Migration Letters
January 2023
Volume: 20, No: 1, pp. 1 – 10
ISSN: 1741-8984 (Print) ISSN: 1741-8992 (Online)
journals.tplondon.com/ml

TRANSNATIONAL PRESS® LONDON

Received: 4 January 2023 Accepted: 7 January 2023
DOI: https://doi.org/10.33182/ml.v20i1.2876

"A Productive Asset for the Country:" Refugees, the League of Nations, and the Greco-Turkish Exchange, 1924-1930

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Abstract

In 1924, the League of Nations authorized a special commission to resettle the hundreds of thousands of refugees created by the Greco-Turkish War. The Refugee Settlement Commission (RSC) would be responsible for rehousing Greek refugees expelled from former Ottoman territories and resettling them in Greece. The RSC had a unique commission. In an attempt to effect a "permanent solution" to ethnic violence in the lands of the former Ottoman Empire, the League of Nations had helped broker the Treaty of Lausanne between the warring nations of Greece and Turkey that ended the conflict and authorized each nation to denaturalize and expel any Greeks in Turkey and any Turks in Greece, over one and a half million civilians in total from both countries. With the League's approval, the RSC carried out the task of resettling hundreds of thousands of refugees who had been created by international accord, forced out of their ancestral homelands, and expelled to Greece with the vague promise of citizenship, housing, and welfare. This paper follows how the Refugee Settlement Commission, a supranational organization created and legitimized by the League of Nations, sought to enact their visions of modernity and civilization through the resettlement of these refugees.

Keywords: *Refugees; Resettlement; Greco-Turkish Exchange; League of Nations; Henry Morgenthau*

In 1924, the League of Nations authorized a special commission to resettle the hundreds of thousands of refugees created by the Greco-Turkish War. The Refugee Settlement Commission (RSC) would be responsible for rehousing Greek refugees expelled from former Ottoman territories and resettling them in Greece. The RSC had a unique commission. While the Greco-Turkish war, which erupted after the end of World War I, had pushed hundreds of thousands of Greeks and Turks to seek asylum, the RSC's ambit was not to only relieve the victims of war, but also refugees created by international agreement. In an attempt to effect a "permanent solution" to ethnic violence in the lands of the former Ottoman Empire, the League of Nations had helped broker the Treaty of Lausanne between the warring nations of Greece and Turkey that ended the conflict and authorized each nation to denaturalize and expel any Greeks in Turkey and any Turks in Greece, over one and a half million civilians in total from both countries. Facing political and economic upheaval, the Greek government allowed the League of Nations to fully take over the resettlement process for the over one million new Greek citizens created by this agreement.[2] The League tasked the RSC with the goal of resettling hundreds of thousands of refugees who had been created by international accord, forced out of their ancestral homelands, and expelled to Greece with the vague promise of citizenship, housing, and welfare.

This paper follows how the Refugee Settlement Commission, a supranational organization created and legitimized by the League of Nations, sought to enact their visions of modernity

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[2] "The Greek Refugee Settlement Scheme Protocol" 1924. Box 31, Reel 25, Folder – Refugee Settlement Commission. Henry Morgenthau Sr. Papers, Library of Congress Manuscript Division, Washington D.C.

and civilization through the resettlement of the refugees. Between 1924 and 1930, the RSC would be responsible for the housing and resettlement of roughly 1.1 million refugees (Macartney, 1930, 111). Using archival material from the commission's internal briefs, meetings, and planning committees as well as the personal papers of the RSC's first chairman Henry Morgenthau, this paper traces how the Refugee Settlement Commission sought to not only resettle Greek refugees but also enact grander visions of economic and social reconstruction through various aid projects. As the Greek government had largely divested responsibility for these refugees to the RSC, the commission gained an enormous amount of control over the daily lives of former Turks now ushered into Greek lands. The RSC operated in what historian Davide Rodogno terms a "sovereignty deficit," a temporal and political space where the absence of state power empowers nonstate organizations, like the RSC, to gain unique control over the lived experiences of the dispossessed (Rodogno, 2016, 190). Ultimately, however, the goals of the RSC, much like the League of Nations itself, were largely oriented towards upholding state power and legitimizing the sovereignty of nation-states (Mazower, 2013). Like many humanitarian and bureaucratic organizations of the time, the RSC focused heavily on statistics and data management in order to render refugees legible to state power. Throughout their six-year tenure, the commission produced thousands of rolls, charts, graphs, and surveys that sought to categorize the refugees to make them legible and, perhaps more importantly, taxable by the Greek state. In all of these documents, the commission consistently focused on the idea of productivity, arguing that their sole intent would be to convert refugees into a "productive asset for the country" of Greece.[3]

The commission's rigid focus on categorization hierarchies and their idiosyncratic ideas of "productivity" often took on ethnic and imperial tones. Identifying and rehousing over one million refugees, the RSC funneled refugees into two large categories of, as they termed it, "civilization."[4] This categorization largely took place at the discretion of commission members and agents, identifying certain refugees as more "civilized" and therefore more suitable for resettlement in urban areas in contrast to refugees identified as of "peasant origin" and therefore resettled in rural areas.[5] This haphazard and uneven process of identification relief upon the inherent assumptions that RSC agents brought with them when evaluating refugees. Groups of refugees from different regions of Anatolia were lumped together into these "urban" and "rural" categories mostly based off of regional stereotypes of the locations the refugees had been displaced from. These two categories of refugees would not only receive different geographical resettlement opportunities, but also different treatment by the RSC.

The hundreds of thousands of refugees resettled in Greece differed from other refugees dispossessed by World War I and its ensuing conflicts in two major ways. The Lausanne Treaty stipulated the expulsion of "ethnic minorities," meaning Greeks in Turkey and Turks in Greece, as a condition of ending the Greco-Turkish War. However, the process of identifying nationality remained murky. From the 1400s until the 19th century, Greece had been a part of the Ottoman Empire, a multi-ethnic empire that included at various times the

[3] "Report on the Financial Status of Greece" by Colonel R. Proctor, 1923. Box 31, Reel 25, Folder – Refugee Settlement Commission. Henry Morgenthau Sr. Papers, Library of Congress Manuscript Division, Washington D.C.

[4] "Report to the Fifth Assembly of the League of the Work of the Commission" June 10, 1924. Box 31, Reel 25, Folder – Refugee Settlement Commission Reports, June-Dec. 1924. Henry Morgenthau Sr. Papers, Library of Congress Manuscript Division, Washington D.C.

[5] Correspondence from M. Adossides to Henry Morgenthau, January 3, 1924. Box 31, Reel 25, Folder – Refugee Settlement Commission Reports, June-Dec. 1924. Henry Morgenthau Sr. Papers, Library of Congress Manuscript Division, Washington D.C.

majority of Eastern Mediterranean nations. Turkish and Greek nationality were hotly debated terms, with ethnic identity only one of a variety of factors contributing to perceived national identity (Philliou, 2011). The complex politics of nationality and ethnic identity in the wake of the collapse of the multi-ethnic Ottoman Empire led those convened at Lausanne to look for easy answers. When trying to identify what constituted Greek and Turkish identity, the League of Nations and the Greek and Turkish governments turned to religion (Ozsu, 2015). On the recommendation of the League's High Commissioner for Refugees, Fridtjof Nansen, the Lausanne Treaty stipulated a "compulsory exchange of Turkish nationals of Greek orthodox religion and of Greek nationals of Moslem religion" (Macartney, 1930, 86). By centering religion, rather than history, ethnicity, or identity claims, the League of Nations sought to provide a straightforward means of identifying and categorizing soon to be refugees in the nations of Greece and Turkey. The process at Lausanne represented the culmination of a new concept of minority rights, where, according to historian Eric Weitz, protections for ethnic and religious minorities blended with new methods for controlling demography, meaning that "deportation and protection ran together" (Weitz, 2008, 1313). What this meant in practice was that many "Greek" refugees claimed long ancestral ties to Turkey and Ottoman lands, while many "Turkish" refugees had lived in Greece and its surrounding areas for centuries. Claims to history and ethnicity provided little protection. With a few small exceptions, the nations of Greece and Turkey denaturalized and expelled almost every practicing Greek Orthodox citizen of Turkey and every Muslim in Greece for the shaky promise of resettlement in their neighboring nation (Gingeras, 2011).

In Turkey, the consolidating government of Mustapha Kemal, who established the modern state of Turkey following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, took control over the resettlement of expelled Muslim Greeks. In Greece, the resettlement situation took a much more complicated route. With its economy in ruins and its military in disarray after its stunning defeats in the Greco-Turkish war, Greece remained wracked with political upheaval. Discontent among military officers eventually boiled over into an armed revolt, with the Greek military forcing the abdication of the Greek king and establishing a military government. One contemporary American observer commented, "the coup could scarcely have come at a worse time for the refugees."[6] This space of political and economic turmoil offered few hopes for the hundreds of thousands of newly created refugees bound across the Aegean Sea for Greece's shores.

In Greece, both the refugees ousted by war and those displaced by the Lausanne Treaty exchange policy relied upon a fragile network of aid provided largely by U.S. based humanitarian organizations.[7] The newly established Greek military government had little money or political will to aid the refugees. Temporary housing had been established in former barracks on the Greek coast and in tent camps on Greek islands in the Aegean Sea, but the Greek government offered no plans towards a permanent resettlement of the refugees.[8] The

[6] Correspondence from Asa Jennings to D.A. Davis, April 8, 1923. Box 3, Folder – Asa K. Jennings. YMCA International Work in Turkey Collection, Kautz Family YMCA Archives, University of Minnesota Archives and Special Collections, Minneapolis, MN.

[7] "The Refugee Situation in Greece" by Brainerd P. Salmon, October 1923. Box 7, Folder 6, Near East Relief Committee Records. Burke Library Archives, Union Theological Seminary, New York. See also "Report of the Near East Relief on the Refugee Aid Situation" December, 1923. Box 31 Reel 25, Folder – Refugee Settlement Commission. Henry Morgenthau Sr. Papers, Library of Congress Manuscript Division, Washington D.C.

[8] "Report on the Financial Status of Greece" by Colonel R. Proctor, 1923. Box 31, Reel 25, Folder – Refugee Settlement Commission. Henry Morgenthau Sr. Papers, Library of Congress Manuscript Division, Washington D.C.

new military leaders of the government began to draw up plans for a massive bank loan, in the region of ten million pounds sterling, in order to effect resettlement. However, the financial situation in Greece precluded most institutions from considering the loan, so the government turned instead to the League of Nations in preparing the negotiations for such a loan.[9]

Into this space of sovereignty deficit, the League of Nations happily stepped in. The League's High Commissioner on Refugees Fridtjof Nansen, who had proposed the exchange in the early days of Lausanne, tasked his senior deputy, Colonel J. Proctor, with crafting an initial report outlining a plan for resettling the hundreds of thousands of Greek refugees created by the war and the exchange. By June, Proctor had prepared an initial report laying out the future plans of what would become the Refugee Settlement Commission. In his opening lines, Proctor noted the extraordinary nature of the League's plans, writing that permanent resettlement had rarely been the goal of refugee relief work, however, "urgent necessity for immediate steps to be taken for their relief and settlement on a permanent basis, the situation being accentuated by the contemplated withdrawal of American relief at the end of June, which would involve the cessation of feeding of some 500,000 destitute people."[10] The withdrawal of American aid represented a watershed moment for the Greek refugees. Soup kitchens, orphanages, and refugee aid stations operated by American organizations like the American Red Cross and Near East Relief provided the basic infrastructure for life for hundreds of thousands of Greek refugees. Due to dwindling funds, both of these organizations had set firm stop dates on aid for the summer of 1923. With this looming vacuum of relief Nansen sought more permanent solutions for the resolution of the refugee problem.

After receiving Proctor's report, the League voted on the measure of effectively taking over the resettlement of Greek refugees within the territory of Greece. In their vote endorsing the project, League representatives stated, "it would be possible to replace the temporary relief measures that…have hitherto alone been undertaken by a general plan, enabling refugees in other parts of Greece to be settled on the land or otherwise established on a self-supporting basis, and if so prepare a scheme for the purpose."[11] With few funds of its own to actually facilitate the "scheme", the League turned instead to the Bank of England to offer the loan to the Greek state. Under pressure from British League representative Arthur Balfour, the Bank of England authorized a loan of roughly twelve million pounds sterling to the Greek state in order to resettle refugees on the condition that the actual resettlement took place entirely in the hands of the League of Nations. By authorizing a loan, the League sought to bring multiple relief and resettlement efforts under one aegis under their control. The domino-like effect of this loan, with the Greek government petitioning the League for aid who in turn petitioned a foreign bank, effectively meant that the League gained an enormous amount of economic leverage over Greece as the disburser of the loan while the Greek government remained responsible for the actual repayment of the debt.[12]

[9] "The Greek Refugee Settlement Scheme Protocol" 1924. Box 31, Reel 25, Folder – Refugee Settlement Commission. Henry Morgenthau Sr. Papers, Library of Congress Manuscript Division, Washington D.C.
[10] "Report on the Financial Status of Greece" by Colonel R. Proctor, 1923. Box 31, Reel 25, Folder – Refugee Settlement Commission. Henry Morgenthau Sr. Papers, Library of Congress Manuscript Division, Washington D.C.
[11] Ibid.
[12] "The Greek Refugee Settlement Scheme Protocol" 1924. Box 31, Reel 25, Folder – Refugee Settlement Commission. Henry Morgenthau Sr. Papers, Library of Congress Manuscript Division, Washington D.C.

By co-opting resettlement plans in Greece, the League sought not only to remedy the global refugee crisis but also assert its place in a rapidly transforming world. Proctor's report stipulated that the resettlement of Greek refugees would provide both opportunity for the League of Nations as well as legitimacy, writing, "The relief and establishment of the refugees is a very serious matter for Greece. There has been an increase of 17% in her population in indigent refugees alone, which constitutes a liability too heavy for the wealthiest nation to support them for more than a very limited period…With the League's help, Greece can convert this liability into a productive asset for the country."[13] In control of the loan, the League secured a series of guarantees from the Greek government: they would cede 500,000 hectares of land to the League for resettlement in Greek controlled Macedonia, the League would have sole control over disbursing the loan, and any outstanding debts would be repaid by the Greek government. In return, the League would rehouse hundreds of thousands of refugees, integrate them into the Greek economy, and provide a stable tax base of new citizens for the Greek government to use for long-term loan repayment (Macartney, 1930, 110-112).

In order to carry out this process, the League created the Refugee Settlement Commission in 1924, and gave the commission the sole power to disburse loan money and rehouse refugees in the land granted by Greece. In a nod to the crucial role played by American relief organizations in transporting and caring for the refugees, the League stipulated that the chairman of the RSC must be "of American nationality and to have representative experience of relief organization."[14] Since the United States had not joined the League, mandating an American in leadership on the RSC guaranteed a certain level of entre between the commission and key humanitarian groups in the region. On the advice of two key American humanitarian groups in the region, the American Red Cross and Near East Relief, the League appointed former U.S. Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire Henry Morgenthau, who served on both organizations' executive boards, as chairman. Under Morgenthau, the League appointed prominent British representative John Campbell and granted the Greek Government two appointees as well, both state bureaucrats (Macartney, 1930, 90). Morgenthau spoke of the work of resettlement with an almost mythical understanding of the process. He would later write in his memoirs, "Ever since Moses led the children of Israel out - of bondage in Egypt the story of the Exodus has thrilled the human heart. It was the birth of freedom to a race, the beginning of the history of a nation" (Morgenthau, 1929, Chapter 2). The concepts of national sovereignty and ethno-national reconstruction stood at the center of the Commission's efforts.

Throughout their work, Morgenthau and his subordinates ultimately sought two goals: buttressing the nascent legitimacy of the League of Nations and rendering refugees legible to the Greek state in order for them to become productive and, therefore, taxable citizens. The Commission believed that the onus of paying off the money used from the Bank of England loan for the purposes of resettlement should, at some point, fall onto the refugees themselves. Writing in his memoir, Morgenthau believed the economic process of resettlement and debt repayment would be inherent among the refugees, "Like the American, nearly every Greek is intensely ambitious to succeed in business. When he succeeds he gains honor (again as in America) by the lavishness of his gifts of money to the public welfare" (Morgenthau, 1929,

[13] "Report on the Financial Status of Greece" by Colonel R. Proctor, 1923. Box 31, Reel 25, Folder – Refugee Settlement Commission. Henry Morgenthau Sr. Papers, Library of Congress Manuscript Division, Washington D.C.
[14] "The Greek Refugee Settlement Scheme Protocol" 1924. Box 31, Reel 25, Folder – Refugee Settlement Commission. Henry Morgenthau Sr. Papers, Library of Congress Manuscript Division, Washington D.C.

Chapter 17). By providing them the tools necessary to succeed, Morgenthau believed, the refugees would be able and willing to repay the massive debts incurred by the League of Nations and the Greek state.

After being organized by the League and endorsed by the Greek government, the RSC began its first large scale project: an identification process to categorize all of the refugees. Employing hundreds of local Greek bureaucrats, the commission required every refugee displaced by the Greco-Turkish war or the ensuing exchange to register with their commission, listing their background, place of birth, and any relevant skills or work histories. Over the early months of 1924, the board would learn the true scale of the refugee crisis engendered by conflict and international treaty. The survey concluded that 1.25 million refugees would need their help with resettlement and rehousing.[15]

In their plans for resettlement, the RSC relied implicitly on perceived civilizational hierarchies among the refugees. The RSC's small board and disproportionate power offered the members of the commission enormous power to act out their idiosyncratic ideologies in the process of categorization and resettlement. These idiosyncrasies could be seen very early on in the categorization process. With the scarce information provided by the survey, the commission grouped refugees into two broad categories, the "urban" class and the "peasant" class. The RSC placed about 30% of the incoming refugees as "urban" and 70% as "peasants." Urban refugees, in the RSC's parlance, had valuable artisanal skills and "civilizational awareness," meaning they embodied perceived values of modernity.[16] Notably, the majority of the urban refugees were already somewhat wealthy and brought liquid assets along with them, either in the form of hard currency or bank-backed currency in Greece. For these refugees, the RSC built and leased out affordable housing in the outskirts of existing Greek cities, allowing the refugees to benefit from existing social services and lower housing prices. The majority of refugees, however, fell into the second camp, the "peasant class" according to the RSC.[17] Resettling these refugees would become the main focus of the commission over the following six years.

Initial RSC reports demonstrate the breadth of perceptions related to the "peasant class" of refugees, revealing the ethnic and racial overtones that dominated perceived civilizational hierarchies. The war and exchange had displaced refugees from across the Eastern Mediterranean, many with little to no connection to Greece itself. Grouping refugees based on place of displacement, one report characterized all of those exiled from the Pontus region as "a race of austere morals, who have retained all the combative ardour and the warlike virtues of their ancestor, the mediaeval hero, Diogenes Acritas." This in sharp contrast to, "The Thracians and Bulgars were 'the true peasant type,' 'slow and serious and of regular habits." The report carried racial overtones as well, describing those with Turkish ancestry, albeit Greek orthodox, as "backwards, submissive, and timid." Refugees expelled from the coast of Anatolia, closest to Greece in both ethnicity and geography, were categorized as "true Ionians in their individualism, their gaiety, energy, suppleness of mind, their adaptability, their great powers of assimilation, their love of change, their talkativeness and their carping spirit."[18]

[15] "Report on the Operations of the Refugee Settlement Commission in its First Three Months," March 6, 1924. Box 31, Reel 25, Folder – Refugee Settlement Commission Reports, Jan-May, 1924. Henry Morgenthau Sr. Papers, Library of Congress Manuscript Division, Washington D.C.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Ibid.

Even within the dismissively named "peasant class," the commission believed that ethnic traits presaged civilizational success. As the survey and categorization process continued, the RSC began the massive process of rural resettlement and rehousing throughout the 500,000 hectares of land ceded in Macedonia for their use. Here, the commission's work took on the language of explicit imperialism. The RSC began to construct colonies, as they called them: purposely constructed ethnically homogeneous villages.

In building these colonies, the RSC took an unusual inspiration. Morgenthau and his fellow appointees believed that refugees of the "peasant class" could not simply form their own communities, but instead needed to be placed into a village style of life that could move them along the path towards civilization.[19] After surveying the histories of agricultural advancement, they settled on, what they called "Eastern European style" villages as a model for their colonies. Based on reports from Poland and Hungary, the commission established firm political rules for how villages would be run: "groups were made up in as homogeneous a fashion as possible. A Council was elected by the heads of families; and the group was then transported to its new lands, the limits of which had been marked out roughly" (Macartney, 1930, 97). This council, the RSC believed, would instill virtues of democracy and individualism which they claimed were sorely missing among the "backwards refugees."[20] The RSC also sought to provide firm economic direction to these villages. Refugees were given housing and agricultural training on the basis that they would plant the crops deemed most productive and valuable by the commission. In most cases, the RSC settled on tobacco cultivation as it promised the largest profit yield, and therefore offered the best chance to repay the Greek debt over time.[21]

Regardless of the wishes of the refugees themselves, the RSC laid out political and economic plans to make the refugees more valuable to the Greek state and, in their minds, more open to modernity in the long-term. Despite their best attempts, and dismissive romanticization of "village life", the RSC failed to build the solid communities they imagined. An international observer from the League noted, "As a rule the land was divided so as to ensure a decent competence to each family of hard-working cultivators. Some difficulties were, however, caused by the tendency of refugees to flock together into the rich districts, regardless of the commission's efforts" (Macartney, 1930, 97-98). Despite the economic leverage and sociopolitical power of the commission, the refugees still found ways to claim their own fates in the rapidly transforming world of the Eastern Mediterranean.

The chaotic process of rehousing and resettlement would continue for years. As required by the League, the RSC provided an update every three months on the project. Each of these updates for the first two years proceeded in the same style: the commission would lay out statistics of houses built and refugees rehoused, they would debit the amount paid from the Bank of England loan, and they would offer optimistic narratives of success from among the

[19] Correspondence from Henry Morgenthau to A. Morris, 1924. Box 31, Reel 25, Folder – Refugee Settlement Commission Misc. Documents, 1918-1924. Henry Morgenthau Sr. Papers, Library of Congress Manuscript Division, Washington D.C. For a thorough description of the League's approval of the adoption of "Eastern European style" villages, see Macartney, *The Work of the League*, 97-110.

[20] "Report on the Operations of the Refugee Settlement Commission in its First Three Months," March 6, 1924. Box 31, Reel 25, Folder – Refugee Settlement Commission Reports, Jan-May, 1924. Henry Morgenthau Sr. Papers, Library of Congress Manuscript Division, Washington D.C.

[21] Ibid.

urban and rural refugee resettlement programs.[22] After two years, however, the League started to demand more progress from the commission, especially financial progress. In that span, the RSC had undergone a change in leadership: Morgenthau returned to the United States to be replaced by Charles P. Howland, a prominent New York lawyer. Under pressure from the League to begin repaying the debt from the Bank of England, Howland began the process of trying to capitalize on the refugees turning them into, in the words of the League, "a productive asset of the country."[23] In practice, this meant that the commission began to take on even more of a governmental role in the life of the refugees, taking on one of the signature powers of a state: collecting taxes.

Leveraging the bureaucratic machinery they had already put in place to evaluate crop yields, the RSC began to place tithes on any sales made in the 500,000 hectares of land they controlled. Profits generated from agricultural sales went not to home improvement, but to the commission so they could begin to pay off Greece's loan. In May of 1926, when this process began, the RSC happily noted "The sale of the tobacco crop in most of the districts of Macedonia at comparatively high prices will enable a large number of farmers to pay part of their debts to the Commission during the summer."[24] Despite this sunny optimism, the taxation process remained laborious for both the commission and the refugees. Months later, the commission reported to the League that many refugees had begun to refuse to pay the debts, arguing that their involuntarily displaced status already placed them at enough of an inconvenience. The commission responded with characteristic dismissiveness, writing, "We are confident, however, that these objections will be gradually overcome, because the refugees will realize that it is in their own interest to pay off their debt to the Commission as soon as possible…" The commission also highlighted their coercive power, concluding, "otherwise they will never become the owners of their houses."[25] The debt collection process, much like the resettlement itself, would continue in a haphazard fashion for the following two years. The commission would never fully recoup the debts it incurred upon the refugees through the rehousing process, but they consistently sought to use the resettlement project as a means to satisfy their own financial and ideological goals.

By 1928, the RSC had declared its "colonization" projects a success. In four years, the RSC had been, in many ways, incredibly successful. The commission had built nearly 80,000 houses throughout Greece and had established roughly 170,000 families into created villages and urban spaces. Hundreds of thousands of "peasant" categorized refugees had been housed in Macedonia and, in the minds of the RSC, provided the equipment and social structure to create economically productive communities that would provide a tax base for Greece to repay its outstanding debt of millions of pounds sterling. However, even in their own quarterly reports the commission frequently noted that the rural resettled refugees continued to face crises, including some of the commission's invention. In 1927, several refugee "colonies" in Macedonia faced economic collapse due to an overproduction of tobacco and a subsequent collapse of the tobacco market, all on the insistence of the commission for refugees to grow

[22] The Refugee Settlement Commission produced 17 quarterly reports between 1924 and 1928 (the duration of their "colonization" projects). See Box 31, Reel 25, Folder – Refugee Settlement Commission Reports 1925-1926 and Box 32, Reel 26, Folder – Refugee Settlement Commission Reports, 1927-1928. Henry Morgenthau Sr. Papers, Library of Congress Manuscript Division, Washington D.C.

[23] "Tenth Quarterly Report" May 25, 1926. Box 31, Reel 25, Folder – Refugee Settlement Commission Reports 1925-1926. Henry Morgenthau Sr. Papers, Library of Congress Manuscript Division, Washington D.C.

[24] Ibid.

[25] Ibid.

tobacco as a cash crop to repay their housing loans owned by the RSC. Natural disasters like floods would also take their toll, destroying communities that had been inadvertently placed by the RSC in dangerous areas.[26] The sheer scale of the project of the Greco-Turkish exchange guaranteed continued crises, even beyond the violence of its initial displacement.

Despite these issues, the RSC shifted focus away from the "colonization" process towards what would become their final project as an organization: a cadastral survey of resettled lands.[27] Cadastral surveys, a process by which surveyors establish property boundaries in geographic space, had existed for centuries as a means to separate private and public property. A contemporary publication summarized cadastral surveys as providing, "a full record of all claims, servitudes, and evidence of ownership as well, so that it may establish and record the owner's title to the property."[28] In effect, the commission's final project would be to fully complete the legal process of the exchange: sanctioning the Greek refugees', and therefore the Greek state's, control over the territory as taxable and governable. The RSC believed that a cadastral survey would be the ultimate conclusion of their resettlement work by providing the Greek state the bureaucratic means to categorize and tax the rehoused refugees on the hundreds of thousands of hectares of land appropriated for them. Starting in 1928 and using modern technology like airplanes and new surveying techniques the RSC rendered the resettlement lands legible to the Greek state. This would be the commission's final contribution to upholding state power when, in 1930, the commission would present the survey as well as hand over its work to the Greek government. The RSC dissolved on December 31, 1930. Throughout its six-year tenure, the commission co-opted state power, particularly through taxation, however their goal was to ultimately buttress the Greek state—the commission passed on all taxation records, bureaucratic papers, and geographical surveys to the Greek government before their dissolution.

Over six years, the Refugee Settlement Commission had immense power over shaping the lived experiences of refugees. The commission built houses, resettled asylum-seekers, provided agricultural equipment and job training for hundreds of thousands of people forced out by the international accord of the Lausanne Treaty. The unique status of these refugees, religious minorities expelled from their homelands by state power and sanctioned by the League of Nations, offered the RSC a particular level of control over their daily lives, living situations, and financial futures. Through the process of rehousing the refugees, the RSC also sought to enact commission members' own unique visions of modernity onto refugees, placing refugees into categories based on perceived qualities of "civilization" and constructing communities based upon dismissive conceptions of "peasant life." In the mind of Henry Morgenthau, the commission's first chairman, this vision of modernity was irrevocably tied to the history of Greece and the contemporary Greek nation-state, "The flight of the Greeks from Asia Minor was the birth pangs of the Greek Republic. Out of their bitter tribulations has arisen a new nation, welded by suffering into a closer bond of union, and destined, I believe, to revive in great measure the ancient glories of that rocky land where Western civilization was born" (Morgenthau, 1929, Chapter 2). Throughout its work, the RSC's core efforts revolved around legitimizing and upholding the sovereignty of the Greek nation-state.

[26] "Thirteenth Quarterly Report" February 20, 1927. Box 32, Reel 26, Folder – Refugee Settlement Commission Reports, 1927-1928. Henry Morgenthau Sr. Papers, Library of Congress Manuscript Division, Washington D.C.
[27] "Seventeenth Quarterly Report" February 17, 1928. Box 32, Reel 26, Folder – Refugee Settlement Commission Reports, 1927-1928. Henry Morgenthau Sr. Papers, Library of Congress Manuscript Division, Washington D.C.
[28] Henry G. Lyons, "Ancient and Modern Land Measurement" *The Geographical Teacher* 13:6 (Autumn, 1926), 429.

The grand ambitions of the League of Nations and the Refugee Settlement Commission consistently oriented around claims of legitimacy, validating their own existence in a world increasingly dominated by the power of nations. Through the displacement of religious minorities, the League sought to consolidate ethnically homogenous nation-states by any means possible, including creating hundreds of thousands of refugees. The legacy of this process would leave lasting results, shaping the ethnic and religious makeup of the region for generations.

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