the events that have occurred and are being analyzed, the greater the difficulties" (Athanasiou, 2003). It is oriented towards the search and study of this subject and its placement in its context. It explores answers, which it may or may not discover. Characteristically, Jaspers stressed, "whereas ancient science appeared as something perennial for which the concept of progress was not fundamental, modern science is directed towards infinity." Often modern science opens up new questions and is seen as an endless process (Jaspers, 1950).

The main method used is historical analysis, which "helps mainly in establishing facts, in the external and internal critique of the available evidence, and in establishing sequences" (Mialaret, 1999). This method allows us to approach the past: to know the events that took place in different periods, the causes of these events, their results, the protagonists, the institutions that dominated different sectors, the prevailing attitudes, etc (Athanasiou, 2003). According to Louis Cohen and Lawrence Manion, historical research is defined as "the systematic and objective identification, evaluation, and synthesis of evidence in order to establish facts and draw conclusions about past events. It is an act of reconstruction undertaken in a spirit of critical inquiry, which aims to achieve a faithful representation of a past era" (Cohen & Manion, 1977). It helps the teacher "to clarify the concepts used, to study the internal and external coherence of educational activities, to verify the correspondence of educational activity with clearly defined objectives" (Topolski, 1983). It has great social utility because it allows science to better understand the past, interpret the present, and predict the future based on past findings (Nova – Kaltsouni, 2006). This work is based on primary sources, which are

the soul of historical research, characterized by originality and a direct material connection with the reconstructed events and participants, as well as secondary sources, used as a complement to them (Cohen & Manion, 1977).

The benefits of historical research, as classified by Hill and Kerber, are as follows: a) It provides the opportunity to search for past solutions to contemporary problems. b) It highlights present and future trends. c) It emphasizes the relative importance and effects of cultural interactions. d) It allows for the re-evaluation or re-examination of past theories and generalizations (Hill & Kerber, 1967). This research studies and demonstrates issues and problems of the past, concerning the Asia Minor catastrophe and the mass exodus that forcibly displaced populations from Greek lands with a history of thousands of years. It attempts to understand in depth the human experience while extensively studying the symbolic interactions of the society of the period under consideration (Verdi, 2015). Past solutions to issues of education and training of refugees during the period of 1922 are sought and combined with contemporary issues that arose during this period.

In the field of education and training, this historical research is necessary and useful (Cohen & Manion, 1977), as it highlights the importance and results of historical interactions from an educational perspective. At the same time, it contributes to a fuller understanding of the triptych of politics, education, and society (Nova – Kaltsouni, 2006). Past theories and generalizations are re-evaluated and re-examined, thus providing the basis for new ways of thinking and reconstructing data that is useful for the present and the future. Any historical research can lead to the realization of the following objectives (Bitsaki, 2005).

1. Knowledge of the past in terms of lawsuit.
2. Drawing conclusions useful and valuable for the present and future.
3. Discovering the history of an educational institution, idea, etc.
4. Utilizing the thoughts and ideas of great thinkers of the past in the present (Melanitou, 1957).

Melanitis argues that “anyone who deals with the issues of education of any era and any people will give a false picture of them if he does not take into account the tendencies, needs, purposes, and spiritual, economic, and technical development of the people during the period under consideration. Education is a social institution and consequently one of the many manifestations of a people of a certain period.” (Melanitou, 1957).

The research does not focus on simply revealing or describing something but on creating a state of mind, shaping sensitivity to refugee issues, and education in combination with pedagogical science. Education aims to forge a national consciousness.

The Arrival of Refugees in Greece During the Asia Minor Disaster

August 27, 1922, is a day of suffering for Hellenism, when the Turkish army of Kemal invaded Smyrna after the retreat of the Greek army on the Asia Minor front. Four days later, the burning of historical Smyrna began. The Greek and Armenian quarters were burned to the ground. The

targeted fire did not reach either the Jewish or the Turkish quarter, while many consulates of European countries remained intact. The burning of Smyrna caused the mass movement of the Greek residents from the western coast and the northwestern side of the region, from Panormos Kyzikou and Kios. Those who managed to escape the persecution boarded the anchored ships and left for Greece. Many Greeks from Asia Minor were slaughtered (Horton, 1992). Thousands of Greeks aged 18 to 45 were sent to the "Working Battalions" in the interior of Asia Minor, where they died trapped due to the miserable conditions. The historical Hellenism of Asia Minor, with a history of more than three thousand years, was completely uprooted (Bierstadt, 1997). The drama of the refugees had just begun. Thousands of Greek refugees from Asia Minor disappeared before reaching Greece (Horton, 1992). In the columns of the newspapers of that time, announcements about missing refugees were constantly published (Newspaper Empros, 1922).

The refugee settlement began largely in Macedonia (Kontogiorgi, 2006), and Western Thrace, followed by the regions of Thessaly, Epirus, Evia, Attica, and Crete. The settlement of the refugees took place in the rest of the regions of Greek territory in a smaller percentage. More than half of the refugee population settled in the three big cities: Athens, Piraeus, and Thessaloniki (Hirschon, 1998). It is characteristic that from the names of the historical regions of Asia Minor, that were inhabited by Greeks, the refugees upon their arrival in Greece, in order to keep alive the memory of their lost homeland, named the refugee settlements created in Greece after the name of their lost homeland, adding the adjective "New" in front of the city name. This is how the neighborhoods of New Chalcedon, New Philadelphia, New Ionia, New Smyrna, and others were created.

The areas of Peristeri, Kaisariani, Byron, Ymittos, and other smaller ones were also created by the refugees. The massive settlement of new populations contributed to a significant change in the social geography of Athens (Pentzopoulou-Vallala, 2001). In this chaos, there were also phenomena of corruption. Public employees and even politicians took advantage of the refugees' situation for their own benefit (Stampoulos, unpublished manuscript diary). Women also fell victim to this exploitation, who in most cases were the only survivors of the Turkish persecution. Due to the urgent humanitarian situation, the famous "Lausanne Convention" was signed on January 30, 1923, in Lausanne, Switzerland, which related to the exchange of Greek and Turkish populations between the government of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey and the Greek government. The Convention contained 19 articles and formed an integral part of the subsequent Treaty of Lausanne, which was signed six months later, on July 24, 1923. The new Treaty effectively abolished the "Treaty of Sèvres" favorable to Greece and redefined the Greek-Turkish borders, destroying all Greek plans for the liberation of the unredeemed Greek territories of the former Ottoman Empire.

The Regime that Prevailed in Education from 1917 to 1932

From the Balkan wars to the disaster in Asia Minor, education faced upheavals. Educational orientation was lost amid political conflicts and frequent changes of governments (Pentzopoulos, 2002). A major problem that plagued the educational community was the

language issue between the spoken and the "purifying" language (with archaisms), an issue which formed the main line of educational policy until the 1920s.

In 1917, the Educational Group, under the persuasion of the leadership of the Liberal government of Eleftherios Venizelos, met to make reforms in education. The establishment of the spoken language in primary school, by a legislative decree (Newspaper of the Government, 1917), during this period, can be characterized as an achievement in the field of education. The Venizelos Government by the law 827/1917 established the use of reading books in the four lower grades of primary school, which were required to be written in the spoken language, without archaic elements.

In 1918 (Newspaper of the Government, 1917), the government amended this law. According to this amendment, the teaching of the "purifying" language was allowed in the fifth and sixth grades, along with the spoken language. Two of the most important reading books published in the spoken language at the time were "Alphabet with the Sun" (Dimaras, 2012) and "The High Mountains" (Papantoniou, 2011). The latter book was reused in 1974-1975, due to its recognized quality.

The files of the Text Book Committee highlighted the dominant trend in language in education, which was the desire to abandon archaism and pretentious speech in textbooks. In fact, illustrations were promoted in the textbooks as a means of attracting the student's interest. Specifically, the report stated that "... the textbook the more attractive it is to the student and stimulates his interest, the better it achieves its various purposes" (Assonites, 2002). Unfortunately, this important step in the reform effort in the field of education was not extended to other educational levels.

The change in thinking in primary education did not affect secondary education, which remained unchanged and attached to classicism. Secondary education was tasked with a general type of education, which would no longer meet the needs of real life at the time. Higher education gradually began to be affected by the new wave of changes, adopting a technical-practical educational orientation in the areas of teaching against traditional theoretical studies. The renaming of the "School of Industrial Arts" to "National Metsovian Polytechnic University of Athens" (Newspaper of the Government, 1914), which aimed to train scientists in higher education for public and private needs (Newspaper of the Government, 1917), proves the need to change the educational orientation based on the real needs of the country at that time (Biris, 1957).

Primary and secondary education, until the elections of 1920, followed a centralized character under the auspices of the Ministry of Education. An exception was higher education, which remained independent. The result of the election was the defeat of the Venizelos government and the rise of the United Opposition party to power. This defeat had a direct impact on education. The 1917 reform was repealed and Venizelos' members - friends of the Educational Group were immediately purged by the Ministry of Education.

In 1922, the University undertook the retraining of teachers, while the Faculty of Philosophy gradually began to see positively the introduction of new progressive trends in education. The teaching staff was asked to face new challenges, especially with the mass arrival of refugees from 1922. In this climate, two teacher's federations were founded, the Federation of Greek Teachers in 1922 and the Federation of Secondary Education Officials in 1924. In the years that followed, the attention of every political government was focused on the rehabilitation of refugees.

Nevertheless, there were some important achievements in education, such as the establishment of the University of Thessaloniki during the prime ministership of Alexandros Papanastasiou (March-July 1924) and the establishment of the Academy of Athens during the prime ministership of officer Theodoros Pangalos (Pangalos Archive, 1974). The economic government of Alexandros Zaimis, which lasted about a year and a half from December 4, 1926, to June 27, 1928, assigned a special committee to the evaluation of teaching and the language issue. This committee, having as members Megareas, Sakellaropoulos, Skias, Exarchopoulos, and Michalopoulos, negatively evaluated the textbooks, saying that they should be immediately removed from the schools and that all textbooks created under current laws and used today as readings of lies and malice must be burned (Dimaras, 1998). With such a policy, education was doomed to regression and stagnation.

The particular government appointed Alexandros Papanastasiou as Minister of Agriculture. He founded the School of Forestry and Agriculture at the University of Thessaloniki as well as agricultural schools all over Greece. Since October 7, 1927, he had proposed to the parliament a legislative decree "On elementary agricultural education," for the elimination of illiteracy. This proposal was implemented through the law 4397/1929, "On Elementary Education," by Konstantinos Godikas as Minister of Education. Another important event of the time is the establishment of the Gymnastics Academy (Newspaper of the Government, 1932) in 1932 as a Higher Education Institution under the supervision of the Ministry of Education.

The Education of the Refugees of the Asia Minor Catastrophe

Various philanthropic organizations, including international bodies like the League of Nations and the American Red Cross, provided support for the education of refugee children through funding, supplies, and establishing schools. Local Greek communities and diaspora organizations also played a significant role in supporting the education of refugee children, providing financial assistance, and creating educational programs.

Due to the lack of sources on the subject, the oral testimonies of the refugees are a useful historical source (Giannakopoulos, 1992) because they activate the memory of the past (Portelli, 2003). Oral testimonies must be critically analyzed (Karakatsani, 2012) to illuminate important historical gaps. The disaster in Asia Minor caused the refugees a lasting traumatic experience (Salvanou, 2018), etched in their memory, so strongly that it marked the rest of their lives. However, it must be clarified that each refugee experienced the trauma of being a refugee differently, as they were different human personalities.

The lack of historical evidence on the education of refugees from the Asia Minor disaster indicates that the state prioritized matters of care, housing, nutrition, and employment (Andriotis, 2003), which would contribute to their immediate rehabilitation. The priority of the Asia Minor refugees was their survival, so the education of their children came second. Due to a lack of space, all the schools of Piraeus and many schools in Athens were ordered to accommodate the refugees (Newspaper Empros, 1922). However, this demand disrupted education in these schools, even for the native students. A similar situation occurred in Thessaloniki, due to the large number of refugees arriving. Even casinos temporarily offered their space to wealthy refugees for the right price (Newspaper Empros, 1922).

The mass arrival of refugees after 1922 was a driving force for finding solutions and making upgrades in various sectors, including education. At that time, illiteracy was high. For national reasons, it was necessary to teach the Greek language as a foreign language to assimilate the Greek refugees who spoke Turkish and to achieve population homogeneity. Before the Asia Minor disaster, one in four people in Greece was a foreigner. Afterward, the homogeneity rate reached 93.83%.

The shock caused by the mass arrival of refugees disrupted the social life of the country, necessitating immediate measures of rehabilitation. A first attempt was made in 1922 when the law "On the establishment of National Orphanages and Boarding Schools for poor students" was passed to care for and educate orphans and poor students (Newspaper of the Government, 1922). Educational fees for certified foreign language students were abolished (Newspaper of the Government, 1926), and part of these fees was given to the refugees as aid (Newspaper of the Government, 1926). Agricultural Boarding Homes and Orphanages were also established (Newspaper of the Government, 1926). A legislative decree provided for imprisonment and fines for parents who didn't ensure their children's compulsory education (Newspaper of the Government, 1926), a measure that would help eliminate illiteracy. Not all refugee children had access to education. Many schools were far from their homes, and those who wanted to go to school had to move under adverse conditions, passing through inaccessible areas.

A very important organization of the time was the Care Committee of the American College Institute of Smyrna (Collective work, 2004). This commission, after the burning of Smyrna, was active in the rehabilitation of refugees with many projects. Among them, the Committee assisted in the creation of school units in Athens and Piraeus for 600 students, placing 11 refugee teachers as teaching staff (Morgenthau, 1994). Until May 1923, many outdoor elementary schools were established, also in Thessaloniki, outside the city, in the courtyards of churches (Agrafiotou – Zachopoulou, 1997).

A Royal Decree "On the examination of the origin of Greeks and graduate foreign refugee teachers wishing to assimilate to the graduates of independent Greek schools" provided for the assimilation of Greek graduate refugee teachers with Greek teaching units after examinations (Newspaper of the Government, 1923). In 1932, 55 mixed primary schools were established (Ziogou-Karastergiou, 2006). In the area of Toumpa, where the largest refugee settlement was created, the so-called "Tin Can" mixed school was established in the yard of the "Alexander

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the Great" Orphanage and operated under adverse conditions. This place was a warehouse with kerosene cans left over from the First World War (Tzioutzia, 2002), and was turned into a school. That is why it was named the Tin Can school. The historic American College Anatolia relocated from Asia Minor to Thessaloniki in 1924. This college continued to offer secondary and higher education to refugee children, with a focus on preparing students for professional careers. It was founded by American missionaries in Merzifunda, Asia Minor, in 1886 (Nar, 2013).

The American Farm School at Thessaloniki, originally founded in 1904. This institution provided agricultural and technical education. After 1922, it played a significant role in educating refugee children, focusing on vocational and technical Training by equipping them with practical skills that could help them find employment and support their families.

The Pierce College to Athens, initially part of the American College of Girls, provided education to refugee girls, focusing on both academic and vocational training, particularly for refugee girls, providing them with skills in areas such as nursing, teaching, and domestic sciences.

Arsakeio Schools to Athens and Patra expanded their reach to accommodate refugee children, providing them with primary and secondary education. Ionian School in Athens established to serve the educational needs of the Asia Minor refugees, offering a curriculum that included both Greek and refugee cultural elements. The Palladion Lyceum in Athens welcomed refugee children, providing them with secondary education and support. The Averoff Girls' School in Athens founded to cater to the educational needs of refugee girls, offering comprehensive education and vocational training.

These institutions tried to provide education and played a crucial role in integrating refugee children into Greek society by addressing their specific cultural and psychological needs. They were instrumental in helping many refugee children overcome the challenges posed by displacement. The classrooms were extremely small, with students often exceeding 120 in number. School equipment was almost non-existent or non-functional. The lack of teaching staff and very poor health conditions, combined with these problems, forced refugee children to abandon their education and work at a very young age, helping with the family income. These schools often had teachers who were themselves refugees and who understood the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of the students. Bilingual education programs were implemented to help children transition from their native languages (e.g., Turkish or Armenian) to Greek.

The feeling of shame and inferiority felt by many refugee children due to their appearance, poverty, and lack of basic items (shoes, clothing, etc.) was another reason that prevented them from pursuing education. If refugee children lost one of their parents, they were often forced to leave their studies to work. It was rare for both parents to be alive, as a large part of the male refugee population had died from warfare and persecution. The cultural shock of the refugees was even greater considering that the majority of refugee children came from an important educational environment. After the loss of Constantinople by the Ottomans in 1453, Smyrna in

Asia Minor became the cradle of Hellenism. Characteristically, the Ottomans called Smyrna "Giaur Ismir," which means "Smyrna of the unbelievers."

Smyrna became the new bastion of Christianity and Greek culture in the Near East. The city had large and remarkable libraries and famous schools. Notable educational institutions in Asia Minor and Pontus included the Great School of the Nation in Constantinople, the Evangelical School of Smyrna, the Academy of Kydonies, and the School of Trebizond, reflecting the national importance the refugees placed on education. By 1907, Asia Minor had 1,237 schools with 115,515 students (Ziogou-Karastergiou, 2006).

Their violent and forced arrival in Greece and the conditions they faced in their new country were traumatic experiences. According to refugee testimonies, most of the schools that hosted refugees were in miserable condition, while many were improvised shacks that hosted many students in the same place under adverse conditions. The educational process worked unorthodoxly, since the transition from one class to the next took place in half or less time than would occur under normal circumstances. In this way, at the end of a school year, the student was promoted to 2 or 3 grades higher to save space and time. This situation prevailed until 1929, when the educational reform of Venizelos took place.

Testimonies of refugees say that many parents were registering their children with fake information in Jewish schools to secure better educational conditions. The wealthy refugee children had better luck due to their parents' financial ability to afford private schools. For students aiming for university education, studies in ancient Greek language and literature (Asonitis, 2002), philosophy, and rhetoric were provided and also advanced courses in physics, chemistry, and biology to prepare for higher education in science and engineering fields. Over time, refugee children who completed their secondary education had opportunities to attend universities in Greece. Institutions like the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens and the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki became accessible to these students. In Thessaloniki, there were well-known schools, such as the Konstantinidis School, the Ioannidios School, the Greek-French School of Kalamari, the Girls' Schools of Aglaia Schina, and others. Schools often included lessons on Greek culture and history to foster a sense of national identity and belonging among refugee children. Emphasis was placed on teaching civic responsibilities and moral values to help integrate refugee children into Greek society.

The experiences of refugee children with their teachers were not always positive. The main points of this negative impression, according to testimonies, were the intense severity with which they imposed punishments on the refugee children, such as hand-wringing and blows with sticks (Clark, 2007).

Primary education

Learning the Greek language, was a priority, including reading, writing, grammar, and literature. This was crucial for integration and further education. Mathematics, basic arithmetic, geometry, and algebra, following the national curriculum.

Greek history, including ancient, Byzantine, and modern periods, were taught to refugees to instill a sense of national identity and pride. Physical and political geography of Greece and the world were taught too. Instruction in the Greek Orthodox faith, which was a significant aspect of Greek culture and identity, was considered as a bond to connect refugees with locals. Physical activities and sports were taught also to promote health and well-being.

Secondary Education

Advanced Greek Language and Literature were taught in Continius focusing on Greek language skills, including classical and modern literature. In Mathematics were chosen more advanced topics in algebra, geometry, trigonometry, and calculus. In Sciences Sector Subjects like physics, chemistry, and biology were in the top list. The program included also foreign languages like French, English, or German, to prepare students for higher education and international opportunities. History and Social Studies were important in-depth study of Greek and world history, as well as contemporary social and political issues. Geography was taught with more detailed geographical studies, including physical and human geography.

Arts and Humanities were include through music, art, philosophy, and sometimes drama, to provide a well-rounded education. Lessons on civic responsibility, ethical behavior, and the principles of democracy, with Education on Greek culture, traditions, and national heritage were considered as important sectors.

The Female Refugee

Approximately 50 -55% was the percentage of the women refugees, after the Asia Minor Catastrophe in 1922, when men's percentage was 25-30%. Children was the 20-25 % of the refugees. This demographic imbalance significantly influenced the social and economic dynamics of the refugee communities in Greece (Kontogiorgi, 2006).

Many men from the Greek communities in Asia Minor were conscripted into the Greek army during the Greco-Turkish War (1919-1922). The war resulted in significant casualties among these men, reducing their numbers significantly. During the conflict and the subsequent population exchange, many Greek men were killed in massacres or other acts of violence. After the defeat of the Greek forces, many Greek men were sent to labor camps, where conditions were harsh and survival rates low. Men, who were more likely to be perceived as combatants or potential combatants, faced greater risks of being captured or killed during these escapes. The overall impact of the war and violence led to a demographic imbalance, as women and children were more likely to survive and make it to safety in Greece.

The female refugee represents a special chapter of Asia Minor suffering (Kontogiorgi, 2006). At the economic field many refugee women, particularly those from rural areas, lost their traditional means of livelihood, such as farming or small-scale trade. In their new environment, they often struggled to find work, especially in a patriarchal society that limited women's economic opportunities. Those who did find work were frequently subject to labor exploitation.

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Women often took up low-paying, labor-intensive jobs in factories, domestic work, or as seamstresses. The tobacco industry, for example, employed many refugee women under harsh conditions.

At the Social and Cultural Integration field Refugee women faced significant cultural displacement (Yildirim, 2006). They had to adapt to new social norms and practices, which could be vastly different from those they were accustomed to. This often led to a loss of cultural identity and difficulties in maintaining traditional customs and practices. Also they faced social stigma and isolation, both from the local population and within their own communities.

At the Health and Well-being sector the deplorable living conditions in refugee camps and settlements had a severe impact on women's health. Overcrowding, lack of sanitation, and inadequate access to clean water led to the spread of diseases. Women, often responsible for the care of their families, bore the brunt of these harsh conditions. Access to reproductive health services was limited, which exacerbated the challenges faced by pregnant women and mothers. High maternal and infant mortality rates were common due to inadequate medical care and poor nutrition.

At the Gender-based violence field refugee women were vulnerable to sexual exploitation and abuse, both within the camps and in the broader community (Hirschon, 1998). The lack of legal protection and social support systems made it difficult for women to seek help or justice. Refugee women, dependent on their families and communities for support, had limited avenues to escape or report abuse. Many refugee women, in their effort to survive with their children, were exploited by cunning people who took advantage of their dire situation, promising them a better fate but with "quid pro quo."

At the Family and Community Responsibilities sector refugee women as parents, had to face the harsh situation of uprooting, often without the help of their husbands, who had either been killed in the Asia Minor outreach, slaughtered during the persecution of the refugees, or murdered in the working battalions. Women were typically the primary caretakers of children and the elderly. This responsibility became even more onerous in the refugee context, where resources were scarce and living conditions were harsh.

The establishment of the International Women's Association in 1921, among other institutions such as the Lyceum of Greek Women and the National Council of Greek Women, were important pillars of assistance to the orphaned refugee children and girls of the Asia Minor disaster. The Association undertook to contribute to the education of the schoolgirls who interrupted their studies because of the refugee situation, enabling them to learn a profession to survive. Their stories highlight the strength and perseverance of women in the face of adversity (Autobiography of Refugee Girls, 1926).

The drama of the Asia Minor catastrophe, with the passage of time, transformed the pain and suffering of uprooting into a historical achievement. No one could have believed that the rehabilitation measures taken could have such an effect with the mass arrival of more than

1,200,000 refugees from Asia Minor in an economically strained country like Greece, which was just emerging from a devastating war. The refugee population in Greece emerged as a saving cultural, technological, and economic force for the country.

The Feat after the Tragedy

Greece, with a population of 5,000,000, faced the immense challenge of rehabilitating 1,300,000 refugees in an unfavorable economic situation. This occurred after a 10-year period of warfare, which had depleted all of Greece's financial reserves. Consequently, Greece had to turn to the League of Nations for assistance, borrowing GBP 10 million and taking out other loans under unfavorable repayment conditions, further straining its economy.

On 29 September 1923, the Athens-based Refugee Rehabilitation Committee was established through an agreement between Greece and the League of Nations. Its primary mission was to rehabilitate refugees in their new homeland. The committee's operations ended in 1930, and its responsibilities were transferred to the Greek state. During this period, there were significant movements of refugees between urban centers and rural areas. The government's aim was to absorb most of the refugees into agricultural production work. . By redistributing land and promoting agricultural work, refugees could contribute to the economy and sustain themselves.

However, housing posed a major problem. Living conditions were deplorable, with rampant disease and many people dying. There were no infrastructure projects, such as water and sewage networks or electricity supply. The state responded by organizing soup kitchens, providing basic necessities, and offering basic health care.

The Refugee Rehabilitation Committee identified suitable rural locations and allocated them to refugee families for cultivation and settlement. In urban centers, conditions were more challenging. The rehabilitation of urban refugees was particularly difficult, as their numbers were greater than those in rural areas. Many refugees were relocated to industrial centers in Kavala, Thessaloniki, and Drama to work in tobacco production.

Gradually, refugees were employed in large projects such as road construction, bridge building, and major irrigation and port works, especially in Serres, Drama, and Thessaloniki. By 1929, Greece had transformed. The refugees contributed significantly to the economic recovery of Greece through their hard work in various sectors, despite the minimal chances of success.

Production increased in all areas. The refugees' hard work and new farming methods led to increased production in various sectors. There was growth in building construction, livestock farming, and wheat cultivation. New farming methods were discovered, and educational institutions and churches were established. They contributed to sectors like tobacco production, strengthening Greece's industrial base.

In the cultural sector, refugees had a significant impact on Greek creativity. Greek music was rejuvenated by the new sounds brought by the refugees. The well-known rebetiko music, born

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from the refugee experience after the Asia Minor Catastrophe, dominated Greek artistic reality for decades.

The efforts to rehabilitate refugees in Greece after World War I were part of a larger international humanitarian response. The population exchange between Greece and Turkey, formalized in the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923, was a significant factor contributing to the refugee crisis. The exchange aimed to create ethnically homogeneous states but resulted in the displacement of large populations.

The Refugee Rehabilitation Committee played a crucial role in this period, working not only to provide immediate relief but also to facilitate long-term integration. Land was redistributed to refugee families to promote agricultural productivity, and various vocational training programs were initiated to help refugees acquire new skills. The experience contributed to the development of international norms and practices in refugee resettlement and rehabilitation, influencing later efforts in other parts of the world.

The refugees displayed remarkable resilience and adaptability, contributing to their successful integration. Despite the deplorable living conditions and rampant diseases, their determination to rebuild their lives played a critical role in overcoming the challenges. The collaboration between the government and the refugees was pivotal. The government's initiatives and the refugees' willingness to work hard and adapt to new environments created a synergy that facilitated their successful rehabilitation.

CONCLUSIONS

One of the most important achievements in the modern history of Greece was the rehabilitation of the refugees from Asia Minor. Although it began as a cultural shock for both the people of Asia Minor and the natives, the antiquated educational policy, initially stuck to classical education, gradually began a progressive shift towards the technical and practical professional education that the country so badly needed. With the prevalence of Eleftherios Venizelos in 1928, a significant educational reform took place, marking the future of Greek education. The spoken language was promoted in primary and secondary education both as a subject of teaching and as a communication code. Six-year primary and secondary education was established.

Many primary and secondary schools were founded, higher education was upgraded, and the number of students increased significantly. A major obstacle to education was the poverty of refugee families, whose primary concern was survival. The years of carelessness and innocence were experienced differently by young refugee children, who were in a constant struggle for survival, living in fear and insecurity.

Access to education for some of these children was a luxury. The inability to survive, difficult access to distant school units, lack of infrastructure and buildings, feelings of inferiority and sadness, as well as poor clothing, were significant obstacles to their education. These factors

often led to the permanent interruption of their studies and subsequent employment in heavy jobs to contribute to the family income.

The use of the "purifying" language and the classical tendency that prevailed in education before Venizelos' reform caused greater problems for the majority of students, especially for children from financially disadvantaged backgrounds, and even for those who wished to continue their education in secondary school. The "purifying" language was particularly challenging for foreign-speaking refugees, making it difficult for them to understand and communicate.

The gender dimension of the refugee crisis following the Asia Minor Catastrophe highlighted the specific and often severe challenges faced by women. Economic hardship, social isolation, health risks, gender-based violence, and the burden of caretaking all compounded the difficulties of displacement. Despite these challenges, the resilience and resourcefulness of refugee women were evident in their ability to adapt, support each other, and rebuild their lives.

Finally, the national division that led to the Asia Minor catastrophe indiscriminately affected every sector of social life, including education. The political parties of the country, due to their rivalry, destroyed whatever good the opposing party had created instead of leading the country according to the national interest. As a result, education was trapped in a period of stagnation until Eleftherios Venizelos appeared on the political scene in 1928.

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