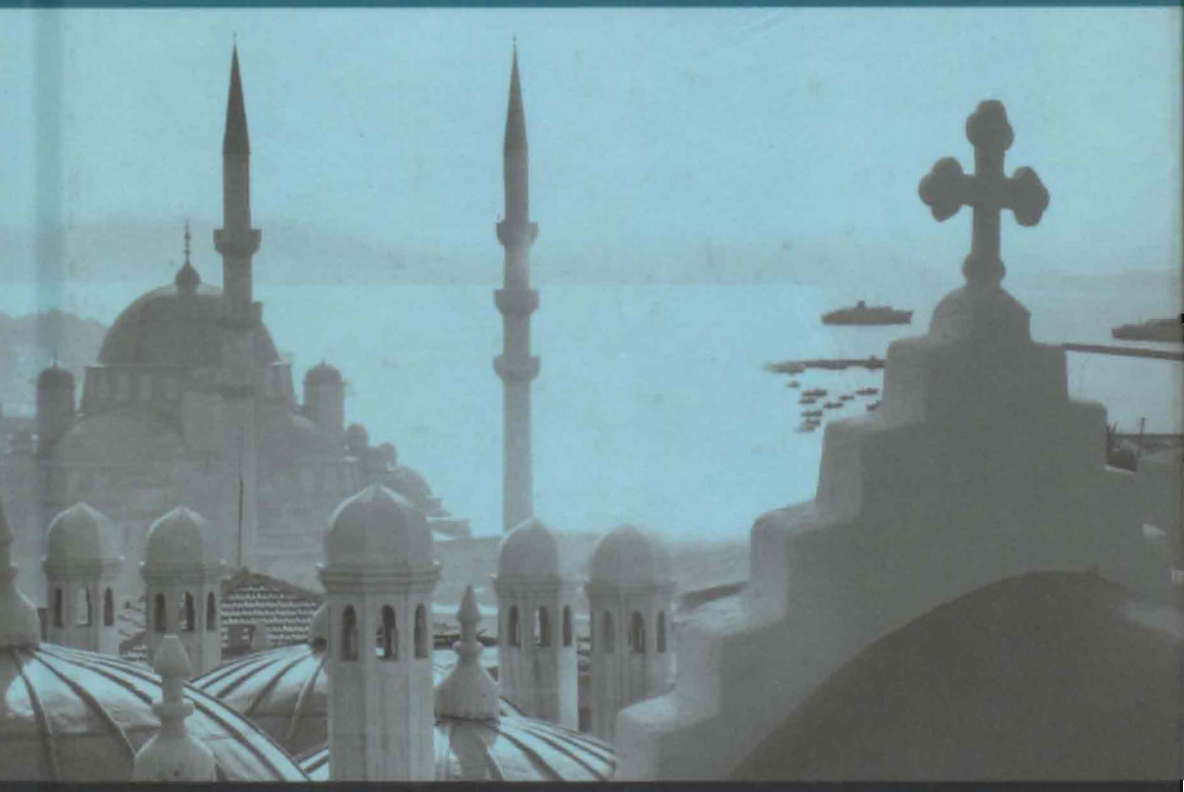
STUDIES IN FORCED MIGRATION · VOLUME 12

CROSSING THE AEGEAN

AN APPRAISAL OF THE 1923 COMPULSORY POPULATION EXCHANGE BETWEEN GREECE AND TURKEY



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Edited by Renée Hirschon

Crossing the Aegean

An Appraisal of the 1923 Compulsory Population Exchange between Greece and Turkey

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Contents

List of Figures

List of Tables

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Notes on Terminology and Orthography

In this collective volume I have not imposed a typology of terms to distinguish between various modes of forced migration. Contributors use the terms 'population transfer', 'population exchange', 'population expulsion' interchangeably, while 'ethnic cleansing', a term coined in the 1990s for events in the former Yugoslavia for what in effect took place in 1923, constitutes an anachronism.

I have urged for clarity in distinguishing between the Convention signed on 30 January 1923 and the wider Treaty of Peace of 24 July 1923. The first, the focus of this study, was concerned only with the terms for the compulsory exchange of Greek and Turkish populations (for the text of the Convention see Appendix I). The exclusion of the Orthodox inhabitants of the islands of Imbros and Tenedos, however, was specified in the later Treaty, as were the conditions for the protection of the remaining minorities.

Some further clarification of terms is necessary since they have connotations or usages which differ significantly in the Turkish and Greek contexts.

Geographical terms

Anatolia or Asia Minor

These two geographical terms, referring to the land mass which comprises the major part of Asiatic Turkey today, are used differently in Turkish and Greek usage. The term *Anadolu*, Anatolia, is used in contemporary Turkey, and is actually a Greek loan word, but the term Asia Minor is not familiar to most Turkish speakers.

In contrast, the term Asia Minor (*Mikra Asia*, *Mikrasia*) is standard in Greek today, while *Anatolia* is not used. This is possibly because the term Anatolia has strong orientalist connotations (see Gauntlett this volume). The use of the term Asia Minor, derived from Latin, is probably traceable to the nineteenth century when a 'purist' *katharevousa* form of Greek was promoted over the spoken demotic.

Another geographical term without precise connotations (but a long and complex history) and which has different usages is 'Roumeli'. The Turkish word *Rumeli* is inclusive and has a wide referent including all of the Balkans and Greece. In the Greek usage, though, *Roumeli* is a limited area in the central mainland, excluding Epirus and Thessaly.

Identity terms

Prior to the establishment of the Turkish Republic, formal identity in the Ottoman Empire was based on religion. Ottoman subjects were administered in religious communities, the 'millets'. Consequently, Orthodox Christians were members of the 'Rum' millet and were called *Rum* (pl. *Rumlar*) or *Romios* (pl. *Romioi*). The term 'Greek', strictly speaking, should refer only to citizens of the Greek state established in 1830.

This is reflected in the Turkish point of view which designates two categories of Greeks. The Greek Orthodox citizens of the Turkish Republic, i.e., those exempted from the exchange under the terms of the Lausanne agreements, are known as the *Rum Ortodoks* or just *Rum* for short. Citizens of the Greek state, including the so-called *établis* citizens of Greece who were also allowed to stay in Istanbul under the 1923 Convention of Lausanne and the 1930 Ankara Convention, are known as *Yunanli* or *Yunan*.

In the application of the exchange, Muslims of Pomak and Roma extraction in Greece, together with the Muslims of Western Thrace were exempted. According to the official Greek view, these Muslims are a religious minority recognised and protected by the final terms of the Treaty of Lausanne. In the recent period, following the 1974 Cyprus troubles, their self-designation as well as references to them as Turks, has become problematic and controversial (see Alexandris, Oran, this volume).

The terminology used to define identity also involves distinctions between words for 'refugees', 'exchangees', and 'migrants'. Interestingly, the Orthodox Christian newcomers to Greece themselves adopted the neoclassical nomenclature, and their original self-designation as *Romios/oi* was supplanted by the local Greek term. Thus, in Greece those expelled from Asiatic Turkey are known as 'Asia Minor refugees' (*Mikrasiates prosphyges*). Most commonly, these people referred to themselves as 'refugees', but seldom, if ever, as 'exchangees' (*antallaksimoi*).

In Turkey, the terms are used differently even within the population that was exchanged. Cretan Muslims who settled in Ayvalik and Cunda call themselves '*mübadil*', exchangees (Koufopoulou this volume), the term being specific to the 1923 compulsory exchange. However, the Muslims expelled from Greek Macedonia who were settled in Muradiye call themselves *muhacir*, refugees, and distinguish themselves from more recent forced migrants from the Balkans whom they call *göcmen* (Köker this volume), a Turkish neologism (*öztürkçe*) meaning migrant or settler. It should be noted, however, that *muhacir* has been the main word in Turkish referring to the

forcibly displaced entering the Ottoman Empire and Turkey from the Balkans and the Caucasus, and *mübadil* the main word referring specifically to the 1923 exchangees.

The term 'refugee' does not apply technically to these groups of displaced peoples as defined in international law, however. This is because the Convention stipulated that they were immediately to be granted full citizenship rights in their respective host countries (Article 7). Nonetheless in the Greek context, it proved to be an especially durable term of several generation's depth with rich and varied connotations (Hirschon 1998 [1989]).

These different usages highlight the significance of indigenous terminologies which might indicate important qualitative differences in the experience of forced displacement. The terms people use to describe themselves are sociologically significant, and could constitute an important topic for further study (cf. Marx 1990, Zetter 1991).

Treatment of Other Terms

Place names have not been standardised in the volume so that, depending on the contributor and the historical period, a place may be referred to either by its Turkish (Izmir, Istanbul, Gökçeada, Bozcaada, Ayvalık) or Greek name (Smyrni, Constantinople, Imvros, Tenedos, Aivali) or by other variants, either in their native or anglicised spellings (Smyrna, Imbros, Thessaloniki or Salonica/Salonika).

There is no standard way of transliterating Greek script. The approach taken here follows a compromise preserving the phonetic with the visual, and allows for exceptions. In some chapters, Turkish words are incorporated as terms integral to the text. Where the plural form is required in English, for readability an 's' has been added to the Turkish word (e.g., muhacirs, misafirs, Rums), even if it is a plural form.

Preface

The Lausanne Convention specifying the conditions for the compulsory exchange of minority populations between the countries of Greece and Turkey was signed on 30 January 1923. One of a number of legal instruments related to the Treaty of Lausanne (24 July 1923), it set a precedent in international politics and is frequently used as a reference point in discussions about subsequent mass population displacements in many parts of the world. In a political context it is generally referred to as an example of a successful solution to interstate problems regarding minorities. Surprisingly enough, however, the multiple and far-reaching effects of the Convention on the two countries have been only partially studied.

The inspiration for this project came out of my experience as a social anthropologist with the Asia Minor refugees settled in Piraeus in the 1920s following the population exchange between Greece and Turkey under the Lausanne Convention of 1923. Having carried out intensive fieldwork in an urban refugee settlement in the 1970s, I was familiar with the picture from one side. It was only later that I realised how much the story of what had happened to the exchanged peoples of both Greece and Turkey remained unknown to the other side. From 1995, I became aware of this when I first met Turkish scholars at international conferences. At that time I was Chair of the Department of Social Anthropology at the University of the Aegean (Mytilini, Greece), with the Turkish coast only a few miles away, and my position there, that of an outsider–insider, convinced me of the need to establish a dialogue across national boundaries in which an overall perspective on issues of common interest might be promoted.

One evening at a memorable dinner party on the banks of the Bosphorus in Istanbul, a number of us – some contributors to this book – agreed that the region's history can only begin to be represented adequately by bringing together views from both sides of the Aegean. An initial attempt was a jointly-organised workshop hosted by Boğaziçi University (Department of Sociology) in April 1997 which focused on 'Our Common Cultural Heritage' and brought together Turkish and Greek scholars who presented views of the past based on oral as well as on documented historical sources. In 1998, the 75th anniversary of the Lausanne Convention, I organised an international conference focusing specifically and narrowly on the consequences of the

Convention (i.e., on the exchange of populations and not on the Treaty with its wider territorial and other specifications). At this event, hosted by the Refugee Studies Centre, Queen Elizabeth House, University of Oxford, participants from various countries, particularly Greece and Turkey, revealed the complex and far-reaching ramifications of the population exchange in political, economic, demographic, social and cultural spheres.

Over the four day period an additional aim of the meeting, that of providing a forum for amicable contacts and for building up interpersonal relationships, was also achieved. It was an early 'multimedia' meeting (now a more common occurrence at academic conferences) in which the proceedings included a video (Bringa's [1993] documentary of a Bosnian village during the war), and a live performance of unrehearsed music played by Turks and Greeks together. This demonstrated powerfully the 'common language' of these two peoples and the possibility of immediate communication through a long-standing shared heritage, too often forgotten. The performance has resulted in a CD recording by the Turkish and Greek players who continued their collaboration long after the conference ended.

This book comprises most of the conference papers, all revised. (The original papers can be consulted on the website of the Refugee Studies Centre). The intention of the conference and of the book is primarily to offer a case study of the consequences of the large-scale population transfer of 1923 between Greece and Turkey, examining its far-reaching effects on the development of these two nations over the past eighty years. The intrinsic interest of this volume then is regional, specific and empirical, showing for the first time the long-term ramifications of a mass population expulsion – nowadays termed 'ethnic cleansing' in a distasteful euphemism – in the Aegean region.

This study also has a wider significance, situated as it is in the context of the rapidly-growing field of forced migration and refugee studies. As mass population displacements are on the increase involving millions of people in all parts of the world, it surely behoves us to incorporate the historical experience of those countries that have dealt with the effects of absorbing displaced populations over the long term. Other suggestive cases for analysis would include those that could be surveyed over more than fifty years – the India–Pakistan partition, the establishment of the state of Israel out of Palestine. Thus, this aspect of the project provokes us to engage with the difficult issue of what can be learned from history. The contemporary relevance of insights gained from this specific case is another aspiration of the book, although it does not address policy issues directly. Nonetheless many of the contributions provide material in which the implications for practical application are available. Thus, a contemporary and comparative perspective is the wider conceptual framework in which this volume is set, with the hope that it might contribute to a deeper understanding of large-scale forced migrations and the many dimensions of their far-reaching consequences.

The project, however, also provokes an epistemological challenge, specifically that of how to achieve a less biased historiography with fewer

inaccuracies. The aspiration to present a more realistic or reliable perspective might be dismissed in the post-modern condition (dissolving the subjective/objective problematic), but it is still a question that underlies much social science and historical research. Attempting to gain a less partisan approach is not easy and requires that several points of view on the same issue be consulted. When the viewpoint has developed within a national frame of reference, however, it is not surprising that the nationalist discourse might inform the work of researchers who focus on geographical areas defined by nation-state boundaries.

The problem of nationalistic bias is deep and insidious, then, and no less problematic for an outsider, i.e., the foreign researcher. My early experience in Greece was undoubtedly influenced by prevailing attitudes, through official as well as informal discourse but, as an anthropologist, I am committed to an ongoing process of examining assumptions and preconceptions. In writing the Introduction to this volume I consulted several colleagues with earlier versions, and was struck by their varied critical responses to my effort to produce what I saw as a satisfactory account that included both sides of the historical record. It seems that even the attempt to present a 'less biased' view is doomed to appear 'unfair', and it is certainly difficult to produce an account that is acceptable to everyone! In a recent review by an anthropologist, a specialist on Turkey, on the republication of my book *Heirs of the Greek Catastrophe*, I was criticised for my use of the phrase 'Asia Minor Catastrophe' to denote the events of 1922–23. Though not the common view in Turkey, this is after all the standard Greek term. Indeed, this term could even be used to describe the overall effect of events in that region for both sides, as some chapters in this volume reveal.

This highlights the key role of language and terminology which must be recognised in the attempt to minimise prejudice and inaccuracy, a point stressed throughout the conference proceedings and continued throughout the editing of this volume. As far as possible in editing the papers, I have tried to maintain sensitivity to political and terminological issues, in particular, to the connotations of terms that might be bound up in anachronism (e.g., avoiding the use of national labels before the existence of the states to which they belong), and to nationalist agendas. Patently this cannot be totally achievable – after all, language is itself a social and cultural construct – but it is hoped that possibly by raising these issues to an explicit level of consciousness we might achieve a greater sensitivity and better communication.

As it is, this is a first step in attempting to present history 'from both sides' and can only constitute a work in progress. At the very least it should alert us to the profound ramifications of the forced displacement of peoples in the Aegean region: the poignant relevance of this early attempt at 'ethnic cleansing' to the situation in the former Yugoslavia, and its parallels with Cyprus are clear. My own position inclines towards ways of promoting coexistence and symbiosis rather than the enforced separation of diverse peoples. In this era of advanced technological communication, it is surely imperative that we learn to accommodate our differences. It is only through contact that we

might achieve the exchange of knowledge, the recognition of our common humanity, and greater mutual respect. I hope that this volume will contribute to an awareness and a wider understanding of the long-term effects of population expulsions in other parts of the world, wherever they occur, in these troubled times.

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This volume is the product of many peoples' interest and collaboration, particularly those who participated in the 1998 Conference which was its initial stimulus (see Preface).

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