



The Asia Minor Disaster
and the Humanitarian Response.
International Philanthropic
Organizations and the Arrival
of the Refugees in Greece, 1918-1924.



THE HELLENIC PARLIAMENT FOUNDATION
FOR PARLIAMENTARISM AND DEMOCRACY



AMERICAN SCHOOL OF
CLASSICAL STUDIES AT ATHENS

The Asia Minor Disaster and the Humanitarian Response:
International Philanthropic Organizations
and the Arrival of the Refugees in Greece, 1918-1924

Proceedings of a Colloquium held in Athens on 16 March 2023,
co-organized by the Hellenic Parliament Foundation
and the American School of Classical Studies at Athens

COLLOQUIUM PROCEEDINGS

**The Asia Minor Disaster and the Humanitarian Response:
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of the Refugees in Greece, 1918-1924**

Athens, 16 March 2023

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THE ASIA MINOR DISASTER AND THE HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE: INTERNATIONAL PHILANTHROPIC ORGANIZATIONS AND THE ARRIVAL OF THE REFUGEES IN GREECE, 1918-1924

PROCEEDINGS OF A COLLOQUIUM HELD IN ATHENS
ON 16 MARCH 2023, CO-ORGANIZED BY THE HELLENIC
PARLIAMENT FOUNDATION AND THE AMERICAN SCHOOL
OF CLASSICAL STUDIES AT ATHENS

EDITED BY

Natalia Vogeikoff-Brogan



THE HELLENIC PARLIAMENT FOUNDATION
FOR PARLIAMENTARISM AND DEMOCRACY



AMERICAN SCHOOL OF
CLASSICAL STUDIES AT ATHENS

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Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, American Red Cross Collection

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Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, American Red Cross Collection

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Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, D.C.

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INTRODUCTION

NATALIA VOGELKOFF-BROGAN

To commemorate the centenary of the signing of the Lausanne Peace Treaty (1923) and the subsequent exchange of populations between Greece and Turkey, the Archives of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens and the Hellenic Parliament Foundation for Parliamentarism and Democracy co-organized on March 16, 2023, a colloquium titled *The Asia Minor Disaster and the Humanitarian Response: International Philanthropic Organizations and the Arrival of the Refugees in Greece, 1918-1924*. Special thanks go to Evanthis Hatzivassiliou, Secretary-General of the Hellenic Parliament Foundation for Parliamentarism and Democracy, and Bonna Wescoat, Director of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens, for their encouragement and warm support.

This institutional collaboration explored both the unprecedented displacement of hundreds of thousands of people before and after the Asia Minor Catastrophe in 1922, and the monumental scale of international relief aid that was offered. Eminent scholars from Greece, Italy, Switzerland, and the United States were invited to discuss early 20th century humanitarianism from a diverse array of approaches: some interpreting it as an expression of liberal internationalism and global patriotism; others questioning its benevolence and effectiveness.

The Colloquium¹

Davide Rodogno, author of *Night on Earth: A History of International Humanitarianism in the Near East, 1918-1930* (Cambridge 2022), opened the colloquium by offering a broad overview of the mission, program, and politics of international humanitarian organizations, such as the Near East Relief, the American Red Cross, and the American Women's Hospital, their cooperation and interaction with Greek authorities, and also the limits of their effectiveness in this unparalleled crisis.

Nikos Andriotis, **Antonis Klapsis**, and **Eleni Ioannidou** explored the activities of the American Red Cross during its 9-month period (October 1922-June 1923) of operations in Greece, based on research in the records of the U.S. Department of State, in the Archives of the League of Nations at Geneva, and in the Greek State Archives.

Natalia Vogeikoff-Brogan focused on the premature departure of the Red Cross through the lens of the personal correspondence of Edward Capps, Chair of the Managing Committee of the American School, former U.S. Minister to Greece (1920-21), and founder in late 1923 of a new philanthropic organization, the American Friends of Greece.

Eleftheria Daleziou presented the work of the Near East Relief in the Ottoman Empire before 1922, and in Greece after 1922, foregrounding the organization's focus on the care of war orphans; **Jack L. Davis** commented on the 30-Million-Dollar Campaign that the American Committee for Relief in the Near East launched in 1919 to raise money for victims of the Ottoman persecutions.

1. A video recording of the colloquium can be accessed here: <https://www.ascsa.edu.gr/events/details/the-asia-minor-disaster-and-the-humanitarian-response-international-philanthropic-organizations-and-the-arrival-of-the-refugees-in-greece-1918-1924-gr>.

Dimitris Kamouzis and **Francesca Piana** highlighted the relief work of two lesser-known agencies. Delving into official reports of the British organization Save the Children Fund, Kamouzis explored the complex issue of child protection, especially children's rights, during and after WW I. Piana communicated the results of her research on another, somewhat forgotten organization, the American Women's Hospitals. She explained how American women physicians transferred medical knowledge to Greece without disregarding local practices, and how the organization managed through its Greek experience to construct a unique identity that combined maternalism and feminism.

This Volume

Here we publish five of the papers delivered at the colloquium of March 16, 2023, now much revised. **Antonis Klapsis** offers a comprehensive picture of the refugee "flood" that followed the Asia Minor Catastrophe, of the immediate actions of the Greek government in response to it, and of its appeals for international aid. He distinguishes three levels of external assistance: intergovernmental, through the direct involvement of many European governments and the United States; international, through the acts of intergovernmental organizations such as the League of Nations, which orchestrated the establishment of the Refugee Settlement Commission; and private, undertaken by individuals and various philanthropic organizations, most notably the American Red Cross and the Near East Relief. He concludes that the acts of the latter two organizations were crucial in saving the lives of hundreds of thousands of refugees in the early months of their displacement.

Nikos Andriotis, in addition to studying the interaction of the American Red Cross with the Greek authorities through of-

ficial correspondence and agreements, has incorporated press releases about the Red Cross published in local newspapers (e.g., in Thessaloniki, Lesbos, and Kalamata). He can thus describe how the operations of the organization were received locally and also reflect on the local consequences of the early departure of the Red Cross in June 1923. Despite the negative reactions then, he concludes that the action of the Red Cross had a positive effect for Greece because it pressured the government to accelerate the permanent settlement of the refugees.

Natalia Vogeikoff-Brogan also is concerned with the premature withdrawal of the American Red Cross from Greece, but views it as seen in the unofficial correspondence of distinguished members of the American community in Athens. Her research in the Archives of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens reveals a deep divide in that community. One group supported the departure of the Red Cross and emphasized a need for self-sufficiency on the part of the refugees, while the other, led by Edward Capps, strongly opposed it. This polarization gave birth to a new philanthropic organization, the American Friends of Greece, which concentrated its efforts on the development of embroidery workshops in Athens, under the aegis of the Near East Relief, to provide work for refugee women.

The two papers by **Jack L. Davis** and **Eleftheria Daleziou** introduce the reader to the inception, aims, and operational focus of the Near East Relief, which was first created by American philanthropists in 1915 in response to anti-Armenian atrocities in the Ottoman Empire. Concentrating on a key moment in the history of the organization, in 1919, when the American Committee for Relief in the Near East (the precursor of the Near East Relief) launched a unique campaign to raise the astronomical sum of 30 million dollars, Davis discusses the aims of the

campaign and examines the visual language and politics of the posters commissioned. (The posters were on display in the exhibition, *In the Name Humanity: American Relief Aid in Greece, 1918-1919*, which the American School organized in 2023-24 to commemorate the signing of the Lausanne Treaty.)²

Daleziou elaborates on the humanitarian efforts of the Near East Relief in Greece after the Smyrna Disaster of 1922, from the time of the evacuation of orphans from Turkey to the establishment of new orphanages in Greece. Through the study of the personal papers of relief workers and nurses such as Dorothy H. Sutton, Daleziou offers a personal and local perspective on the daily operation of the orphanages, although, as she admits, we are still missing an important component of the Near East Relief story, viz. orphaned children's narratives.

We hope that the oral presentations at the colloquium and the five papers published here have contributed to our understanding of western humanitarianism. Endeavors such as Rodogno's *Night on Earth* and Julia F. Irwin's *Making the World Safe* (Oxford 2013) constitute landmark contributions to the study of a complex contrast between idealized humanitarianism and humanitarianism in practice. As more archival resources become available to researchers in the future, there will be new opportunities to explore them, and, in so doing, learn from the past achievements of humanitarian organizations, and their shortcomings.

In addressing the issue of international humanitarian aid and the criticism it has periodically received, American philosopher Martha C. Nussbaum in her influential article, "Toward a Globally Sensitive Patriotism" (*Daedalus* Summer 2008, 78-93), has

2. Eleftheria Daleziou, Maria Georgopoulou, and Natalia Vogeikoff-Brogan (eds.), *In the Name of Humanity: American Relief Aid in Greece, 1918-1929* (Athens 2023).

argued that the people in charge of such initiatives and programs should “combine compassion for the plight of the suffering person with respect for that person’s agency, treating the person not as a passive victim of fortune, but as a human being striving, often heroically, against great obstacles.” Above all, modern humanitarianism should not be based on “any ethnolinguistic homogeneity, or on any religious sentiments.” We concur.

TRANSATLANTIC PHILANTHROPY:
THE AMERICAN RED CROSS
AND THE RELIEF OF GREEK REFUGEES, 1922-1923

ANTONIS KLAPSIS

ABSTRACT: The Asia Minor Catastrophe of 1922 triggered an unprecedented refugee crisis, with over a million Greeks forcibly displaced from their ancestral homes. The Greek government, already weakened by war, struggled to provide food, shelter, and healthcare for the refugees. International aid, particularly from the American Red Cross and the Near East Relief, played a crucial role in mitigating the crisis. The American Red Cross provided extensive humanitarian assistance, including food, medical care, and vaccinations, saving thousands of lives. Despite concluding its operations in mid-1923, its efforts were instrumental in stabilizing the situation, marking a significant moment in transatlantic philanthropy.

The Refugee Flood

The Asia Minor Catastrophe marked the beginning of an unprecedented wave of refugees heading to Greece. Chased by Kemalist Turkish forces, hundreds of thousands of Greeks were forced to abandon their ancestral homes in search of safety, with Greece as their primary destination. These violently displaced populations used every means available to escape the widespread massacre, which had taken the form of systematic ethnic cleansing. By early September 1922, just weeks after the collapse of the Greek military front in Asia Minor, Greek authorities estimated that approximately 200,000 refugees had

already reached various points in Greek territory. These refugees primarily originated from the Ionian coast and its hinterlands. More than half of them had scattered across Macedonia and Thrace, while 40,000-50,000 had sought refuge in Lesbos, 25,000 in Chios, 15,000 in Attica, and another 15,000 in Samos.¹ A month later, official estimates from Greek authorities placed the total number of refugees at over 450,000.²

In the months that followed, the refugee wave grew even larger, taking on the proportions of a flood. Refugees from Asia Minor were not the only ones pouring into Greece. After mid-October 1922, approximately 250,000 Greeks from Eastern Thrace also joined them,³ as the Armistice of Mudanya signed on 11 October 1922 placed that region under Turkish control. By mid-November 1922, Fridtjof Nansen, the League of Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, estimated that around 900,000 refugees had already arrived in Greece. Of these, 850,000 were of Greek descent, and the remaining 50,000 were of Armenian origin (as Armenians had also fallen victim to Turkish persecution). Nansen further predicted that an additional 350,000 refugees (250,000 Greeks and 100,000 Armenians) would arrive in Greece in the near future.⁴

1. Diplomatic and Historical Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Greece (DHAMFAG hereafter), 1922/KTE/1.2, Yannopoulos to Streit, no. 65276, Athens, 9 September 1922.

2. Eleftherios Venizelos Archives/Benaki Museum (EVA/BM hereafter), 173/120, no. 10778, Nikolaos Politis to unknown receiver, Athens, 9 October 1922, <https://www.searchculture.gr/aggregator/edm/venizelosdig/000132-9571> (accessed 13 February 2025).

3. Antonis Klapsis, "Violent Uprooting and Forced Migration: A Demographic Analysis of the Greek Populations of Asia Minor, Pontus, and Eastern Thrace," *Middle Eastern Studies*, 50:4 (2014), 632-633.

4. United Nations Archives at Geneva (UNAG hereafter), League of Nations, *Official Journal*, 4th Year, No. 1, Part II, January 1923, 133, <https://archives.ungeneva.org/league-of-nations-official-journal-4th-year-no-1-part-ii-january-1923> (accessed 11 February 2025)

In order to obtain the most accurate count of refugees, the Greek state conducted a detailed census. This task was undertaken in April 1923 by the Ministry of Hygiene, Welfare, and Assistance. According to the findings of this census, there were 786,431 refugees in Greece at that time. Of these, 351,313 were males and 435,118 were females, and, as shown in Table 1, they were distributed across all geographic regions of the country.⁵

Table 1. Results of the refugee census conducted by the Ministry of Hygiene, Welfare, and Assistance (April 1923):

Departments and General Administrations	Males	Females	Total
Eastern Macedonia	38,471	42,220	80,691
Western Macedonia	5,661	6,503	12,164
Epirus	5,060	6,922	11,982
Thessaly and Arta	14,170	19,315	34,025
Thessaloniki	74,911	87,507	162,418
Thrace	47,906	52,007	99,913
Ionian Islands	10,298	15,157	25,455
Crete	12,611	16,210	28,821
Cyclades Islands	7,620	11,230	18,850
Lesvos	26,114	31,394	57,508
Peloponnese	20,322	26,519	46,841
Samos	9,194	12,181	21,375
Central Greece and Euboea	66,120	91,956	158,076
Chios	12,315	15,997	28,312
Total	351,313	435,118	786,431

Around the same period when the census was conducted by

5. Ministry of Hygiene, Welfare, and Assistance, *Απογραφή προσφύγων ενεργηθείσα κατ' Απρίλιον 1923* (Athens 1923), ix.

the Ministry of Health, Welfare, and Assistance, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs also carried out a separate count of the refugee population.⁶ According to the data collected, which is detailed in Table 2, the number of refugees amounted to 862,110.

Table 2. Number of refugees according to the data of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Spring 1923):

Prefecture of Attica and Boeotia	164,235
Prefecture of Phthiotis and Phocis	7,623
Prefecture of Aetolia and Acarnania	11,811
Prefecture of Euboea	17,824
Peloponnese	55,644
Epirus	21,841
Ionian Islands	38,800
Cyclades Islands	15,746
Crete	38,254
Samos	29,619
Chios	33,529
Lesvos	67,140
Thessaly	23,940
Prefecture of Thessaloniki (including the sub-administrations of Katerini, Veria, Kilkis, Langadas, Chalkidiki and Mount Athos)	112,519
Prefecture of Pella	16,962
Prefecture of Evros	49,763
Prefecture of Rodopi	56,000
Prefecture of Florina	3,746
Prefecture of Kozani	6,030
Prefecture of Serres	24,084
Prefecture of Drama	67,000
Total	862,110

6. DHAMFAG, KY/1923/18.4, Unsigned note, [Athens], [April (?) 1923].

The relatively small differences (amounting to less than 10% overall) in the numerical data derived from the comparison of the two censuses can be explained by the interaction of several factors. First, the census conducted by the Ministry of Hygiene, Welfare, and Assistance was carried out on a voluntary basis, meaning it included only those refugees who chose to participate. Second, a very large number of refugees lacked stable housing, making it difficult to locate and accurately count these individuals. Finally, all attempts to conduct refugee censuses were carried out under objectively challenging conditions, making minor discrepancies between different attempts at enumeration more or less expected.⁷

Following the implementation of the Lausanne Convention for the Exchange of Greek and Turkish Populations, signed on 30 January 1923, an additional 190,000 refugees arrived in Greece between 1924 and 1926.⁸ Consequently, the total number of refugees from the Asia Minor Catastrophe who sought refuge in Greece undoubtedly exceeded 1,000,000. This is confirmed by the data from the country's general population census (see Table 3), conducted in 1928,⁹ by which time the refugee influx had been completed. Even this number, however, falls short of the actual figure, as it does not account for the high mortality rate among refugees, nor the fact that tens of thousands of them chose to leave Greece in search of better opportunities in Western Europe, the United States, Egypt, and other destinations.¹⁰

7. Klapsis, "Violent Uprooting," 630-631.

8. Stephen P. Ladas, *The Exchange of Minorities: Bulgaria, Greece and Turkey* (New York 1932), 438.

9. Ministry of National Economy, *Στατιστικά αποτελέσματα της απογραφής του πληθυσμού της Ελλάδος της 15-16 Μαΐου 1928. Πραγματικός και νόμιμος πληθυσμός – Πρόσφυγες* (Athens 1933).

10. Renée Hirschon, *Heirs of the Greek Catastrophe: The Social Life of Asia Minor Refugees in Piraeus* (Oxford 1989), 37.

Table 3. Number of refugees from the Asia Minor Catastrophe in Greece according to the 1928 census:

Place of origin	Males	Females	Total
Asia Minor	273,309	315,917	589,226
Eastern Thrace	112,682	116,896	229,578
Pontus	79,292	85,349	164,641
Istanbul	17,785	16,654	34,439
Total	483,068	534,816	1,017,884

The Refugees' Care Needs

The massive influx of such a large number of refugees, which occurred under conditions of a major humanitarian crisis, naturally created an immense need for multifaceted care: food, shelter, and healthcare. The situation the refugees found themselves in, especially in the initial period following the Asia Minor Catastrophe, was tragic. Their violent displacement meant they lacked even the most basic means of survival. Particularly, the refugees from the Asia Minor peninsula were forced to flee their homes in such haste to escape massacre that they were unable to take any supplies or other belongings with them. Most of the survivors had nothing more than the clothes on their backs. Even those clothes, however, were insufficient, as the exodus took place from late August to late September, and their clothing was summer-appropriate, leaving them ill-prepared for the approaching winter. The situation of refugees from Eastern Thrace was somewhat better, as they had managed to bring along a significant portion of their movable belongings (such as carts, livestock, farming tools, household equipment, etc.),¹¹ since their departure was carried out under

11. UNAG, League of Nations, *Official Journal*, 4th Year, No. 1, Part II, Janu-

the protection of the Greek army. The refugees' most immediate need for care was related to food. Most refugees had no money and, for an extended period, were unable to secure employment that would allow them to support themselves.¹² The prospect of a widespread famine that could claim the lives of thousands of refugees was very real.¹³ To address this nightmarish possibility, the efforts of the Greek authorities focused on collecting and distributing food to the refugees to keep them alive, as well as organizing soup kitchens in the refugee camps. This undertaking was extremely complex, not only because of the large number of people needing food aid but also due to the dire financial situation of the Greek state, which was essentially in a state of bankruptcy.¹⁴ Fundraising campaigns, the support of the church, and the involvement of humanitarian organizations played a crucial role in filling the gaps that the Greece's feeble state budget could not cover.

Equally pressing was the need to house the refugees. The Greek government made efforts, to the extent possible, to ensure that these people were distributed across the entire country in such a way that their accommodation would be facilitated. Securing shelter for hundreds of thousands of people,

ary 1923, 133, <https://archives.ungeneva.org/league-of-nations-official-journal-4th-year-no-1-part-ii-january-1923> (accessed 11 February 2025)

12. EVA/BM, 173/71, Alexandros Pallis, "The Refugee Problem in Greece," Athens, 21 November 1922, <https://www.searchculture.gr/aggregator/edm/venizelosdig/000132-10125> (accessed 13 February 2025).

13. Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS hereafter), Office of the Historian, Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, 1922, vol. II document 331 (767.68/302, The High Commissioner at Constantinople (Bristol) to the Acting Secretary of State, Constantinople, 10 September 1922, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1922v02/d331> (accessed 11 February 2025).

14. EVA/BM, 173/191, no. 15237, Apostolos Alexandris to Eleftherios Venizelos, Athens, 31 December 1922.

especially within a few weeks, required decisive actions. Initially, efforts focused on procuring tents, in which a significant number of refugees could find temporary shelter,¹⁵ as well as temporary housing units to be used for the same purpose.¹⁶ At the same time, especially in large cities such as Athens, Piraeus, and Thessaloniki, various public buildings were utilized to house refugees on an emergency basis: schools, hospitals, warehouses, train stations, and even the Municipal Theater of the capital were used for this purpose.¹⁷ The measure of temporary requisitioning of homes and other private properties (such as cinemas, factories, or even casinos) across Greece, where a large number of refugees were temporarily housed, was also in line with this approach.¹⁸

Particularly important were the actions taken to provide medical care for the refugees. A large number of them were suffering from various diseases, many of which were contagious and deadly.¹⁹ The adopted practice was to have as many refu-

15. UNAG, League of Nations, *Official Journal*, 4th Year, No. 1, Part II, January 1923, 133, <https://archives.ungeneva.org/league-of-nations-official-journal-4th-year-no-1-part-ii-january-1923> (accessed 11 February 2025).

16. EVA/BM, 173/18, no. 4376, Stylianos Gonatas to Andreas Michalakopoulos, Athens, 13 May 1923 (Εθνικό Ίδρυμα Ερευνών και Μελετών “Ελευθέριος Βενιζέλος” - Digital Archive, <https://www.searchculture.gr/aggregator/edm/venizelosdig/000132-11702>, accessed 11 February 2025).

17. Hirschon, *Heirs*, 36.

18. Kostas Katsapis, “Το προσφυγικό ζήτημα,” in Antonis Liakos (ed.), *Το 1922 και οι πρόσφυγες: Μια νέα ματιά* (Athens 2011), 136-140; EVA/BM, 173/38, General Commander of Epirus to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ioannina, 2 March 1923 (Εθνικό Ίδρυμα Ερευνών και Μελετών “Ελευθέριος Βενιζέλος” - Digital Archive, <https://www.searchculture.gr/aggregator/edm/venizelosdig/000132-11383>, accessed 11 February 2025).

19. UNAG, League of Nations, *Official Journal*, 4th Year, No. 1, Part II, January 1923, 133, <https://archives.ungeneva.org/league-of-nations-official-journal-4th-year-no-1-part-ii-january-1923> (accessed 11 February 2025); EVA/

gees as possible go through quarantine stations before being allowed to settle anywhere in the Greek territory. However, this measure, by necessity, could not be fully implemented when hundreds of thousands of people were arriving within a very short time. Simply put, the existing infrastructure was not sufficient to accommodate such a large population.

The miserable sanitary conditions prevailing in the makeshift refugee camps only worsened the situation. The overcrowding of a large number of people in a limited time, their constant proximity to one another, often the lack of running water, and the exhaustion of the refugees from the general hardships they had suffered created the ideal breeding ground for the spread of all kinds of infectious diseases.²⁰ The need for vaccination of refugees was urgent, and systematic efforts in this direction were indeed made by the relevant state services.²¹

The tragic situation in which the refugees found themselves was vividly described by Nansen:

"They urgently require not only shelter but also winter clothing and blankets to enable them to face the severity of the coming winter; they are also without any money with which to supply themselves with food [...]. Unless supplies of these articles are forthcoming in great quantities and without delay, vast numbers of mothers and little children must inevitably die. The mortality among the babies and mothers whose children have been born in refugee camps during the last month is already very high. In addition, the presence of this great number of refugees in temporary camps gives rise to a grave danger of serious epidemics. In some camps smallpox has already broken

BM, 173/114, Société des Nations, "Réfugiés du Proche-Orient," Geneva, 22 January 1923.

20. Op. cit. UNAG, League of Nations, *Official Journal*, 133.

21. League of Nations, *Greek Refugee Settlement* (Geneva 1926) 93.

out. In all of them dysentery is more or less common. Typhoid, cholera and, above all, typhus may be expected."²²

Despite the initial efforts made by the Greek authorities to alleviate the refugees' situation, the condition remained very difficult.²³ According to the League of Nations' data, from September 1922 to July 1923, approximately 70,000 refugees died due to various diseases and exhaustion caused by malnutrition.²⁴ In the second half of 1923 alone, among approximately 14,000 refugees living in temporary camps around Thessaloniki, there were 5,207 cases of malaria, of which 320 were fatal. The situation was even worse in the countryside, where during the last months of 1923, the mortality rate among sick refugees reached an astronomical 45%. The severity of the situation was tragically reflected in the birth-to-death ratio: throughout 1923 and into the first half of 1924, for every new birth, there were three deaths. Premature births and miscarriages became endemic among refugee women during the same period.²⁵

International Aid

Although the Greek authorities made great efforts to care for the refugees, it was clear that they were incapable of successfully carrying out such a massive undertaking. The state health

22. UNAG, League of Nations, *Official Journal*, 4th Year, No. 1, Part II, January 1923, 133-135, <https://archives.ungeneva.org/league-of-nations-official-journal-4th-year-no-1-part-ii-january-1923> (accessed 11 February 2025).

23. EVA/BM, 173/46, "Réfugiés du Proche-Orient," 8 January 1923.

24. UNAG, League of Nations, *Official Journal*, *Official Journal*, 4th Year, No. 8, August 1923, 1014, <https://archives.ungeneva.org/league-of-nations-official-journal-4th-year-no-8-august-1923-2> (accessed 11 February 2025).

25. League of Nations, *Greek Refugee Settlement*, 93; Dimitri Pentzopoulos, *The Balkan Exchange of Minorities and Its Impact on Greece* (London 2002), 98.

services and other related agencies demonstrated, by general consensus, impressive dedication and self-sacrifice in carrying out their mission.²⁶ However, as touching as the sense of duty was, it was not enough to offset the lack of financial resources, the shortage of appropriate means, and the absence of expertise. In order to effectively address the refugee crisis, unprecedented in scale by Greek standards, Greece was in dire need of external assistance.

International solidarity toward the refugees of the Asia Minor Catastrophe manifested itself simultaneously on three different levels, which worked complementarily. The first level was intergovernmental and involved third countries aiding Greece, either through donations of money or by sending various supplies (such as tents, bedding, medicines, food, vaccines, medical equipment, etc.). The Greek side understood the crucial importance of the assistance it would receive, particularly from the Great Powers of Western Europe and the United States, for the success of efforts to care for and rehabilitate the refugees. The situation was so dramatic, and the needs were so vast and urgent, that it was simply impossible for the Greek state to meet them on its own, given that its financial situation was desperate due to the prolonged Asia Minor Campaign and the military defeat it ended in. This reality was publicly acknowledged by the former Prime Minister Eleftherios Venizelos as early as October 1922, when he called for the practical solidarity of all countries toward Greece.²⁷ As he put it two months later, Greece's very survival depended directly on whether the powerful countries of Western Europe and the United States would provide financial support to Greece.²⁸

26. League of Nations, *Greek Refugee Settlement*, 93.

27. Pentzopoulos, *The Balkan Exchange of Minorities*, 77.

28. EVA/BM, 173/76, Eleftherios Venizelos to Edward Capps, Lausanne, 29

The second level was that of international organizations, particularly the League of Nations. From the early stages of the humanitarian crisis caused by the Asia Minor Catastrophe, the League of Nations was mobilized. The initial response of the organization was linked to the activities of the High Commissioner for Refugees, Fridtjof Nansen, who made systematic efforts to secure all kinds of assistance for the Greek refugees.²⁹ He played a key role in the processes that led to the granting of a 12.3 million British pound international loan to Greece in 1924, backed by the League of Nations, with the aim of facilitating refugee rehabilitation.³⁰

The League of Nations also played a leading role in the establishment, in 1923, of the Refugee Settlement Committee, in collaboration with the Greek government. This committee took on the monumental task of settling the refugees in their new homes. As part of its efforts, it undertook several initiatives, including the distribution of cultivable land, seeds, agricultural tools, and livestock to refugee farmers, the construction of refugee housing, and the creation of entire refugee settlements both in cities and in rural areas.³¹ The operations of the Refugee Settlement Committee came to an end in December 1930, after it had provided invaluable services in alleviating problems and resettling hundreds of thousands of refugees.

December 1922 (Εθνικό Ίδρυμα Ερευνών και Μελετών “Ελευθέριος Βενιζέλος” – Digital Archive, <https://www.searchculture.gr/aggregator/edm/venizelosdig/000132-12394>, accessed 11 February 2025).

29. UNAG, League of Nations, *Official Journal*, 4th Year, No. 1, Part II, January 1923, 133-135, <https://archives.ungeneva.org/league-of-nations-official-journal-4th-year-no-1-part-ii-january-1923> (accessed 11 February 2025).

30. Berit Tolleshaug, *Φρίντγιοφ Νάνσεν: Ένας Νορβηγός ήρωας σε μια ελληνική τραγωδία*; (Katerini 2012), 219-228.

31. John Hope Simpson, “The Work of the Greek Refugee Settlement Commission,” *Journal of the Royal Institute of International Affairs*, 8:6 (1929), 583-604.

The third level of international assistance relates to the activities of various charitable organizations and initiatives undertaken by private individuals and civil society organizations. This category includes fundraising events, such as those held in November 1922 in Manchester and Liverpool,³² the collection of various supplies, and public appeals made by prominent international figures in support of the refugees. The first, and certainly the most significant, category includes the systematic efforts made mainly by American organizations, such as the American Red Cross (ARC) and the Near East Relief (NER). The NER primarily focused on the rescue and care of thousands of orphaned children who had lost their parents as a result of the Asia Minor Catastrophe. The efforts of the ARC were concentrated on providing health services, supplies, and food to refugees who had sought refuge in Greece.³³

The Initial Actions of the American Red Cross

The creation of the massive refugee influx into Greece immediately mobilized the ARC. From the first days after the collapse of the Greek front in Asia Minor, the ARC, together with the NER, made available \$25,000 for the assistance of refugees.³⁴ This

32. EVA/BM, 173/50, Demetrios Kaklamanos to Eleftherios Venizelos, London, 6 November 1922, (Εθνικό Ίδρυμα Ερευνών και Μελετών “Ελευθέριος Βενιζέλος” - Digital Archive, (<https://www.searchculture.gr/aggregator/edm/venizelosdig/000132-43314>, accessed 11 February 2025).

33. Dimitra Giannuli, “American Philanthropy in Action: The American Red Cross in Greece, 1918-1923,” *East European Politics and Societies*, 10:1 (1996), 108-132; Antonis Klapsis, “American Initiatives for the Relief of Greek Refugees, 1922-1923,” *Genocide Studies and Prevention*, 6:1 (2011), 98-106; Eleftheria Daleziou, “Adjuster and Negotiator’: Bert Hodge Hill and the Greek Refugee Crisis, 1918-1928,” *Hesperia*, 82:1 (2013), 49-65.

34. FRUS, Office of the Historian, Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, 1922, vol. II, document 326 (868.48/83), The Acting Sec-

amount was certainly insufficient to alleviate the suffering of the hundreds of thousands of Greeks who had been violently uprooted from their ancestral homes and either had already sought refuge in Greece or were expected to do so in the immediate future. However, the swift response of the ARC foreshadowed its intention to assist even more actively, with much more substantial resources, in the monumental task of refugee relief. Furthermore, the ARC had already begun its field operations, having been actively engaged in relief efforts in Smyrna, which was the place of the largest concentration of refugees on the western coast of Asia Minor.³⁵

By the end of September 1922, approximately \$300,000 in funds and supplies had been allocated for the relief of Greek refugees, thanks to various American relief organizations. American emergency relief teams were actively assisting on the ground, particularly in regions where large numbers of refugees had gathered on their way to Greece, including Smyrna, Mudanya, Bursa, and Rodosto. Additionally, U.S. warships were involved in the challenging task of evacuating refugees. Despite this significant American aid, much more needed to be done to save the lives of the hundreds of thousands of refugees. In response, U.S. President Warren G. Harding issued a statement on 9 October 1922, announcing that, in response to an emergen-

retary of State to the High Commissioner at Constantinople (Bristol), Washington, 8 September 1922, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1922v02/d326> (accessed 11 February 2025); and op.cit., document 300 (125.655/10b), The Acting Secretary of State to the Ambassador in Great Britain (Harvey), Washington, 15 September 1923, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1922v02/d300> (accessed 11 February 2025).

35. Op. cit., document 331 (767.68/302), The High Commissioner at Constantinople (Bristol) to the Acting Secretary of State, Constantinople, 10 September 1922, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1922v02/d331> (accessed 11 February 2025).

cy request, the ARC and the NER would jointly continue their efforts. A special fund, named the Near East Emergency Fund, would be created to collect donations from across the United States. The ARC was tasked with operations in Greece, while the NER would focus on Turkey, where thousands of Greeks, including many orphans, were still seeking safety in Greece.³⁶

The ARC was ready to send a mission to Athens to assist in managing the relief efforts for Greek refugees, provided that on the one hand the mission received approval from the Greek authorities, and on the other hand that those authorities ensured the protection of personnel and provided storage and transportation for the necessary supplies.³⁷ Athens eagerly accepted this offer, expressing its gratitude and promising to provide the requested facilities³⁸ to aid the relief work. The situation in Greece was dire, and the Greek authorities had limited resources to address the refugee crisis. In fact, when the first representatives of the ARC arrived in Athens, the Greek government was considering transferring full control of the Ministry of Public Assistance to the ARC.³⁹ Although the ARC could not take on such a responsibility, the aid from American organizations,

36. *Op.cit.*, document 354 (868.48/180a), The Secretary of State to the High Commissioner at Constantinople (Bristol), Washington, 9 October 1922, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1922v02/d354> (accessed 11 February 2025).

37. *Op.cit.*, document 355 (868.48/178a), The Secretary of State to the Chargé in Greece (Caffery), Washington, 9 October 1922, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1922v02/d355> (accessed 11 February 2025).

38. *Op.cit.*, document 358 (868.48/179), The Chargé in Greece (Caffery) to the Secretary of State, Athens, 11 October 1922, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1922v02/d358> (accessed 11 February 2025).

39. *Op.cit.*, document 362 (868.48/215), The Chargé in Greece (Caffery) to the Secretary of State, Athens, 31 October 1922, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1922v02/d362> (accessed 11 February 2025).

particularly the ARC, was so impactful that in January 1923, King George II of Greece personally thanked President Harding for the generous assistance of the United States.⁴⁰

The Scale of the American Red Cross's Aid

The American Red Cross Relief Commission in Greece, established in October 1922, did remarkable work in aiding Greek refugees. By March 1923, over 533,000 refugees were receiving daily food supplies, and approximately 291,000 had been vaccinated against diseases like typhus and cholera by agents of the ARC,⁴¹ in addition to receiving clothing and other essential items. However, it was clear that the American charitable organizations, particularly the ARC, could not sustain this immense effort for much longer. In late January 1923, the American Red Cross Commissioner in Greece, Colonel William N. Haskell, recommended that the organization end its operations by June of that year, with prior notice to allow the Greek government and other parties ample time to make necessary arrangements.⁴²

Following Colonel Haskell's suggestion, the ARC decided to conclude its emergency operations in Greece by 30 June 1923. This decision was based on the difficulty of securing further resources and the understanding that the solution to the refugee

40. Op.cit., document 370 (811.458/793), The Secretary of State to the Chargé in Greece (Caffery), Washington, 5 January 1923, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1922v02/d370> (accessed 11 February 2025).

41. The American National Red Cross, *Annual Report for the Year Ending, June 30, 1923* (Washington 1923), 64-65.

42. FRUS, Office of the Historian, Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, 1923, vol. II, document 214 (868.48/351), The American Red Cross Commissioner for Greece (Haskell) to the Chairman of the American Red Cross (Payne), Athens, 29 January 1923, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1923v02/d214> (accessed 12 February 2025).

crisis required permanent measures, rather than temporary relief, to integrate refugees into Greece's economic life. In other words, the refugees needed to become self-sufficient rather than continuing to rely on charity. Similarly, the NER decided to focus its efforts on orphans and children, ceasing its relief for adult refugees.⁴³

The Greek government attempted to persuade the ARC to extend its operations beyond 30 June 1923, formally requesting this in late May 1923. The Greek government argued that it would be unable to care for the refugees until six months after a peace treaty with Turkey, which had not yet been signed.⁴⁴ However, the American Red Cross was firm in its decision, and Ernest P. Bicknell, Vice President of the Central Committee for International Relations, explained the reasoning behind this choice.

"I feel that it is important to make it necessary that Greece shall be made to feel her full responsibility in the circumstances. Our withdrawal should have a tendency to compel the breaking up of the concentration camps and a wider distribution of the refugees throughout the country. Without the breaking up no progress can be made toward the absorption of the refugees into the normal population or their establishment on self-support. Possibly, too, the pressure of the full burden of responsibility for the refugees will have a wholesome effect on governmental policies."⁴⁵

43. Op. cit., document 225 (868.51 Refugee Settlement Commission/13), The Secretary of State to the British Ambassador (Geddes), Washington, 31 March 1923, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1923vo2/d225> (accessed 12 February 2025).

44. The Peace Treaty of Lausanne was eventually signed on 24 July 1923.

45. FRUS, Office of the Historian, Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, 1923, vol. II, document 237 (868.51 Refugee Settlement Commission/46), The Vice President, Central Committee in Charge of For-

In this context, the U.S. government had already requested substantial assistance from the governments of Great Britain, France, and Italy to help Greece manage the refugee crisis.⁴⁶ This American initiative further demonstrated that U.S. officials firmly believed the solution to the refugee issue lay not in temporary relief, but in more permanent measures.

As previously announced, the ARC officially ended its relief operations in Greece on 30 June 1923. Four days earlier, the Municipality of Athens held an official ceremony where King George II, the Greek Prime Minister, cabinet members, and other officials expressed their gratitude to the ARC for its invaluable support.⁴⁷ By mid-August of the same year, the NER concluded its assistance for adults,⁴⁸ and continued focusing solely on orphans and children in need. Before concluding its operations, the ARC had distributed food rations to the refugees, sufficient for one to two months in some cases, while a small amount of clothing and child-feeding supplies were left to be distributed by local Greek authorities. Thus, even as it withdrew from Greece, the ARC ensured at least a month's worth of fur-

eign Operations, American Red Cross (Bicknell) to the Under Secretary of State (Phillips), Paris, 23 May 1923, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1923v02/d237> (accessed 12 February 2025). For the efforts of the American Friends of Greece to have the ARC return to Greece, see Vo-geikoff-Brogan in this volume.

46. Op.cit., document 225 (868.51 Refugee Settlement Commission/13), The Secretary of State to the British Ambassador (Geddes), Washington, 31 March 1923, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1923v02/d225> (accessed 12 February 2025).

47. *Ελεύθερον Βήμα*, 27 June 1923.

48. FRUS, Office of the Historian, Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, 1923, vol. II, document 253 (868.48/579a), The Secretary of State to the Chargé in Greece (Atherton), Washington, 4 August 1923, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1923v02/d253> (accessed 12 February 2025).

ther relief.⁴⁹ Additionally, with leftover American supplies and favorable crop forecasts, U.S. officials estimated that Greek authorities could meet the refugee needs until November 1923.⁵⁰

The total cost of the relief efforts by the ARC from October 1922 to 30 June 1923, amounted to an impressive \$2,605,696.09.⁵¹ During this period, the ARC provided food and medical care to more than 500,000 Greek refugees, while the NER assisted thousands of Greeks, including many orphans who were still stranded in Asia Minor, seeking safe passage to Greece. After the ARC withdrew, it was estimated that the Greek government would require approximately 12 to 15 million drachmas (around \$375,000 to \$470,000) per month to feed refugees unable to support themselves.⁵² Without this assistance, the Greek government would have struggled to bear the immense responsibility of ensuring the survival of hundreds of thousands of Greek refugees. One can easily imagine the dire consequences for many refugees if the United States, and especially the ARC, had not provided such generous aid in the critical months following the Asia Minor Disaster.

49. Op. cit., document 248 (868.48/553), The High Commissioner at Constantinople (Bristol) to the Secretary of State, Constantinople, 10 July 1923, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1923v02/d248> (accessed 12 February 2025).

50. Op. cit., document 241 (868.51 Refugee Settlement Commission/69), The Special Mission at Lausanne to the Secretary of State, Lausanne, 26 June 1923, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1923v02/d241> (accessed 12 February 2025).

51. The American National Red Cross, *Annual Report*, 90.

52. *Ελεύθερον Βήμα*, 30 June 1923.

Epilogue

The Asia Minor Catastrophe confronted the Greek state with the titanic task of providing multi-dimensional care for the hundreds of thousands of refugees who sought shelter in Greece. This task had to be carried out under the most adverse conditions: following a significant military defeat in the Greco-Turkish War of 1919-1922, which had drained the country both morally and economically. Despite the great difficulties and the colossal scale of the problems that had to be managed, the Greek authorities succeeded in responding better than expected, given the lack of necessary material and technical resources.

Initial forecasts that the majority of refugees were doomed to die from disease, malnutrition, and hardships were fortunately not confirmed, thanks to the coordinated efforts made. The initiatives undertaken to relieve the refugees in the first period following the Asia Minor Catastrophe focused, as was natural, on meeting their vital needs, such as housing, food, and medical care. Thanks to these coordinated actions, over one million people displaced from Asia Minor, Pontus, and Eastern Thrace were eventually settled in Greece and quickly became vital components in every aspect of its economic, social, and intellectual activities.

The success of the entire endeavor, however, would have been doubtful (if not impossible) without the active assistance of the international community, which took the form of multi-level aid (financial, technical, etc.) provided to Greece by third countries, international organizations, and charitable groups. The practical support shown by the international community for the victims of the Asia Minor Catastrophe represents one of the first and simultaneously most significant links in the long chain of humanitarian solidarity that has followed since then.

Indeed, the lives of hundreds of thousands of Greek refugees from Asia Minor, Pontus, and Eastern Thrace were preserved

largely due to the humanitarian efforts of American charitable organizations, particularly the ARC and the NER. These organizations took on the monumental challenge of delivering direct assistance to Greek refugees, who might otherwise have succumbed to disease, malnutrition, and other severe hardships. The urgency of the crisis required swift and effective intervention, and the United States was notably the first to respond to Greece's pleas for aid.

ABBREVIATIONS

DHAMFAG: Diplomatic and Historical Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Greece
 EVA/BM: Eleftherios Venizelos Archives/Benaki Museum
 FRUS: Foreign Relations of the United States
 UNAG: United Nations Archive at Geneva

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THE ACTIVITY OF THE AMERICAN RED CROSS
IN GREECE, 1922-1923:
RELATIONS WITH THE GREEK AUTHORITIES,
EXPECTATIONS, AND FAILURES

NIKOS ANDRIOTIS

ABSTRACT: The American Red Cross arrived in Athens in October 1922, its mission being to alleviate the suffering of Asia Minor refugees. Shortly afterwards, and in collaboration with Greek authorities, the Red Cross expanded its operations to the entire country by creating a supply distribution network. In December 1922, the Greek government and the Red Cross signed an agreement that regulated in detail the contribution of each to the program. In early 1923, the Red Cross declared its anticipated departure that same June. The announcement elicited strong reactions in Greece where many thousands of refugees remained helpless.

The American Red Cross (ARC) had a presence in Greece even before 1922, after the end of World War I, during the years 1918-1920, with its main areas of action being Eastern Macedonia and the Eastern Aegean Islands.¹

Following the collapse of the Asia Minor front in August 1922, while following the retreating Greek army, Greek populations began embarking on ships for Greece and moved to the afore-

1. Dimitra Giannuli, "American Philanthropy in Action: The American Red Cross in Greece, 1918-1923," *East European Politics and Societies*, 10:1, (1996), 108-116.

mentioned areas. It was reported in early September 1922 that there were approximately 200,000 refugees in Greece, whereas, at the end of the same month, there were almost 500,000. At the end of October, their number reached 800,000.²

As early as September 1922, there was refugee relief from American charitable organizations, mainly the ARC and the Near East Relief (NER), both in Asia Minor and Constantinople, as well as in Greece.³ As early as September 5, a meeting was held at the American Consulate in Athens with the participation of the ARC, the NER, and the YMCA, during which a 20-member committee was established with an office in Piraeus.⁴ At the beginning of October, the Greek press announced the involvement of the ARC in refugee relief.⁵ On October 9, the U.S. Department of State announced that the ARC “is prepared to send a mission to Athens in the administration of relief measures on behalf of refugees from Smyrna if approved by Greek authorities, and if these authorities are prepared to afford full protection for personnel and provide necessary storage and transportation facilities for supplies.”⁶ Two days later, the Chargé d’

2. For the number of refugees during the years 1922–1923, see Nikos Andriotis, “Refugees in Greece Before and After 1922: the Numbers,” in Evita Arapoglou (ed.), *Asia Minor Hellenism. Essays and Reflections* (Athens 2022), 103–107. For the health condition of the refugees and the measures taken, see Emilia Salvanou, *Αρρώστια και περίθαλψη στη Μικρασιατική καταστροφή και στους πρόσφυγες* (Athens 2022). Nikos Andriotis, *Πρόσφυγες στην Ελλάδα, 1821–1940. Αφιξη, περίθαλψη, αποκατάσταση* (Athens 2020), 167–201.

3. FRUS, Office of the Historian, Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, 1922, vol. II, document 332 (868.48/87), The Acting Secretary of State (William Phillips) to the Chargé d’affaires in Greece (Jefferson Caffery), Washington, 11 and 22 September 1922, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1922v02/d332> (accessed 27 August 2024).

4. *Ελεύθερος Τύπος* and *Πρωινή*, 6 September 1922.

5. *Πρωινή*, 2 October 1922. See Vogeikoff-Brogan in this volume.

6. FRUS, Office of the Historian, Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations

affaires of the United States in Athens, Jefferson Caffery, conveyed to his superior the gratitude of the Greek side and the promise of all desired facilities.⁷ On October 15, the Relief Commission of the ARC arrived in Athens under Dr. A. Ross Hill, Vice Chairman in Charge of Foreign Operations (Fig. 1).⁸

Upon the arrival of its upper echelons, two questions were raised about the operation of the ARC. The Greek Government requested that the ARC “take entire charge of Ministry of Public Assistance,” but Caffery replied that “American relief organizations would assume no responsibility whatever in connection with the refugee problem, but were willing to lend assistance to Greek authorities in caring for refugees.” Dr. Fridtjof Nansen, High Commissioner for Refugees at the League of Nations, raised the second question during his visit to Athens in the same period, and it concerned “the formation of the general supervisory committee for all refugee work in Greece under the jurisdiction of the League of Nations.” Caffery’s response to the Greek Cabinet was also unfavorable to such a request, as “the American relief organizations are perfectly willing to work in harmony with the League of Nations committee, but that it is impossible for American relief organizations to work under the supervision of Doctor Nansen.”⁹

of the United States, 1922, vol. II, document 355 (868.48/178a), The Secretary of State to the Chargé in Greece (Caffery), Washington, 9 October 1922, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1922v02/d355> (accessed 28 August 2024).

7. Op. cit., document 358 (868.48/179), The Chargé d’affaires in Greece (Caffery) to the Secretary of State, Athens, 11 October 1922, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1922v02/d358> (accessed 28 August 2024).

8. Πατρίς, 16 October 1922. For the arrival and actions of the ARC, see also, Antonis Klapsis, “American Initiatives for the Relief of Greek Refugees, 1922–1923,” *Genocide Studies and Prevention*, 6:1 (April 2011), 98–106.

9. FRUS, Office of the Historian, Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations



Fig. 1. *The arrival of ARC food supplies in November 1922 at Piraeus*
Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, American Red Cross Collection



The action of the ARC was organized in 12 regions: 1) the departments of Attica, Boeotia, Argolis, and Corinthia, 2) Achaia, Eleia, Messenia, and Zante, 3) Arcadia and Laconia, 4) Euboea, Phthiotis and Phocis, 5) Aetolia-Acarmania and Cephalonia, 6) Thessaly, 7) Epirus, Corfu and Lefkada, 8) Crete, 9) Cyclades, 10) Eastern Aegean, 11) Macedonia, and 12) Western Thrace.¹⁰

The Greek Government complied with the ARC instructions to provide necessary aid and informed local authorities accordingly. On December 11, Minister of Health and Social Welfare (ex-Public Assistance) Apostolos Doxiades sent a circular to the general administrators, prefects, and treatment committees to distribute the items provided by the ARC. The sending and receiving of supplies, food, clothing, and bedding, regulated in detail, were to be provided only to the “new” refugees, i.e., to those who had arrived in Greece after August 1922, regardless of race or religion, or to people unable to work due to age or illness. The preceding policy would have to be strictly adhered to, and all care would be cut for those who would settle rural-ly and for those who would refuse to accept offered work or move. The flour provided was precisely defined (300 grams per person daily). Each distribution should be recorded in the refugees’ booklets or on slips.¹¹

of the United States, 1922, vol. II, document 362 (868.48/215), The Chargé in Greece (Caffery) to the Secretary of State, Athens, 31 October 1922, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1922v02/d362> (accessed 28 August 2024). See also two letters of Nansen to Ross Hill at 7 and 26 November 1922, in UNAG, File R1757/48/24870/23735 - Collaboration Between the League of Nations Relief Organisation and the Organisations of the American Red Cross, Particularly With the ‘Near East Relief’, <https://archives.ungeneva.org/collaboration-entre-lorganisation-de-secours-de-la-sdn-et-les-organisations-de-la-croix-rouge-americaine-en-particulier-avec-le-near-east-relief> (accessed 27 August 2024).

10. Πολιτεία, 21 June 1923. *Η Θεσσαλία*, 1 July 1923.

11. K. Kargiotis, *Διατάξεις αφορώσαι την πρόνοιαν και αστικήν εγκατάστασιν των προσφύγων* (Athens 1926), 75-78.

In the same month, the Greek Government and the ARC signed an agreement on medical relief for refugees. In compliance with it, the ARC agreed to assist the Greek Government "in every possible way to ameliorate sanitary conditions among the refugees," "in establishing an organization all over Greece for the medical control and supervision of refugees," "in the sanitation of refugee camps," "to establish wards for sick refugees in camps, 2-10 beds per camp, not to exceed the total number of 500 beds," "to increase the number of beds available in existing hospitals with 500 beds," "to establish new hospitals units, not less than 20 beds each, wherever most needed, not to exceed the total number of 500 beds," "to establish isolation wards in refugee camps, 1-4 beds, not to exceed the total number of 200 beds,"¹² "to establish 3 Stationary Hospitals for infectious diseases not to exceed the total number of 1.000 beds," "to establish 5 mobile hospitals 50 beds each, for infectious diseases," and "to furnish for refugee patients in any hospital, food of the daily value of 1.000 calories."

On its part, the Greek Government agreed "to do everything in its power to ameliorate the sanitary conditions of the refugees, to carry out the program inaugurated by the Red Cross in every detail," to establish an organization¹³ all over Greece

12. By January 1923 the ARC had establish hospitals in Preveza, Arta, Zante, Lefkada, Corfu, Volos, Patras, Thessaloniki (2), Athens, Piraeus and the quarantine station of Saint George (Piraeus). See UNAG, File R1760/48/26047/24010 - Fight Against Epidemic Diseases Amongst Refugees in Greece: File Containing the Minutes of the Executive Committee of Vaccinations. Fourth session of the Greek Executive Committee of Vaccinations, 10/23 January 1923: <https://archives.ungeneva.org/lutte-contre-les-epidemies-parmi-les-refugies-en-grece-dossier-contenant-les-proces-verbaux-du-comite-executif-des-vaccinations> (accessed August 2024).

13. This organization consisted of 8 regional supervisors and approximately 100 sanitary inspectors, or health officers, "preferably refugee doctors." One health officer was responsible for every 5,000 refugees. The

for the sanitary control of refugees," "to use every means in its power, national and otherwise, to ameliorate housing conditions in refugee camps on request and report of the medical supervisors," "to provide the necessary and suitable locations for approximately 100 ambulatoria, to furnish heat, light and cleaning," "to provide the necessary and suitable locations for 2-10 beds in every large camp as wards for patients, to furnish light, heat and cleaning," "to point out the hospitals where the increase of beds is most needed and secure the necessary locations, to secure personnel and to guarantee the conduct of these hospitals," "to secure the necessary locations for the hospital units to be established, and to be responsible for conducting these hospitals," "to secure the necessary locations for the isolation wards in camps, or to furnish the labor and materials for erecting the necessary buildings," "to secure the necessary locations for the contagious hospitals and to be responsible for conducting these hospitals," "to do the same in case of the mobile hospitals," and "to supplement the food supplied by the Red Cross for refugee hospitals up to a daily value of 1500 calories by supplying native food such as oil, vegetables and meat."¹⁴

ARC considered the organization of sanitary police commanded by health officers necessary in refugee camps. Regional supervisors and sanitary inspectors would be offered a supplement to their salaries by the ARC.

14. A copy of the agreement was attached to a letter of the Athens Bureau of the Society of Nations to Cuno de Watteville, Assistant High Commissioner for Refugees, on 27 December 1922. See UNAG, File R1759/48/25506/24010 - Epidemics Amongst the Refugees - Mr. Fielden, Athens - Forwards copies of the medical programme drawn up by the American Red Cross (A.R.C.) and the Agreement signed between the Greek Government and the A.R.C. in this connection, <https://archives.ungeneva.org/epidemics-amongst-the-refugees-mr-fielden-athens-forwards-copies-of-the-medical-programme-drawn-up-by-the-american-red-cross-a-r-c-and-the-agreement-signed-between-the-greek-government-and-the-a-r-c-in-this-connection> (accessed 8 August 2024).

By and large, the Greek Government must have respected the agreement, as seen in a letter of the Greek Chargé d'affaires in Washington, Michael Tsamados, in August 1923: "The cooperation of the Government consisted in part in: a) Remission of all harbour, lighthouse and sanitary dues to ships carrying Red Cross supplies. b) Remission of all Customs Duties. c) All supplies were transported from the ship to Red Cross warehouses, and from warehouses to point of consumption at the expense of the Government. d) All wheat was milled at the Government's expense. e) All bread was baked at the Government's expense. f) American Red Cross Officials and employees travelled free in all trains, ships and street cars in Greece. g) All American Red Cross cables, telegrams and letters were forwarded by the Greek Government at its own expense. h) All offices, warehouses, hospital buildings, etc., were furnished free of charge by the Government as well as living quarters for most of the field managers. In most cases offices and living quarters were furnished and equipped by the Government. i) All light and heat was furnished by the Government. j) Automobiles were furnished for the use of various Red Cross officials at the Government's expense. k) Many of the field managers had special assistants paid by the Government and a special employee was attached to each local committee, selected by the Red Cross, but paid by the Government. l) Coal, wood and water for cooking were all provided by the Government."¹⁵

An "Outline of the Medical Programme of the American Red Cross for the Relief of Refugees in Greece: For the Use of Re-

15. FRUS, Office of the Historian, Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, 1923, vol. II, document 263 (868.51 Refugee Settlement Commission/123), The Greek Chargé (Tsamados) to the Assistant Chief of the Division of Near Eastern Affairs, Department of State (Dwight), Washington, 18 August 1923, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1923v02> (accessed 27 August 2024).

gional Supervisors and Sanitary Inspectors” was attached to the ARC’s and the Greek Government’s agreement. It emphasized the need “to create adequate organizations and proper discipline in refugee camps.”¹⁶ Moreover, “an adequate system of sewerage must be installed in every camp,” caring for latrines and baths, cleaning, and disinfection (the ARC had installed several mobile shower-baths for delousing purposes). Especially the “Child health program” for mothers and babies provided for 30 health stations all over Greece, for prenatal and postnatal work up to six years of age (where milk and layettes would be distributed, as well as 200 wandering baskets for maternity cases), and for intensive educational work.¹⁷

In early 1923, Dr. Ross Hill was succeeded by Lieutenant Colonel William N. Haskell, formerly director of the American Relief Administration’s operations in Russia, who arrived in Athens on 8 January.¹⁸ Many refugees were still in areas that belonged

16. Op. cit. UNAG, File R1759/48/25506/24010 - Epidemics Amongst the Refugees - Mr. Fielden, Athens - Forwards copies of the medical programme drawn up by the American Red Cross (A.R.C.) and the Agreement signed between the Greek Government and the A.R.C. in this connection, <https://archives.ungeneva.org/epidemics-amongst-the-refugees-mr-fielden-athens-forwards-copies-of-the-medical-programme-drawn-up-by-the-american-red-cross-a-r-c-and-the-agreement-signed-between-the-greek-government-and-the-a-r-c-in-this-connection> (accessed 27 August 2024). In many of their announcements in Athenian newspapers or in the provinces, the ARC emphatically stressed the need for discipline in the hygiene of the refugees and in the provision of his supplies to those who were really in need. See, for example, the official ARC statement in Salonika in March 1923 which stated: “The ARC resources are primarily intended to treat the absolute necessities of life. As they are not sufficient, they must be used in the most suitable for those of the members of the refugee families who would otherwise die of hunger without such help,” *Ταχυδρόμος Βορείου Ελλάδος*, 11 March 1923 [my translation].

17. Op. cit. UNAG, File R1759/48/25506/24010.

18. *Εμπρός*, 9 January 1923.

to the Ottoman Empire and in Constantinople, awaiting their transfer to Greece. As the situation in Greece was desperate, the Greek Government decided not to receive any more refugees. In the name of the Greek Cabinet, Greek Ministers asked Caffery "if American relief organizations would make definite promise to take entire care of all Greek refugees now in Pontus region in case Greek authorities furnished ships to bring them here." He replied that "he did not believe that the American relief associations could give any definite guarantees whatsoever but that it was his personal opinion that they would help to the extent of their ability to take care temporarily of these Pontus refugees if they were brought here now in Greek vessels."¹⁹

In the same month, due to the infectious diseases that had already appeared since the autumn of 1922 and the danger of epidemics in refugee camps and all over Greece, a systematic vaccination program against smallpox, cholera, typhoid, and typhus was started in Greece for both refugees and the native inhabitants. In this program, the ARC's contribution was significant, not only in providing materials: "propaganda had, however, been carried on, thanks to the good offices of the American Red Cross, which printed large placards and organised lectures," and also through the clergy, Orthodox and Muslim, "who had strongly urged people to submit to the measure." In addition, the ARC eventually agreed to co-operate in a joint action by distributing bread cards. "In this way it became possible to vaccinate 95 per cent of the refugees in Salonika, due in large measure to the refusal to give a bread card to persons who did not

19. FRUS, Office of the Historian, Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, 1922, vol. II, document 372 (868.48/320), The Chargé in Greece (Caffery) to the Secretary of State, Athens, 21 January 1923, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1922v02/d372> (accessed 27 August 2024).

present themselves for vaccination. This method, which some people might be inclined to criticise with some severity, had, however, enabled them to obtain the necessary results in all the places where the American Red Cross was at work.”²⁰

At the end of January, when the ranks of the ARC had by now settled in various cities of Greece, the Greek government issued a decree stating the obligation of every Greek citizen to assist the ARC, and particularly the public services were to provide all assistance and cooperate with the ARC, whenever help was requested.²¹ In the same month, the legislative decree of January 11, 1923 provided for the exemption “of the foreign staff of the recognized foreign charitable organizations of all taxes for the entire period of their stay in Greece.”²²

20. UNAG, Item C-424-M-187-1923-III, Health Committee, Minutes of the Sixth Session held at Paris from May 26th to June 6th, 1923). Third Meeting 27 May, “Health Situation in Greece. Statement by Dr. Wroczynski, Commissioner of the League of Nations,” 16-17, <https://archives.ungeneva.org/health-committee-minutes-of-the-sixth-session-held-at-paris-from-may-26th-to-june-6th-1923> (accessed 8 August 2024)

21. Vikelea Municipal Library of Heraklion, Archives of the Municipality of Heraklion, dossier 39, 187, Decree of 30 January 1923 to the general commanders, prefects, and police directorates.

22. The decree provided tax exemptions for the Asia Minor and Thracian refugees; the exemption for the foreign charities was defined in article 4. See *Εφημερίς της Κυβερνήσεως του Βασιλείου της Ελλάδος*, 12 January 1923, issue 13 (Νομοθετικό διάταγμα της 11ης Ιανουαρίου 1923 “Περί απαλλαγής των εκ Μ. Ασίας και Θράκης προσφύγων του κατά τον νόμον 2177 τέλους αδείας ασκήσεως επαγγέλματος του οικον. έτους 1922/1923 και του προσωπικού των ξένων φιλανθρωπικών αποστολών του Φ.Κ.Π. στ’ κατηγορίας και του επ’ αυτού συνθετικού.” Άρθρο 4: “εξαιρούνται της φορολογία αμοιβών εκ μισθωτών υπηρεσιών ως και του επ’ αυτών συνθετικού, το εξ αλλοδαπών προσωπικών των ανεγνωρισμένων ξένων φιλανθρωπικών αποστολών (ΑΕΣ κλπ) εφ’ όσον χρόνον θέλει διαρκέσει η εν Ελλάδι παραμονή των,” <https://www.et.gr/SearchFek> (accessed 30 August 2024). See also James L. Barton, *Story of Near East Relief (1915-1930): An Interpretation* (New York 1930), 163-164.

The ARC action focused on areas with a large number of refugees, such as Attica, Macedonia, Lesbos, and Chios. In Athens, in addition to the distribution of clothes and bedding in the refugee camps, the ARC had installed 20 milk distribution stations, twelve baby care stations, seven establishments for cleaning and disinfection, two stationary hospitals for infectious diseases, six outpatient clinics (ambulatories) and seven isolation wards for sick refugees in camps, with the participation of 42 Greek doctors paid by the ARC (Fig. 2).²³ The ARC was an essential aid component from November 1922 in Macedonia, where more than 1/3 of the refugees in Greece had gathered. It established clothing and food stores for the refugee camps of Kalamaria, Harmankioi, Lembet, and Toumba in Salonika, as well as sanitary stations in many urban refugee camps.²⁴ It provided food daily to 115,000 refugees.²⁵ The ARC also had a remarkable part to play on the island of Lesbos. The head of the ARC in Lesbos, H. W. Gregory, had a decisive role and voice in the feeding of the refugees and in determining the health policy on the island.²⁶ On Chios²⁷ approximately 10,000 refugees received care from the state and 29,000 from the

23. *Ελεύθερος Λόγος*, 26 June 1923.

24. *Ταχυδρόμος Βορείου Ελλάδος*, 21 December 1922.

25. *Μακεδονία*, 27 May 1923. *Ταχυδρόμος Βορείου Ελλάδος*, 27 May 1923. *Τηλέγραφος* [Salonika], 28 May 1923. See also *Εθνικός Κήρυξ* [New York], 27 July 1923.

26. He had become entirely integrated into Mytilene, and on New Year's Eve his wedding with Miss Satening, also a member of the ARC mission on the island, took place; the director of the Care Service of Lesbos, Koutroubas, was his best man. *Ελεύθερος Λόγος* [Lesbos], 6 January 1923.

27. The ARC had operated in Lesbos and Chios in previous years as well, from October 1918 until the summer of 1919. See also Natalia Vogeikoff-Brogan, "Professors to the Rescue: Americans in the Aegean at the End of the Great War (1918-1919)," in Zissis Fotakis (ed.), *The First World War in the Mediterranean and the Role of Lemnos* (Athens 2018), 195-211.



Fig. 2. One of the ARC children's clinics in Athens, 1922

Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, American Red Cross Collection



ARC.²⁸ Toward the end of the ARC's operation in Patras, abuses were reported regarding the distribution of ARC supplies (flour and socks), for which three Greeks were charged: two were arrested and the District Director of Care was imprisoned for two months.²⁹

The Announcement of the Departure

We cannot be confident that the termination of the ARC action in Greece had not been decided upon as early as 1922. At Christmas 1922, during his visit to Kalamata, in an interview of the ARC executive, Charles Lewis, we find the only relative indication: "Despite the good intentions of the Americans, the fateful moment will come when they will stop being involved in the care of refugees. For this reason, the Greek authorities and the Greek private charity must take all appropriate measures from now on for a radical solution to the refugee issue."³⁰

The first reference to the termination of the ARC action appears in a letter that Colonel Haskell addressed to the chairman of the ARC, John Barton Payne, at the end of January 1923, on the occasion of funds being allocated to the refugee relief. Specifically, he writes: "Personally, I recommend that we get out of here in June at the latest, for the simple reason that the problem is going to drag on for years, and unless we make a cut-off, the difficulty of withdrawal will increase with the length of time

28. General State Archives, Ministry of Health, box 233-3, Cryptogram. The Prefect of Chios Athanassiadis to the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, 21 June 1923.

29. In particular, the abusers using false lists increased the number of the city's refugees from 10,000 to 14,000, reaping the extra amount of flour, about 1,000 oka per day (1,282kg), and several socks. *Τηλέγραφος* [Patra], 2, 14 and 17 July, 1 and 11 August, 29 September 1923.

30. *Σημαία Καλαμών* [Kalamata], 25 December 1922.

that we remain. [...] I recommend that as soon as the decision is taken to leave Greece that it be announced at once so that plenty of time will be given to the Greek Government and all others concerned to make their arrangements accordingly.”³¹

After the State Department was informed, a relevant positive response referring to it appeared on February 28: “It is clear that the feeding of great camps of refugees cannot and should not go on forever. This summer, when climatic conditions will be most favorable for arranging for the distribution of the refugees, seems the logical and proper time for the Red Cross to terminate its emergency work.” A separate mention was made concerning the Armenians: “The question of the Armenian refugees is one of particular concern to this Department. [...] it may be important to look forward to plans for finding homes elsewhere for Armenian refugees now in Greece.”³² The actions

31. FRUS, Office of the Historian, Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, 1923, vol. II, document 214 (868.48/351), The American Red Cross Commissioner for Greece (Haskell) to the Chairman of the American Red Cross (Payne), Athens, 29 January 1923. A copy of this letter was sent by John Barton Payne to the Under Secretary of State William Phillips, pointing out “If we do not withdraw, it is difficult to forecast a period when we may do so. If we withdraw, we may expect criticism from the churches and the Near East Relief. This would come at any time. Hence, our decision should be made firmly, having in mind the consequences, pro and con.” Op. cit., document 214, The Chairman of the American Red Cross (Payne) to the Under Secretary of State (Phillips), Washington, 19 February 1923. Both documents available here, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1923v02/d214> (accessed 27 August 2024).

32. Op. cit., document 215. The Under Secretary of State (Phillips) to the Chairman of the American Red Cross (Payne), Washington, 28 February 1923, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1923v02/d215> (accessed 27 August 2024). In 1919-1923 approximately 85,000 Armenians fled to Greece. Following the departure of many for the USSR, 33,634 Armenian-speaking people were registered in Greece in 1928. See also Andriotis, *Πρόσφυγες στην Ελλάδα 1821-1940*, 154-155 and 165.

to be taken were identified as follows: "1) That the Red Cross should prepare a comprehensive report of its relief work in Greece and of its decision to terminate the emergency feeding of refugees on a certain date. 2) That this report should be communicated by the Department to the British, French and Italian Governments at the same time as it may be made public in this country or furnished to the Greek authorities. 3) That the Department should call the attention of these governments to the importance of early action to effect a more permanent disposition of the refugees and to find homes for the Armenian refugees for whom Greece may not be able to make provision." Undersecretary Phillips concluded "Meanwhile I presume no publicity will be given to the proposed termination of American Red Cross activities in Greece."³³

The next day, March 1, following reference to the present situation in Greece and the problem of Armenians in his letter to the State Department, Payne completed the rationale for the ARC withdrawal as follows: "In connection with the withdrawal of the American Red Cross not later than June 30, may we suggest that the State Department take official cognizance of the situation and invite the cooperation of other governments and other agencies prepared to deal with a permanent program of reconstruction, to the end that these unfortunate people of all nationalities may be afforded an opportunity to live normal lives."³⁴

33. Op. cit., document 215.

34. Op. cit., document 216. The Chairman of the American Red Cross (Payne) to the Under Secretary of State (Phillips), Washington, 1 March 1923, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1923v02/d216> (accessed 27 August 2024). Payne also stated that "Inasmuch as the Armenians are not attached to the Greeks by ties of kinship or language, it may be anticipated that the Greek Government will feel that it cannot accept the responsibility for the permanent absorption of this element into the Greek population."

On April 5, Caffery, met the Greek Prime Minister, Stylianos Gonatas, and announced to him the ARC's decision to terminate their emergency work in Greece on June 30.³⁵ The Greek Government asked the ARC administration to reconsider its decision, arguing that the emergency was still great, as many refugees still lacked the bare necessities, and the government was unable to carry on the relief work. The ARC remained firm in its decision and assured the Greek Government that they would leave behind enough food to feed a considerable number of refugees for a few months.

Until the ARC's departure, the Greek authorities (central, local, and diplomatic), refugee organizations, and the press pressured the ARC representatives in Greece and the USA, the U.S. Government, and American public opinion to continue the aid.³⁶ The Greek Government made appeals and representations to the governments of the U.S.A. and Great Britain, while its diplomatic missions acted similarly. The burden fell on the Minister of Greece in Washington, Michael Tsamados. In a confidential report on April 24, 1923, he informed the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs about the meetings he had had to try to prevent the departure of the ARC. In his meeting with the chairman of the ARC, John Barton Payne, the latter defended the ARC decision to leave, saying that to give Greece time, he had announced the organization's intention three months earlier. In conversation with the Near East Relief committee, Tsamados understood that they were unwilling to undertake the work of the ARC, as they did not have ample means at their disposal and were, moreover, dissatisfied with the ARC. From contacts

35. *Πολιτεία*, 6 April 1923. At the same time and on the same subject, the ARC Commissioner for Greece Haskell sent a letter to the Prime Minister Gonatas, *Πρωινή*, 7 April 1923.

36. See also Vogeikoff-Brogan in this volume.

he had with the State Department, he believed that no plan was going to be proposed by the U.S. Government. Based on the above, Tsamados proposed informing the American public about the ARC withdrawal before finding another solution for the refugees in Greece, by circulating reports of dignitaries who will go to Greece to examine the situation to enlighten the public opinion "about the cruelty of measures taken." For this purpose, he agreed with the Central Council of the Episcopal Church that they should organize protests in all their churches in the U.S.A. At the same time, he intended to go to New York to request the assistance of the former U.S. Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, Henry Morgenthau.³⁷

However, the ARC remained steadfast in its decision. The Vice Chairman of the Central Committee in Charge of Foreign Operations ARC Ernest P. Bicknell informed the State Department that the ARC in Washington had received "a cable from our Commissioner in Greece, advising us that the Greek Government has formally requested the American Red Cross to continue relief operations several months, stating that the Government is unable to undertake the care of the refugees until six months after the signature of peace." Bicknell felt it was important to make Greece "feel her full responsibility in the circumstances. Our withdrawal should have a tendency to compel the breaking up of the concentration camps and a wider distribution of the refugees throughout the country. Without this breaking up no progress can be made toward the absorption of the refugees into the normal population or their establishment in self support."³⁸

37. General State Archives, Ministry of Health, box 232-1, Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare (attachment to the document), Athens, 14 June 1923.

38. Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS),

The Departure of the ARC

Before its departure, the ARC had left food for the refugees that would be sufficient for one month or, in some regions, more. As the day of departure approached, the Greek authorities tried to make their plans clear to the refugees. In a telegram dated 13 June 1923, the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare informed the general administrators and prefects that, after the departure of the ARC, if the state decided to continue the distribution of bread, it would be limited to a few (people over 65, children under 12, nursing mothers, families whose chief breadwinner was disabled or captive, the sick, and priests). Again, the beneficiaries should lack another working patron and not be affluent. At the same time, he drew attention to the local authorities of the need to compile lists of the food and other items that would be delivered by the ARC in order to protect them from destruction or misuse, especially sanitary material.³⁹ With other circulars, the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare and local bodies, in addressing the refugees through their refugee organizations, advised them to hurry to find a job, become self-sufficient, and not rely only on the state, which did not have the financial means to continue the care that the ARC had provided. However, as far as possible, the Ministry would see to their rehabilitation.⁴⁰ On the occasion of the termination of the ARC action, the Thessaloniki newspaper *Macedonia* called on

1923, vol. II, document 237 (868.51 Refugee Settlement Commission/46). The Vice Chairman, Central Committee in Charge of Foreign Operations, American Red Cross (Bicknell) to the Under Secretary of State (Phillips), Paris, 23 May 1923, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1923v02/d237> (accessed 27 August 2024).

39. General State Archives, Ministry of Health, box 232-1. Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, Athens, 13 June 1923.

40. *Το Φως*, 12 May 1923. *Η Θεσσαλία*, 23 May 1923 and 11 June 1923. *Ελεύθερος Λόγος* [Lesbos], 14 June 1923.

the city's people and institutions to support the state in its care for "the unfortunate refugees."⁴¹

Before the departure of the ARC, ceremonies were held in many Greek cities in honour of its members. On June 26, the Municipality of Athens, "as a representative of the refugee community of Athens," organized a ceremony in the Theater of Herodes Atticus, in the presence of King George II, the Greek Prime Minister, and members of the Cabinet. At this ceremony, the ARC flag was decorated with the Grand Cross of the Savior, while decorations were awarded to 35 ARC officers (Fig. 3).⁴² The ARC upper echelons departed on July 5 from Phaleron, where the Municipality of Piraeus organized a reception, again in the presence of the Prime Minister and ministers.⁴³ In Thessaloniki, there were two receptions;⁴⁴ in Lesbos, a Thanksgiving ceremony;⁴⁵ in Herakleion, an honorary luncheon at Knossos;⁴⁶ in Volos, an American flag-laying ceremony (υποστολή σημαίας) at the ARC maternity hospital,⁴⁷ and an honorary luncheon in Alexandroupolis.⁴⁸

Meanwhile, discussions had begun with the Assembly of the League of Nations in Geneva to find a more permanent solution for the issue of refugees in Greece and the conclusion of a related loan. Throughout July, negotiations for a loan for the

41. *Μακεδονία*, 27 May 1923.

42. *Ελεύθερος Λόγος*, 27 June 1923. *Ελεύθερος Τύπος*, 27 June 1923.

43. *Πατρίς*, 6 July 1923.

44. On 10 June at the General Administration building, and on June 14 at the Chamber of Commerce and Industry. *Μακεδονία*, 11 and 15 June 1923. *Το Φως*, 11 June 1923.

45. *Ελεύθερος Λόγος* [Lesbos], 17 June 1923.

46. *Η Ίδη*, 21 June 1923.

47. *Η Θεσσαλία*, 20 and 21 June 1923. The ARC left food for one month at Volos, and for five months at the Maternity Hospital, the Hospital for Infectious Diseases, the Nursing Station, and the clinics it had established.

48. *Νέα Αλήθεια*, 26 June 1923.

resettlement of the refugees continued, and it was decided to establish a special committee that would manage the entire project. In August 1923, the Near East Relief also terminated its general relief work for refugees and continued its actions only for orphans and children in need.

In mid-August, one and a half months after the departure of the ARC, the Minister of Greece in Washington, Tsamados, citing the tough economic and financial conditions in the country and the vast number of refugees, requested that the U.S. government allow the participation of American organizations in the strictly humanitarian work assumed by the committee created in Geneva, i.e., to be represented on the special committee which was to be formed.⁴⁹

Tsamados began his letter by painting a bleak picture of the situation in Greece in the summer of 1923: "At this particularly critical moment, when the supplies left in Greece by the American Red Cross are exhausted; when the Near East Relief has announced the termination of all adult relief; and when sixty thousand additional refugees from Constantinople and the Black Sea ports are arriving in Greece, the Greek Government wishes once more to call attention to the terrible plight of the refugees now in Greece, facing certain death, and to make a last appeal to the humanitarian sentiments of the civilized world on behalf of hundreds of thousands of human beings who, through no fault of their own are homeless, destitute and are now, seemingly, abandoned to starvation and death." And he ended it in an equally dramatic tone: "If adequate steps are not taken to prevent their misery and death, history will lay the blame at the door of the civilized world."⁵⁰

49. The Refugee Settlement Commission was founded by the protocol signed in Geneva on 29 September 1923.

50. FRUS, Office of the Historian, Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, 1923, vol. II, document 263 (868.51 Refugee Settlement



Fig. 3. *On the evening of June 27, 1923, the ARC staff was decorated by the Greek government in an elaborate ceremony*
ERT Archives, Petros Poulides Collection



In the end, the pressure exerted on the Greek Government by the departure of the ARC contributed to the acceleration of the effort for permanent settlement and rehabilitation of the refugees, the completion of the procedures for the conclusion of the refugee loan, and the foundation of the Refugee Settlement Commission in September 1923. By the spring of 1923, the rural settlement of the refugees had begun, mainly in Macedonia, while at the same time, refugee settlements began to be built in the cities. As an example, we cite an article from the Athenian newspaper *Πολιτεία* (*Politia*) at the end of June 1923 which, after writing that following the departure of the Americans the task of caring for and definitively rehabilitating the refugees remained with the Greek state, concluded: “the task of definitively rehabilitating the refugee families has already begun both in the provinces and in Attica.”⁵¹ Gradually, by the end of the 1920s, the humanitarian crisis had been overcome, and most refugees had settled in Greece. Of course, it took another decade and the Second World War for them to be fully integrated into their new homeland.

Commission/123), The Greek Chargé (Tsamados) to the Assistant Chief of the Division of Near Eastern Affairs, Department of State (Dwight), Washington, 18 August 1923, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1923v02/d263> (accessed 27 August 2024). The Chief of the Division of Near Eastern Affairs, Department of State, A. W. Dulles, responded in a diplomatic way: “The Department has not failed to bring to the attention of the American Red Cross and the Near East Relief the considerations advanced in your communication. These organizations will undoubtedly be able to indicate directly to the responsible European and Greek agencies engaged in refugee relief work in Greece any further information with regard to their position in the matter which those agencies may desire.” Op. cit., document 268 (868.51 Refugee Settlement Commission/140). The Chief of the Division of Near Eastern Affairs, Department of State (Dulles) to the Greek Chargé (Tsamados). Washington, 12 September 1923, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1923v02/d268> (accessed 27 August 2024).

51. “Το προσφυγικό,” *Πολιτεία*, 21 June 1923.

ABBREVIATIONS

FRUS: Foreign Relations of the United States

UNAG: United Nations Archives at Geneva

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"ASSIMILATION OF REFUGEES
PROCEEDED TO ASTONISHING EXTENT":
FAKE NEWS IN THE FALL OF 1923
AND THE AMERICAN FRIENDS OF GREECE

NATALIA VOGEIKOFF-BROGAN

ABSTRACT: In June 1923, the American Red Cross departed from Greece after having provided food, clothing, and medical assistance to more than 500,000 refugees for nine months. The Red Cross communicated its departure with press releases giving the impression that its operation had led to the assimilation of the refugees. Many Americans with firsthand knowledge of the situation in Greece challenged such a story and lobbied for the return of the Red Cross. Failing to convince the U.S. government that Greece remained in need, Edward Capps, Chair of the Managing Committee of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens, founded a new philanthropic organization, the American Friends of Greece, which aimed to create income for the refugees.

Following the Smyrna Disaster in September 1922, former Prime Minister Eleftherios Venizelos appealed to several American humanitarian organizations for assistance.¹ The American community in Athens, at the initiative of Darrell Osmer Hibbard (1881-1948), Director of the Youth Men's Christian

1. National Research Foundation "Eleftherios K. Venizelos" - Digital Archive, telegram, 18 October 1922, <https://www.searchculture.gr/aggregator/edm/venizelosdig/000132-8921> (accessed 19 January 2024).

Association (YMCA) in Greece, and Bert Hodge Hill, Director of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens (ASCSA or the School hereafter), joined efforts to seek the support of the American Red Cross (ARC) and the Near East Relief (NER) for the hundreds of thousands of Asia Minor refugees who were pouring into Greece.

By early October, the Athens American Relief Committee (Athens Committee, hereafter) was formed. Its board, chaired by Hill, included many prominent Americans residing in Athens, such as William S. Taylor (1887-1930) of the Standard Oil Company, Henry Albert (Harry) Hill (1896-1959) of the American Express Company, and Jeffery Caffrey (1886-1974), *Chargé d'affaires ad interim* of the American Mission in Greece.² Members of the Athens Committee traveled to many of the Greek islands in late October/early November 1922, reporting in detail on the refugee situation.³ In addition to sending urgent telegrams to America for help, the Athens Committee coordinated offers of service from American citizens and handled monetary and in-kind assistance. We also know that the Committee ran one of the first refugee camps, the Lahanagora camp in Piraeus.⁴

The ARC mission arrived in Athens in late October 1922 to take over all responsibility for relief efforts from the Athens Committee, which ceased to operate after November. The ARC stayed in Greece until 30 June 1923. During this 9-month period, the organization fed more than 500,000 people (occasionally

2. ASCSA Archives, *Annual Report* 79 (1959-1960), 17 (obituary for Harry Hill).

3. ASCSA Archives, Bert Hodge Hill Papers, Box 13, folder 2, Report, November 1922.

4. Eleftheria Daleziou, "Adjuster and Negotiator": Bert Hodge Hill and the Greek Refugee Crisis, 1918-1928," in Jack L. Davis and Natalia Vogeikoff-Brogan (eds.), *Philhellenism, Philanthropy or Political Convenience? American Archaeology in Greece, Hesperia* (Special Issue), 82:1 (2013), 56-57.

up to 800,000) daily, distributed 24,000 tons of food, clothing, and medical supplies, worth roughly \$3,000,000.⁵ The ARC's efforts in Greece have been the focus of several papers, some critical of the propaganda that went hand-in-hand with U.S. humanitarian agencies working abroad.⁶

Edward Capps and the American Friends of Greece

The purpose of this paper is not to discuss the ARC's relief work in Greece but to examine the organization's refusal to return to Greece after June 1923 when there was still need for emergency relief. I am also interested in the role of a new organization that emerged in October 1923. The American Friends of Greece (AFG) was the brainchild of Edward Capps (1866-1950), former U.S. Minister to Greece (1920), and Chair of the ASCSA Managing Committee (1918-1939) (Fig. 1). Although there is abundant official correspondence in the National Archives in Washington

5. "Cost of the A. R. C. Relief Work in Greece Over \$2,600,000," *The Red Cross Journal*, 7 July 1923.

6. The ARC had created a separate department, the Insular and Foreign Division (IFD), to reach out to the thousands of Americans who resided abroad, either as employees of the State Department or working for various American corporations, institutions, and organizations (Julia F. Irwin, *Making the World Safe: The American Red Cross and a Nation's Humanitarian Awakening* [Oxford 2013], 76). See also Dimitra Giannuli, "American Philanthropy in Action: The American Red Cross in Greece, 1918-1923," *East European Politics and Societies*, 10:1 (1996), 108-132; Nikos Andriotis in this volume; Jack L. Davis, "The American School of Classical Studies and the Politics of Volunteerism," in Davis and Vogeikoff-Brogan, *Philhellenism, Philanthropy or Political Convenience?* 15-48; Evanthis Hatzivassiliou, *Βιώματα του Μακεδονικού Ζητήματος. Δοξάτο Δράμας, 1912-1946* (Athens 2014); Konstantinos Diogos, "'Americanization' Through Philanthropy: The Role of American Red Cross and American YMCA in Greece during 1918-1920," *Ex-centric Narratives: Journal of Anglophone Literature, Culture and Media*, 6 (2022), <https://ejournals.lib.auth.gr/ExCentric/article/view/8813> (accessed 25 January 2024).



Fig. 1. *Edwards Capps, ca. 1920*
ASCSA Archives

D.C. and the League of Nations Archives in Geneva for the period between the withdrawal of the ARC in June 1923 and the establishment of the Refugee Settlement Commission in October 1923, my research focuses on action behind the scenes, drawing on informal correspondence between Edward Capps, Bert H. Hill, and Carl W. Blegen, Assistant Director of the School. In addition to holding key positions at the American School, all three men were ARC veterans, having offered their services in Macedonia in 1918-1919.⁷ They also maintained strong ties with the U.S. Legation in Athens.⁸

A professor of Classics and former colleague of President Woodrow Wilson at Princeton University, a colonel in the ranks of the ARC with field experience in Macedonia, and an ardent supporter and friend of Venizelos, Capps combined good knowledge of Greece with access to powerful political circles in both countries. On 12 November 1922, in a long article in the *New York Times*, titled “\$33,000,000 Due to Greece on Loan Held to Be Our Debt of Honor,” Capps criticized America for withholding her share of the Tripartite Loan of 1918 from Greece.⁹

On 13 January 1923, Capps communicated to Venizelos, who was in Lausanne negotiating on behalf of Greece the terms of the Lausanne Treaty, that he had presented Greece’s case to Elihu Root, former Secretary of State and first President of the Car-

7. About Blegen’s service in Eastern Macedonia, see Davis, “The American School of Classical Studies and the Politics of Volunteerism,” op.cit.

8. Louis E. Lord, *A History of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens, 1882-1942: An Intercollegiate Project* (Cambridge Mass. 1947), 133: “Hill took charge of the Home Service Bureau, where his chief duty was to see that allotment checks and insurance certificates for the twenty-five thousand-odd Greek soldiers in the American Army reached their proper destinations in Greece.”

9. ASCSA Archives, Bert H. Hill Papers, Box 2, folder 1. Also available in Εθνικό Ίδρυμα Ερευνών και Μελετών “Ελευθέριος Κ. Βενιζέλος” - Digital Archive: <https://venizelosarchives.gr/show/12420> (accessed 29 January 2024).

negie Endowment for International Peace (Root was pivotal in helping the ASCSA secure \$250,000 for the construction of the Gennadius Library).¹⁰ Venizelos thanked Capps a few days later for his actions on behalf of Greece, adding that “We are indeed fortunate in having, in you, so true and able a friend across the Ocean in this tragic crisis.”¹¹

Following the departure of the ARC from Greece in June 1923, Capps travelled to Washington in August to lobby once again on behalf of the refugees. In a letter to Blegen, he described his days as futile: “The general attitude there is: ‘Greece did it, let her stew in her own juice.’ But in back of our national policy of relieving distress is an unacknowledged but actual desire to make Greece so desperately in need of us that she [Greece] will consent to tear up the Loan agreement and forego the balance, \$33,000,000, due her on that contract. She could be recognized tomorrow and be forgiven the fifteen million we have already paid if she would do this. It’s a shocking state of affairs [...]”¹² Capps was referring to the Allies’ refusal to recognize King Constantine as head of the Greek State after his return to Greece in December of 1920.¹³

10. Εθνικό Ίδρυμα Ερευνών και Μελετών “Ελευθέριος Κ. Βενιζέλος” - Digital Archive, 13 January 1923, <https://venizelosarchives.gr/show/11458> (accessed 29 January 2024).

11. Εθνικό Ίδρυμα Ερευνών και Μελετών “Ελευθέριος Κ. Βενιζέλος” - Digital Archive, 27 January 1923, <https://venizelosarchives.gr/show/11460> (accessed 29 January 2024).

12. ASCSA Archives, Carl W. Blegen Papers, Box 15, folder 2, 24 August 1923. In another letter to Blegen, Capps confided that he also “felt that for some time that some distinctly anti-Greek stuff was coming to the State Department from the Athenian Legation. It is too bad, for if the waters were not polluted, there would be a chance of our recognizing the Greek Government at this time.” Capps was suspecting Caffery, the Chargé d’ affaires, as the source of the anti-refugee sentiment.

13. Louis P. Cassimatis, *American Influence in Greece 1917-1929* (Kent, Ohio 1988), 68-77.

Frustrated by the U.S. government's inaction concerning the refugees and the withdrawal of the ARC "from its unfinished task," Capps issued on 1 September 1923, a pamphlet, "For Aid to Greece and the Refugees of the Near East," stating the need for a new organization that would educate the American people about the refugee situation in Greece, negotiate with existing organizations for continuance of relief aid to Greece, and organize a separate appeal for funds.¹⁴ The American Friends of Greece was incorporated on 16 October 1923. The organization's membership included many important American philhellenes associated with academia, the press, businesses, and philanthropic organizations.¹⁵

In a follow-up press release on 1 December 1923, the AFG explained to the American public the initiative of the League of Nations to establish a Refugee Settlement Commission (on 31 October 1923) and the actions of the Greek government to secure 500,000 hectares of land (Fig.2). Capps wanted to raise awareness that the money raised by the Refugee Settlement Commission (RSC) could not be used for temporary relief, and that there were still 300,000 "destitute people who must be carried through the present winter."¹⁶ Capps was informed of a

14. For a copy of the leaflet, see UNAG, File C1409-305-R-404-1-61-1, International Labour Office Refugees Service, Relations with the American Friends of Greece: <https://archives.ungeneva.org/international-labour-office-refugees-service-relations-with-the-american-friends-of-greece-washington-mr-salmon/download> (accessed 25 January 2024).

15. The establishment of the American Friends of Greece was also announced in the *National Herald* (Εθνικός Κήρυξ) on 7 October 1923 in the hope that the Greek *omogeneia* in America would respond to the call for aid to Greece and the refugees.

16. For a copy of the leaflet, see ASCSA Archives, Bert H. Hill Papers, Box 2, folder 2.

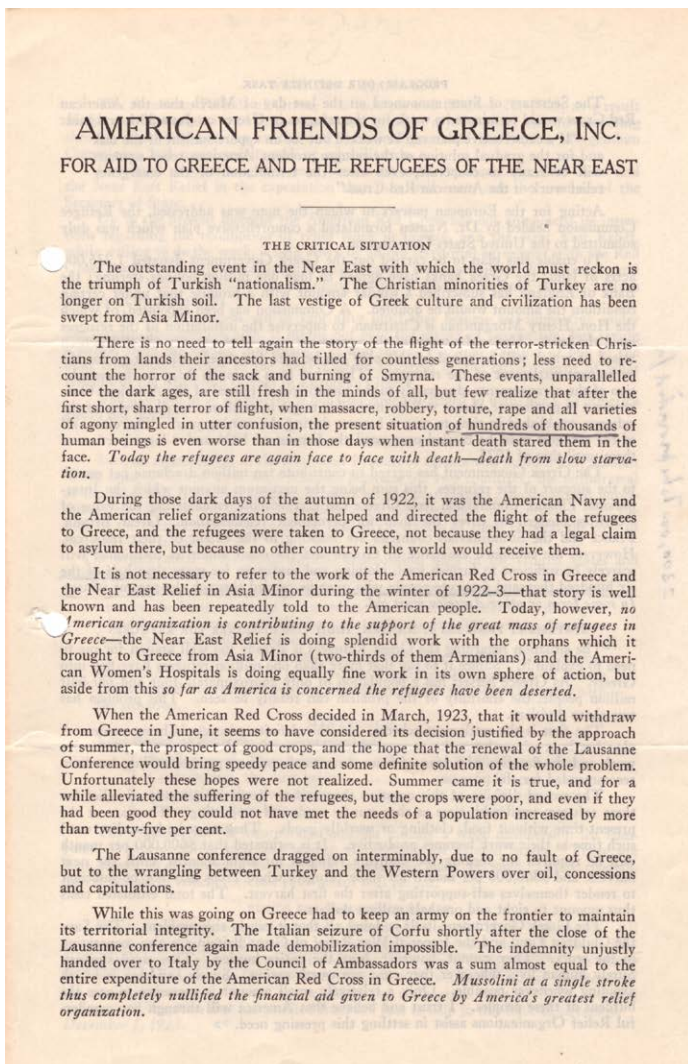


Fig. 2. *American Friends of Greece (AFG), leaflet, 1 December 1923*
ASCSA Archives, Bert H. Hill Papers

telegram that Henry Morgenthau, the President of the RSC, had sent to the President of the ARC, John Barton Payne, a few days earlier, on 21 November, imploring the organization to renew its relief to Greece “to prevent wholesale starvation.” Morgenthau’s telegram raised the number of destitute refugees to 700,000.¹⁷ So, what was the real number of refugees still in need of immediate aid? The AFG needed hard data, not just wide-ranging estimates, to press its case.

Blegen’s Fateful Cablegram

Capps sent the School’s Assistant Director, Carl W. Blegen, whose judgement he trusted, an urgent telegram asking for information about the number of refugees who were *not* receiving any relief.¹⁸ Blegen was a field archaeologist who had lived continuously in Greece since 1909 and had worked for the ARC in 1919, organizing relief stations in Macedonia (Fig. 3).

Three days later, on 3 December 1923, Blegen telegraphed a long reply stating that “the assimilation [of] refugees [has] proceeded [to] astonishing extent,” that the unassimilated people were “about one hundred ten thousand,” but without danger of general starvation, further concluding that emergency relief was not needed. He also recommended that Capps consult with Allen W. Dulles, Chief of the Division of Near Eastern Affairs, and read a copy of a “recent, detailed report by the American Athens Relief Committee.”¹⁹

17. ASCSA Archives, Bert H. Hill Papers, box 2, folder 2, Morgenthau to Judge Payne, 21 November 1923.

18. ASCSA Archives, Carl W. Blegen Papers, Box 15, folder 2, 29 November 1923.

19. ASCSA Archives, Carl W. Blegen Papers, Box 15, folder 2, 3 December 1923.



Fig. 3. *Carl W. Blegen, ca. 1920*
ASCSA Archives, Carl W. Blegen Papers

Blegen confided to Hill, the School's Director, that he expected Capps to find his cablegram disappointing, but it should serve "as an honest outside opinion to check up exaggerated statements in the N.Y. Times, emanating presumably from Mr. Salmon." Blegen's judgement was based on his own observations and on lengthy talks with Hibbard (Director of YMCA) and the new Chargé d'affaires, Ray Atherton. His other comment about Brainerd Salmon echoed the Legation's opinion that Salmon had been hired by the Greek Government "as a propaganda agent in America with the understanding that he was to receive a commission on all loans he may succeed in getting paid and likewise on all sums collected and turned over by philanthropic organizations inspired by his propaganda for relief work [...]. In any case S. [Salmon] appears to have a most unsavory reputation among American (and Greek) circles in Athens. I wonder if Mr. C. [Capps] knows how unpopular S. is over here."²⁰

Capps did find Blegen's cable puzzling. His numbers did not agree with information coming from other sources: "I have spent a good many hours with Nansen and have had access to his figures; I have the figures of Doxiades; I have talked with Morgenthau [...], and I have, within the fortnight, talked with Dulles, with Vickrey of the Near East Relief [...]. And your information, which you say is in accord with that of the 'Athens Committee,' is absolutely out of line with the composite view in the above-mentioned sources," Capps replied.²¹

20. ASCSA Archives, Bert H. Hill Papers, Box 2, folder 3, 5 December 1923. For more on Salmon, see Natalia Vogeikoff-Brogan, "Brainerd P. Salmon: American Journalist (and Many More) and Friend of Greece," *From the Archivist's Notebook*, 12 April 2023, <https://nataliavogeikoff.com/2023/04/12/brainerd-p-salmon-american-journalist-and-many-more-and-friend-of-greece/> (accessed 15 January 2024).

21. ASCSA Archives, Carl W. Blegen Papers, Box 15, folder 2, Capps to Blegen, 5 December 1923.

Capps also puzzled over Blegen's reference to the Athens Committee Report: "what and who are they?" The Committee he knew of (i.e., the Athens American Relief Committee) had been defunct since November 24, 1922.²² Conferring with Dulles added to Capps's frustration: "They seem to want to minimize the need over there [Greece] and magnify the Gk. Government's capacity to handle the situation." Capps asked Blegen to confirm his low figure of 110,000 unassimilated refugees before he shared the number with other constituencies.²³

Unfortunately for Capps, Blegen's cablegram had already leaked to the State Department and the ARC, because Blegen had shared a copy with Atherton. In the Executive Committee meeting of the ARC on 13 December 1923, the organization used Blegen's cablegram and the Athens Committee Report as evidence why it should not resume its relief program for Greece. The AFG left the meeting "feeling that [they] had made fools of [themselves], taking seriously a relief situation that required no outside attention at all."²⁴ Capps confided to Hill that "Blegen's telegram has done positive harm, for the Red Cross was apparently quite ready to vote further help in the light of the Morgenthau, Nansen, and similar reports."²⁵ Capps requested from the State Department a copy of the Athens Committee report.

Meanwhile there were important political developments in Greece. In the elections of 16 December 1923, Venizelos's party won; three days later King Constantine was forced into exile.

22. ASCSA Archives, Bert H. Hill Papers, Box 2, folder 2, Capps to Hill, 24 December 1923.

23. ASCSA Archives, Carl W. Blegen Papers, Box 15, folder 2, Capps to Blegen, 5 December 1923.

24. ASCSA Archives, Carl W. Blegen Papers, Box 15, folder 2, Capps to Blegen, 16 December 1923.

25. ASCSA Archives, Bert H. Hill Papers, Box 2, folder 2, Capps to Hill, 16 December 1923.

In a long congratulatory letter to Venizelos, Capps expressed his hope that the new political situation would expedite the recognition of the Greek government by the Allies, and, by so doing, America would be forced to pay to Greece the remaining \$33,000,000 of the 1918 Loan. He also announced to Venizelos the formation of the American Friends of Greece and its goals.²⁶

In late December, the ARC communicated to Fridtjof Nansen, the High Commissioner for the Refugees at the League of Nations, its decision not to resume emergency relief because there was no need according to its sources: "It is felt from the information before the Red Cross that the principal work which remains to be done in Greece relates to the settlement of the refugees on the land and engaging them in occupations of a productive culture - a task of continuing and not of the emergency character to which the foreign relief activities of the Red Cross must necessarily be confined."²⁷

About the same time, Morgenthau cabled Capps that there were over five hundred thousand refugees requiring immediate relief.²⁸ The State Department dragged its heels about send-

26. Capps also praised Salmon's services to Venizelos, see Εθνικό Ίδρυμα Ερευνών και Μελετών "Έλευθέριος Κ. Βενιζέλος" - Digital Archive, 26 December 1923, <https://venizelosarchives.gr/show/27456> (accessed 29 January 2024).

27. UNAG, File R1765/48/32579/29451 - Settlement Scheme: Grant of Funds by the American Red Cross, James L. Fieser to Nansen, 29 December 1923, <https://archives.ungeneva.org/settlement-scheme-grant-of-funds-by-the-american-red-cross>, (accessed 25 January 2024).

28. Morgenthau's telegram is copied in a letter from Capps to Blegen; see ASCSA Archives, Carl W. Blegen Papers, Box 15, folder 3, 2 January 1924. In the same letter, Capps once again accuses Atherton of being "anti-Greek in his coloring;" and explains the conditions under which Salmon was hired by the Greek government: "I can't imagine that you believed the rumor that you repeated to Hill - that Salmon's contract with the Greek Government gives him a rake-off on relief funds obtained. [...] His contract was an open

ing Capps a copy of the Athens Committee report until early in January of 1924: "[...] I hardly expect to see it. And I am, myself, convinced that they themselves do not believe it, either. But they do not like Morgenthau, or the League, and prefer to let the Greeks 'stew in their own juice' as Wadsworth stated to me last September."²⁹ After a month of silence, Blegen finally wrote to Capps trying rather sheepishly to justify his number of assimilated refugees and to argue for the validity of the Athens Committee Report, concluding that the disagreement "was essentially one of phraseology, not of facts."³⁰

The Athens American Relief Committee Report

When the Athens Committee Report (a.k.a. the Hibbard-Melas-Rapp report) finally reached Capps in early January; he found it "full of nauseating laudation of the ARC, very restrained about the NER, does not mention Morgenthau or a mission of the League, does not mention the fact that the Greek Gov. had been obliged to discontinue the dole of a drachma a day to 259,000 people, or the statement of the British Relief that they were able to feed only one-seventh of the applications that came to them, having food for one meal daily for only 40,000 -and that sort of thing."³¹

matter, recommended in general terms by Venizelos [...]. Salmon's own remuneration is not contingent upon anything, and it is very small. [...] As to refugee funds, he has nothing to do with-handling any, and can have no immediate knowledge of any sent to Greece."

29. ASCSA Archives, Carl W. Blegen Papers, Box 15, folder 3, Capps to Blegen, 2 January 1924.

30. ASCSA Archives, Carl W. Blegen Papers, Box 15, folder 3, Blegen to Capps, 2 January 1924.

31. ASCSA Archives, Bert H. Hill Papers, Box 2, folder 2, Capps to Hill, 4 January 1924.

Transmitted to the State Department on 13 November 1923, and signed by Hibbard, Executive Secretary of the Athens American Committee, and two investigators, Michael Melas and William J. Rapp, the report summarized the efforts of the ARC and other foreign relief agencies, and praised the actions taken by the Greek government.³² It tabulated the numbers of refugees by original arrivals, those remaining, and the needy. The needy ones were estimated to about 105,000, and were divided into widows with small children, small orphans, the sick, and the aged. The geographical coverage of the report, however, left many parts of Greece unaccounted for.³³ Second only to the need of women and children for relief was that for medical assistance since malaria and tuberculosis were threatening to become epidemic. Apart from these two issues, the report praised the entrepreneurial character of the refugees, concluding that they were ready to become self-supporting.³⁴

On 4 January 1924, Salmon cabled Morgenthau in Athens about an imminent press release of the ARC carrying the title "Smyrna Refugee Situation Solved by Assimilation" (Fig. 4).³⁵ The release, based on the Athens Committee Report, praised the work of the ARC, and presented the refugee assimilation as a *fait accompli*, borrowing phrases from the Athens Committee

32. William Jourdan Rapp (1895-1942), who was associated with the YMCA at the time of the report, later became a well-known writer and editor in the U.S.

33. The report was limited to Crete, the Cyclades, Chios, Samos, and Mytilene, the eastern half of the Peloponnesus, Athens, Piraeus, and Salonica.

34. "In the matter of employment the refugees themselves recognize that they are best off when they can work for themselves. Literally thousands upon thousands of shops have been opened in gateways, angles of walls, and public squares [...]," *The Red Cross Courier*, 19 January 1924, 9 (where the Athens Committee Report was eventually published).

35. *The Red Cross Courier*, 5 January 1924.

The Red Cross Courier

Official Journal of The American Red Cross

Vol. 3, No. 1.

WASHINGTON, D. C., JANUARY 5, 1924

Subscription \$1 a Year

WELFARE SERVICE WORK FOR NURSES FILLING BIG NEED

National Activities During
And Since World War Bulk
Large in Results

AID TO HIGHER TRAINING

Three Years of Intimate Con-
tact With Nurses Proves
Value of Service

A valuable three-year summary of the Medical Social Service work and Public Health Nursing for the nurses of the American Red Cross and all governmental nursing services, inaugurated in New York by Miss Florence Johnson in 1917 for the mobilizing units, and since conducted to meet changing conditions in the nursing world, shows a total of 602 nurses reported to the committee since the beginning of 1920, and a total of 5,477 visits made during this period.

The different organizations represented were the American Red Cross, U. S. Public Health Nursing Service, Central Club for Nurses, National Organization for Public Health Nursing, Maternity Center Association, and the Department of Nursing and Health of Teachers' College, Columbia University.

VALUABLE CONTACTS

The report in part is as follows: From 1917-19, the Atlantic Division of the Red Cross had a great opportunity for coming in contact with the nurses who went overseas during the War. Thousands came as members of military units, but even so, being strangers in New York, they frequently needed some friendly service which the Red Cross was prepared and glad to give.

The nurses going abroad under the Red Cross were a direct responsibility. If they were ill, or in any way needed attention during their journey in New York prior to sailing it became the privilege of the Division office to render such assistance. When the war was over and the nurses returned to America, it was again the privilege of the Red Cross staff to meet them, and, if they were ill, to place them in line for necessary assistance. If they had served under the Red Cross, they were the direct responsibility of the Red Cross, and much time had to be spent in securing physical examinations, hospital treatment, convalescent care, and various other forms of social service.

MANY REMAIN IN NEW YORK

As this work grew, it became a tax upon the staff of the Atlantic Division, which was again fortunate in securing the valuable assistance of Miss Mary Maguen Brown, who had assisted with the embarkation

(Continued on Page 6)

A Spirited First Aid Contest



Employees of the Pacific Gas and Electric Co., and the Official Red Cross and State Examiners, in the midst of Red Cross First Aid and Life-Saving tests at Fairfax, Calif.

2,103,382 ACTUAL ROLL CALL TOTAL TO DATE TABULATED

Membership in U. S. Re- ported by Divisions is Still Incomplete

The number of members enrolled in the Seventh Roll Call actually reported to National Headquarters to date, with all estimates eliminated, is 2,103,382. This total represents approximately reports from not more than one-half of the Chapters in the country, and includes no returns from the Chapters outside continental United States.

The national total stated above represents the following membership enrollments reported by the Divisions: Washington Division, 295,341; New England Division, 203,767; Southern Division, 191,494; Central Division, 379,090; Southwestern Division, 266,472; Pacific Division, 139,615.

SOUTHERN DIVISION LEADS

The Southern Division continues as the only one of the Divisions that has reported an enrollment for 1923 in excess of that for the past year.

It is encouraging to Red Cross workers to learn from the returns that many Chapters inactive for several years have experienced a revival of interest and have conducted successful Roll Calls.

Managers Walter Davidson comments on this feature of the Roll Call in the Central Division, and it is true of several other sections of the country. Many of the continuously active Chapters have also exceeded their membership of last year.

PINK SHOWING BY CHAPTERS

In the Central Division, for instance, out of 399 Chapters reporting 196 have increased their enrollments. In North Dakota 28 out of 43 Chapters have bettered their membership; in Iowa 29 out of 69;

in South Dakota 22 out of 36; in Michigan 57 out of 59; in Nebraska 23 out of 39; in Illinois 31 out of 82; in Minnesota 13 out of 43; in Wyoming 19 out of 14; in Wisconsin 19 out of 22 and in Montana four out of 14.

These records represent only partial returns in many instances. The report of the Southwestern Division of 263,472 members is based on returns from only 163 of its several hundred Chapters. It stands to date within less than 84,000 of its 1923 enrollment.

Hawaiian Juniors Send 10,000 Gifts to Young Japanese

On board the Pacific liner *Tenaga Maru* which reached Yokohama a few days before Christmas, there was a shipment of gifts from the members of the American Junior Red Cross of Hawaii for the girls and boys of the devastated districts of Japan. The shipment contained more than 10,000 gifts, which were intended for distribution on New Year's day, each bearing the greeting "Happy New Year." On each small box was the name of the school making the gift.

This action on the part of the Juniors of Hawaii was entirely spontaneous. The Hawaiian Chapter made a splendid record in contributing to the relief of Japanese earthquake sufferers, but the school girls and boys were not satisfied with the part they played in this work, and eagerly sought an opportunity to do something special for the children of Japan. The result was the filing of thousands of small boxes with toys and sweets. The Juniors' New Year gifts sent from Hawaii were in addition to the more than 10,000 gift boxes which were sent to Japan by the Juniors of the Pacific Division.

SMYRNA REFUGEE SITUATION SOLVED BY ASSIMILATION

American-Athens Relief Com-
mittee Reports on Fact
To State Department

NEARLY MILLION SAVED

American Red Cross and Greek
Government Commended
for Solution of Problem

"One year after the Smyrna catastrophe it is obvious that the refugees from Turkish territory now in Greece have demonstrated almost unbelievable ability to assimilate themselves with the help of the Greek Government."

The statement is the substance of a report received from Athens at National Headquarters of the American Red Cross through Undersecretary of State William Phillips. The report is non-partisan in character and was made at the instance of the American-Athens Relief Committee, composed of prominent Americans residing in Greece. This committee has been in existence for nearly a year and its investigators made a complete survey of the Greek refugee situation, upon which the report is based.

CARED FOR NEARLY MILLION

It is apparent from the report that the material aid extended by the American people through the American Red Cross has been largely responsible for the sustaining and emergency care of a great majority of the 1,000,000 Greek refugees who fled from Asia Minor in the fall of 1922 after the military victories of Mustafa Kemal and the capture of Smyrna.

The Greek Government itself, the report states, is entitled to much more praise than it has generally received for its efforts in helping the refugees. In providing money, housing, land, medicines and transportation to the destitute, the Government went to the very limit of its ability, according to the report.

DESTITUTE REHABILITATED

Immediately after the burning of Smyrna in Sept. 1922, the American people materially aided in a gigantic task and extended the helping hand to the destitute Greek populations fleeing the Smyrna hinterland before the onrushing Turkish armies. The subsequent operations of the American Red Cross covered a period of ten months, with an expenditure of \$2,605,696, and resulted in the saving of lives and the epidemic disease hundreds of thousands of the refugees. The report just received shows that through the extension of this emergency relief, practically all the destitute have

Fig. 4. The Red Cross Courier, 5 January 1924
ASCSA Archives

Report such as: "Water poured over sand does not disappear much more rapidly than these refugees who came to Greece over a year ago and have disappeared into the social and economic organization of Greece." Salmon warned Morgenthau that the ARC's press release made it impossible for the AFG to raise any relief funds, and difficult for Morgenthau to seek support for the international loan that would finance the refugee settlement.³⁶

In long letters to Blegen and Hill, Capps criticized the inefficiency of the Athens Committee Report which had left out of consideration many areas of Greece (Western Thrace, Eastern Macedonia, Thessaly, Euboea).³⁷ If Hill, the Chair of the Athens Committee, had not commissioned the report, who then had? Capps suspected Atherton, but further inquiries indicated that the report had been commissioned by Colonel William N. Haskell, the former ARC Commissioner for Greece.³⁸ Haskell was known for his antipathy for the League of Nations and his objec-

36. ASCSA Archives, Carl W. Blegen Papers, Box 6, folder 3, copy of telegram dated 4 January 1924.

37. Hill agreed with Capps that the logic and the arithmetic of the Athens Committee Report were difficult to accept. The districts covered by the report constituted roughly half of Greece (ASCSA Archives, Bert H. Hill Papers, Box 2, folder 3, Hill to Capps, 15 January 1924).

38. The figures that Hibbard, "as well as Nansen, Morgenthau, and Jaquith, have been using under different arrangements were based *upon the same Government statistics*. But the classification by the terms 'assimilated' and 'non-assimilated' was Hibbard's—and this is the source of the horrible mistake that has crippled every effort over here" wrote Capps to Hill. Capps also noted that "the summary of Hibbard's recommendation sent to State Department Nov. 15 stated that 5,000,000 were needed in Greece for work among the refugees—relief work. This fact has been carefully suppressed on this side," and suspected that the report which the State Department gave him a copy of was not the full report which Hibbard handed to Atherton [...] (ASCSA Archives, Bert H. Hill Papers, Box 2, folder 2, Capps to Hill, 17 January 1924).

tions to the continuance of relief aid by the ARC after June 1923.³⁹

Two weeks later, the ARC was forced to publish the full text of the Athens Committee Report in *The Red Cross Courier* (19 January 1924) "in order to correct any misapprehensions from the summary printed in the issue of Jan. 5." At the end of the report, the *Courier* saved a small space for "Mr. Salmon's Statement" that, according to the journal, had been received too late to be reprinted. The editors of the *Courier* stated Salmon's concern about the incomplete character of the Athens Committee Report, not mentioning, however, that the numbers in the Athens Committee Report did not reconcile with those of other concerned parties, such as the Greek Government, Henry Morgenthau, and Nansen.⁴⁰

Americans in Athens Divided

On 19 January 1924, at the request of the Federal Council of Churches, the State Department asked Atherton to confirm that the number of unassimilated refugees in the Athens American Report included all parts of Greece. Atherton falsely replied: "Figure includes all Greece."⁴¹ The same questionnaire was sent

39. Cassimatis, *American Influence in Greece*, 141-142. Also, ASCSA Archives, Bert H. Hill Papers, Box 2, folder 2, Capps to Hill, 12 March 1924.

40. Salmon's full statement is included in the "Confidential Statement Regarding the Refugee Situation in Greece and the Negotiations with the American Red Cross. Prepared for Hon. Henry Morgenthau, January 8, 1924," ASCSA Archives, Bert H. Hill Papers, Box 13, folder 2.

41. ASCSA Archives, Bert H. Hill Papers, Box 13, folder 2, copy titled "Cable sent Mr. Atherton on Jan. 19, 1924, containing following questions" and "Cable replying to questions: received Jan. 22, 1924." Capps also knew that the ARC and the State Department had in their files a curious statement by Doxiades based on an interview with Atherton in which Doxiades appeared to be in complete agreement with the Hibbard report (ASCSA Archives, Bert H. Hill Papers, Box 2, folder 2, Capps to Hill, 10 January 1924).

to Morgenthau on 21 January, who cabled back: "Hibbard classification absolutely unrecognizable here [...] excludes Thrace, Ionian Islands, all Macedonia except Salonica."⁴² A few days later, on 24 January 1924, Prime Minister Venizelos and Minister of Relief [Apostolos] Doxiades cabled Capps that there were still about four hundred thousand refugees requiring relief.⁴³

In a long letter to Hibbard, the main author of the Athens Committee Report, Capps challenged Hibbard's claim that "harmony prevailed on the subject of refugee relief among the Americans in Athens." "Every statement of appeal that comes from Mr. Morgenthau is at once met and countered in Washington at the offices of the ARC and of the State Department, with fresh advice from the Legation at Athens flatly contradicting, on the authority of you and other named Americans, the statements Mr. Morgenthau makes" wrote Capps on 24 January, painting a picture of increased polarization in the American community of Athens.⁴⁴

The validity of the Athens Committee Report and Atherton's false statement were further challenged by another report that Barclay Acheson, Associate General Secretary of the NER, shared with the State Department. Acheson, who had personally inspected Eastern Macedonia and Salonica in January 1924, and had conferred with representatives of other relief agencies in Western Thrace, Central and Western Macedonia, cabled in late January that "any statements [that] refugees [are] satisfac-

42. ASCSA Archives, Bert H. Hill Papers, Box 2, folder 2, "Text of cablegram sent by Federal Council of Churches to Henry Morgenthau January 21, 1924, together with a copy of his reply on January 24, 1924."

43. ASCSA Archives, Bert H. Hill Papers, Box 2, folder 2, "Copy cable sent to Edward Capps, Jan. 24, 1924."

44. ASCSA Archives, Bert H. Hill Papers, Box 13, folder 2, Capps to Hibbard, 28 January 1924.

torily absorbed [are] ridiculous," that disease was about to assume epidemic proportions, to conclude that he was "greatly disappointed with quibbling when need is so obvious."⁴⁵

Although the State Department tried to follow a non-partisan approach, the deep divide in the American community in Athens, one group pressing for more refugee relief, the other pushing for refugee settlement, combined with the unpopularity of Morgenthau in some U.S. circles, was responsible for the State Department's decision not to renew the relief aid to Greece. The ARC was finally convinced to ship five tons of quinine to combat the spread of malaria.⁴⁶

The American Friends of Greece continued their efforts for more relief aid. The AFG release of 15 February 1924, which included excerpts of statements by Nansen, Morgenthau, and Venizelos, appealed to the American public for donations either toward an *Immediate Relief Fund* estimated at three million dollars, or a *Workshop Fund* estimated at one hundred thousand dollars for "women and girls unable to earn a living otherwise."⁴⁷ A follow-up, but undated, release informed the public that "several thousand dollars had already been raised and transmitted to Greece;" hundreds of refugee women were already at work, shipments of their products were sold in the

45. ASCSA Archives, Bert H. Hill Papers, Box 2, folder 2, "Copy for B.H. Hill of Acheson's cablegram Jan. 28 to Near East Relief [...]," 28 January 1924.

46. "A.R.C. Sending Five Tons of Quinine to Aid Greece," *The Red Cross Courier*, 2 February 1924; and typescript copy of the press release in the ASCSA Archives, Bert H. Hill Papers, Box 2, folder 2.

47. For a copy of the leaflet, titled "The Refugee Situation in Greece Today: An Appeal for Aid. Statements by Fridtjof Nansen, Henry Morgenthau, E. Venizelos," see UNAG, File C1409-305-R-404-1-61-1, International Labour Office Refugees Service, Relations with the American Friends of Greece, <https://archives.ungeneva.org/international-labour-office-refugees-service-relations-with-the-american-friends-of-greece-washington-mr-salm-on/download> (accessed 25 January 2024).

United States, with the proceeds of the sale being returned to Greece as a revolving fund.⁴⁸ And, on 1 March 1924, an editorial titled "A Continuing Need" by John Finley, who sat on the boards of NER and AFG, appeared in *The New York Times*.⁴⁹

Capps's public appeals did put some pressure on the ARC and the State Department to reevaluate the refugee situation in Greece. Atherton, Hibbard, and Hill were sent to Macedonia to inspect the situation anew.⁵⁰ According to his sources, the ARC executive committee would meet in early April to review the news from Greece with "an attitude more favorable."⁵¹ To apply more pressure, on 2 April 1924, the AFG printed one more leaflet which included an appeal from Venizelos "the great Greek statesman," and quotes from Morgenthau; and on 5 April, the Friends distributed 2,000 copies of Morgenthau's more recent "Report of the Refugees Settlement Commission in Greece."⁵² The goal was to explain to Americans that "the function of the Refugee Settlement Commission was exclusively one of permanent

48. For a copy of this other leaflet, op.cit.

49. ASCSA Archives, Bert H. Hill Papers, Box 2, folder 2, Capps to Hill, 3 March 1924 (*The New York Times* article is copied by Capps in his letter to Hill).

50. ASCSA Archives, Bert H. Hill Papers, Box 2, folder 2, Capps to Hill, 20 March and 25 March 1924. Capps had information that the ARC and the State Department "were receiving anything but accurate statements from their own sources."

51. John R. Mott, the general secretary of the International Committee of the YMCA, also reported to the Federal Council of Churches that the refugee situation in Macedonia was terrible beyond description: "Outside help absolutely essential." Mott's cable copied in a letter from Capps to Hill (ASCSA Archives, Bert H. Hill Papers, Box 2, folder 2, April 2, 1924). In the same letter Capps questioned Hill's support for his efforts: "On the other hand, I gather that advices have been received from you down in Washington that tend to counteract Mott, in so far as they constitute a defense of the Hibbard report. [...] But I can hardly believe that at this time you would do anything that would have the effect of preventing relief being voted."

52. For a copy of the leaflet, titled "Greek Refugees. Report on the Oper-

settlement, the Commission was prohibited, under the terms of their appointment, from spending any of the money under its control for food, clothing, medicine, or relief of any kind.”⁵³

In a follow-up letter to Major T. F. Johnson, Assistant High Commissioner for Refugees at the League of Nations, Salmon related that the Red Cross had “appropriated \$100,000 for the Greek refugees in addition to which they have already shipped about seven tons of quinine.” Salmon interpreted this as “admission on the part of the Red Cross that a need does exist” and that such an admission on the part of the Red Cross would allow the AFG to organize an appeal for funding “backed by the Federal Council of Churches and with the approval, if not the definite cooperation of the Red Cross.” The AFG was also watching the passing of a bill by the U.S. Congress “appropriating \$10,000,000 for the German Children.” They were hoping that the bill could be “amended to include a substantial appropriation for the Greek refugees.” Whether the bill and its amendment passed the Senate did not matter that much; it provided a public forum for the interested parties to explain “the situation in Greece and the needs of the refugees.”⁵⁴

Two weeks later, Capps wrote to Hill that he had been invited to the Senate hearings and that “the attitude of all present seemed to be favorable to the amendment in case the bill were to be reported favorably.” All Capps was asking from Hill was

ations of the Refugee Settlement Commission for the First Three Months,” see UNAG, File C1409-305-R-404-1-61-1, International Labour Office Refugees Service, Relations with the American Friends of Greece, <https://archives.ungeneva.org/international-labour-office-refugees-service-relations-with-the-american-friends-of-greece-washington-mr-salmon/download> (accessed 25 January 2024).

53. Op.cit., “Memorandum concerning Report of the Refugees Settlement Commission,” prepared by Capps, 5 April 1924.

54. Op.cit., Salmon to Johnson, 11 April 1924.

"a positive word from him aligning his Committee [the Athens American Relief Committee] with the Morgenthau-Delta-Mott-Acheson etc., view of the need" to conclude that "the lack of this [i.e., positive word] can hardly be misinterpreted."⁵⁵

Closure with a New Plan

Nevertheless, the deep divide in the American community in Athens, one group pressing for more refugee relief, the other pushing for refugee settlement and self-sufficiency, combined with Morgenthau's unpopularity in some U.S. circles, dissuaded the State Department from renewing its commitment for relief to Greece. Disappointed with the results of his efforts to raise awareness about the refugee situation in Greece, the American Friends of Greece dropped its general appeal for relief, concentrating solely on the development of its embroidery workshops.

With pressing matters to attend to, such as the construction of the Gennadius Library and the planning of a new excavation program (that is, the Athenian Agora Excavations), Capps also declined Morgenthau's invitation to replace him in the Refugee Settlement Commission. And when Morgenthau extended an invitation to Hill to assume the same position, Capps cabled Hill on 11 April 1924: "Position incompatible with School duties. Sorry." "I don't see how you could possibly be spared, so much work is already piled upon for you and so much coming on. But with my profound interest in the refugees I could not but be sorry that you or I could not, again, put the School obligations second" Capps added in a follow-up letter.⁵⁶

55. ASCSA Archives, Bert H. Hill Papers, Box 2, folder 2, 29 April 1924.

56. ASCSA Archives, Bert H. Hill Papers, Box 2, folder 2, telegram 11 April 1924; and Capps to Hill, 15 April 1924.

The next pamphlet issued by the American Friends of Greece promoted the success of its embroidery workshops. On 19 January 1925, Salmon wrote to Johnson in Geneva: "The workshop plan of the American Friends of Greece has developed fairly well and I am enclosing, herewith, a little pamphlet which may be of interest in connection with same." The twelve-page pamphlet carried the title *American Workshops in Greece. A 1924 Experiment Becomes a 1925 Fact*; Mrs. W. Stuart Thompson had written the introductory text that presented the work of refugee women in the two AFG workshops, one in the Coundouriotis Camp built by Greek Americans, the other in Pangrati built by the Refugee Settlement Commission (Fig. 5).

W. Stuart Thompson, the architect of the Gennadius Library, and his wife Gladys Slade Thompson were the first representatives of the AFG workshops in Greece before Priscilla Capps (1900-1985), daughter of Edward, took over the management in 1926. By 1928, the AFG Workshops were consolidated with the Near East Relief Industrial Department, rebranding themselves as Near East Industries (NEI).⁵⁷ Products of the NEI (handbags, table runners, and dolls) and other relevant material were recently on display at the American School of Classical Studies at Athens, in an exhibition titled *In the Name of Humanity: American Relief Aid in Greece, 1918-1929* (Fig. 6).⁵⁸

57. "Aids Greek Workers. Friends of Greece Now Helping 300 to Earn Living at Home," *The New York Times*, 1 July 1928.

58. Eleftheria Daleziou, Maria Georgopoulou, Natalia Vogeikoff-Brogan (eds.), *In the Name of Humanity: American Relief Aid in Greece, 1918-1929* (Athens 2023), 76-99.

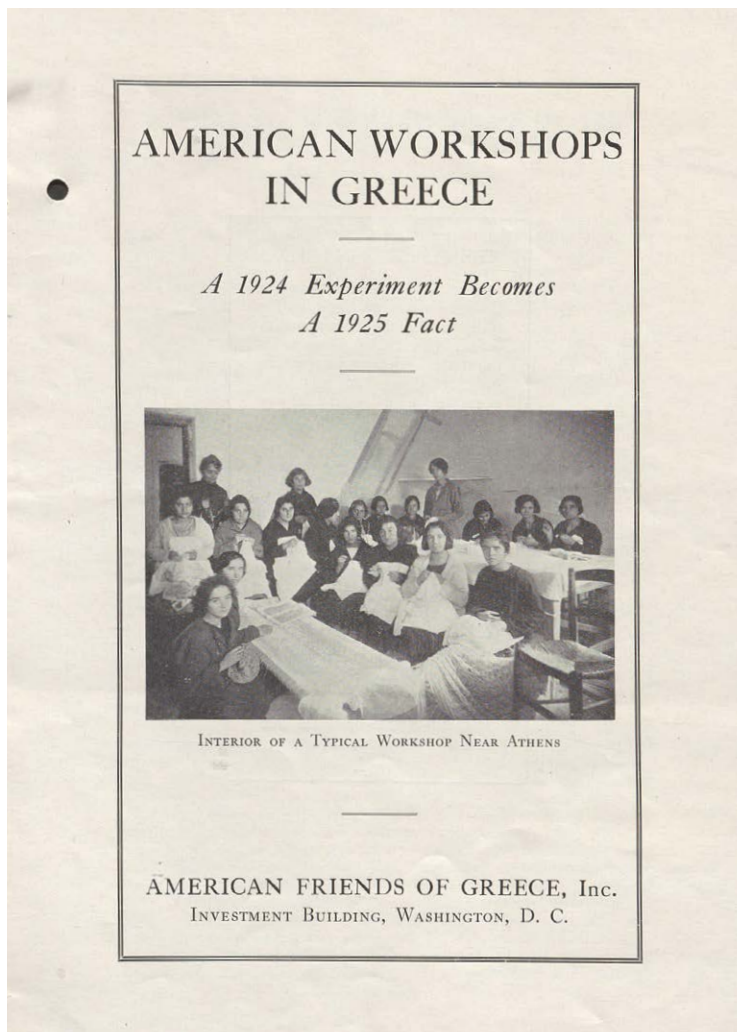


Fig. 5. *American Workshops in Greece. A 1924 Experiment Becomes a 1925 Fact* (Washington, D.C. [1925])

Retrieved from United Nations Archives at Geneva

(<https://archives.ungeneva.org/lontad>)



Fig. 6. *The sales rooms of the AFG Workshops at 48 Amalias Avenue, opposite the Arch of Hadrian*

Courtesy of Rockefeller Archive Center, Near East Foundation Records

ABBREVIATIONS

ASCSA: American School of Classical Studies at Athens

UNAG: United Nations Archives at Geneva

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"LEST WE PERISH": THE \$30,000,000 CAMPAIGN
OF THE AMERICAN COMMITTEE FOR RELIEF
IN THE NEAR EAST. ARMENIA-GREECE-SYRIA-PERSIA

JACK L. DAVIS

ABSTRACT: The \$30,000,000 Campaign was an American humanitarian effort initiated by the American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief in 1919, immediately after the Armistice with Germany that brought WW I to an end. The aims of such a substantial fundraising campaign were compassionate, educational, and theological. The initiative also sought to introduce elements of American modernity to the countries in which it operated. Here I examine the posters that promoted the \$30,000,000 Campaign, how they were commissioned, the relationship between the American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief and the government of the United States, and how Greece came to be included in this relief program.

The \$30,000,000 Campaign was a highly visible American humanitarian effort initiated by the American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief (ACASR) immediately after the Armistice with Germany that brought WW I to an end on November 11, 1918. This non-governmental initiative was launched in January 1919 to succor victims of genocides in the Ottoman Empire by means of a program of reconstruction. The aims of such a substantial fundraising campaign were compassionate, educational, and theological. Even though the ACASR was not itself a missionary society, it did focus on offering a Protestant education to the Islamic and Orthodox peoples of the Near

East.¹ The initiative also sought to introduce elements of American modernity to the countries in which it operated.²

Modernity is, however, not my concern in this contribution. Nor will I attempt to disentangle Protestantism from philanthropy for the early 20th century in the Near East, a near impossibility. Instead, I examine posters that promoted the \$30,000,000 funding initiative, how they were commissioned, the relationship between the ACASR and the government of the United States, and how Greece came to be included in the program of the ACASR.³

1. For discussions of the goals of American Protestant missionaries in the Ottoman Empire, and how these were adapted to local realities in the course of the 19th and early 20th centuries, see, for example, Henry Gorman, "American Ottomans: Protestant Missionaries in an Islamic Empire's Service, 1820-1915," *Diplomatic History*, 43 (2019), 544-568; Ussama Makdisi, *Artillery of Heaven: American Missionaries and the Failed Conversion of the Middle East* (Ithaca, New York 2008); Naksan Makudyan, "Physical Expressions of Winning Hearts and Minds: Body Politics of the American 'Missionaries' in 'Asiatic Turkey,'" in Inger Marie Okkenhaug and Karène Sanchez Summerer (eds.), *Christian Missions and Humanitarianism in the Middle East, 1850-1950: Ideologies, Rhetoric, and Practices* (Leiden and Boston 2020), 62-89.

2. For critiques of the ACASR's goals, see, for example, Fabian Klose, *The Emergence of Humanitarian Intervention: Ideas and Practice from the Nineteenth Century to the Present* (Cambridge 2016); Dimitris Kamouzis, "Greece and the Post-1922 International Humanitarian Aid: The Untold Story," 14 November 2023 (<https://vimeo.com/884788657>); Davide Rodogno, *Night on Earth: A History of International Humanitarianism in the Near East, 1918-1930* (Cambridge 2022).

3. This series of posters has previously been studied most systematically by Jaffa Panken, *"Lest They Perish": The Armenian Genocide and the Making of Modern Humanitarian Media in the U.S., 1915-1925* (2014). Publicly Accessible Penn Dissertations, 1396, <http://repository.upenn.edu/edissertations/1396> (accessed 31 January 2024). Her focus, as was that of Hazel Antaramian Hofman, is on the Armenian Genocide. For Hofman, see Hazel Antaramian Hofman, "A Preliminary Visual Assessment of the Near East Relief Posters," *Journal of the Society for Armenian Studies*, 23 (2014), 113-136.

The origins of the ACASR are well-known. One man in particular, Cleveland Hoadley Dodge (1860-1926), its Treasurer, was in a position to influence policy in the administration of President Woodrow Wilson.⁴ Dodge is often called Wilson's "advisor and financier," but he was more than that. He was Wilson's best friend and had extraordinary access to the president.⁵ Dodge was concerned to protect the substantial investments of American Protestant missionaries in the Levant, and, to a lesser extent, American business interests operating in Ottoman territories. His initial foray into Near Eastern philanthropy had begun in response to U.S. Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire Henry Morgenthau Sr.'s shocking 1915 report to the U.S. Secretary of State on anti-Armenian activities.⁶

Dodge, partnering with James Levi Barton (1855-1936),⁷ a former missionary, marshalled a group of prominent New Yorkers

4. "Cleveland Hoadley Dodge: January 26, 1860-June 24, 1926," <https://www.chdodgefoundation.org/who-we-are/our-founder> (accessed 31 January 2024); and <https://www.nytimes.com/1926/06/25/archives/cleveland-h-dodge-philanthropist-dies-end-comes-at-his-riverdale.html> (accessed 31 January 2024).

5. Joseph L. Graybill, "Cleveland H. Dodge, Woodrow Wilson, and the Near East," *Journal of Presbyterian History* (1962-1985), 48 (1970), 249-264. Graybill emphasizes Dodge's support for Arab nationalism.

6. FRUS, Office of the Historian, Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, 1915. Supplement. The World War, no. 1406 (File No. 867.4016/90), The Ambassador in Turkey (Morgenthau) to the Secretary of State, 11 August 1915, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus-1915Supp/d1406> (accessed 28 August 2024).

7. For his history of Near East Relief, see James L. Barton, *Story of Near East Relief (1915-1930): An Interpretation* (New York 1930). In an earlier book, Barton is clear that conversion is not his *direct* goal, nor should it be that of a missionary (*The Missionary and His Critics* [New York 1904], chapter 2). There he writes "One needs but to consider the absurdity of the assumption that the missionaries are primarily iconoclasts first and teachers of Christianity afterwards. [...] Confidence can be gained only by making the people understand that [the missionary] is there for no other purpose than

with connections to the Near East to form the ACASR. Dodge had been president of the board of trustees of Robert College in Constantinople, and Barton was the former president of Euphrates College in Harput. They were joined by other public figures and church leaders with missionary or educational interests in the Near East.⁸ Formerly separate relief committees joined the ACASR at the instigation of the Rockefeller Foundation. Their conjoined efforts enabled sights to be set higher.

Because the political situation in Greece and Turkey immediately following the Armistice was significantly different from that in the years after 1922, responses to the questions I have raised need to be sought in a particular and narrow chronological context. The organizers of the Campaign cast the net of their fundraising in 1919 more broadly than had the ACACR previously. Why was that the case? During WWI focus was on humanitarian aid to Armenian refugees. In November 1918, when the 1919 Campaign was about to go public, Armenia and Syria remained on center stage.

The *News Bulletin* of the ACASR for November 1918 announced: "For more than a year the American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief has been planning to [s]end a commission for rehabilitation in Western Asia, immediately at the close of

to do them good. [...] The Protestants did not and do not to-day attack in any way the old churches. They are endeavoring to aid those churches to live nearer their own ideals. [...] When rightly understood and interpreted every religion is a preparation, in greater or less degree, for the preaching of Christianity." The ultimate goal, of course, was "to lead them on to a full personal knowledge of the true God, and to Jesus Christ as Redeemer and Lord (op. cit. 85-86)."

8. For Robert College, see https://findingaids.library.columbia.edu/ead/nnc-rb/ldpd_6607719/print (accessed 31 January 2024); for Euphrates College, see <http://www.dlir.org/archive/orc-exhibit/items/show/collection/6/id/11311> (accessed 31 January 2024).

the war, [...] [Turkey] occupies a strategic position from the military point of view and the economic, [...]. Meanwhile its natural resources are almost untouched, [...]. These resources must be developed and the survivors of the massacres must be taught to do it and efficiently helped [...] first of all half-starved, abused bodies must be restored by food, and medical care, minds and souls seared by horrible memories aroused to new hope and ambition."⁹

A hint of the broader intent of the 1919 campaign is, however, clear from a memo dated 18 April 1918 received by the Jewish American Joint Distribution Committee, proposing collaboration, well before the Armistice:

"The American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief aims to cover the field of relief in Armenia and Syria, irrespective of race, creed or national affiliation; it is non-denominational and non-sectarian. It works with, and in many instances through, the Red Cross, and gives help also to the Jews in the territory covered by it. Its scope is based on *geographical* limits [...]. The Committee is about to send a Commission to Armenia and Syria (as well as Palestine) to study and organize relief there [...] there is to be a representative of the Catholics and the Jews [...]. The Committee last April planned to conduct its campaign for funds from November 23rd to 30th, 1918 but the drive was postponed. It is to take place January 12th to 19th and is to aim at securing \$30,000,000."¹⁰

9. "Relief Expedition to Be Sent to Turkey," *News Bulletin Published by the American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief* 2 (6), November 1918, no pagination.

10. JDC Archives, 1914-1918 New York Collection, American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief, 1916-1919, Ref. code: NY AR191418 / 2 / 3 / 44, Item ID 5240, https://search.archives.jdc.org/pdf_viewer.asp?lang=ENG&dlang=ENG&module=search&page=pdf_viewer&rsvr=4¶m=%3Cword%3E5240%3C/%3E%3Cpdf_path%3Emultimedia/Documents/NY_

The focus no longer was entirely to be on persecuted and displaced Armenians. The January issue of the *News Bulletin* reported in regard to the first relief ship sent:

"Carrying an assorted cargo of materials and equipment for relief purposes, the *Mercurius* will reach Constantinople in about thirty days, and begin the work of distributing food, clothing and medical supplies among the starving and plague-tortured peoples of Armenia, Syria and Persia, and among the Greeks of Asia Minor. [...] The Committee has directors in this hunger-scourged area who are supervising the feeding and healing of millions of Armenians, Syrians, Greeks and Persians."¹¹

In the *News Bulletin* of May 1919, the report continued faithful to more universal goals:

"The *Newport News*, fourth transport granted by the United States Navy to the American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief, sailed to the rescue of the starving peoples in the Near East April 22nd from New York. [...] W. Lane, a business-man from Smyrna, is also sailing on this vessel to aid relief workers in his country. His knowledge of the people and language will be of great value to his companions. [...] 'My heart swells when I think what this ship and its cargo will mean to the Armenians, Syrians and Greeks,' said Dodge, who conducted the farewell services on board the ship. 'A better day is dawning for these people,' he continued. 'There is much in store for them but our work has only just begun and we will have to care for four hundred thousand orphans for a good many years to come.' [...]"

AR1418/00002/NY_AR1418_04834.pdf%3C/%3E%3Cbook_id%3E5240%3C/%3E¶m2=&site=ideaalm (accessed 31 January 2024).

11. "First Contingent of Relief Expedition Underway," *News Bulletin Published by the American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief* 3 (8), January 1919, no pagination.

The Greek delegation presented a huge bunch of roses to Mrs. Morris, wife of the consul to Smyrna, who also sailed on the *Newport News* [...]."¹²

In the July issue, the Committee reported on the situation in Eastern Thrace:

"The situation in European Turkey is entirely different from that in Anatolia. There are relatively few orphans. There are large numbers of Greeks who are suffering privation and hardship and will suffer famine this coming winter unless relief is afforded. This condition is wholly due to the attitude of the Turkish government toward the returning refugees, and their inability to secure possession of their houses, lands, and animals."¹³

A broadening of geographical scope and a non-sectarian platform were ultimately reflected in the obvious change in the organization's name by the start of the \$30,000,000 Campaign: The American Committee for Relief in the Near East (ACRNE). The structure of the \$30,000,000 Campaign was shaped to some extent by the United States foreign policy in the aftermath of WW I. In order to operate, the Committee needed the support of the U.S. government and federal agencies at home and that of U.S. diplomats on the ground in the Near East.

A sub-committee was created to carry the Campaign for \$30,000,000 forward in the fund drive scheduled for Janu-

12. "Another Life Boat," *News Bulletin Published by the American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief* 3 (12), May 1919, no pagination.

13. "Thrace," *News Bulletin Published by the American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief* 4 (2), July 1919, no pagination. Concerning conditions in Greek Macedonia and Thrace in 1918-1919 and the American Red Cross Mission there, see Jack L. Davis, "The American School of Classical Studies and the Politics of Volunteerism," in *Philhellenism, Philanthropy, or Political Convenience? American Archaeology in Greece*, Jack L. Davis and Natalia Vogeikoff-Brogan (eds.), *Hesperia* (Special Issue), 82 (2013), 15-48.

ary 1919. Ellis Parker Butler was Director of Publicity. It was announced that "The work of this Department is going forward rapidly along the lines planned months ago in anticipation of a campaign. [...] A large number of editors, authors, and cartoonists, who promised their co-operation last Spring are lending very substantial assistance through their various mediums."¹⁴

Propaganda and the Committee on Public Information

American attitudes toward the European conflict changed radically after 1917 in a remarkably short period of time. Key was Woodrow Wilson's Committee on Public Information (CPI), which succeeded, through an intense program of media control, in breaking down the American isolationism that Wilson had supported during his campaign for reelection in 1916.¹⁵ Wilson established the CPI, America's first propaganda office, by presidential decree in 1917 – only a week after signing a joint Congressional resolution declaring war on Germany. Newspaperman George Creel, whom Wilson appointed as its head, appealed to the patriotism of every person in the United States.¹⁶

World War I was the first major conflict in which all combatant parties made extensive use of state-sponsored propaganda. Greece and the United States, both late to enter the war,

14. "Relief Expedition to Be Sent to Turkey," *News Bulletin Published by the American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief* 2 (6), November 1918, no pagination.

15. John Maxwell Hamilton, *Woodrow Wilson and the Birth of American Propaganda* (Baton Rouge 2020).

16. George Creel "The Fight for Public Opinion: Meeting the German Offensive on American Soil," *Scientific American*, 118:14 (6 April 1918); "George Creel, Is Dead on Coast," *The New York Times* (3 October 1953).

relied extensively on poster graphic arts in order to sway public opinion against Germany and the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

Divisions of the CPI distributed pamphlets, news releases, magazine advertisements, films, and materials for schools. Thousands of volunteers made live appeals in movie theaters during four-minute intermissions when reels of film were changed. Initially the CPI propaganda defended democracy and liberty from German state aggression. But distinctions between the German state and the German people were gradually elided, and, by 1918, citizens of German descent in the United States were envisioned as potential threats too. The impact on American society was swift and permanent. German newspapers closed and the German language ceased to be taught in most schools.¹⁷

The Division of Pictorial Publicity and Woodrow Wilson as an Artist

The Division of Pictorial Publicity (DPP), a unit of the CPI constituted in November 1917, produced during its short lifespan nearly 1500 designs for propaganda posters, cards, buttons,

17. E.g., in the Cincinnati area: <https://sites.rootsweb.com/~kycampbe/piecesgermanheritage.htm> (accessed 31 January 2024). In Indianapolis, where Heinrich Schliemann had earlier obtained a divorce from Ekaterina, his Russian wife, the *Indianapolis Journal* published a necrology based primarily on interviews with two prominent local Germans, Adolph Seidensticker and Herman Lieber. Seidensticker was the editor of the *Indiana Volksblatt*, at a time when a quarter of the city's readers got their news in German. Herman Lieber was one of the founders of *Das Deutsche Haus*, then the center of German cultural life in Indianapolis, <https://blog.newspapers.library.in.gov/so-she-went-heinrich-schliemann-came-to-marion-county-for-a-copper-bottom-divorce/> (accessed 31 January 2024); and "The Athenaeum." <https://athenaeumindy.org> (accessed 31 January 2024).

cartoons, and lantern slides.¹⁸ Its director, Charles Dana Gibson (1867-1944), then the most popular illustrator in America, assembled a team of supporting artists.¹⁹ The designs of the DPP were remarkably effective. "The Hun," depicted as a mad, monstrous ape in a German Pickelhaube helmet, instilled terror as he stomped onto American shores, carrying a half-naked American woman.²⁰ Recruitment posters proclaimed that Uncle Sam wanted young men, entreating them to enlist in the army.²¹

Gibson declared: "We must see more of the spiritual side of

18. The DPP logo was omitted on most posters produced by the Division. For the DPP in general, see Eric Van Schaack, "The Division of Pictorial Publicity in World War I," *Design Issues* 22:1 (Winter, 2006), 32-45, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25224029> (accessed 31 January 2024).

19. "The Division of Pictorial Publicity," in *The Activities of the Committee on Public Information War Information Series* 17, (Washington, D.C. February 1918), 16. Gibson was best known for his creation of the Gibson Girl, an iconic representation of the beautiful and independent Euro-American woman at the turn of the 20th century: Library of Congress, Exhibitions <https://www.loc.gov/exhibits/gibson-girls-america/> (accessed 31 January 2024); and *The Creel Report, Complete Report of the Committee on Public Information 1917: 1918: 1919* (Washington, D.C. 1920), 40-41. The DPP was established on April 17, 1917, its headquarters at 200 Fifth Avenue. Also see James R. Mock, *Words That Won the War: The Story of the Committee on Public Information, 1917-1919* (Princeton 1939), 72. "The division cost the CPI only \$13,170. 97 and its posters and other illustrations are vividly remembered to this day by millions of Americans." [...] "Competitions were never held because it was felt that the great mass of entries would be worthless, causing a mountain of extra work and probably resulting in hurt feelings. Each job was assigned, usually by [Frank De Sales] Casey," Gibson's assistant. Gibson boasted: "Casey knows every artist in town," op. cit., 102.

20. The image is so similar to that of King Kong carrying Fay Wray on posters that advertised the 1933 film "King Kong" that it is easy to imagine that the latter graphic was inspired by it.

21. David Vergun, "WW II Posters Aimed to Inspire, Encourage Service," Oct. 16, 2019, United States Department of Defense, <https://www.defense.gov/News/Feature-Stories/story/Article/1990131/wwii-posters-aimed-to-inspire-encourage-service/> (accessed 31 January 2024).

the conflict. We must picture the great aims of this country in fighting this war. They have already been pictured in words by the President, and I want to say now that he is the greatest artist in the country today, because he is an idealist. He is the great Moses of America [...]. The work of the artist will be made easy by putting into pictorial form the last message of the President [...]. At any cost [...] the artists of America must visualize the needs of the country so vividly that they would be seen at all times, in the country village and along Broadway, and everywhere else in America."²² The plan was that *government* departments would contact the DPP when they needed artwork and the DPP would provide it at no cost.

By January 1919, when the ACRNE was ready to launch its \$30,000,000 campaign, it had had access to the services of the DPP, even though it was not a governmental agency.²³ The DPP produced a suite of extraordinary posters for the ACRNE. Gibson or Creel may have been nudged to help the \$30,000,000 Campaign by members of the Relief Committee for Greeks of Asia Minor, which shared offices and board members with the ACRNE, Princetonians in particular. Its chairman was a former U.S. consul in Patras and its honorary chairman Jacob Gould Schurman (1854-1942), a man well-known to the American School of Classical Studies at Athens (ASCSA) as a former U.S. Minister to Athens (1912-1913) and President of Cornell University (1892-1920). Other members of the Relief Committee for Greeks of Asia Minor included influential members of Princeton's Sardis excavations, Howard Crosby Butler (1872-1922) and T. Leslie Shear (1880-1945), later to become the first director of the Athenian Agora Excavations of the ASCSA.

22. Mock, *Words That Won the War*, 104.

23. The DPP had been disbanded by the time the \$30,000,000 campaign was launched.

Various governmental agencies had already taken advantage of the opportunities provided by the CPI, including the American Red Cross, which had long enjoyed a special relationship with the U.S. government under the terms of its charter.²⁴ But the official history of the Near East Foundation does not mention any connection between the ACRNE and the DPP. Barton there wrote only that: "The use of the newspapers and magazines was supplemented by posters, large and small. Each year the campaign story was told in the simple, concise form of a display poster. As the conditions changed, new slogans were coined and new pictorial presentations were prepared. Immediately following the armistice, when the American public could be expected to lessen their interest and reduce their giving, a poster told the story of unsettled refugees by an image of desolation with the words, 'Hunger Knows No Armistice.' During the underwriting campaign when the question was the completion of a moral responsibility to thousands of orphaned children, an American, personified as a Boy Scout, standing somewhat elevated, extended a helpful hand to less fortunate little children from the Near East. This poster was titled 'Don't Let Go, Lift.' The list of artists included some of America's best known illustrators."²⁵

"Near East Relief was gearing up for their record-breaking 1919 Campaign for \$30,000,000. They commissioned the Creel Committee's Division of Pictorial Publicity to supply the necessary posters for the campaign. Upon receiving the Near

24. In August 1919, the ACRNE did receive a congressional charter, the second humanitarian organization to be so recognized; it then was renamed Near East Relief.

25. Barton, *Story of Near East Relief*, 387-388. The December issue of the *News Bulletin of the Committee on Armenian and Syrian Relief* previews most of the posters.

East Relief order, the Division of Pictorial Publicity designated J. Thomson Willing as Captain for the campaign. At that time, Willing held positions as Art Manager for the American Lithographic Company, Art Editor of the Associated Sunday Magazines, and Treasurer of the American Institute of Graphic Arts. Willing's previous work with the Y.M.C.A. and Salvation Army earned him a sterling reputation among ecumenical Christian organizations. He was currently engaged with the 1918 United War Work Campaign, a much larger project that included several philanthropic organizations, so it is surprising that the Near East Relief secured his services. Willing's vast experience and solid connections would serve the Near East Relief well. Some of the Division's most talented artists would contribute compelling, evocative works of art that put their previous publicity posters to shame."²⁶

The Posters

The posters designed for the January 1919 30-million-dollar campaign have generally been studied from an Armenian perspective (despite the fact that their legends mention Greece and Persia, in addition to Armenia and Syria), with the assumption that the posters are meant to depict Armenians.²⁷

Here seven posters in the series are reconsidered.

26. Panken, "Lest They Perish," 108; on Willing's role, see William Oberhardt, "War Artists As Seen By William Oberhardt," *The International Studio*, 69, no. 273 (November 1919), xlviii.

27. Hofman, "A Preliminary Visual Assessment," 113-136. See also Rebecca Onion, "The Heartbreaking Posters That Convinced Americans to Help Displaced Syrians During World War I," *Slate*, 23 September 2015, <https://slate.com/human-interest/2015/09/history-of-relief-to-syria-near-east-relief-efforts-after-wwi.html> (accessed 31 January 2024) where Syria, but not Greece is mentioned. Hoffman catalogues five posters produced for the campaign but fails to recognize the monogram of the DPP.

1. In "Lest We Perish," characteristics of other work of Ethel Franklin Bains Betts (1877-1959) are instantly recognizable (Fig. 1).²⁸ Bains Betts, primarily an illustrator of children's books, was the only woman illustrator who produced posters for the \$30,000,000 Campaign. The young girl in "Lest We Perish" engages viewers by staring directly at us with outstretched hands, palms up in the traditional posture of a beggar, while the poster's legend appeals to us intimately in the first-person plural, rather than the third. Her colorful outfit transforms the girl into the down-on-her-luck heroine of a children's fairy tale, as in Bains Bett's illustrations for *A Little Princess*. The context of the young girl embeds her in a human reality that makes her plight all the more sympathetic.
2. Herman Pfeifer (1879-1931) and William B. King (1880-1927), New York-based illustrators, produced devastatingly effective posters. Pfeifer's "The Child at Your Door" (Fig. 2) focuses on the torso of an emancipated waif, who, from beneath her scarf, stares at us hauntingly with sunken, yet unconquered, eyes.²⁹
3. King's "Lest They Perish," features a mother and child in a landscape of ruined buildings, reminding us that sufferers were struggling to survive in places no longer habitable (Fig. 3). Here it is the baby, probably born of rape, strapped on her back, whose gaze commands our attention.³⁰

28. Compare works included at <https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/37332> (accessed 31 January 2024).

29. The poster is attributed to Pfeifer (1874-1931) in the *News Bulletin Published by the American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief* 2 (7), December 1918, no pagination.

30. The poster was based on a photograph ultimately published in *The New Near East* for March 1921, 5, and titled: "This sad Armenian mother, her baby the progeny of an enemy race, is depending, as are others, on us." Panken notes that this is the only poster that does not bear the DPP logo



Fig. 1. *Ethel Franklin Bains Betts, "Lest We Perish"*

Colored Lithograph, Personal Collection, Sharon R. Stocker and Jack L. Davis

Fig. 2. *Herman Pfeifer, "The Child at Your Door"*

Colored Lithograph,
ASCSA Archives,
Jack L. Davis Collection





Fig. 3. William B. King,
"Lest They Perish"

Colored Lithograph,
ASCSA Archives,
Jack L. Davis Collection



Fig. 4. Douglas Volk,
"They Shall Not Perish"

Colored Lithograph, Personal
Collection Sharon R. Stocker
and Jack L. Davis

4. "They Shall Not Perish" (signed 1918) by Douglas Volk (1856-1935), a well-known portrait painter and art-school teacher, is often misinterpreted (Fig. 4).³¹ The personification depicted is Columbia, not the Statue of Liberty, which replaced her only after 1920. Columbia, draped in the American flag, wears a Phrygian cap and holds a sword above her head. She protects the young girl clinging to her legs, standing on a titulus in accord with imagery of the Roman Republic, so popular in early America. In the background is a Liberty Shield with the flags of Allied countries, the United States, Great Britain, France, Belgium, and Italy—between them, a rising sun, representing rebirth.
5. In "Give or We Perish," by Wladyslaw Teodor Benda (1873-1948), a Polish immigrant illustrator, the refugee girl resembles his depictions of western women (Fig. 5). Her face, illuminated and in three-quarter view, seems startled. She wraps herself in a shawl for warmth, and perhaps also for protection, yet exposes her arm to reveal a broad cuff-bracelet (possibly talismanic and her only hope of relief should the \$30,000,000 Campaign fail).³²

and was not included in the December 1918 issue of the *News Bulletin*. The photograph had previously been used in an advertisement in 1918 (Panken, "Lest They Perish," 124, fig. 14). Panken cites: "Advertisement A5" in "1919 Campaign Portfolio," File 12HA-F16 Publications of the American Committee for Relief in the Near East, 12/1918 - 01/1919, U.S.F.A. Educational Division Records" and writes "After appearing in print and poster, the photograph circulated as a lantern-slide on the organization's speaking circuit. Barton in 1918 describes the woman as follows (*News Bulletin Published by the American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief* 2 (7), December 1918, no pagination.): "An Armenian mother, whose child was born in the wilderness east of the Jordan. She has come to the Relief Fund headquarters for the tin of condensed milk which is given twice a week."

31. Of the artists who produced posters for the Campaign, only Volk had served on the Board of the DPP.

32. Library of Congress, Posters: WW I Posters, <http://www.loc.gov/pic->

6. A sixth poster, "Give, Or We Perish," was a massive 9×14 ft. assembly by Maurice Leone Bracker (1885-1937), who designed "Hunger Knows No Armistice" for Near East Relief." Its imagery is the most gruesome of those produced for the Campaign: a man and woman in Eastern dress, pleading for help with outstretched hands, an emaciated child on the ground before them, a young girl clinging to her mother's knees, their ruined village behind them, only a Christian cross still standing erect.³³
7. A seventh poster, a map by Ethel Franklin Bains Betts, showing the distribution of victims by country, with various legends boldly overprinted in blood-red lettering, including "Where the Victims Are," is effective without pictorial imagery (Fig. 6).³⁴

Posters and Politics

Greece, as a state, did not directly suffer from the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, and, in the context of the \$30,000,000 campaign, "Greece" with few exceptions referred to the unredeemed Greek Orthodox populations remaining within the borders of modern Turkey. Morgenthau had written to Dodge:

tures/collection/wwipos/. Compare works included at <https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/37332>.

33. See "WW I Poster Made on Behalf of Armenian Relief Fund to be Auctioned," <https://massispost.com/2015/06/wwi-poster-made-on-behalf-of-armenian-relief-fund-to-be-auctioned/> (accessed 31 January 2024) and *News Bulletin Published by the American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief* 2 (7), December 1918, no pagination. For "Hunger Knows No Armistice," see <https://knowledge.e.southern.edu/wwiposters/14/> (accessed 31 January 2024).

34. See Cornell University Library, Digital Collections, <https://digital.library.cornell.edu/catalog/ss:8245866> (assessed 4 February 2024).



Fig. 5. Wladyslaw Teodor Benda, "Give or We Perish" Colored Lithograph, ASCSA Archives, Jack L. Davis Collection



Fig. 6. Ethel Franklin Bains Betts, "Save the Survivors" Cornell University - P. J. Mode Collection of Persuasive Cartography

"The story which I have told about the Armenians, I could also tell, with certain modifications, about the Greeks and the Syrians." Barton commented: "Indeed, the Greeks were the first victims of this nationalizing idea. [...] There was a general apprehension among the Teutonic allies that Greece would enter the war on the side of the Entente. It was only a matter of state policy, therefore, that saved these Greek subjects of Turkey."³⁵

When America did enter the war against the Central Powers, President Wilson broke diplomatic relations with Turkey without a formal declaration of war. American relief workers in Turkey were attached to the Swedish delegation for their protection and their work continued, sanctioned by the U.S., while accepted by Turkey as strictly humanitarian. Posters thus required an entirely different approach from that designed to influence public opinion in favor of supporting the war against Germany. Yet Turkey was a Central Power at war with the British and French, and Greece was about to enter the war as a combatant on the Eastern Front. After the Armistice an American relief agency also needed to tread lightly if it was to preserve its ability to operate within Turkey, as the Ottoman Empire was being dismantled, and the need for aid continued to be staggering.

It is thus impossible to ignore the political aspects of the posters designed for the January 1919 Campaign. The Turk could not be directly vilified, but the message that Turkey was responsible for the refugee problems that the Campaign addressed was only thinly veiled.

One other observation is worth drawing. Individual artists seem to have been left up to their own devices how exactly to represent the children, women, and men they illustrated. Only the woman in King's poster can definitely be identified as Ar-

35. Barton, *Story of Near East Relief*, 63.

menian. One wonders if the artists could have distinguished an Armenian child from a Greek, Syrian, or Persian.³⁶ Was it not their intent to be more ambiguous, given that fundraising aimed to help others aside from Armenians?

The January 1919 Campaign was remarkably successful, raising nearly \$20,000,000 toward its goal by the end of the year. \$250,000 of that sum was contributed directly to the Greek Relief Committee, in addition to direct funding for relief to Greeks within the Ottoman Empire by The American Committee for Relief in the Near East and its successor, Near East Relief.³⁷

ABBREVIATIONS

JDC Archives: American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee Archives
FRUS: Foreign Relations of the United States

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36. Antaramian Hofman seems mistaken in imagining that this series of posters can be a source of information about the actual appearance of Armenian refugees. She herself notes ("A Preliminary Visual Assessment," 21) that figures appear European.

37. Nikolaos Hlamides, "The Greek Relief Committee: America's Response (A Research Note)," *Genocide Studies and Prevention: An International Journal*, 3:3 (2008), <https://digitalcommons.usf/gsp/vol3/iss3/9> (accessed 31 January 2024), 378-379.

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HUMANITARIAN RELIEF ANTE PORTAS:
ORPHANED CHILDREN UNDER THE CARE
OF THE NEAR EAST RELIEF IN GREECE, 1922-1924

ELEFThERIA DALEZIOU

ABSTRACT: Near East Relief was one of the most significant international humanitarian agencies responding to the humanitarian crisis that followed the Asia Minor Catastrophe of 1922. Prior to 1922, Near East Relief was the primary channel for US aid, post-WWI, in the Near East, providing food, medical services, and care for orphans. In Greece, post-1922 Near East Relief tended Armenian and Anatolian Greek refugees. Here I examine the organization's orphanages in Greece, in particular its educational and vocational practices, outplacement, and the social welfare of the children under its care.

“During the last two months I have been in Hell, – that is, I have been in the Near East. [...] I have seen camps containing 5,000, 20,000, 50,000 cowering, frightened, cold, half-starved, wretched human beings stripped of wealth and happiness, reduced to the elemental conditions of savagery. I have seen little children dying like flies after the first frost – 180 of them a day [...] I have seen women [...] scores of them, lying on the ground in the rain, giving birth to children without a curtain, without a blanket, without doctor or nurse.”¹

1. Pamphlet under the title *The Near East: A Discussion Course for Students. 5,000 Children Trek 500 Miles to Safety* (Near East Relief n.d.), 14.

These are the words of Dr. Lincoln Wirt, International Commissioner of the Near East Relief, reporting on the conditions in Greece a few months after the Smyrna catastrophe and the influx of hundreds of thousands of Anatolian Greeks into the country.² The Near East Relief (NER hereafter), which was first known as the American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief, was established in 1915 by prominent philanthropists, to raise money for Armenian, Syrian, Greek, and other refugees from the Ottoman Empire. Chartered by the U.S. Congress in 1919 as the Near East Relief, the organization was designated as the primary channel for American aid in the region, with a focus on child relief and welfare. The NER distributed food, medicine, and clothing. It established workshops and operated orphanages and health clinics, and assisted existing orphanages in the areas of its operations (Fig. 1).³

Orphan care was central to the work of the NER in the region of the Near East. In Constantinople, in the Caucasus, and other cities of the Ottoman Empire, up to 1922, the orphanage work played a key role in the agenda of the organization. "When the relief work was undertaken, it at once became evident that a great number of children – innocent sufferers of the deporta-

2. The defeat and ensuing retreat of the Greek armed forces from Western Asia Minor ended up as "one of the gravest, most perplexing and most shameful international situations," in the words of another contemporary observer (Melville Chater, "History's Greatest Trek," *The National Geographic Magazine*, 48:5, November 1925, 533). For the ensuing Greek-Turkish population exchange signed in Lausanne on 30 January 1930, see Renée Hirshon (ed.), *Crossing the Aegean: An Appraisal of the 1923 Compulsory Population Exchange between Greece and Turkey* (New York 2003); and Onur Yildirim, *Diplomacy and Displacement: Reconsidering the Turco-Greek Exchange of Populations, 1922-1934* (New York 2006).

3. For a summary description of the operations of the organization up to 1920, see *Handbook. Near East Relief* (New York 1920). It included hospitals, clinics, rescue homes, orphanages, food relief, clothing, and industries.

tions and massacres – must be cared for in institutions.”⁴ For example, as early as 1920, the NER maintained 229 orphanages in the Caucasus, Beirut, Aleppo, Constantinople, and Anatolia, with a total of 54,600 children under its care. In addition, 56,039 children received partial support outside of orphanages.⁵ In 1923, the NER maintained 125 orphanages with 64,107 children, while partial assistance was given to 50,000 children outside institutions, living with their families in refugee camps.

The Evacuation of the NER Orphans to Greece After the Smyrna Disaster

The organization had no direct presence in Greece prior to September 1922. The NER, however, had responded to the emergency relief situation in Smyrna.⁶ Personnel and supplies had reached the Anatolian Greeks in the city, and the American State Department had authorized the organization, along with the American Red Cross (ARC), to undertake the provision of emergency relief assistance to Greece for the refugees, with the medical support of a third organization, the American Women’s Hospitals (AWH).⁷ Harold C. Jaquith, the head of the NER Con-

4. Op. cit., 30

5. Op. cit., 17. For a detailed account of the work of the Near East Relief, see James L. Barton, *Story of Near East Relief (1915-1930): An Interpretation* (New York 1930).

6. “The Committee had undertaken a minor role in Greece prior to the Smyrna debacle, its appropriations having been \$9,682. But the Committee undertook a major role in mass feeding and provision of shelter for the refugees,” Herbert Hoover, *An American Epic: Famine in Forty-five Nations, the Battle on the Front Line, 1914-1923*, vol. III (Chicago 1961), 394-395. See also Eleftheria Daleziou, Maria Georgopoulou, and Natalia Vogeikoff-Brogan, *In the Name of Humanity, American Relief Aid in Greece, 1918-1929* (Athens 2023), 48-59.

7. See Klapsis and Andriotis, in this volume. For the work of the Amer-



Fig. 1. *Children in a refugee camp*

Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, D.C.

stantinople, had reached the city by boat with supplies and personnel upon news of the humanitarian disaster unfolding after the Smyrna fire (Fig. 2).⁸

The news of the complete victory of the Turkish Nationalists under the leadership of Mustapha Kemal had at the same time triggered a series of developments in Constantinople among the international humanitarian agencies. The new Turkish regime did not guarantee the safety of their operations.⁹ The NER officials responded immediately, considering first and foremost the safety of the thousands of orphans under their care. On 11 October 1922, the organization's representatives in Constantinople had even expressed readiness to ship 5,000 children to the United States within 10 days "if the government would accept them," stressing that "only the most critical situation would make such a move on our part seem imperative."

ican Women's Hospitals, see Francesca Piana, "Maternalism and Feminism in Medical Aid: The American Women's Hospitals in the United States and in Greece, 1917-1941," in Esther Möller, Johannes Paulmann, and Katharina Stornig (eds.), *Gendering Global Humanitarianism in the Twentieth Century: Practice, Politics and the Power of Representation* (London 2020), 85-114.

8. For a thorough and detailed picture of the American relief activities in Smyrna during September 1922, and the roles of George Horton, the American Consul at Smyrna, and Asa K. Jennings, the YMCA employee who organized the rescue operation by boat of thousands of Anatolian Greeks, see Ismini Lamb and Christopher Lamb, *The Gentle American: George Horton's Odyssey and His True Account of the Smyrna Catastrophe* (Piscataway, New Jersey 2022) and Lou Ureneck, *The Great Fire: One American's Mission to Rescue Victims of the 20th Century's First Genocide* (New York 2015).

9. Charles Vernon Vickrey, the NER General Secretary, in his review for calendar year 1922, noted the following: "Before evacuation, an effort was made to secure from the Nationalist government assurance of safety for the children in our orphanages. Such assurance failing, there seemed no alternative but the removal of all Christian orphans from Asia Minor," Charles V. Vickrey, *Near East Relief: A Review for 1922 (Annual Report to Congress)* (New York 1923), 3.

Near East Relief Emergency

"He Gives Twice Who Gives Quickly"



(Near East Relief official photo)

COMFORTING SMYRNA'S ORPHANS

Miss Sarah Corning, of New York, Near East Relief nurse and Armenian orphans rescued from the great fire which destroyed Smyrna. This picture was taken on American destroyer Litchfield while en route from Smyrna to Constantinople with 400 orphans whose home in Smyrna was destroyed. Red Cross brassards stamped with American consulate seal were worn by all Americans in Smyrna.

Why Help?

MORE THAN A MILLION refugees, fleeing before the Turk, are scattered, without food or shelter, along the shores and islands of the Aegean Sea, in Thrace, in Syria, and adjacent regions.

THEY HAVE SUFFERED ENOUGH ALREADY. These peaceful, law-abiding people, through no fault of their own, are homeless, helpless, foodless and shelterless. Cables tell of hundreds dying of exhaustion, or going insane, or committing suicide to escape worse horrors.

100,000 CHILDREN NOW SAFE ARE THREATENED. When the Smyrna disaster first horrified the world, Near East Relief workers in Constantinople took the food and supplies stored there for its 100,000

orphan wards this winter, in order to save the refugees from immediate death.

THEY DEPEND ON US — AMERICANS — when we realize the need, to give back to the children in 124 Near East Relief orphanages, their chance for life. The Greco-Turkish disaster makes more orphans to care for.

IF WE DO NOT, EVERY ONE OF US, HELP, AND HELP QUICKLY, almost a million innocent people will perish, old men, and women and little children.

*Let us see that we do not
pass by on the other side*

Address all checks marked "Smyrna" to CLEVELAND H. DODGE, Treasurer

Near East Relief - 151 Fifth Avenue - New York City

Fig. 2. Near East Relief worker and nurse Sara Corning with orphans evacuated from Smyrna

American School of Classical Studies at Athens, Jack L. Davis Collection, ASIA magazine, December 1922.

This was quickly ruled out. Greece, Persia, Syria and Palestine, and the Caucasus, became the focal points of the NER activities and Athens became its headquarters in the Near East.¹⁰ A series of cablegrams reveals the urgency of the situation and the decisive moves on the part of the NER to evacuate as soon as possible Armenian and Greek orphans under its care to safer spots (Fig. 3).¹¹

By mid-November 1922 it was crystal clear that the new Turkish government established in Ankara preferred Armenians and Anatolian Greeks out of its territories; therefore, the decision to transfer the NER orphans was final. A cablegram signed by Jaquith, dated 18 December 1922, brought the organization to a new beginning with the evacuation of the last remaining NER orphans from the former Ottoman Empire: "All Near East Relief orphanages at Constantinople will be evacuated by Christmas Day. The last to depart will be 1200 from the Cushman Orphanage embarking December 21st. They will spend Christmas on board the ship."¹²

10. "The Allied decision to withdraw from Constantinople makes safety of orphans first consideration. In view past felicitations [*sic*] and statements made in newspapers by high officials in Smyrna there is no place, after defeat of the Greeks, in Turkish Empire for Greeks. Hatred against Armenians at Smyrna more bitter than against the Greeks. Conditions here offer no hope for safety or opportunity become self-supporting." See FRUS, Office of the Historian, Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, 1922, vol. II, no. 357 (868.48/180), excerpt of a telegram from The High Commissioner at Constantinople (Bristol) to the Secretary of State, Constantinople, October 11, 1922, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1922v02/d357> (accessed 26 August 2024).

11. Cablegrams as cited in Near East Relief, *A Million Lives Saved: The Churches of America and the Near East. A Handbook for Pastors 1923* (New York 1923), 10.

12. Op. cit., 10. Emma Cushman (1863-1931) was then an American missionary relief worker in charge of three NER orphanages.

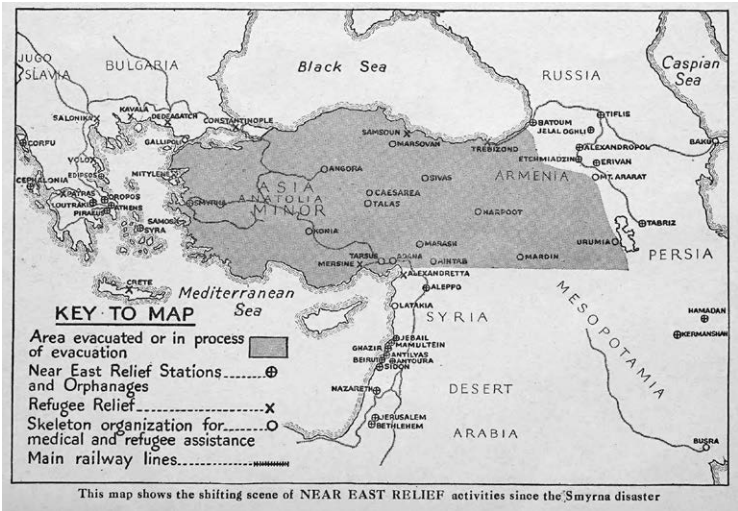


Fig. 3. *Map of Near East Relief activities since the Smyrna catastrophe*
Near East Relief. A Review for 1922 (New York, 1923)

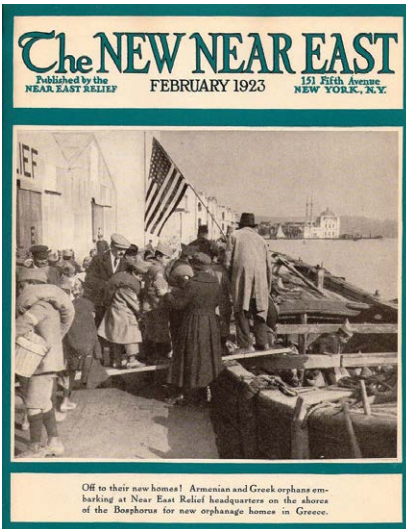


Fig. 4. *Off to their new homes! Armenian and Greek orphans embarking at Near East Relief headquarters on the shores of the Bosphorus for new homes in Greece*
The New Near East, February 1923.

The Greek officials, in direct communication with the NER representatives, despite the extreme refugee crisis, responded immediately to the requests of the organization: "The Greek hospitality has been especially manifested towards the Near East Relief orphans whom it was necessary to bring out of Anatolia. Good quarters have been furnished in safe places on the agreement that we continue the care and support of orphans."¹³

The problem of the refugee orphans would have been by itself a further strain and probably beyond the power of the Greek government to cope with it. The NER, now in Greece, continued to provide care for the Armenian, Anatolian Greek, and Greek refugee orphans,¹⁴ and to contribute to general refugee relief, along with other American and international relief agencies. The Greek side committed to provide the organization with several benefits: exemption from custom duties, land for the construction of an orphanage, and free transportation for supplies, orphans, and personnel. The NER officers in Greece were given diplomatic privileges, and they could use the post and telegraph without charge.¹⁵

By the end of December 1922, emergency evacuation of the NER orphans to Greece, Syria and Palestine, and Soviet Armenia was completed, by truck, freight train, donkey, boat, and on foot (Fig. 4). The headquarters and its personnel were moved to Athens, leaving in Constantinople and other places

13. Op. cit., 33.

14. The organization was also assigned the care of a number of refugee children who had become orphans or had been separated from their families during the events of the Asia Minor catastrophe. These children were added to the groups of NER orphans who evacuated from the former Ottoman Empire. Many of them would be reunited with family members; others would remain under the wings of the organization.

15. Barton, *Story of Near East Relief*, 163-164.

skeleton crews to safeguard existing infrastructure and protect those left behind until they reached safety. The NER personnel transported approximately 22,000 children, with almost 15,000 children arriving in Greece by boat via Constantinople during November and December. The conditions of the transfer were far from ideal.¹⁶ In January-February 1923 the children in Greece numbered approximately 18,500.¹⁷ The temporary increase was because during the evacuation from Anatolia more adult refugees perished, and their unprotected, unattended children were brought to Greece and put under the care of the

16. For example, see the vivid description by NER worker Susan D. Orvis, responsible for a group of orphans from Caesarea: "I have never in my whole experience in Near East witnessed such human sorrow, distress, death as caused by this vast flight [...]. It was like a march of terror. I brought out the fifteenth and last caravan of orphans from Caesarea, 250 miles inland [...]," *The New Near East*, February 1923, 12-13.

17. During November-December 1922 groups of NER orphans escorted by relief workers were arriving in Athens, Loutraki and Corinth, Piraeus, Oropos, Corfu, Salonica, Dedeagatch (Alexandroupolis), Mount Athos and Kavala. Salonica, Dedeagatch, Mount Athos, and Kavala served as temporary stations for the NER orphans; children were distributed to Athens, Loutraki, Corinth, Oropos, and Corfu, and by the summer of 1923 also to the newly purpose-built Syra (Syros) orphanage. By the end of 1923, the NER had protected 15,700 children and was operating five orphanages. For calculations of numbers of refugee orphans in Greece, see *Το έργο της Αμερικανικής περιθάλψεως της Εγγύς Ανατολής εν Ελλάδι (Σεπτέμβριος 1922-Δεκέμβριος 1924)* (Athens 1925), 9; Εθνικό Ίδρυμα Ερευνών και Μελετών "Ελευθέριος Κ. Βενιζέλος" - Digital Archive, "Table showing the numbers of orphans in Greece," Athens, 6 December 1922, <https://www.searchculture.gr/aggregator/edm/venizelosdig/000132-10646> (accessed 28 August 2024); and Indiana State Library Digital Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts, Will H. Hays Collection, Box 4, folder 3, Cablegram from Charles V. Vickrey dated 1 December 1922 (Correspondence, 1922 December 1-9 - Will H. Hays Collection - Collections Hosted by the Indiana State Library (oclc.org) - accessed 26 August 2024). For locations of NER stations and orphanages in Greece, see the map in Vickrey, *Near East Relief*.

NER.¹⁸ "This [evacuation] of necessity, opens up to Near East Relief a new and vast area, where, by force of circumstance, we are compelled to operate. [...] These exiled, helpless, fatherless motherless children, orphans of martyrs, once landed on the shores of impoverished Greece, must be cared for during the winter months."¹⁹

The NER in Greece: Orphanages and Other Relief Initiatives

The major NER-operated orphanages in Greece by the end of 1923 were five: the Zappeion Orphanage, the Orphanage of the Old Palace, the Corinth Orphanage, the Oropos Orphanage, and the Syros Orphanage.²⁰ The Zappeion exhibition center had been transformed for the needs of the NER orphans. The building also housed a clinic with dental and x-rays departments. The Zappeion orphanage, due to its central position and facilities was regularly visited by American tourists in Athens, and most probably acted as the flagship for the work done by NER in Greece along with the Syros orphanage. The Old Palace also housed orphan girls who were either to be placed with families, sent to live with relatives, or placed in a temporary housing facility or hostel (Fig. 5). The NER Corinth Orphanage was housed in twelve military barracks on a hilltop overlooking Ancient and New Corinth. It also included a hospital for the needs of the children and the population of the surrounding region and offered vocational

18. Others were put in the custody of surviving family members once in Greece when their relatives were located by relief workers.

19. Near East Relief, *A Million Lives Saved*, 11.

20. See *Το έργο της Αμερικανικής περιθάλψεως της Εγγύς Ανατολής εν Ελλάδι*, 13-17. Up to the time of the construction of the Syros Orphanage, the Zappeion was the largest, with 2,500 children. See back cover of *The New Near East*, February 1923.



Fig. 5. *Group portrait of orphans from the Near East Relief orphanages at Zappeion, and their directors, 1922*

Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, D.C.



training. The NER Oropos orphanage, mostly hosting Armenian boys and girls, was housed on premises owned by the Amalieion Orphanage.²¹ Finally, the purpose-built NER Orphanage on the island of Syros was the biggest orphanage operating in the Near East, established on a huge piece of land donated by the Greek state. From the early days of its operation, it was labelled both as an orphanage and vocational school for boys and girls.²²

Education for refugee children was difficult, primarily due to harsh living conditions and was not viewed as a priority either by their families or the state; according to NER data, in 1925 out of 47,216 children under sixteen in the Athens-area refugee camps, only 9,938 were receiving any schooling.²³ The NER's educational program serves as one of the most lasting contributions to the care of the orphans and the refugees, prior to and after the Smyrna catastrophe. Thousands of children had the opportunity to be trained in a profession that would render them self-supporting. Children in NER orphanages were provided with a comprehensive elementary education and then began learning trades. Occasionally, there were opportunities for children with academic achievements to continue with their studies.²⁴

21. The Amalieion Orphanage for Girls was founded in 1855; the Oropos facilities were used by the NER from 1923. The NER director at Oropos was Sara Corning, who had rescued 5,000 Armenian orphans by leading them to the Smyrna harbor where they were rowed out to American destroyers. On Corning, see the Sara Corning Centre for Genocide Education, <https://www.corningcentre.or/about-us/> (accessed 26 August 2024).

22. The NER Syros Orphanage housed up to 5,000 children and included facilities like a gymnasium, hospital, laundry facilities, and specially designed workshops for the vocational training of the children. On the same plot there was also designated housing for the NER staff. See also *The New Near East*, May 1923, 6-7; and Lefteris Zorzos (ed.), *The New Near East Orphanage of Syros* (Syros 2023).

23. *Annual Report of the Foreign Department for the year 1925*, 26.

24. See, for example, a two-page report with the names of competent

In 1925, 110 senior orphans from Greece enrolled in higher educational institutions in Greece and in American schools in Switzerland and England.²⁵ There was a scholarship plan; grants were awarded primarily for training in practical fields in nursing and teaching and there were a few cases where children were offered a year's study in the United States. However, vocational training was a priority. Boys were trained as carpenters, farmers, mechanics, shoemakers, silversmiths, and potters. Girls became dressmakers, weavers, and nurses.²⁶ Immediately after the relocation of the NER personnel from Constantinople the organization set up offices in the Old Palace in Athens, now the Greek House of Parliament. There one of the most notable operations of the Constantinople NER headquarters was reestablished – the department targeting the unaccompanied children who were found among the groups of refugees.²⁷ In Greece, the service, due to the special circumstances, was extended to include

NER orphans who were recommended or sent by the NER Salonica staff for further studies (ASCSA Archives, Dorothy H. Sutton Papers, Box 2, folder 5). In addition, during the school year 1929-1930, the last year of operation of the NER Syros Orphanage, out of the 455 pupils registered in the Secondary School of Syros, 71 were children of the NER Syros Orphanage. See Tania Chietala, "Refugeehood in Ermoupolis," in Zorzos, *The New Near East Orphanage of Syros*, 47.

25. See Near East Relief, *Annual Report of the Foreign Department for the Year 1925*, 53.

26. The orphans were also an important labor force for the functioning of the orphanages. At the NER Syros orphanage for example, the boys were used as helpers during the construction of the orphanages: out of 1,150 workers for the construction of the orphanage 400 were older orphans, while the rest were refugees who resided on the island. See Nina Georgiadou and Lefteris Zorzos, "The Syros Near East Relief Orphanage" in Zorzos, *The New Near East Orphanage of Syros*, 50-57.

27. "This work began in the fall of 1919 when the establishment of Near East Relief centers made it possible to locate individuals whose relatives in this country [USA] were looking for word of them" (*A Million Lives Saved*, 31).

adults as well. In one month in Athens, January to February 1923, there were 12,000 inquiries, many of them from America and England, and these were posted around 500 refugee centers, all over Greece. 2,000 missing persons were reunited with their families by March 1923. Two American NER workers were responsible for the operation, Miss Myrtle Nolan of Minneapolis and Miss Louise MacLachlan of Detroit, assisted by local personnel. The office was also responsible for searching for relatives of the unaccompanied or orphan children abroad, in the United States and elsewhere. By December 1923, almost a year after its operation, the staff had helped to reunite 25,000 people, children and adults.²⁸

A similar department operated in Salonica in 1924, with Dorothy H. Sutton (1873-1970), an experienced NER relief worker, in charge of it. The NER in Salonica also operated a hostel, a sort of temporary accommodation for children who were looking for their families. The department employed field workers, Anatolian Greeks and Armenian refugees, who investigated the cases in refugee camps and villages. By the end of 1925, 3,000 children, orphaned and unattended, had passed through the NER Salonica bureau on their way to parents and relatives who had thought them lost. One typical day at the office, as described by Sutton, gives a picture of work that was not restricted to uniting children with their families and offered relief in many more forms to refugees.

"[...] Next a boy of 8 is brought in; having lost his parents and relations during the deportation or the Smyrna disaster. This small youngster following every rumor concerning the whereabouts of his people, he had been wondering in the mountains and villages of Macedonia for nearly eight months, getting food and shelter whenever and wherever he could. We have bathed

28. *The New Near East*, March 1923, 13.

and clothed him and placed him in our Hostel until such time as we can either locate some relative or put him in a good family... Following came a sad eyed little widow, with 3 children to feed and clothe, begging for work. One child desperately ill and placed in hospital, the entire group given immediate relief of food and warm clothing, as well as temporary space [...].²⁹

The NER practiced extensively and from very early on the method of home-placing for the orphans under supervision in the areas of its operations. In 1923, 14,159 children were out-placed in homes while in 1924 the number was higher with 15,048 children leaving the orphanages in Greece.³⁰ As of December 1923, 21,911 children remained in the NER orphanages, largely limited to children under fourteen or twelve years of age.³¹ The general policy from 1924 onwards was to reduce relief operations to a minimum and continue with outplacing, the NER officials called the practice drastic but necessary (Fig. 6).

Another practice was to send orphans abroad, this applied specifically to Armenian orphans in NER orphanages in Greece. The organization's officials systematically worked to place the Armenian orphans with Armenian communities in countries like Egypt and France, either for adoption by Armenian families or, in the case of older girls, to be married. For older boys -

29. American School of Classical Studies at Athens, Archives, Dorothy H. Sutton Papers, Box 2, folder 5, item 31 (a two-page typewritten account). Sutton's description of the work accomplished by the bureau is impressive; information was recorded for every lost child reported by family or for children who were found wandering by themselves, orphaned while on their way to Greece or in the camps. The relief workers filed a report, then tried to match the information they had on orphans under their care and assigned the case to staff who would investigate refugee camps and Greek orphanages.

30. Near East Relief, *Report to Congress for 1925* (New York 1926), 24.

31. *Report of the Near East Relief for the Year Ending December 31, 1923* (Washington 1924), 10, 12.



Fig. 6. *The NER Syros Orphanage*

Lefteris Zorzos Private Collection

fourteen years old and older – another practice was their placement in Macedonia as student-farmers, interns under supervision. The agreement between NER on behalf of the boys and the farmers was the following: the farmers supplied a home, clothes, and spending money (a small amount each month as an allowance) and taught the boys farming through practice. In 1924, for example, the agency had sent more than 2,000 orphans as student farmers to Macedonia.³²

32. "In Macedonia, Mr. McAfee of the Near East Relief has been able to place more than two thousand of the older boys as student farmers on a basis that is advantageous both to the boys and to the country," Near East Relief, *Report to Congress for 1924* (New York 1925), 18.

The agency also placed children with widowed mothers who had several children of their own. In this, the NER personnel were assisted by committees of local ladies who conducted surveys and regularly inspected homes under NER supervision; the organization provided a monthly allowance to the single/widowed mother. This practice however, required further control on the part of the NER. The placement of children in homes, without adoption, in today's terms foster parenting, was and remains difficult. It requires a network to supervise the procedures and the welfare of the child. We are not able to know how effective and successful was the outplacement with families, whether the children were happy with the arrangements, or if the operation was properly monitored by the NER.³³

Prospects for Future Research

Finding the means to provide relief and shelter to Anatolian Greek orphans would have been another burden for Greece amid the refugee crisis. Thus, the Greek state responded to the NER's transfer of operations to Greece by striking with it the best possible deal for Greece, considering the circumstances. On the one hand, Greece secured the protection of the Anatolian Greek orphans and also the Armenian orphans. This was done by supplying whatever was available and could be spared (e.g., buildings, help with bureaucratic matters, exemption from duties). The NER, in return, gave assurances that feeding,

33. Sutton, for example, who was one of the most experienced NER workers in Greece, since 1922, paid special attention to the follow up of children who were placed with families. On 19 November 1925, she wrote to Managing Director Jaquith in Athens expressing openly her concern: "There is much to be done still, and may I add my urgent plea for the continuation of personal supervision over the children outplaced," ASCSA Archives, Dorothy H. Sutton Papers, Box 2, folder 5.

clothing, education, and care of the orphans, Armenian and Greek alike, would be secured and there would be a flow of relief assistance to the general refugee population. The last was not on the scale that the Greek state would have wished for but still it was something. And something was better than nothing in a chaotic situation.

Despite the retreat of the American Red Cross at the end of June 1923 and the decision of the U.S. government not to resume relief aid to Greece, the NER continued to offer support to adult refugees long after the summer of 1923.³⁴ The NER continued to run health clinics for refugee adults and children with the cooperation of the American Women's Hospitals. In addition, the organization operated the Near East Industries which provided vocational training and employment for refugees, particularly women and older children, who manufactured, in small workshops, handicrafts for sale.³⁵

Children's voices in any form, written or oral, do provide a large part of the narrative of the humanitarian relief during this period.³⁶ That said, the relationship between the NER and members of the Greek government during this period is a topic that

34. See Vogeikoff-Brogan in this volume.

35. See *In the Name of Humanity*, 76-99.

36. The part of the "givers," or "benefactors," that is the organizations and their personnel, has been extensively described and documented. The experiences of the recipients of the help, that is the children, are less well known and documented. We do have personal testimonies, originating mostly from Armenians who were under the agency's care and recorded their experiences in autobiographies and memoirs; and there are also memories which have survived through their descendants. We should also take into consideration the fact that sometimes people who have been through traumatic situations do not want to remember or reminisce. While it may be difficult to locate orphans' own experiences and perspectives in archival material loaded with bureaucratic, political, and technical details, we do need to keep searching for children's narratives.

requires further investigation. A critical reexamination of how the Greek side responded would shed additional light on the legacy and contributions of the organization in Greece. Did the Greek state take up the challenge to continue whatever was bequeathed after the NER terminated its orphan work in Greece in 1929, especially in the areas of education and in social and medical welfare?

In conclusion, the humanitarian aid that the NER offered after 1923 was not on a large scale and did not reach all the refugees. But it had a significant impact in a war-torn country with a million and a half refugees who required rehabilitation and support. Humanitarian legacies are worth remembering, even if they need to be addressed today with a more critical eye.³⁷

ABBREVIATIONS

ASCSA: American School of Classical Studies at Athens

FRUS: Foreign Relations of the United States

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37. See especially the works by Keith David Watenpaugh, *Bread from Stones. The Middle East and the Making of the Modern Humanitarianism* (Oakland 2015) and Davide Rodogno, *Night on Earth. A History of International Humanitarianism in the Near East, 1918-1930* (Cambridge 2022).

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