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A TALE OF MIGRATION: "EXCHANGE"

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Öz

Mübadele, Türkiye'nin yakın tarihinde en önemli toplumsal olaylardan biridir. Bu büyük olayda ortalama 1.200.000 kişi Türkiye'den Yunanistan'a göç etmiştir. Bunun karşılığı olarak da 500.000 kişi gelmiştir. Bu karşılıklı göçün en önemli özelliği zorunlu oluşuydu. Milyonlarca insan uygulamada yerlerinden göç ederek, hiç bilmedikleri başka topraklara yerleşmek zorunda kaldılar. Bu olay, pek çok sorunun yanında bireyler üzerinde de derin etkiler bıraktı. Özellikle uyum (adaptation) sorununu aşmak kuşaklar boyunca sürdü. Bu göçle birlikte, bireyler derin acılar çektiler; ancak gittikleri yerlere taşıdıkları kültürle orada kültürün yeniden oluşumuna katkılar sundular.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Mübadele, Göç, Türk - Yunan Mübadelesi, Türk Göçmenler, Yunan Göçmenler

Abstract

The people exchange is one of most crucial social events in the recent history of Turkey. An average of 1.200.000 people have migrated from Turkey to Greece in this great event. On the other hand, 500.000 persons have been brought from Greece to Turkey. The most important feature of this people exchange was its obligatory nature. In this exchange millions of people had to leave their homelands and settle in the different territories they never knew. This exchange caused many problems as well as the profound effects on the souls of the people. In particular, it has been for generations to overcome the problem of adaptation. With this migration, individuals have suffered deeply, but they have contributed to the recreation of the culture in their new lands by means of the culture they have carried.

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Let's fantasize together.

One day some officers come pounding at your door and tell you that you have to abandon your homes, lands and graperies, that you would be sent to another country and that you have no say in deciding about where you would be located in where you would be sent.

Moreover, you learn that people like you and others who share the same culture and faith will be forced to emigrate and they cannot escape from this process.

Where and into what kind of an environment will you go? How will you form roots in where you go to? What and whom are you going to meet? How is the environment and how are the conditions that you will face going to be?

It would be great if the questions were to be only this much:

There are innumerable uncertainties about where you will go to, about the process of going and all the surrounding stages; and that is fine.

However, how about the lands that you are to abandon, the natural and social environment that you have been living in, your acquaintances and even your habits that had developed into behavioural patterns by the culture that you were living in?

What is going to happen to them?

What is more are the "memories" that you have inherited from the past and that you have called as your roots. For example, tombs of your elders, corners related to every aspect of life that you have been familiar with.

These questions are never ending and will never end, will they?

The feelings of distress that these questions would cause are very similar to the sense of distress a person would have after having woken up and remember having had a nightmare.

However, the things that the people who had been confronted with these questions had to live through were not dreams. The rhythm within reality had loaded them with its burden.

People in countries having taken part in the long lasting First World War experienced numerous problems, deaths and unbelievable pains and sufferings, and these people were of the opinion that they were going to have comfortable days in the period following the armistice agreements.

Now that violence had ended, they could prepare themselves for a new life. However, war had not seized on Turkish lands. Turks who opposed The Treaty of

the Sevres adapted a totally anti- imperialist stand and favoured the idea of a nationalistic war causing the war to last three and half more years. Of course, during this process the "nationalistic / patriotic" feelings among the Turks were even aroused more. Greece was under the influence of the powerful nations and was misled into Turkish lands.

After the invasion of Izmir by the Greek troops, mountains and cities of Anatolia became a witness to new wars at September 15th., 1919.¹ During the war, the differences on nationalist standpoints in both Turkey and Greece became sharper.

The way Turks perceived their next door Greek neighbours in Turkey, and the way Greeks perceived their Turkish neighbours in Greece were no freer from suspicions. Feeling of belonging was becoming fragmented on a common ground, and fragmented emotional differences were at times likely to turn into inexplicable violence which was not hard to explain.

Turks had already made up their minds about founding a new state that had strong nationalistic feelings. As for Greece, nationalist/patriotic feelings that had started long before years of independence were present in all walks of life.

The arousing nationalistic feelings was estranging "the others" who could not share that nationalistic feeling by positioning them in a different place ; thus, this arousal of feelings that would at times recede but gain strength again was preparing the ground for the formation of a new identity as if there existed no memories related to a common past.

The resistance of Turks to defend their country ended with their victory at the end of 1922.

Greek armed forces that had gone as far as Ankara were destroyed to a large extent in The Great Offensive. Greek soldiers who could escape from the war were referred to as "Sword remainders" or "retail forces" in the resources of the period, and they started to flee into their own country².

This, of course caused great fears in West Anatolia, Marmara and East Thrace which were regions where majority of the Greek -Orthodox populations lived³. Now, when eyes met in these crowds, tongues dried out owing to fear and asked each other: "What if the Turks seek revenge?"⁴

¹ For Occupation of İzmir V. Kemal Arı, "Karagün", *Bütün Dünya*, February 2016, p. 33 - 36.

² Kemal Arı, "Büyük Taarruzda Süvariler ve İzmir'e Yürüyüş", 90. Yıldönümünde Sakarya Zaferi ve Haymana, by Asist. Prof. Hakan Uzun, Asist. Prof. Necdet Aysal, Ankara University Publisher, Ankara, 2012, pp. 333-350.

³ *Anadolu'da Yenigün*, September 21th., 1922.

⁴ V. Bilge Umar, *İzmir'de Yunanlılar'ın Son Günleri*, Istanbul, Bilgi Publisher, 1968; A News About Greek Migration: *Yeni Asır*; September 9th., 1922; V., TGNA Proceedings Protocol, Circuit: II, Interior: I, Volume.II, Ankara, 1975.

Everyone was fearful that the civilians were going to be massacred. Presence of independent observers who were in the cities, towns and even in remote corners was not enough to cool down hearts burning with fear⁵.

Izmir seemed like the "Red Apple" of the Turkish War of Independent⁶, and on the day Turkish troops entered into Izmir on September 9th 1922⁷, Greek-Orthodox populations living in West Anatolia, East Thrace and Marmara were in the panic of taking refuge in Greece.

Aegean Islands and mainland Greece were filled with refugees in a relatively short time. Despite the efforts of Red Cross or American Aid, there were no remedies for the problems of these people who all took part in this Great Migration.

Kids and adults were all devastated. They were thinking that where they were going was a country with which they had sincere ties. However, upon arriving there, they were seeing that these feelings were not a reflection of reality. Winter conditions seemed to be more severe than usually expected. And now, they were begging for a piece of bread. They did not have the slightest hope that they were even going to return to their houses, lands and workshops, and the environments where they used to earn their bread. What they had been experiencing till then had been enough to destroy all their relationships. They did not have any of the acquaintances, neighbours and friendships in this new place to which they had been blown. A huge village had been evacuated, and they had sought refuge in Greece. This social group which once used to be an integral part of the whole was now scattered all over Greece and had lost all its unity.

Those who happened to have some money and who managed to take it with themselves appeared to be doing a little better. But what good was it going to do as Greece was now going through the difficulties of post war years. Prices had sky rocketed and staple commodities such as food and clothing were scarce. And Greek population was being crushed under the burden that the war had loaded on its back. However, these immigrants were feeling these more than those who were the residents of those lands. Most of the immigrants were suffering and trying to survive out on the streets or in huts.

Every new comer was being added to the ones gone previously, thus difficulties were piling on top of one another. As difficulties and distress were increasing and as resources were very limited, when already limited opportunities were being distributed, each one's share was becoming smaller and smaller.

⁵ *Anadolu'da Yenigün*, September 21th., 1922. For Full Information V. Kemal Arı, *Üçüncü Kılıç*, Zeus Publisher, İzmir, 2012, Various Page

⁶ Kemal Arı, "Gazi İzmir'e Nasıl Girdi?", *Bütün Dünya*, 2016/09, p. 58.

⁷ *Bir Kent Bir İnsan -İzmir'in Son Yüzyılı: S. Ferit Eczacıbaşı'nın Yaşamı ve Anıları*, (By: Yaşar Aksoy), Eczacıbaşı yay., İstanbul, 1986, p.185.

There was neither security nor any order any more.

Suddenly, the harsh Greek winter conquered the land. The starving bodies now had one more issue to bear: the freezing weather.

Soon after, the number of Greeks having deserted their homes in Anatolia and piled up in Greece exceeded 850000.

Life in Greece had turned into hell for both the Greeks and Turks of mainland Greece, and for the immigrant Greeks that had emigrated from Anatolia.

Turks were in worse conditions!

The people who were suffering from starvation, cold weather and diseases were now questioning: "When we are living out on the streets in huts and in tents, why Turks should, who are supporters of Mustafa Kemal and who are the cause of our abiding our homes, be able to live in their own homes? Why shouldn't they be forced to leave their homes as we had been?"

It was as if the pendulum that the migration has created was swinging back and forth, and every new condition that appeared as time was passing by was adding the burden of sufferings to either of the sides.

For Greece, the fantasy of Anatolia had ended in disappointment.

Greek Army had lost the war that it had entered with so many dreams. The lands that seemed to be the land of their enemy had become tombs for them. Soldiers that had escaped from Anatolia were spending their days as bandits in many places as well as the capital Athens. Their primary fear was to be tried in martial court and be hanged because of being an escapee from Anatolia. The nation was struggling against economic problems. Disappointment was dominant all over. The quest for who had caused these sufferings had already started. Money had depreciated in value; inflation had skyrocketed, and the price of many commodities had risen so much that almost no one could afford to buy it⁸.

How about the Turks?

How were they?

What were the changes in the daily lives of the Turks and Muslims living in Greece?

They were scattered all over Greece, and they were seeing themselves as the ones responsible for the miserable conditions in which the Greek immigrants were trying to survive. There were all sorts of information spreading among the people.

⁸ Kemal Arı, "Kurtuluş Savaşının Bitiminde Türkiye Dışına Yönelik Göçler ve Sonuçları", *Beşinci Askeri Tarih Semineri Bildirileri: Değişen Dünya Dengeleri İçinde Askeri ve Stratejik Açından Türkiye* (İstanbul, October 23rd - 25th, 1995), I General Staff ATASE Publisher., Ankara, 1995, pp.496-504

They were overhearing from different sources that there were murderers, revengeful people and martial escapees among the crowds that had emigrated from Anatolia. What they were seeing was added to what they were hearing. Some of them wanted to believe that these days were going to pass by, and that they were going to get back to their good old days. However. Very near past was arousing feelings like the great past. Turks in Greece were feeling themselves under allot of pressure. It was known by everyone that the Greek police was counting up the houses of the Turks and Muslims to determine their numbers and that they were trying to keep these groups under pressure by levying heavy taxes upon them. The reality was bitter but they had become aliens on the lands that they had considered their very own. As there were those who had deserted their homes and had migrated to Turkey, there were those living on their lands but they were a little timid, and shy. They were trying to maintain their existence without being captivated by feelings of estrangement. Yet, not a day was passing by without overhearing new news, and while they were considering the land that they lived on to be the possession of the Sultan whom they considered as their patron, in a matter of nine years or so, they found themselves under the Greek ruler ship⁹.

Bloody encounters, fights, and those dead or wounded on the fronts, those who migrated, those who were not able to migrate, those in the dungeons, those who were exiled.

All these were fresh in the memories as if they were from the previous day.

It was true that what happened yesterday belonged to the past.

A lot of people were arrested while and after being transported from Greece to Turkey on Greek ships for spying against the Greeks, and many Turkish villages were raided by unknown people. Houses were burned down and their flocks and livestock and their crops in their barns were either taken away from them by force or were stolen. They were well aware that their plantations, wine yards and gardens were no longer safe. They were also well aware that streets were far from being secured and that guns would be fired at any unexpected moment. They were also overhearing that so many innocent people were raped. There were many families who would lock all the gates, doors and windows of their houses, go into their beds as soon as possible and pray to God that they could safely pass the darkness of the night and that they would be able to see the first rays of the sun rising.

Of course none of these were unknown or unheard of. However, future was housing many fears despite the hopeful thinking about the times ahead. Fear and hopes are like twin siblings befriending human beings. When would descend, the other would ascend and this was like a vicious circle. After all, isn't life a network made up of a number of ebb and flows? Everything evolves in life; destruction of

⁹ Ibid., Besides loc.cit, "Büyük Mübadele" various page.

one thing may be the revival of another or revival of one of thing would be the cause of another's destruction.

All these wars, fights, raids and blood and tears.

How was this turmoil going to end?

Whatever was overheard would become a fact of life, and everything that would become a fact would turn into being the cause of another unpleasant event or state.

It was not long before what they feared of became a reality. The eyes that stared with anger soon became the eyes aiming at Turkish families to fire their arms. There were night time raids. They were raiding neighbourhoods and streets, they were putting barricades on the roads and stopping those passers-by and Greek fanatics were attacking the houses or properties of the Turks and using anything they could find insight to harm their properties. Those who had abandoned their homes in Anatolia and tried to seek refuge in Greece were now living in poverty and miserable conditions. While they were sleeping in mud and dirt, they could not stand that the Turks were living in the warmth of their homes.

Severe winter conditions were becoming more effective. Just as cold weather was descending down on cities and villages just like dark clouds were, so were the miseries increasing. Although Greek authorities tried to help these people living in misery with the help of the International Red cross, unfortunately, it was impossible.

Immigrants and refugees were not allowing anyone to help them. Almost all the schools, churches and ruins with four standing walls and a roof over them were filled with refugees. Winds, rain and finally snow were pouring dangers of all kinds, diseases and starvation on people mercilessly. As problems among the immigrant Greek population increased, the number and severity of attacks against the Muslim families were escalating. As for the Greek police force, they were not willing to prevent such acts when they were notified of them. Having abandoned their homes and lands in Turkey, these immigrants were homeless in the freezing winter conditions and were struggling against all these severe conditions. Sights of people in the open and under plastic covers, and in heaps of mud had become very common in Greek newspapers and official reports. However, it was quite a well-known fact that there were still 350.000 Orthodox in Turkey¹⁰. It was also known that many Turks from Greece had abandoned their homes due to harsh pressures and had piled up in coastal towns¹¹. Their conditions were not very different from those of the Greek immigrants. Turks were encamping in the coastal Greek towns. They were deprived from health facilities and were suffering from starvation and unsafe

¹⁰ İlhan Tekeli, "Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'ndan Günümüze Nüfusun Zorunlu Yer Değiştirmesi ve İskan Sorunu", *Toplum ve Bilim*, 50 (Summer,1990), p.54

¹¹ Seçil Akgün, "Birkaç Amerikan Kaynağından Türk-Yunan Mübadelesi Sorunu", *Üçüncü Askeri Tarih Semineri Türk-Yunan İlişkileri*, Gn. Kur.yay., Ankara, 1986, p.247-249.

conditions, and they were altogether waiting but not knowing what they were waiting for¹².

This was a total tragedy. There were many deaths, and especially young children were unable to bear the harsh winter conditions... There was even a time when Turkey sent "Health Relief" (Imdad-i Sihhi) commission for the Turkish refugees in Greece. This was an attempt to intervene in their health issues at least. However, the escalating fanaticism reached such levels that even the members of the relief committee became targets for the fanatics. There was even a time when members from Turkish Red Cross died in an attack in Athens. Violence was ascending in different places and this was gradually moving both Turkey and Greece towards another conflict. It was not long ago that both these nations were involved in a war.

The widespread talks among the populations in both Turkey and Greece were pressurizing authorities to take more determined steps in resolving the issue.

It was in this kind of a setting that an "urgent" decision was made at Lausanne Peace Talks in the November of 1922. Fridjif Nansen, a Norwegian expert on the League of Nations, prepared a report with the leadership of the United Kingdom; in this report, he stated that the refugee problem between Turkey and Greece could only be resolved through an exchange¹³. In his view, majority of the Greek-Orthodox population from Turkey had already piled up in Greece. Turks in Greece had abandoned their homes and lands, and they, too, were migrating. A high number of Turks in Greece were mainly in coastal cities. As the border between Turkey and Greece was closed, the number of Turks from Greece who could safely arrive in Turkey was very low. However, social peace had been greatly destroyed. Forcing people to return to their homes that they had deserted could result in having harmful effects on peace. However, there were many Turkish refugees in Greece who would have homes and land to plant crops once they could come to Turkey. The same would apply to Turkish Orthodox refugees in Greece; once the Turks would migrate from Greece and abandon their houses and lands, the homeless Orthodox refugees who had left all their possessions in Turkey would find opportunities to have a place to live and land to cultivate. Under such conditions, practices aiming at refining the properties and real estates of the population by force would perhaps prevent more sufferings from happening.

In light of this and similar thoughts, organizations from Turkey, Greece and other countries tried to benefit from this process by asserting different viewpoints. However, after having heated debates, parties reached a consensus.

Hence, a pre-agreement between Turkey and Greece called "A Treaty about the Exchange of Turkish-Greek Orthodox Population" was signed on January 30

¹² Kemal Arı, *Türk Ticaret-i Bahriyesi Mübadele Gemileri*, Deniz Ticaret Odası, İzmir, 2009.

¹³ Akgün, *Ibid.*, p.248.

1923¹⁴. According to this treaty, above all, this migration was mandatory. The contents of the treaty stressed "Turkish Orthodox" and "Greek Muslims" and regardless of ethnic origins, a cleansing was aimed at on the basis of religion¹⁵. This was religious discrimination. This treaty was asserting the compulsory migration of all Greek Muslims except those living in West Thrace and all Turkish Orthodox residing anywhere except Istanbul. Immigrants were allowed to take all their possessions that could be carried. The remaining possessions that could not be carried would be registered into records by "Composite Exchange Commission"¹⁶. The value of what they were abandoning would be recorded on a "Cleaning Manifestation" and a copy of it would be presented to the immigrants. The copy obtained from their country of origin would be submitted to the authorities in the country immigrated to, and upon submission, immigrants would be given property that would equal the amount of immovable that they had abandoned¹⁷.

At this stage there appeared new hopes.

People who had experienced pressure, poverty, starvation and sufferings in Greece were going to leave their lands and homes where they had been born and had been raised, and they were waiting for Turkish ships to come and pick them up and take them to Turkey.

Hopes meant life.

A light of hope had started flickering amidst all pains and misery experienced¹⁸.

¹⁴ İsmail Soysal, *Tarihçileri ve açıklamaları İle Birlikte- Türkiye'nin Siyasal Andlaşmaları-I* (1920-1945), TTK Publisher., Ankara, 1983, ss. 177-183. for full documentation of agreement and protocol V. İsmail Soysal, *Tarihçileri ve Açıklamaları İle Birlikte - Türkiye'nin Siyasal Andlaşmaları - I* (1920-1945), TTK Publisher, Ankara, 1983, pp. 177 - 183; "Lozan Barış Konferansı - Tutanaklar - Belgeler", (Trans. by: S.L.Meray), 1/Tak.1, Kit:II, Faculty of Political Sciences Publisher of Ankara University, Ankara, 1969, pp. 1722; for mentioned text and the others agreement documentations V. Mehmed Esad Atuner, "Mübadeleye Dair Türkiye ve Yunanistan Arasında İmza Olunan Mukaveleler", İstanbul, 1932.

¹⁵ Kemal Arı, "Büyük Mübadele", Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2014, p.9-11.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, p. 47-49.

¹⁷ Jacques Vernant, *The Refugee in The Post-War World*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1953, p. 239.

¹⁸ An offer Novel: Dido Sotiriyu, *Benden Selam Söyle Anadolu'ya*, Can Publisher, İstanbul, 2014; a tale again: Kemal Arı, "Manoli'nin Gözyaşları", *Mübadele Öyküleri*, Tekirdağ, 2017, pp. 77-85.

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