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FRIDTJOF NANSEN
AND THE GREEK REFUGEE PROBLEM¹
(September-November 1922)

Although the Allied powers had proscribed the newly created League of Nations in Geneva (1919) from being a major player in the shaping of a peace settlement following the defeat of Greek arms in Asia Minor, they were more than eager to have it assume responsibility for a humanitarian crisis for which they were partly culpable. Even before the end of Greek-Turkish hostilities (1919-1922)² and the signing of the Mudanya armistice in October 1922, they had contemplated calling upon the newly created League of Nations in Geneva (1919) to act as liaison between the Greek and Turkish authorities in matters

1. This work was made possible, in part, by a grant from the Alexander S. Onassis Public Benefit Foundation; by the support of the director and staff of the League of Nations Archives (Geneva) in 1992; by the director (Dr. Valentini Tselika) and staff of the Benaki Museum Historical Archives, Penelope Delta House (Kifisia); and by the director (Dr. Photini Thomai Constantopoulou) and staff (Michael Mantios) of the Diplomatic and Historical Archives, Hellenic Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Athens).

2. Following the armistice of Mudros (October 20, 1918), Greek forces occupied Eastern Thrace and in May 1919, at the invitation of the Allies, the Smyrna [İzmir] district. The long delayed and fateful Near East peace treaty of Sèvres (August 20, 1920), not unexpectedly awarded, *inter alia*, to Greece Eastern Thrace and provided for a zone of Greek influence in the Smyrna region that would eventually lead to Greek annexation. Among other factors, the Allied occupation of Constantinople in March 1920 and the subsequent onerous Sèvres treaty, allowing for only a truncated Turkey in the middle of Asia Minor, precipitated a successful Turkish nationalist revival and resistance under Mustapha Kemal [Atatürk]. For details of the Greek-Turkish war of 1919-1922 see Michael Llewellyn Smith, *Ionian Vision, Greece in Asia Minor, 1919-1922*, London 1973.

pertaining to a refugee crisis and the exchange of prisoners of war and hostages. It was a task for which the young organization had rapidly established a certain expertise. As early as the spring of 1920, the League Council, having been apprized of the desperate situation of the "lost" prisoners of war still held in Russia, Siberia and in central Europe³, appointed one of the League's most prominent members, Dr. Fridtjof Nansen, as a High Commissioner of the League (fig. 1), for the repatriation of these men to their respective countries⁴. Internationally renowned for his original scientific work, based on polar expeditions, the intrepid Norwegian explorer and zoologist was destined to play a leading role in the affairs of the League, where he led his country's delegation. Appalled by the bloodshed of World War I and by the chaos which followed hostilities, Nansen, at the age of 56, became a staunch advocate of peace, firmly believing that only small nations like his own could act as disinterested mediators in promoting cooperation among states⁵. With singular objectivity and superb organizational skills, honed by the experience of his arctic expeditions, Nansen successfully completed his task as High Commissioner of the League for Prisoners of War. By the spring of 1921 most of the 400,000 prisoners, representing twenty-six nationalities, had been returned to their homes by the Nansen High Commission⁶.

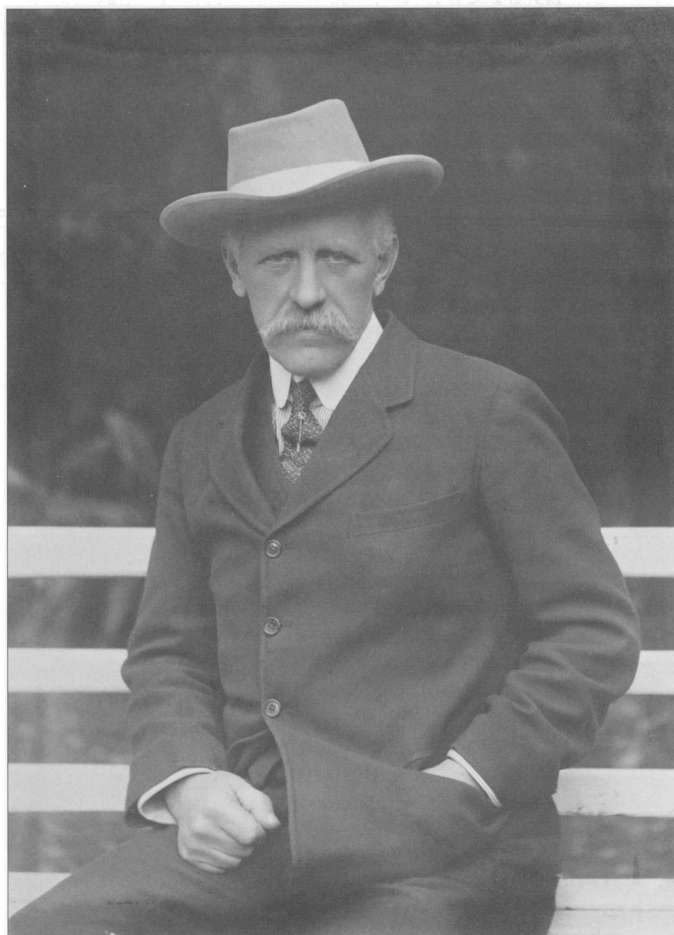
In September 1921, the Norwegian diplomat was asked again by the League Council to deal with another crisis situation sparked by the presence of more than one and a half million Russian refugees scattered throughout Europe, fugitives from the Russian Revolution. Repatriation was not favored by the Soviet Government nor by a majority of the refugees. Yet no country was keen to accept them and they remained stateless, in civil and political lim-

3. At the end of World War I no arrangements had been made for an exchange of prisoners between Russia and the Central Powers. Many of these unfortunate people had been in captivity since 1914.

4. In his work, Nansen secured the help of numerous humanitarian organizations which performed the actual task connected with the care and transportation of the prisoners; chiefly, the International Red Cross, the American Y.M.C.A., and the Swedish Red Cross.

5. For biographies of Nansen (1861-1930), see: T. Greve, *Fridtjof Nansen*, Oslo 1974; E. E. Reynolds, *Nansen*, Harmondsworth 1949; C. A. Clausen, *Dr. Fridtjof Nansen's Work as High Commissioner of the League of Nations*, Urbana, Illinois 1932; and J. Sorenson, *Fridtjof Nansen's Saga*, Oslo 1931.

6. An amazing effort considering that the League had no funds for this operation. See C. A. Clausen, *op.cit.*, p. 406.



*Fig. 1. Fridtjof Nansen as the League of Nation's High Commissioner
for prisoners of war and refugees, 1922*
[courtesy of the National Library of Norway, Picture Collection].

bo. Hence, Nansen's task was not only to provide the Russian refugees with basic relief but also to secure employment and a permanent home for them in various European countries. As a first step in his capacity as the League of Nations High Commissioner for Russian Refugees, he came up with the discerning idea of stateless papers to be issued by the League. They quickly became known as the "Nansen passports" (fig. 2) and became for many the key to citizenship. His task was not a simple one given the post-war economic depression in Europe. Yet, Nansen and his colleagues in the International Labour Office were able to deal fairly successfully with the problem, placing a large number of the Russian refugees in France and in the Slavic countries of southeastern Europe. Nansen then went on to serve as the League's representative to help relieve the suffering caused by the great Russian famine (1921-1923). For this humanitarian effort, he received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1922⁷. Not surprisingly he donated the prize money to international relief efforts.

Nansen was therefore a person of such stature and commitment that his recommendations for a more peaceful and stable world were not to be taken lightly by the international community. It is the exercise of his considerable influence in the League and among the great powers during the critical weeks between the defeat of Greek arms in Asia Minor and the convocation of the Lausanne peace conference on November 20, 1922 that is largely the focus of this study. It is primarily concerned with the efforts of Nansen, in his capacity as the first League of Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, in coping with the severe refugee crisis brought about by the war in Asia Minor. It also stresses the significance of Nansen's work as prelude to one of the most radical provisions agreed at Lausanne; namely, the compulsory exchange of populations between Greece and Turkey.

The League of Nations High Commission for Refugees

As a result of the defeat of General Wrangel (1919-1920) by the Red Army, some 180,000 of the general's followers had swarmed into Constantinople [Istanbul] which was then under Allied occupation. Of these about 25,000 remained in the city and were in desperate straits when Nansen assumed his

7. *Revue Internationale de la Croix-Rouge*, 3rd Year, No. 33 (September 15, 1921), pp. 899-918, and 4th Year, No. 42 (June 15, 1922), pp. 469-481 (hereafter cited as *RICR*).



Fig. 2. A proofprint of the «Nansen Passeport» published in France. The passport was issued to Russians, and later to other refugees who were unable to get ordinary passports. The “Nansen Passeport” was issued on the initiative of F. Nansen in 1922, and was honored by the governments in 52 countries [courtesy of the National Library of Norway, Picture Collection].

duties as High Commissioner for Russian Refugees⁸. It was in this capacity and in this city that he became deeply involved in the fate of Greece. A year later, while Nansen's organization was winding down its work with Russian refugees in Constantinople, the Asia Minor disaster occurred. And before long, Constantinople was to be inundated with tens of thousands of wretched and destitute Greek and Armenian refugees.

On September 16, 1922, Nansen received an urgent request from Colonel Proctor, his Deputy High Commissioner for Russian Refugees in Constantinople, asking for immediate authorization to use the League's local organization to administer relief funds on behalf of the many thousands of impoverished Greeks and Armenians who had fled to Constantinople from Smyrna [İzmir] and Brousa [Bursa]⁹. The request was not unexpected. Nansen had been following events in the Near East very closely and apparently was waiting for the opportunity to get involved, not only in administering relief but politically as well¹⁰. In his capacity as a delegate of Norway at the League of Nations Assembly, he informed the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Proctor's urgent request and asked for permission to present it to the League Assembly and to add to it an appeal to article 11 of the League Covenant, empowering him to offer the good offices of his organization to work toward the immediate cessation of hostilities between the belligerents. At the same time, he endorsed and transmitted Colonel Proctor's request to the President

8. C. A. Clausen, *op.cit.*, pp. 8-9; and *RICR*, 4th Year, No. 37 (January 15, 1922), pp. 44-45.

9. Étienne Clouzot, "La Société des Nations et les secours dans le Proche Orient," *RICR*, 4th Year, No. 47 (November, 1922), pp. 972-979. Clouzot was Secretary General of the International Committee of the Red Cross; and *The League of Nations Archives* (Geneva), *Nansen Papers* (hereafter cited as *Nansen Papers*), R 603 (1922), 11/23534/22490, September 16, 1922.

10. While dealing with prisoners of war in Russia in 1920, he contacted Venizelos about the problem of repatriating thousands of Greeks of South Russia and 12,000 Greek POW's in the Don and Kuban districts. The response was that Greece regretted its inability, for the time being, to receive the Greeks in Novorossisk district because it had too many refugees. See *League of Nations Archives*, R 1707 (1920), Document 6293 - letters of Politis to Nansen, August 6, 1920; Nansen to Venizelos, August 10, 1920; Litvinoff to Nansen, August 18, 1920; and Nansen to Romanos, August 26, 1920. More directly, at the First Assembly of the League in 1920, Nansen suggested that 60,000 soldiers be sent at once to the Near East to save the Armenians from the Kemalists. He also broached the issue at the Second and Third Assemblies of the League. See E. E. Reynolds, *op.cit.*, p. 253.

of the Third Assembly of the League and proposed that his good offices be offered to the belligerents to stop the war¹¹.

The matter was directed to the Fifth Committee where due to the critical nature of the request it was promptly considered¹². In the discussions, Nansen recommended intervention by the League under the following conditions:

1) It would be charged with the administration of funds raised from other sources; (2) The work with Russian refugees would continue unhindered; (3) It should be well understood that the League does not assume responsibility for the refugees of Asia Minor; and (4) The intervention of the League would be of a temporary character, and would begin at once¹³.

On September 18, the Fifth Committee passed a resolution recommending, in accordance with Nansen's proposals, that the organization of the Assistant Commissioner for Russian Refugees in Constantinople should be utilized to administer relief to the refugees of Asia Minor; and that in accordance with article 11 of the Covenant, the Council of the League should consider the feasibility of offering good offices to the belligerents with a view to immediate cessation of hostilities¹⁴. On the next day in a plenary meeting of the League Assembly, the recommendation of the Third Committee was accepted and a resolution was adopted authorizing the utilization of the Russian refugee organization for the relief of Near East refugees. It charged the High Commissioner for Refugees with the duty of investigating the problem raised by the evacuation of a great number of refugees from Asia Minor as a result of military operations. It also charged him with the task of bringing relief to those

11. *Nansen Papers*, R 1761 (1922), 11/23534/12, President of the League Assembly to Nansen, Fourth Session, September 16, 1922.

12. Nansen had urged the use of article 4 of paragraph 4 of the rules of the Assembly which enabled the Assembly in exceptional circumstances to inscribe a new question at the head of the agenda of the day.

13. Clouzot, *op.cit.*, p. 972.

14. League of Nations, *Greek and Armenian Refugees from Asia Minor in Constantinople*, Resolution by the Fifth Committee, September 18, 1922. A. 80, 1922. See also Great Britain, Foreign Office, *Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-1939*, First Series, Vol. XVIII: *Greece and Turkey*, September 3, 1922 - July 24, 1923, edited by W. N. Medlicott, Douglas Dakin and M. E. Lambert, London: HMSO, 1972. Doc. 45 [E. 9643/27/44], Crowe (Geneva) to London (Foreign Office), September 21, 1922 (hereafter cited as *DBFP*). Crowe strongly approved the resolution of the Fifth Committee and directed London to support the resolution in the Assembly, welcoming the help of the League of Nations in securing a peaceful settlement in the Near East.

refugees and assisting the authorities of the belligerent countries in a policy of reconstruction with such resources as the Governments of the members of the League might place at his disposal¹⁵. To help accomplish these tasks, the Assembly invited the League Council to consider immediately placing the sum of 100,000 Swiss francs at Nansen's disposal and urged member states to make additional contributions in support of Nansen's organization. Within a week a number of Assembly delegates, led by Britain, pledged their financial support to avert "a real danger of a veritable calamity for the large numbers of Armenian and Greek refugees who find themselves without shelter and food"¹⁶. On the bases of these pledges, as early as September 28, Nansen directed the purchase of food and clothing for distribution to the refugees who had fled to the Greek islands of Samos and Chios from Smyrna and for Christian and Muslim refugees in Eastern Thrace. He also provided relief supplies to the Haccius and Cuénod mission of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) on behalf of the Turkish refugees in Asia Minor¹⁷. And on September 27 from his Geneva headquarters, Nansen telegraphed Mustapha Kemal in Ankara [Angora], expressing his earnest desire to enter into relations with his government with respect to the questions of relief intrusted to him. For good measure, the Persian Delegation of the League Assembly also telegraphed Ankara,

15. *Nansen Papers*, R. 1761 (1922), 48/24400/24537. "Memorandum of the High Commissioner of the League of Nations for Refugees," October 10, 1922; The League of Nations, *Official Journal (LNOJ)*, (November, 1922), pp. 1140-1141, 1195-96; League of Nations, *Records of the Third Assembly*, Plenary Meetings, pp. 123-125, 137-142. The machinery which had been established to deal with the Russian refugees was also extended to include over 600,000 Armenians who had survived the war-time massacres in Turkey and fled to the neighboring states and Europe, making many of them eligible for Nansen passports.

16. Clouzot, *op.cit.*, p. 974. At its meeting of October 15, 1922, the League Council placed at Nansen's disposal credit in the sum of 100,000 Swiss Francs.

17. *Ibid.*, pp. 972-974; 996-997. Rodolphe Haccius and Henri Cuénod, "Mission en Anatolie," *RICR*, 4th Year, No. 47 (November 15, 1922), pp. 961-971. The International Committee of the Red Cross was founded in 1864 to help soldiers wounded in the battlefield. It experienced unprecedented growth during World War I, especially in locating and assisting prisoners of war. One of its most important new activities was the inspection of the care and facilities provided POW's. The ICRC should not be confused with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies nor with the Red Cross national societies which provide social services and relief in the event of natural disasters.

at Nansen's request, drawing the attention of the Nationalist Government to the importance of his mission¹⁸.

On September 30, the High Commissioner for Refugees left Geneva for Constantinople arriving there in the first week of October. After several meetings with his representatives in Constantinople, it soon became clear that the situation of the refugees was desperate and that the question of their ultimate absorption and settlement was of the utmost importance¹⁹. On October 11, Nansen met with the Allied High Commissioners in Constantinople who promised their support for his efforts on behalf of the refugees. He also presided over a meeting of the representatives of all foreign relief organizations in that city to coordinate relief activity, to discuss the availability of resources and to exchange information on the location and status of the refugees²⁰. They all agreed that the situation would worsen with the implementation of the Mudanya agreements of October 11 and the anticipated massive flight of the Christian population of Eastern Thrace²¹. Immediately following the meeting, Nansen informed the Secretariat of the League that he considered the refugee problem "far more serious even than that presented to the Assembly" and asked for a global fund-raising campaign in support of a massive relief effort. He found that there were probably no fewer than 750,000 desti-

18. *Nansen Papers*, R 1761 (1922), 48/24318/24318, "Report of Dr. Nansen to the League Council, Part I," November 15, 1922. Turkey was not a member of the League, which could possibly create problems for the Nansen mission. On the other hand, although the Soviet Union was not a member of the League and in fact antagonistic toward it, Nansen was able to deal effectively with Moscow in carrying out his mission as High Commissioner of the League for the exchange of prisoners of war. Persia was the leading Islamic state member of the League and as such it was thought that Persia's endorsement would be helpful to Nansen's mission.

19. For minutes of the meetings see *Nansen Papers*, R 1761 (1922), 48/24385/24357, October 4 and 6, 1922.

20. Nansen reported to the League that because he was unable to carry through with his intentions to journey to Asia Minor, he had to rely for his information concerning the situation there on official sources and on relief workers on the spot. *Nansen Papers*, "Refugees in Greece and Asia Minor," R 1761 (1922), 48/24722/24357, November 18, 1922.

21. Harry J. Psomiades, "Thrace and the Armistice of Mudanya, October 3-11, 1922," *Δελτίο Κέντρου Μικρασιατικών Σπουδών* 12 (Athens 1997-1998), pp. 213-255. It called for, inter alia, the withdrawal of the Greek army from Eastern Thrace in 15 days, and for the retro cession of Eastern Thrace to Turkish administration in 30 days thereafter. The Armistice provisions were to be operative on October 15, 1922.

tute refugees, the greater part of whom were women, children and the elderly, scattered over every part of Greece, Thrace and the Aegean islands²².

The funds at the disposal of Nansen were by no means sufficient to cope with the problem of immediate relief. But fortunately other organizations were able to shoulder the major burden in this area, especially the American Near East Relief²³ and the American Red Cross. The later organization fed and cared for over 700,000 refugees in Greece from October 1922 to April 1923²⁴. However, even with very limited financial resources, the work of the High Commission among the refugees was not negligible²⁵. It was instrumental in introducing branches of the League's Epidemic Commission in Constantinople and Greece to combat diseases, especially typhus and cholera, among the weakened refugee population; and in establishing disinfectant stations in Constantinople where refugees could be treated before passing on to Greece.

22. LNOJ (November, 1922), p. 1141; and Clouzot, *op.cit.*, p. 976. Nansen appealed personally to several governments, including the Vatican, on behalf of the refugees. See *Nansen Papers*, R 1759 (1922), 48/24179/2349, October 9, 1922.

23. Harry J. Psomiades, "The American Near East Relief (NER) and the Megali Catastrophe in 1922," *Journal of Modern Hellenism* 19, Boston 2001, pp. 135-150. The American Red Cross was in charge of operations in Greece, while, at least initially, the American Near East Relief concentrated its activities in Turkey, for the purpose of providing relief to the Greek and Armenian refugees before their removal to Greece. Important refugee relief work in Greece was also undertaken by British, Swiss, Swedish, Dutch and other national organizations. The role of the Greek government was paramount.

24. Louis P. Cassimatis, *American Influence in Greece, 1917-1929*, Kent, Ohio 1988, pp. 117-119, 126-134; Dimitra M. Giannuli, *American Philanthropy in the Near East: Relief to the Ottoman Greek Refugees, 1922-1923*, Ph. D. Diss., Kent State University 1992; Apostolos Doxiades, "La situation des réfugiés en Grèce," *RICR*, 6th Year, No. 47 (August 15, 1924), pp. 724-734; and Georgios A. Yiannakopoulos (ed.), *Refugee Greece. Photographs from the Archive of the Center for Asia Minor Studies*, Athens: A. G. Leventis Foundation and Center for Asia Minor Studies, 1992.

25. For the relief work of Nansen's organization see his successive reports to the League in *League of Nations Archives* C. 736 (a), M. 447 (a), 1922; C. 100, M. 40, 1923; C. 347, 1923; and A. 30, 1923, XII. Although the High Commission was instrumental in restoring 10,000 Turkish refugees to their homes along the west coast of Asia Minor and in caring for needy Turkish refugees in the vicinity of Constantinople, it was mutually agreed that the Ankara Government, aided by the Red Crescent, would be able to cope successfully with matters in Asia Minor without further aid from the League. See also C. A. Clausen, *op.cit.*, pp. 9-11, and Clouzot, *op.cit.*, pp. 967-977.

Nevertheless, during the exodus thousands died of dysentery, typhus and cholera. Indeed, in the winter of 1922-1923 typhus engulfed all the ports and most of the towns of Greece. Nansen's organization also opened aid stations on the banks of the Maritsa river which most of the 250,000 refugees of Eastern Thrace had to cross to enter Greece. All told, the League's High Commission for Refugees was instrumental in the evacuation of 156,000 Greek refugees from Constantinople, and in the repatriation of 60,000 Muslim refugees who found themselves in Constantinople since July 1921. Another 20,000 Muslims were repatriated from Bulgaria. Perhaps, the most important contribution of Nansen and his organization came not in the form of relief work, which was significant, but in their role in reaching an over-all settlement of the refugee question and of other issues related to the cession of Greek-Turkish hostilities.

The Exchange of Prisoners of War and Civilian Hostages

From his previous experience with refugees, Nansen realized that there was a limit on how long refugees could be fed and clothed by charitable and governmental organizations. And almost from the moment he arrived in Constantinople, his mind turned toward how to make the Near East refugees self-reliant and self-sufficient, without prejudging the final political solution to the refugee problem. Before long, Nansen with his collaborators, Colonels Proctor and Trevlar, began an experiment to establish some of the rural Anatolian refugees on vacant land in Western Thrace²⁶. It soon became clear, however, that the success of this plan on a wider scale would depend upon the release of the thousands of the male hostages detained by Turkey as prisoners of war. In a meeting on October 6 with Rumbold, the British High Commissioner in Constantinople, Nansen spoke of his plan to help make the refugees self-supporting and of the need to obtain the immediate release of the hostages. Ankara had detained all Greek males of Asia Minor, ages 17-45, and placed them in the notorious military labor battalions. It was agreed that the release by Turkey of these 100,000 hostages of military age, for the most part husbands and supporters of the refugees, should be given a high priority and that

26. *Nansen Papers*, C 1767 (1922), 48/40233/38170, September 29, 1923. Within nine months some 15,000 refugees were established in a model colony of 15 villages. They wished to demonstrate that if the refugees were supplied with fields to cultivate they could become self-supporting.

their absence greatly complicated the problem of refugee resettlement and relief²⁷. They also agreed that if the hostages remained in Turkish labor battalions through the winter few of them would survive. These thoughts were conveyed by Nansen to the Allied High Commissioners and the Principal Allied Powers on October 10, along with a guarantee of the League that the released males would not be conscripted in the Greek army.

Nansen's next move was to convey to the Greek Government his thoughts and recommendations concerning the settlement of the refugees and the urgent need to effect an exchange of the Greek men of military age, detained by the Turks, for the Turkish nationals who had been detained by the Greeks or had fled to Bulgaria. In a letter on October 10 to Eleftherios Venizelos, the former prime minister of Greece and the special representative of the newly installed Greek Revolutionary Government for Greek interests abroad, particularly for the forthcoming Near East peace conference, Nansen advocated that Greece, in order to provide relief for the hundreds of thousands of Christian refugees of Asia Minor, settle them on the remaining vacant and unexploited lands in Greek Macedonia and Thrace. He pointed out to Venizelos that he considered it not impossible that the League might assist the Greek Government in this endeavor by either further mobilizing international humanitarian organizations or by supporting Athens to secure a foreign loan for carrying through the settlement policy. He further suggested that it might be possible to assist the Greek Government not only in securing the loan but also to help in its administration. But this would only be possible, he told Venizelos, if the Greek Government "makes the world understand that it recognizes that the rapid and successful solution of the refugee problem is one which the whole future of the country depends"²⁸. In his special report to the League on Near Eastern

27. Clouzot, *op.cit.*, p. 967; Historical Archives, Great Britain, No. 8, *Turkey* [E 1431/4/44] "Report on Refugees in the Near East by Dr. Nansen, High Commissioner of the League for Refugees," January 26, 1923. All able bodied men under 45 were detained by the Turks in labor gangs in the interior of Asia Minor. "Naval reports on the embarkation of the refugees all emphasize that the refugees were passed between two lines of Turkish soldiers before being allowed to embark, and no able bodied man less than 45 was allowed to leave." *DBFP*, Vol. XVIII, Randal (Eastern Department of the Foreign Office) to Curzon (Foreign Office), Doc. 202 [E 44/12845/10524], November 17, 1922.

28. Nansen (Constantinople) to Venizelos (London), October 10, 1922 in *Venizelos Papers*, 318 (currently housed in the Penelope Delta Museum, Kifisia, Greece); *Nansen Papers*, R 1761 (1922), 48/24318/24318, October 10, 1922; R 1761 (1922),

refugees, Nansen clearly admitted that in his letter to Venizelos, he tried to effect an exchange of Greek male hostages in order to induce the Greek Government to accept his plan for the settlement of the Asia Minor refugees on the unoccupied lands of northern Greece²⁹. Clearly, his plan not only embraced simple humanitarian concerns but also suggested a solution for the refugees future fate. By this time Nansen was convinced that most of the Anatolian refugees would not be able to return to their homes and that their welfare demanded that they should be resettled elsewhere as soon as possible. In any case he believed that either the Greek Government would be compelled to contemplate implementing an exchange of population agreement with Turkey in order to make Muslim homes and lands available to the Christian refugees or, barring such an agreement, it would be forced to settle the refugees on the free lands of Macedonia and Western Thrace³⁰. While Nansen was not directly advocating a proposal for the exchange of populations between Greece and Turkey, that was to come later. His letter of October 10, 1922 expressed a vague preference for a Greek-Turkish population exchange³¹.

Because of its importance and the controversy surrounding it, the emergence of the decision to enact a compulsory population exchange between Greece and Turkey will be treated separately at a later stage. For purposes of the present discussion it will suffice to say that as a result of two telegrams sent by Venizelos to Nansen, October 13 and October 17, Greece had agreed to a population exchange with Turkey and extended full powers to Nansen to negotiate such an exchange.

The Mudanya convention of October 11, 1922 not only set in motion a second massive wave of refugees to Greece but also compelled the Allied Governments to seek arrangements for the exchange of prisoners of war and of civilian hostages and to find a solution to the refugee problem. Moreover, the success of the Kemalists at Mudanya, having accelerated the dislodgement and deportation of the country's native Christian population, created a serious

48/24373/24375. SR/I, October 25, 1922 and R 1761 (1922), 48/24929/24357, "The Work of Doctor Nansen...", November 15, 1922.

29. *Nansen Papers*, R 1761 (1922), 48/24373/24375. SR/I, October 25, 1922.

30. *Ibid.*, and *Venizelos Papers*, 318.

31. Constantine Svolopoulos, *I apofasi gia tin ypohreotiki antallagi ton plithismon metaxi Ellados kai Tourkias* [The Decision for the Compulsory Exchange of Populations between Greece and Turkey], Thessaloniki: Publications of the Center for Macedonian Studies, 1981.

crisis for the Allied High Commissioners. It swelled the number of destitute and disease-ridden refugees in Constantinople, especially from the Pontus region. Indeed, these refugees were regarded as a serious threat to the health and well-being of the Allied occupation forces. Their presence in the city also prodded the moral sense of the Allied authorities, reminding them of their share of responsibility for the refugees' woes. Small wonder then that they welcomed Nansen to deal with the refugees and related issues and promised him their complete support and cooperation³².

The fact is that the flow of hundreds of thousands of destitute refugees into an impoverished war-weary Greece, unable to care for them without considerable outside assistance, posed a potent threat to the peace of Europe. In these dire and chaotic circumstances, which broached the very real possibility of the disintegration of Greek society and the collapse of its government, the League of Nations, the Allied powers and the philanthropic organizations of Europe and America all came to the rescue. The danger of a humanitarian crisis of colossal proportions had to be contained.

On October 12, in an urgent note to the Allied High Commissioners, Nansen made essentially the same proposal to them as he had to Venizelos in his letter of October 10. He pleaded that all hopes for the settlement of the refugee problem and for the reconstruction of Greece depended on securing the immediate release of the detained male refugees in Turkey. Failure to secure their freedom, he warned, would create such turmoil in Greece as to invite the triumph of Bolshevism, a sure way of getting their attention, in that country. Moreover, he charged that unless the detainees were united with their families soon, they would be killed off in the labor battalions. He cautioned them that mortality in the work gangs was incomparably higher than at the front. He explained that if the Allies would support his request, he would raise the issue officially with the Greek Government and attempt to secure its approval for the release of the hostages on an exchange basis³³. Nansen also informed the

32. Clouzot, *op.cit.*, p. 917.

33. *Nansen Papers*, R 1709 (1922), 42/24356/24034, Note to Allied High Commissioners on the Retention of Male Refugees in Asia Minor, October 12, 1922. Earlier, Nansen had made a forceful but unsuccessful effort to persuade the Allied High Commissioners to insert in the Mudanya convention a provision for the release of the civilian hostages by the Nationalist Government. See *Nansen Papers*, R 1709 (1922), 42/24292/24034, October 10, 1922. Similar thoughts were also expressed in a letter to the Secretary General of the League of Nations, Sir Eric Drummond, by V. Dendramis,

Allied High Commissioners, shortly thereafter, of the Venizelos telegram of October 13 requesting that he, in his capacity as the League's High Commissioner for Refugees, endeavor to arrange an immediate exchange of the Greek and Turkish populations in order to provide some of the Greek refugees with the housing and accommodations of the departing Muslims. And that he made this request because of pronouncements from Ankara that the Nationalists Government would not allow the further presence of Greeks on Turkish soil³⁴.

Anxious to move as quickly as possible on the unsettled conditions in Greece and Turkey, the Allied High Commissioners on October 15, the date when the Mudanya convention came into force, extended to Nansen a formal invitation to deal with the exchange of the civilian populations and with the problem of prisoners of war and civilian hostages in his capacity as the League's High Commissioner for Refugees and High Commissioner for the Prisoners of War respectively. More specifically, they requested that he endeavor to arrange for the establishment under his presidency of a joint Greek-Turkish Commission to examine the possibility of an immediate exchange of prisoners of war and civilian hostages. They asked that he undertake these tasks as soon as possible and independently of the peace negotiations. Not unexpectedly, Nansen immediately accepted the invitation, informed the League of these developments, and initiated a new round of talks with Athens and Ankara³⁵.

Two days later, he received Venizelos second telegram in which he expressed his complete agreement with Nansen on the subject of an exchange of civilian populations between Greece and Turkey and of an exchange of prisoners of war and civilian hostages; and informed Nansen that he had asked the Greek Government to give him his full support. He warned, however, that on the question of the release of Greek males of military age, if Mustapha Kemal's attitude remained uncompromising he should be told that "the Greek Government will proceed to take reprisals in the form of a male mobilization of the Muslims in Greece." He apologized for the threat but felt that this was the only language the Turks understood³⁶.

Director of the Permanent Hellenic Secretariat, League of Nations, Geneva. *Nansen Papers*, R 1709 (1922), 42/25097/24304, October 10, 1922.

34. *Nansen Papers*, R 1761 (1922), 48/24318/24318, Telegram of October 13, 1922 of Venizelos to Nansen.

35. *Nansen Papers*, R 1761 (1922), 48/24929/24357, November 15, 1922.

36. *Nansen Papers*, R 1761 (1922), 48/8441/24357, Venizelos (London) to Nansen (Constantinople) dated October 17, 1922.

On October 19, Nansen left for Athens by car, inspecting refugee camps on the way and witnessing the panic of the Greek population, which was ever mindful of the Armenian and Smyrna massacres, as it was moving en masse from Eastern Thrace to an uncertain life in a destitute Greece. He then entered Bulgaria to deal with refugee problems and finally reached Athens on October 22 where he met, as he did in Constantinople, with the ministers of the principle powers and representatives of the foreign and Greek relief agencies. He also contacted the Greek Government which gave him full powers to negotiate an immediate exchange of prisoners of war and of all civilian hostages detained by the two governments and expressed its approval of the principle of a population exchange. It also gave Nansen a list of Turkish prisoners of war and civilian hostages. It did not have a list of Greek prisoners of war and civilian hostages in Turkey, but estimated that the later numbered between 100,000 to 120,000 souls, not counting the young Greek girls and women carried off into captivity. Nansen also received assurances from the Greek Government that if the civilian male hostages of military age were released by the Turks, they would not be enrolled in the Greek military and that Greece would bear the cost of the exchange. Nansen also pressed the Greek Government to draw up a scheme for the settlement of the refugees on the land and suggested that he would send specialists in this field to Greece to help the government draw up the plan. He then returned to Constantinople to renew negotiations with the Ankara Government³⁷.

When he first arrived in Constantinople in early October, Nansen had several meetings with Hamid [Hâmit Hasancan], President of the Ottoman Red Crescent and diplomatic representative in Constantinople of the Ankara Government, and discussed with him the various problems concerning the question of the refugees. On October 14, he sent Hamid a letter outlining the various questions which he wished to take up with the Ankara authorities and repeated his desire to enter into direct relations with them. On the question of the male refugees of military age detained by the Turkish authorities, Hamid volunteered that "because the Ankara authorities regarded them as military hostages, he thought that they would be intransigent with regard to any pro-

37. *Nansen Papers*, R 1761 (1922), 48/24929/24357, November 15, 1922; and R 1761 (1922), 48/24484/24375, R/78, November 1, 1922; and for a report of Nansen's visit to Athens see *Venizelos Papers*, 29, Politis (Athens) to Venizelos (Paris), October 23, 1922.

posal to release these men before the conclusion of a peace treaty"³⁸. On the following day, Nansen informed Hamid of the mandate given to him by the Allied High Commissioners and again stressed the importance of obtaining an early meeting with Mustapha Kemal. He then appealed to the Turkish Grand National Assembly to release the personnel actually held in captivity as soon as possible so that they could leave for Greece and return to their normal occupations and productive work. At the same time he asked Athens and Ankara to be magnanimous vis a vis the personnel detained for many months in concentration camps, in the interest of the future peace in the Orient; and expressed the view that the advent of peace would be greatly assisted by the immediate exchange of all prisoners of war and of all civilian hostages detained by the two governments³⁹.

While waiting for a reply for a meeting with Mustapha Kemal, Nansen left for Bulgaria and Greece on urgent business in connection with the refugees. He returned to Constantinople on October 23, and on the same day received a telegram from Mustapha Kemal from Brousa [Bursa] informing him that he could not meet with him "since it was impossible for me under present conditions to wait in any one town..."⁴⁰

The indefinite postponement by Turkey of consultations with Nansen and the breakdown of talks with Hamid in late November, prompted Nansen to send a detailed memorandum to the Ankara Government on November 2, explaining that it was his sincere desire to obtain a solution to the refugee question that kept him so long at Constantinople. And that it was impossible for him to remain an indefinite time waiting for a result. While the memorandum was primarily concerned with movement on a population exchange agreement it asked for a direct reply to the question whether or not Turkey was prepared to include the deported male refugees in the population exchange. By this time Nansen had come to the conclusion that immediate negotiations with Turkey on an exchange of populations seemed the only hopeful way of securing the restitution of the 100,000 male refugees retained in Turkey. He also asked for a separate reply as to whether the Ankara Government was willing to negotiate for an immediate exchange of prisoners of war

38. *Nansen Papers*, R 1709 (1922), 42/24356/24034, October 15, 1922, "Note on a Conversation between Hamid Bey, President of the Ottoman Red Crescent, and Dr. Fridtjof Nansen, High Commissioner of the League of Nations for Refugees."

39. *Ibid.*, R 1761 (1922), 48/24929/24357, November 15, 1922.

40. *Ibid.*

and civil hostages, as a matter apart from the exchange of populations⁴¹. Finally, over a week had passed with no response to the memorandum and Nansen left for Geneva to submit his report and recommendations. All the issues which he tried so desperately to resolve on behalf of the refugees were left pending for the peace conference at Lausanne. The only concession Nansen received from Ankara was an agreement in principle that a population exchange should take place. But at Lausanne there was great disagreement between Greece and Turkey as to the scope of the exchange and whether or not the transfer of populations should be conducted on a compulsory or voluntary bases. Yet, Nansen's work was not to be entirely in vain. It laid down the ground work for an international refugee loan to assist the settlement of the refugees in Greece and was to serve as a useful guide on refugee issues for the Allied powers during the proceedings at Lausanne. Regretfully, however, the suffering and anguish of the refugees, the prisoners of war and the detained civilians continued unabated into the following year. The Turks refused to alter their behavior toward them and the international community seemed powerless or lacked the political will to compel them to do so.

The League of Nations and the Issue of Atrocities and War Crimes

Following the defeat of the Greek army in Asia Minor, the issue of atrocities was again brought to the attention of the Allied powers and the League of Nations. In August 1922, the Persian delegate announced to the League Assembly that as its only Muslim member he had been asked by delegates of the Turkish Grand National Assembly in Rome to intervene with the League for the purpose of organizing an impartial enquiry into atrocities committed by the Greeks during the war in Thrace and Asia Minor. As a result, the Allied powers and the United States Government, although not a member of the League, undertook to contribute funds for a commission to investigate the alleged atrocities committed by both Greece and Turkey. The Greek Government agreed on September 4 to cooperate with the commission of inquiry and to admit it on its territory. Earlier, on August 28, the International Red Cross, informed the British High Commissioner in Constantinople that if it did not obtain Turkish agreement to allow the mission into Asia Minor by September 5,

41. *Nansen Papers*, R 1761 (1922), 48/24318/24318, Letter of Nansen to Rumbold, the British High Commissioner in Constantinople, dated November 3, 1922.

it would consider this as a refusal to cooperate. No reply was ever received from Ankara and the project was dropped. However, in response to charges of ill-treatment of Turks in Asia Minor and Thrace, the Greek Government asked how could isolated and often disputable acts of atrocities be compared with the premeditated action of the Kemalist government which, after systematically and without provocation exterminated much of the peaceful Greek population of the Pontus region, far from the seat of war, had just burned Smyrna and committed untold atrocities on its population⁴². An earlier attempt to form a commission of inquiry in the Pontus region was blocked by the Ankara Government. On June 10, 1922, it informed Hamid that "in principle the Commission [of inquiry] would be allowed to come into contact with minority elements in Asia Minor but would not be permitted to make an inquiry in the Pontus region"⁴³.

With the defeat and withdrawal of the Greek army from Asia Minor, the Allied powers cease to press the issue, although they did not formally abandon the project. And the British delegate in Geneva was told if the occasion should arise again that he "should express surprise at the cynicism of the Turkish request in view of their tacit refusal to admit a commission of enquiry and the admission this implies of the policy of the Ankara Government toward minorities, most recently exemplified at Smyrna where it is now reported that deportation is succeeding to massacre"⁴⁴. However, in October 1922, the League of Nations, under much pressure, established a Commission of Enquiry in cases of deportation of Greek women and children during the war, chaired by Dr. W. A. Kennedy, a Canadian. But the Commission was compelled to narrow its mandate to trying to find missing women and children because Ankara again would not allow or agree to investigations on its territory⁴⁵.

The last discussion on atrocities and war crimes before the Lausanne Conference (November 20, 1922 - July 24, 1923) took place on October 28, 1922,

42. Statement of G. Streit, President of the Greek Delegation, to the Third Assembly of the League on September 27, 1922. League of Nations Documents, C. 685, M. 399. 1922, VI.

43. Intercept by British signals, Public Record Office (PRO) FO 371-7880, E 6448, London, June 29, 1922.

44. *DBFP*, Vol. XVIII, Crowe (Foreign Office) to London (Geneva), Doc. 45 E 9616/27/44], September 21, 1922.

45. *Nansen Papers*, C 1762 (1923), 48/24632/24602, October 5, 1923, Letter of Dr. Kennedy, Representative of Save the Children Fund in Greece, to the Assistant High Commissioner for Refugees in Constantinople.

when it was suggested to Nansen that the League of Nations should ask both the Greek and Turkish Governments to allow it to make enquiries into atrocities alleged by the Greeks and Turks respectively. Nansen's response was that he was reluctant to do so. "I always feel extremely doubtful as to the utility of enquiries into atrocities, and on this particular occasion I think that such a suggestion made by me would only endanger the whole of the negotiations which I have in hand. *As you know, the Turks are extremely sensitive on this point – perhaps with good reason.* (Italics added)." Nansen then went on to say that he was equally doubtful whether it would be wise for the League of Nations to endeavor to do anything of this sort through another channel than himself. "I am sure it would only produce the same result"⁴⁶.

With regard to a proposal that he should tell the Turkish Government that the Greeks have agreed to receive a representative of the Red Crescent accompanied by a representative of the League to enquire into the treatment of Turkish prisoners in Greece, Nansen responded that it was not necessary since he had a statement from the Dutch Minister in Athens which would assure the Turkish Government that their prisoners are being well treated. Clearly, Nansen did not wish to antagonize the Turks and to jeopardize his negotiations with them by suggesting that they accept a Commission of Enquiry into alleged atrocities⁴⁷. And not surprisingly and for similar reasons of expediency and practicality, the question of alleged atrocities and war crimes was excluded from the agenda of the Lausanne conference. The Allied powers and Greece wished to bring Turkey to the conference table and to reach a peaceful settlement on issues vital to their immediate interests. Yet, by their silence on this issue they simply encouraged the Turks to proceed with their inhumane behavior toward their Christian minorities even during and after Lausanne, without fear of foreign intervention. In any case, it seems that as a general rule only losers are tried for war crimes and that over time silence on the issue leads to denial by the victor.

The Movement toward a Population Exchange

The mission of the relief agencies in the refugee crisis was to save lives, not to extend relief indefinitely nor to assume the primary burden of making the

46. *Nansen Papers*, R 1709 (1922), 42/24034/24034, Letter of Nansen to Rumbold (British High Commissioner in Constantinople), dated October 28, 1922.

47. *Ibid.*

refugees self-sufficient. The later was beyond their resources and mandate; and raised a critical political question—where should the refugees be permanently settled so that they could regain their ability to be self-supporting? Consequently, by the end of October, in concert with Nansen, the relief agencies informed the League of Nations and the Allied High Commissioners in Constantinople that relief could not be extended indefinitely to the refugees and that they should start thinking of a permanent solution to the refugee predicament. In the discussions that ensued they expressed the belief that since Turkey would not allow the refugees, by now over one million, to return to their homes in safety and since no one was prepared to force them to do so, the most likely solution to the problem would be the permanent settlement of the refugees on Greek soil and/or some kind of a Greek-Turkish population exchange⁴⁸. Nansen's notion of the possibility of autonomous regions for minorities within the Turkish state, areas to which the exiles could return with some semblance of security, or with other special provisions for the protection of minorities were, not surprisingly, completely unacceptable to the Turkish leadership and therefore to the Allied Powers and to the refugees themselves⁴⁹. The defeat of the Greek army in Asia Minor, the procrastination, rivalry and indifference of the Allied powers and the triumph of a Turkish nationalism bent on creating a homogeneous Turkish nation-state could not be ignored nor denied.

Finally, it should be noted that the notion of an officially sanctioned exchange of populations was not alien to Greece nor to Turkey. During the Balkan Wars of 1912-1913 and their aftermath the first wave of needy Christian and Muslim refugees cascaded across the newly delineated frontiers to seek refuge in their respective "motherlands." From the Balkan Wars, the vast

48. *American Near East Relief Activities in Greece*, September 1922 - December 1924, pp. 1-3; and Clouzot, *op.cit.*, p. 960.

49. Nansen tried on several occasions to get the Ankara Government to set up an autonomous district in eastern Anatolia for the few remaining survivors of the Armenian genocide, only to be adamantly rebuffed. Prior to the Mudanya armistice, there was even a suggestion for some kind of autonomous state under the League of Nations in Eastern Thrace for the protection of its Christian majority, which was also to serve as a buffer between Greece and Turkey. *DBFP*, Vol. XVIII, Doc. 48 [E 9843/27/44], *British Secretary's Notes of a Conference*, September 22, 1922. There was also a last minute desperate attempt by the Metropolitan of Smyrna (September 1922) to establish an autonomous Christian state in the Smyrna region under the sovereignty of the Ottoman Sultan with perhaps Venizelos as High Commissioner.

majority of the refugees were not surprisingly Muslims, some 300,000. They were driven out of Macedonia and Thrace primarily by Serb and/or Bulgarian forces. Some 60,000 were pushed out of or left voluntarily Greek Macedonia. In the period 1914-1915, the vast majority of the refugees, some 200,000 were primarily Greek Christians pushed out of the Ottoman territories of Eastern Thrace and western Anatolia⁵⁰. These movements further exacerbated nationalist feelings and set in motion population exchange agreements between Bulgaria and Turkey, Greece and Turkey, and following Bulgaria's defeat in World War I between Greece and Bulgaria.

A protocol between Bulgaria and Turkey following the Treaty of Bucharest (August 10, 1913), which brought to an end the second Balkan War, was annexed to the treaty of peace between the Ottoman Empire and Bulgaria (September 29, 1913)⁵¹. It was the first interstate treaty in modern history providing for an exchange of population. It called for a voluntary exchange of Bulgarians and Muslims living in a 15 kilometer zone on each side of their common border in Thrace. But it was basically a recognition of an accomplished fact since most of the people involved had already left this zone during the upheaval of the Balkan Wars. In all, approximately 48,500 Muslims moved from Bulgarian territory to Turkey compared to 46,700 Bulgarians who left for Bulgaria from Turkish Thrace⁵². The more germane accord was that between Greece and Turkey in 1914, although it was never ratified because of Turkey's entry in the world war (November 1, 1914). Briefly, it was sparked by the systematic persecution, harassment and forced exodus of the Ottoman Greeks from Eastern Thrace and from the Aegean coast of Asia Minor. The reasons for the expulsion were three-fold: (1) The influx of the Balkan Muslim refugees naturally led to reprisals against the numerous Ottoman Greek com-

50. A. J. Toynbee, *The Western Question in Greece and Turkey*, London 1922, p. 138; A. A. Pallis, "Racial Migrations in the Balkans during the Years 1912-1924," *Geographical Journal* 4 (October, 1925) and "Exchange of Populations in the Balkans," *The Nineteenth Century and After* (March, 1925), pp. 1-8; and *Diplomatic and Historical Archives, the Hellenic Ministry of Foreign Affairs* (hereafter cited as *AYE*), 1914: A.A.K. 17 & 26. In 1912, there were about approximately 2 million Greeks in Eastern Thrace, Constantinople, and Asia Minor, some 8 million Muslims/Turks and 1.7 million Armenians.

51. Great Britain, Foreign Office, *British and Foreign State Papers*, 107: 713-714.

52. Harry J. Psomiades, *The Eastern Question: The Last Phase. A Study in Greek-Turkish Diplomacy*, Thessaloniki 1968, p. 53.

munities in Eastern Thrace and western Anatolia. Greeks were being kicked out of their homes by Muslim refugees from Macedonia and Crete; (2) The further implementation of a policy of Turkification by the Young Turks, particularly by the ruling Committee of Union and Progress (CUP), which directed an organized system of harassment and intimidation to eliminate or clear out the Christian population of Thrace and the Turkish littoral and replace them with Muslim immigrants from the Balkans and the Russian Empire; and (3) The decision on February 16, 1914 by the six Powers – Germany, Austria-Hungary, France, Britain, Russia and Italy – to assign the Greek occupied Aegean islands from the Balkan Wars to Greece was unacceptable to Turkey for reasons of security⁵³. It refused to recognize Greek sovereignty over the islands, particularly Mitylene, Chios and Samos because of their strategic presence just off the Anatolian coast, with its large Greek population centers. The policy of persecution and eviction was designed in part to put pressure on Athens to reach an agreement with the Porte on the disposition of the islands.

In response to the protests of the Greek Government and its demands for the cession of hostilities toward the Ottoman Greek population, the Porte recommended a population exchange of the Greek rural population of Eastern Thrace and Aydin province or *vilayet*, including the Smyrna district, for the Muslim rural population of Greek Macedonia and Epirus. On May 18, 1914, the Turkish minister in Athens, Ghalib Kemaly [Söylemezoğlu] wrote to the Greek premier, E. Venizelos: "During our last conversation I brought forward to you as a personal opinion the idea of making an exchange of the Greek rural population of the vilayet of Smyrna with the Muslims of Macedonia. Having submitted this idea for the approval of the Sublime Porte, I have the pleasure of making known to you that it agrees with the idea. I now make the proposal officially in the name of my Government"⁵⁴. He warned Venizelos on several occasions that only by accepting the population exchange would there be peace in the Orient⁵⁵.

53. The islands were occupied by Greek forces during the first Balkan War, terminated by the Treaty of London, May 30, 1913.

54. *AYE*, 1914: A.A.K. 28.

55. As told in a brochure by Ghalib Kemaly published in Rome in 1919 and found in *Venizelos Papers*, 24. Coromilas (Rome) to Venizelos (Paris), November 23, 1919; Three years later in an interview with a Turkish journalist, Ghalib Kemaly insisted that it was Venizelos who in 1914 first suggested the idea of a population exchange as a solution to the Greek-Turkish problem. Alaeddine Haidar, "Le problème de l'échange des populations," *Aurore* (Paris), October 30, 1922; and Galib Kemali Söylemezoğlu,

Mindful of Greece's security concerns – over a revanchist Bulgaria in Macedonia and Turkey's refusal to recognize the status quo in the Aegean – and of the need for time to develop the newly acquired territories of the past three years⁵⁶, Venizelos recognized the need to calm the turbulence in Greek-Turkish relations. Four days later, he accepted in principle the Turkish initiative for a voluntary population exchange, provided that the free and spontaneous character of the exchange was secured and that the properties of the emigrants were properly appraised and liquidated. A Mixed Commission for the limited exchange of populations was established in June 1914, at Smyrna [İzmir]. By August the Commission for the valuation and liquidation of the migrants fixed property started its work by taking depositions in the Smyrna, Pergamum and Aydin areas of Asia Minor. But the preliminary work of the Mixed Commission was suspended by the Porte's entry in the world war and the exchange agreement came to naught⁵⁷. In theory, at least, the Greek-Turkish agreement of 1914 seemed to be the first to suggest that the peaceful exchange of populations as a preventative measures could improve relations between states and solve some of their problems arising out of the presence of significant ethnic and religious minorities⁵⁸. In practice, it is highly doubtful that most people would voluntarily leave their lands and homes for another country, even one of their fellow kinsman, without being forced to do so or without a very strong incentive. Finally, Athens was not adverse to the idea of a population exchange which would help to reinforce the Hellenization of its

Hatıralar [Memoirs], Istanbul 1946, pp. 102-103. For a Turkish perspective of this period see also Djemal Pasha, *Memories of a Turkish Statesman, 1913-1919*, London 1922 and Yusuf Hikmet Bayur, *Türk İnkilâbı Tarihi* [History of the Turkish Reform], 2:3, Ankara 1951, pp. 233-275.

56. The acquisition of southern Epirus, a large chunk of Macedonia – including the port of Thessaloniki, Crete and the eastern Aegean islands as a result of the Balkan Wars doubled the size of Greek territory and population. Greece's territory increased from 25,014 to 41,933 square miles, and its population rose from 2,666,000 to 4,363,000.

57. Psomiades, *The Eastern Question*, p. 55; Stephen P. Ladas, *The Exchange of Minorities: Bulgaria, Greece and Turkey*, New York 1932, pp. 21-22; and Bayur, *op.cit.*, pp. 251-252.

58. Michael Llewellyn Smith, *op.cit.*, pp. 32-33; Dimitri Pentzopoulos, *The Balkan Exchange of Minorities and its Impact upon Greece*, Paris 1962, pp. 54-55; Psomiades, *The Eastern Question*, pp. 12-14; *Venizelos Papers*, 10 (1914), Panas (Constantinople) to Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Athens), April 19, 1914 and June 20, 1914; *AYE*, 1914: A.A.K. 17, 27 and 28.

newly acquired territories and to make up for the loss of the several hundred thousand Greeks who migrated to America between 1900 and 1914. Its objection was to the poor correlation of the peaceful and voluntary emigration of Muslims living in Macedonia and the violent exodus of more than 150,000 Greeks from Asia Minor and Thrace⁵⁹. If the persecutions had not occurred or if the population exchange agreement of 1914 had been peacefully realized things may have been different in the direction of Greek-Turkish relations. The persecutions were undoubtedly a compelling factor in the subsequent Greek designs on Asia Minor and Thrace.

Following the end of the world war, the Treaty of Neuilly-sur-Seine was signed on November 27, 1919, delimiting Bulgaria's southern frontier and conceding Western Thrace to the Allies for disposition. On the same day Greece was assured that autonomy for Western Thrace was out and that the territory would go to Greece⁶⁰. At the same time and place, the Convention for the Reciprocal and Voluntary Emigration of Minorities between Greece and Bulgaria was concluded. And shortly thereafter Western Thrace, which was occupied by Greek forces during the great autumn Allied Balkan offensive of 1918, was ceded to Greece.

The Convention included the right of ethnic and religious minorities to immigrate freely into their respective territories; the freedom to take their goods with them; and the lose of one nationality and the immediate acquisition of the other once you leave. Articles 9-13 provided for a Mixed Commission to supervise and facilitate the voluntary emigration referred to in the Convention, including the evaluation and liquidation of immobile property and disputes over property ownership⁶¹. On April 17, 1920 Venizelos informed the Secretary General of the League, Sir Eric Drummond that Greece had ratified the Convention and requested that he place the formation of the Mixed Commission on the agenda of the next meeting of the League Council. Three weeks later, Athens reiterated its wish to the League to put the Convention with Bulgaria in effect as soon as possible⁶².

59. AYE, 1914: A.A.K. 17. The Greek Minister of Foreign Affairs to the Sublime Porte, September 30, 1914.

60. *Venizelos Papers*, 24, Kanellopoulos (Paris) to the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs, November 27, 1919.

61. For the text of the Convention see AYE, 1922: 105 (2)2,1. For details of its implementation see Ladas, *op.cit.*, Chapter 3; and Pentzopoulos, *op.cit.*, pp. 67-75.

62. AYE, 1920: 53 (2). Caclamano (London) to Drummond (London), April 17, 1920 and Caclamano (London) to Drummond (London), May 8, 1920.

Finally, on November 27, 1920, after much searching, the League Council appointed the two foreign members of the Mixed Commission for the Greek-Bulgarian population exchange, which was also to include one Greek and one Bulgarian. The League's appointees were Lt. Colonel A. C. Corfe of New Zealand and Commandant Marcel de Roover of Belgium. They along with M. Colban of the League's Secretariate, who also gained much experience in implementation of the Greek - Bulgarian Convention, were to become valuable members of Nansen's staff in dealing with the Greek-Turkish refugee question.

The Greek-Bulgarian population exchange was quickened with the sudden influx of thousands of Greek refugees from Eastern Thrace into Western Thrace in October 1922. Unfortunately, it was not without a strong element of coercion, its voluntary character being largely ignored. When only a few elected to leave voluntarily, both countries began strong agitation to force them out. By 1924, the population exchange was largely completed. Some 50,000 Greeks, mostly from Bulgarian's Black Sea littoral, were exchanged for about 100,000 Bulgarians, largely from Western Thrace and central and eastern Macedonia, although the questions of properties left behind and compensation were to drag on for several years more⁶³.

Venizelos and the Revival of the Idea for a Population Exchange

The origins of the January 30, 1923 convention for the compulsory population exchange between Greece and Turkey⁶⁴ were somewhat obfuscated by the promptness with which all the parties concerned, while accepting the convention, rejected its paternity – in particular its compulsory character⁶⁵. Given its importance, it would be useful to trace in some detail the activities of the key

63. Between 1912 and 1920 over 435,000 refugees in Greece received state assistance, including 200,000 from Thrace and 190,000 from Asia Minor. *AYE*, 1923: 13 (2)2,1. Refugee File. Many had returned to their homes after 1919 only to become refugees again in 1922. The development and experience of a cadre to deal with refugees and population exchanges in the decade prior to its defeat in Asia Minor enabled the Greek Government to attend to its 1922-1924 massive refugee problem with far greater efficiency than would normally have been the case.

64. For the text of the Convention see Appendix I.

65. The only person to have publically accepted paternity for the idea of a compulsory exchange was Nansen but only several years after the Convention was signed. He

players in the movement toward a compulsory population exchange, in the critical two months preceding the opening of the Lausanne conference on November 20, 1922.

The provisions of the Mudanya convention (October 11, 1922)⁶⁶ which set in motion the second wave of a massive flight of refugees to Greece and Venizelos meeting with Crowe in London on October 12, 1922, undoubtedly prompted the Greek statesman⁶⁷ to seek a definitive solution to the refugee problem⁶⁸. Crowe had been told, a day earlier, by Curzon that "as the idea of

announced this in response to a reporters question "who fathered the notion of a compulsory Greek-Turkish exchange" while on a visit to the Soviet Republic of Armenia, where he was greatly admired and respected for his relief work on behalf of the Armenians. Fridtjof Nansen, *Armenia and the Near East*, London 1928, p. 61.

66. See note 21. Greece's demand that amnesty and security guarantees for the Christian population of Eastern Thrace be included in the armistice agreement was totally ignored.

67. Eleftherios Venizelos (1864-1936) was Prime Minister of Greece during most of the period 1910-1920. He went into self-imposed exile in Paris after the disastrous electoral defeat of his party in November 1920. Military defeat in Asia Minor in September 1922 brought about the collapse of the royalist government, rebellion by elements of the army and navy (September 24, 1922) and the installation of a Revolutionary Government in Athens by its leaders, primarily colonels Gonatas and Plastiras (September 27-28, 1922). The goals of the Revolution were to hold on to Eastern Thrace, to remove and punish those responsible for the defeat in Asia Minor, and to deal with a rapidly deteriorating domestic situation which threatened the very integrity of the state. Recognizing its own inexperience in foreign affairs, one of its first acts was to cable Venizelos asking him to represent Greek interests abroad and providing him with full powers to deal with foreign policy questions. *Venizelos Papers*, 29, Revolutionary Committee (Athens) to Venizelos (Paris), September 27, 1922. The cable, "Revolution declares its absolute confidence in the sorting out of the national questions abroad and asks you for immediate help", was signed by 7 colonels, 1 naval captain, and 5 lieutenant colonels. A second telegram was sent reiterating the offer to Venizelos on September 29, 1922, signed by 7 officers, the leaders of the Revolution – colonels Gonatas and Plastiras, Foreign Minister Kanellopoulos and President Krokidas. *Venizelos Papers*, 29, Kanellopoulos (Athens) to Venizelos (Paris), September 29, 1922, just 4 days before the opening of the armistice negotiations at Mudanya.

68. During the negotiations at Mudanya, Venizelos position on the emigration of the Greek population of Eastern Thrace was that it should not be forced but only voluntary – if they wish to leave they should have the right to do so. It was critical that amnesty for the Greek population should be included in the armistice agreement. *Venizelos Papers*, 29, Venizelos (Paris) to Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Athens), October 8, 1922.

expatriation is that of Venizelos and as he is here we should find out what he thinks or proposes before we thrust this task on the High Commissioners at Constantinople... Please consult [with] him at once particularly on the W. Thrace proposal. The more Greeks can be got into W. Thrace and the more Turks and Bulgars extruded the easier will it be for Greece to retain her hold upon it"⁶⁹. Crowe took the matter up with Venizelos on October 12 and narrated the meeting on this issue as follows⁷⁰:

I asked him whether he, or the Greek Government, had got any plans for carrying out this civilian evacuation [of Eastern Thrace]. He declared that there were no plans of any kind, and that, neither he nor anybody had any notion how, in practice, the withdrawal of a hundred thousand Greeks from Thrace into Greece proper was to be effected. No doubt it was imperative, but it was a problem which terrified him. He said that there were already half a million refugees arrived in Greece from Asia Minor; more were coming from the islands...; how many [of the remaining Greeks] might want to leave he could not say, but thought that there would be many. Where all these hundreds of thousands of people were to be put raised a physical problem of the greatest complexity. He had been thinking about it a good deal, and felt that he might be driven to some ruthless measures, such as ordering all Greek villages and towns to set aside one-half, or a certain proportion, of their buildings for the incoming families, forcing the inhabitants to huddle together as best they could in the remaining accommodations. I asked him whether he had considered the possibility of now proceeding with the plan, of which I knew he had been in favour formerly, as regards Bulgaria and Macedo-

69. *DBFP*, Vol. XVIII, Doc. 122 [E 11215/27/44], Minute of Lord Curzon to Crowe on October 11, 1922 in *Record by Sir E. Crowe of a Conversation with M. Venizelos*, Foreign Office, October 12, 1922. In his memo to the Peace Conference (1919) Venizelos had suggested that in the event western Anatolian territory was given to Greece, it would be possible to arrange for a process of racial redistribution by a voluntary exchange of the Greek and Turkish populations left stranded on the wrong side of the border, as had been done in the case of the Greeks and Bulgarians in eastern Roumeli, Macedonia and Western Thrace. See A. A. Pallis, *Greece's Anatolian Venture and After*, London 1937, pp. 58-59; and L. I. Paraskevopoulos, *Anamnis* [*Memoirs*], Athens 1933, p. 362.

70. *DBFP*, Vol. XVIII, Doc. 122, *Record of Sir E. Crowe of a Conversation with M. Venizelos*, Foreign Office, October 12, 1922.

nia, namely, the interchange of Greek and Moslem populations. He would no doubt himself have realized that there might be a technical advantage for Greece to have in Western Thrace as many Greeks coming from Eastern Thrace as possible. If the Turks of Western Thrace, and perhaps of Thessaly, were ready to migrate to Eastern Thrace in return, this would offer some means of finding room for the refugees. M. Venizelos said that he did not overlook this possibility, but apart from the question of making arrangements for such an elaborate exchange within the short time available... such a scheme would only offer a very partial alleviation of the difficulty.

On the following day, Venizelos communicated to Curzon his misgivings with regard to the Mudanya⁷¹ convention and the retro cession of Eastern Thrace to Turkey, which he argued undermined the safety and security of the Christian population of Eastern Thrace; and bitterly complained of the shabby treatment of Greece by its former allies. Nevertheless, following the exhortation of Lord Curzon, he advised a reluctant Greek leadership to accept the verdict of Mudanya. On the same day, he requested from Athens the number of Turks living in Greece⁷²; he also sent a telegram to Nansen in which he decisively accepted the permanent settlement of the refugees in Greece. And to achieve this radical solution to the refugee problem Venizelos combined an appeal for foreign material assistance and a population exchange⁷³:

I am glad to learn you have accepted the mission entrusted you by the League of Nations to go to the Near East as its Commissioner and to undertake work of succouring hundreds of thousands of refugees. This noble and important mission could not have been placed in more capable hands. Total number of refugees who recent events forcing to leave

71. Psomiades, "Thrace and the Armistice of Mudanya, October 3-11, 1922," pp. 32-33. The Greek delegation at Mudanya had refused to sign the Convention on October 11 and left for Athens.

72. *AYE*, 1922: 88(6)1,1, Caclamanos (London) to the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs, October 13, 1922. The figure he was given was 450,000. This request could also suggest that Venizelos had in mind some kind of a population exchange.

73. *Nansen Papers*, R 1761 (1922), 48/24318/24318, Venizelos (London) to Nansen (Constantinople), October 13, 1922; also in *Venizelos Papers*, 29, Caclamanos (London) to Simopoulos (Constantinople), October 13, 1922.

homes and who will take refugee on Greek soil and ask shelter and means of livelihood will exceed million by far. The Greek state which is just emerging from ten years period of war and is exhausted is not in position to meet these colossal demands. The sympathy enterprise and material assistance of the world is necessary in order that this relief work be brought to successful issue. Minister of Interior of Ankara Government declared fortnight ago that Turks are decided not to allow further presence of Greeks on Turkish soil and will propose at forthcoming conference the compulsory exchange of Greek and Turkish populations. As the question of housing of refugees will be even more difficult than that of their alimentation particularly with the approach of winter, I take the liberty of requesting that you will endeavor to arrange that transfer of populations begin before signature of peace. Taking into account that in Greece today there are about 350,000 Turks and that these could be immediately transferred to houses and properties of the Christians in Asia Minor who have already left and those of Thrace, who are about to leave, it would be possible to provide housing for proportionate number Greek refugees and the problem of their accommodation would be so much facilitated.

The interpretation of this telegram has been the subject of much debate by scholars. Ladas, commenting on the cable deduced that "M. Venizelos was proposing a total exchange and probably a compulsory one"⁷⁴. Pentzopoulos, on the other hand, while agreeing with Ladas to the extent that Venizelos was thinking in terms of an accord covering the minorities of the entire two countries and not selected geographical provinces, believed that it could not be substantiated that Venizelos "envisaged an obligatory exchange" and indeed that "subsequent events proved that he was against the forceful transfer of populations"⁷⁵. Others have argued that at Lausanne Venizelos for a number of reasons had changed his mind or at least simply initially refused to support the repulsive idea of an obligatory exchange in a public forum. Svolopoulos argued that the cable of October 13 did not give a clear response to the question who initiated the idea of a compulsory population exchange, but that its deepest meaning implied a compulsory exchange⁷⁶. Koufa and Svolopoulos

74. Ladas, *op.cit.*, p. 336.

75. Pentzopoulos, *op.cit.*, p. 63.

76. Svolopoulos, *op.cit.*, pp. 7, 20.

agree that Venizelos without actually stating it in so many words, had essentially adopted the term "compulsory exchange". And that Nansen taking his cue from the telegram "undertook to promote the solution that had been proposed by Venizelos but actually *imposed* by the Turkish government's action of expelling the Greeks from Turkish territory"⁷⁷. His belief, conveyed to Venizelos, that if the exchange was not compulsory that the Muslims would not leave Greece undoubtedly influenced his critique of Venizelos' telegram⁷⁸. In any case, Venizelos' call for the complete removal of the Greeks left in Asia Minor for the immediate removal of the Muslims of Greece could hardly be implemented on a voluntary basis, particularly since the vast majority of the Muslims in Greece had no wish to repatriate to Turkey.

The fact of the matter is that the term compulsory exchange had not yet entered the vocabulary of international discourse; but voluntary exchanges of population, nevertheless, are seldom voluntary, particularly in crisis situations. When an incoming population, having been rudely and forcefully uprooted and stripped of its possessions, finds itself without shelter and the means of livelihood in the receiving country, the element of coercion to move on a settled minority population, identified with their former tormentors, is difficult if not impossible to contain, even if it is not state sanctioned.

The meaning of Venizelos telegram to Nansen can also be grasped by Venizelos response to a note two days later from E. Kanellopoulos, the Greek Foreign Minister, asking him should the Government discourage the Greeks of Eastern Thrace from abandoning their homes and fleeing to Greece? His reply was unequivocal⁷⁹:

I think that the Government would be committing a grave crime if it did not help the population of Eastern Thrace that wished to emigrate.

77. Kalliopi K. Koufa and Constantinos Svolopoulos, "The Compulsory Exchange of Populations Between Greece and Turkey: the Settlement of Minority Questions at the Conference of Lausanne, 1923, and its Impact on Greek-Turkish Relations," in *Ethnic Groups in International Relations*, Vol. V, edited by Paul Smith in collaboration with Kalliopi Koufa and Arnold Suppan, New York 1991, p. 279. The interaction between the Turkish position, with its *faits accomplis*, and the Greek counter reaction predetermined to a large extent the character of the population exchange.

78. AYE, 1922: 88(2)1,1, Simopoulos (Constantinople) to Politis (Athens), October 20, 1922.

79. *Venizelos Papers*, 29, Kanellopoulos (Athens) to Venizelos (London), October 15, 1922; and Venizelos (London) to Kanellopoulos (Athens), October 16, 1922.

Of course, if it were possible to secure their life and property until the conclusion of peace, we would be in a better position at the peace conference to negotiate a peace, we would be in a better position at the peace conference to negotiate a population exchange... But it is absolutely certain that after 30 days, with the removal of all Allied controls on the Turkish administration in Thrace, the Turks will plunder the movable property of our fellow countrymen and will expel them naked and miserable. Remember what happened on the eve of the Great War. Today, this will be repeated on a much wider scale because of the contempt the Turks have of the Great Powers. For this reason, it is necessary to facilitate in every way the departure of our fellow countrymen, taking with them their movable property before the [Turkish] army comes... Do not deceive yourself! Eastern Thrace is lost forever for Hellenism. The Turks will not tolerate a compact alien population, especially at the very gates of their capital. The problem of settling so many thousands of refugees is of course terrifying but we cannot avoid it... There is hope that all the world will help. Upon a proper solution of this problem depends the future of Greece and the security of our borders beyond the Aliakmonas. It is clear that with the withdrawal of the Greek population of Eastern Thrace we will be forced to ask the Turks in Greece to leave Greece to make room for the incoming refugees. But it should be done in a civilized way by the League of Nations and managed by Dr. Nansen.

Venizelos asked that the decision for the departure of the Turkish population from Greece should remain a secret until the complete evacuation of Eastern Thrace and further advised that the Government should make an appeal on his behalf to the Greek population not to destroy their abandoned homes upon their departure from Eastern Thrace. Such an act he told Kanellopoulos would make their resettlement in Greece easier because it would ultimately facilitate the orderly evacuation of the Turkish population from their homes in Greece by providing them with the abandoned Greek homes in Eastern Thrace. On the following day, heeding the advice of Venizelos, a directive was dispatched to the Governor General of Eastern Thrace that the army and civil population should refrain from destroying the abandoned houses⁸⁰. The directive was also

80. *AYE*, 1922: 88(2)1,1, Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Governor General (Adrianople), October 17, 1922.

a response to Nansen's request that the Greek Government "use all in its power to prevent the destruction of property and homes in Eastern Thrace in spite of provocations by Muslim civilians and armed bands." Such destruction he pleaded would severely compromise his efforts on behalf of the refugees⁸¹.

The Nansen Initiative

Venizelos' telegram of October 13 was dispatched before the arrival of Nansen's telegram of October 10 which independently recommended the settlement of the refugees on vacant lands in Greek Macedonia and Thrace with the help of a foreign loan and international relief organizations; and vaguely suggested a Greek-Turkish population exchange⁸²:

... Everyone appears to agree that it is hopeless to expect that Turkey will agree to receive them again in Asia Minor, or that the refugees themselves would agree to go even if they were received back in. They must be therefore settled else where and I presume that it will be the purpose of the Greek Government either as a result of treaty for the exchange of populations with the Turkish Government, or without such a treaty to settle them in the vacant lands of Macedonia and Western Thrace – the vast numbers of refugees will have to be settled on land that is neither occupied or cultivated. The alternative to settling the refugees is to support them in idleness for perhaps 2-3 years, which must be unacceptable to the Greek Government and the Voluntary agencies. What is needed is rapid settlement on vacant land in the interest of world peace...

With Venizelos telegram in hand, Nansen promptly proposed to the Allied High Commissioners at Constantinople that he undertake with their approval immediate negotiations with Greece and Turkey for a population exchange and that such an exchange take place before the signature of peace, foreseeing the long diplomatic negotiations at Lausanne. And on October 15, the High Commissioners of Britain, France, Italy and Japan at Constantinople, wasting little time in endorsing, without qualification, Venizelos' request and Nansen's proposal, formally invited the League's High Commissioner for Refugees to

81. AYE, 1922: 88(2)1,1, Simopoulos (Constantinople) to Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Athens), Telegram of Nansen to Venizelos. October 17, 1922.

82. AYE, 1922: 88(2)1,1, Nansen (Constantinople) to Venizelos, October 10, 1922.

take all possible steps to reach an agreement as soon as possible regarding an exchange of populations, independently of the peace negotiations. They had rapidly concluded that the question of the refugees was essentially connected with that of an eventual exchange of minorities⁸³.

Meanwhile, with the new immense flow of refugees to Greece from Eastern Thrace, the Black Sea region, and the interior of Asia Minor, Venizelos became increasingly apprehensive that the Turks would delay if not refuse an agreement for a population exchange. He was also disturbed by developments in Greece where the Revolutionary Government appeared overwhelmed by the problem of finding funds for the settlement of the refugees and for sustaining its military forces for the defense of Western Thrace. There were alarming indications that it was pulling back from its agreement with Venizelos that Eastern Thrace was lost and to save what could be salvaged through a population exchange. Particularly disturbing to Venizelos was the notion circulating in Athens that it would be better if the refugees returned to Turkey at whatever cost⁸⁴. This potentially dangerous development was undoubtedly in part inspired by military elements in Athens which had not yet adjusted to the fact of the Asia Minor disaster and apparently still harbored the notion of a war with Turkey over Eastern Thrace⁸⁵. He also had to deal with the dream of many refugees to return home⁸⁶.

83. AYE, 1922: 88(2)1,1, Simopoulos (Constantinople) to the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs (for Venizelos from Nansen), October 15, 1922. The High Commissioners assured Nansen of their support and that of their Governments in the Council of the League of Nations for a population exchange. This came as no surprise since the Mudanya armistice, at Turkey's insistence, did not provide guarantees of security for the non-Muslim population of Eastern Thrace. In early September 1922 in a conversation with Lord Fisher, the British representative at the League of Nations, the Greek minister was told that in the case where guarantees for the non-Muslim population in Turkey was insufficient he would envisage an exchange of the Greek population of Asia Minor for the Muslims of Greece. AYE, 1922: 18(7)2,2, Streit (Geneva) to the Greek Minister of Foreign Affairs, September 7, 1922.

84. Extract of letter by Baker (Athens) to Nansen (Constantinople), October 14, 1922, in *Nansen Papers*, R 1761 (1922), 48/24318/24318. See also Milton Pagtziloglou, *I genoktonia ton Ellinon kai ton Armenion tis Mikras Asias* [*The Genocide of the Greeks and Armenians of Asia Minor*], Athens 1988, pp. 218-219.

85. *Venizelos Papers*, 29, Venizelos (London) to Plastiras (Athens), October 14, 1922; and Smith, *op.cit.*, pp. 330-331. The substance of these tendencies was reflected in the Kanellopoulos - Venizelos exchanges of October 15 and 16, 1922. See note 79.

86. AYE, 1922: 88(2)1,2, Rentis (Athens) to Venizelos (Lausanne), December 10, 1922.

Thus, Venizelos was confronted by problems with both Ankara and Athens which could only be resolved, in his view, by obtaining an immediate agreement for a Greek-Turkish population exchange. He was fearful that if Greece did not reach an agreement with Ankara soon, before the Christian element was completely expelled from Turkey, its ability to effect a satisfactory exchange would be significantly limited. Moreover, he dared not contemplate the alternative of forcefully removing the Muslim population from Greek territory without the consent of Turkey which in his view would be morally reprehensible and politically disastrous for Greece⁸⁷. Such an act he believed would further isolate the country diplomatically and undermine its efforts to secure an international loan for refugee resettlement. It would also provoke irresistible pressures for the Turkish occupation of Constantinople (which was to remain under Allied occupation until a peace treaty was signed) and the slaughter and expulsion of its sizeable Greek population⁸⁸. Also, even without state sanction for such a policy, one way or another the Muslims of Greece would bear more than their fair share of the burden of resettling the refugees, inviting a strong reaction from Ankara and the international community.

Venizelos was also greatly concerned with the deepening crisis in Greece. Financially exhausted, politically fractured and socially agitated, the very integrity of the Greek state, he insisted, called for a calm calculation of the new reality, the need to absorb over one million refugees. He made every effort and used every possible argument, to convince his countrymen of this urgent necessity. In his memorandum to the Greek Foreign Office on October 17, he stressed that "the future of Greece, without exaggeration depends on the good or bad solution of this question. Failure of reaching the good solution will cause disasters one is terrified even to contemplate, while its success will contribute in a few years to our rise from the unbearable burdens which we inherited from the unfortunate ending of the war and to securing, after the demise of the Greater Greece, a Great Greece, whose borders will never be secure if Western Thrace and Macedonia will not become ethnically, as well as politically, Greek"⁸⁹. He

87. *Venizelos Papers*, 30, Venizelos (London) to the Greek Foreign Office, October 17, 1922.

88. *Ibid.*, 31, Politis (Athens) to Venizelos (London), November 9, 1922. In fact, Hamid told Nansen that if the Greeks expel the Turks from Greece we will massacre all the remaining Greeks, including those in Constantinople.

89. *Venizelos Papers*, 30, Venizelos (London) to the Greek Foreign Office, October 17, 1922.

frequently used the strategic argument with the Greek leadership, particularly the military, that the security of the geographically sensitive regions of northern Greece could only be realized by a mutually acceptable, bilateral exchange arrangement with Turkey. Such a convention, he argued, was the best guarantee for the peaceful departure of the large Muslim population of northern Greece and their replacement by the Greek refugees from Turkey. It would ensure the security of Greece's northern frontier and, at the same time, greatly facilitate the awesome task of Greek refugee resettlement⁹⁰. In this regard, it is interesting to note that when the first wave of refugees arrived in Greece after the defeat in Asia Minor, the Triantafylakou Government for internal political reasons prohibited their settlement in old or southern Greece. However, when the Revolutionary Government of colonels Plastiras and Gonatas came to power in late September 1922 it undertook a more organized effort to deal with the refugees and allowed them into all parts of the country⁹¹.

In response to his anxieties over developments in both Greece and Turkey and using the occasion to respond to Nansen's letter of October 10, Venizelos wrote Nansen the following letter on October 17⁹²:

I have your letter of the 10th instant... I am glad to say that I am in complete agreement with all the proposals contained in your letter, of which I have sent a copy to Athens with the warm recommendation that the Government accept these in their entirety and give you its complete support.

It is obvious that the work of relieving the refugees, whose number will far exceed a million, is above the strength of a small nation emerging from a period of ten years of continuous war. Of course the Greek state will do everything that is humanly possible but the work is so vast that it

90. Svolopoulos, *op.cit.*, pp. 7-8. In 1920 Greek census, the Greek ethnic population in Macedonia and Western Thrace was somewhat under 50%, although it formed a plurality in Macedonia. In the view of the author the security argument was used by Venizelos mainly to elicit the support of the military for a population exchange. While the security of Greece's northern provinces was in fact enhanced by the exchange, Venizelos primary concern, at this stage, was to find a solution to the refugee problem and the anomalous and dangerous relations with Turkey.

91. Areti Tounta-Fergadi, *To prosfygiko daneio tou 1924 [The Refugee Loan of 1924]*, Thessaloniki 1986, p. 24.

92. *Nansen Papers*, R 1761 (1922), 48/84441/24357, October 17, 1922.

can never be brought to a successful issue if the whole of the civilized world does not come to our aid, not only financially, but also administratively. The fact that you have accepted to act as the Commissioner of the League of Nations is the best guarantee that this work will be directed in the most effective manner possible.

The work of the immediate and temporary housing of such a large number of refugees is perhaps the one that is most difficult of accomplishment. The prompt exchange of these populations with the Turks in Greece, and amounting to about 350,000, will considerably alleviate the difficulties which attend this problem and for that reason it is necessary that Mustapha Kemal should, as quickly as possible, be persuaded to give his consent to the speedy transfer of the Turks now in Greece. This could be effected under your supervision and you may be sure that the Musulmans who leave Greece will not only be allowed to take with them all their possessions, but also every possible facility will be given to them by the authorities to enable them to depart in comfort.

I have already hastened to recommend that the Greeks leaving Eastern Thrace be prevented, as far as possible, from destroying the houses they vacate, so that the installation there of the Turks who may leave Greece, should be thus made easier.

With regard to the land and property of the Musulmans in Greece and of the Christians in Turkey, arrangements on this subject may well be deferred until the Peace Conference. In the houses of the Musulmans in Greece it will be possible, temporarily at any rate, to install more than half a million Christian refugees though not without crowding of course.

If it is possible to avert at least for the present, or until the Peace Conference, the departure of the Christian populations of Constantinople, Tchataldja and Gallipoli, i.e the regions under Allied Control, then more than half of the refugees will find immediate shelter. Perhaps, if reasons of a higher order fail to persuade Mustapha Kemal, it will be possible for you to point out to him that if he does not concur in the migration of the Turks in Greece, the Greek Government under the pressure of unavoidable necessity will be very probably compelled to impose this migration on the Turks living on Greek soil...

On October 14, Nansen wired Drummond that he had "received official request from Venizelos to organize an immediate exchange of Greek and

Turkish populations of Thrace, Macedonia and Asia Minor without awaiting signing of peace. As this is essentially a question within scope of refugee work and vital to satisfactory solution of existing problems consider impossible to refuse to act on this definite request of Member of League although this involves increased responsibility... impossible to await Council's consideration as immediate action is essential..."⁹³. And on October 16, Nansen again informed the League of Venizelos request that he:

"endeavour to arrange an immediate exchange of the Greek and Turkish populations of Macedonia, Thrace and Asia Minor. In making this request M. Venizelos refers to a declaration made a short time ago by the Minister of the Interior of the Nationalist Government of Ankara, to the effect that the Government had decided not to allow the further presence of Greeks on Turkish soil, and that it would accordingly propose at the forthcoming conference of peace the compulsory exchange of Greek and Turkish populations. M. Venizelos requests me to endeavour to arrange that *such* an exchange shall begin as soon as possible and that negotiations *to this end* shall be carried on independently of the negotiations for peace." (Italics added)

Venizelos cable of October 13 was thus interpreted by Nansen as a clear indication that Greece had accepted the principle of a compulsory population exchange. Nansen also informed Drummond and the League Council that on October 15 a similar request to take charge of a Greek-Turkish population exchange was made to him by the Allied High Commissioners in Constantinople on behalf of their Governments. Without waiting for the official approval of the League Council, Nansen rushed to undertake the responsibilities of his new mission.

The Nansen Negotiations with Turkey for a Population Exchange

From the very beginning of his stay in Constantinople, Nansen had made every effort to secure immediate contact with the Ankara authorities only

93. Public Record Office (PRO) FO 371/7956, E 11589, London, October 14, 1922. The cable was sent by Rumbold, British High Commissioner Constantinople, for Drummond (Geneva) from Nansen (Constantinople). See also F. Nansen, "Refugees and the Exchange of Populations," *The Encyclopedia Britannica*, 14th Edition, Vol. 19, London, 1929, pp. 58-60.

to be rebuffed or ignored. He had earlier met several times with Hamid, the Nationalist representative in Constantinople, explaining his mission and his urgent need for an appointment with Kemal but with no results. However, with his new mandate and the support of the Allied powers and Greece, Nansen, on October 15⁹⁴, again pressed Hamid for a meeting with Kemal to secure agreement on a population exchange.

The meeting with Hamid apparently reinforced his optimism. It led him to inform Venizelos that although he did not mention to Hamid Greece's official request for a population exchange, believing that it was preferable for him to come to direct negotiations with Kemal, that Hamid had freely voiced the opinion that his Government was extremely favorable to such a proposal. And that he left the meeting "almost certain that it will agree to face the question immediately"⁹⁵.

While waiting for an appointment with Kemal, Nansen went to Sofia and Athens on urgent business in connection with the refugee question. In his brief visit to Athens on October 22, he reconfirmed the Greek Government's decision that he should attempt to establish an agreement on the exchange of populations; and advised it to draw up a scheme for the settlement of the rural refugees on vacant lands in Macedonia and Thrace. This advice according to Nansen was well received since the Government was anxious to keep the destitute refugees out of the cities, if at all possible, to avoid social unrest⁹⁶.

Upon his return to Constantinople on October 23, Nansen received a telegram from Kemal stating that "the Exchange proposed by Dr. Nansen is

94. *Nansen Papers*, R 1761 (1922), 48/24318/24318. Nansen (Constantinople) to Drummond (Geneva), October 16, 1922. See also *ibid.*, Nansen (Constantinople) to Venizelos (London), October 15, 1922 and *Venizelos Papers*, 29, Nansen (Constantinople) to Venizelos (London), October 16, 1922.

95. *Venizelos Papers*, 29, Simopoulos (Constantinople) to the Greek Legation (London), October 15, 1922; and Svolopoulos, *op. cit.*, pp. 22-23. On October 17, 1922, Nansen informed Venizelos that "after a conversation I had with the Ankara Government representative, I believe that the Turkish Government would accept the propositions of Venizelos. I am persuaded that it is a question for which one can use the authority of the League to favor the true interests of Greece and the Greek people to prevent disaster in Eastern Thrace and in favor of the true pacification of the Near East". *AYE*, 1922: 88(2)1,1, Simopoulos (Constantinople) to Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Athens), October 17, 1922.

96. *Venizelos Papers*, 29, Politis (Athens) to Venizelos (Paris), October 23, 1922. Report on Nansen's meeting.

acceptable in principle, however, it is necessary to take up the matter with the Government. Cannot meet with you due to my duties as Commander in Chief." Despite his great disappointment at the indefinite postponement of consultations with Ankara, Nansen again renewed his efforts to meet with the Turkish leadership. On October 24, he called upon Refet [Bele], the newly appointed Nationalist Governor of Thrace, who had just arrived at Constantinople, for assistance. Refet suggested that in order to reach a speedy agreement he should proceed without further delay to Ankara and promised that Hamid would inform him as soon as the necessary arrangements for the journey had been made. Refet also told Nansen that he would need a document stating that the Greek Government had given him full powers to obtain an agreement. Nansen immediately obtained the document by telegraph⁹⁷.

Nansen's fear that his departure for Ankara would be postponed, was only too well founded. Dissatisfied with the slowness of the process, he arranged for another interview with Refet on October 28. Refet again expressed his desire to arrange for a reply from Ankara and promised to take personal steps in the matter immediately. He assured Nansen that he would have a reply within two days. On October 30 Nansen sent his aides de Roover and Burnier to see Refet who told them that he had received a telegram from Hussein Raouf, President of the Council of Ministers at Ankara, stating that the Turkish Government was "in principal favorable to an exchange of populations, excluding [the Muslims of] Western Thrace," but that the Government was desirous of avoiding for Nansen a journey to Ankara, and therefore had charged Hamid to negotiate with him in Constantinople⁹⁸. A copy of the telegram was given to Nansen later by Hamid along with a copy of a telegram from Ismet [İnönü], the newly appointed Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs which read: "There is no need for Dr. Nansen to go to Ankara. We agree to the exchange of populations. On this principle you can discuss with Dr. Nansen"⁹⁹.

97. *Nansen Papers*, R 1761 (1922), 48/24318/24318. League of Nations, Report by Dr. Nansen, Part 1, *Reciprocal Exchange of Racial Minorities between Greece and Turkey* (Geneva), November 15, 1922.

98. *Nansen Papers*, R 1761 (1922), 48/24318/24318, Colban (Constantinople) to Drummond (Geneva), October 31, 1922.

99. *Ibid.*, League of Nations, Report by Dr. Nansen, Part 1, *Reciprocal Exchange of Racial Minorities between Greece and Turkey* (Geneva), November 15, 1922. The document was also circulated by Secretary General Drummond to the League Council, Member States and the Secretariat: League of Nations, *The Question of Exchange of Populations between Greece and Turkey* (Geneva), November 15, 1922, C.736/M447.

Nansen was clearly unhappy with this arrangement and expressed his fears to his colleagues that the instructions given to Hamid would not enable him to enter into really fruitful negotiations. Yet, he could not refuse the invitation to deal with Hamid.

On October 31 the meeting took place with Nansen, assisted by his staff of experts – de Roover, Burnier, Baker and Colban, and Hamid, who was not accompanied by any secretary or supporting staff, in Nansen's hotel. It was to be Nansen's first and last official conference with Hamid. The Turkish representative started the discussion by observing that Nansen's *pleins pouvoirs* did not mention Constantinople, which should come under the exchange scheme. He then informed Nansen that his instructions only permitted him to negotiate on the basis of a total and compulsory exchange of populations, excepting [the Muslims of] Western Thrace but from which the population of Constantinople would not be excluded. Nansen objected to this limitation, although he thought a compulsory exchange as a solution was not altogether excluded¹⁰⁰. In the discussions that followed it was agreed that Hamid would wire his Government and ask for instructions as to whether he could proceed with the discussions on the basis of voluntary emigration. And at the same time Nansen should wire the Greek Government and asked whether it would authorize him to negotiate on the basis of compulsory emigration, including Constantinople. It should be noted that the meeting was the first documented admission of Nansen that a compulsory exchange was not to be altogether excluded. Up to this point the question whether the exchange was to be obligatory or voluntary had not been discussed by any of the parties, although the implication of a forced exchange had been present.

Fearful of further delays in resolving the refugee crisis, Nansen suggested that the discussions should continue, while waiting for the replies of the two Governments, as many of the details in a population exchange would be more or less the same if one or the other alternative was finally adopted. However,

100. In his meetings with Refet and Hamid, Nansen brought out the differences between the case of the refugees of Asia Minor and those of Eastern Thrace. He believed that since the civil population of Eastern Thrace evacuated the territory after the armistice and the end of military operations that the peace treaty would undoubtedly recognize its right to chose either for Turkey or for Greece. He did not foresee a similar right for the refugees from Asia Minor whose exodus was the result of military operations. *Nansen Papers*, R 1761 (1922), 48/24929/24357, November 15, 1922, *The Work of Doctor Nansen Concerning the Organizations of Aid to Refugees in the Near East*.

Hamid showed the greatest reluctance to enter into further deliberation. His rebuttal to Nansen was that it would be a waste of time and labor to continue the talks before knowing the position of the two Governments on the fundamental question of compulsory or voluntary emigration. Moreover, he complained that he had no experts at his disposal, they were busy elsewhere, while Nansen's staff was free to give full attention to the issue. Therefore, he would be personally in a position of inferiority in any discussion relating to technical details. The end result was an agreement that Nansen would send to Hamid a document on the following day containing a preliminary draft on a population exchange, which might serve as a detailed basis for discussion. But he failed to draw from Hamid some clearer idea when an agreement could possibly be ready for signature¹⁰¹.

On November 1, as scheduled, de Roover and Colban called upon Hamid to hand him the draft stipulations for an exchange agreement. And tried to arrange a meeting to review and explain the document, only to be told by Hamid that he himself could no longer deal with the issue because he had to leave in three days for the Peace Conference at Lausanne. He added that he had asked Ankara to appoint a substitute and to send experts to Constantinople for the resumption of the discussions; and hoped to have a reply to his request within three or four days¹⁰². They were also informed that the basis of an eventual accord could only be an integral and obligatory exchange of populations and that Ankara "did not consider the issue to have a character of urgency and that its examination could wait until after the conclusion of the Peace Conference." In response to Colban's remark that the question of a population exchange would come up at the Peace Conference, Hamid repeated that it ought to be considered as outside the scope of the Conference¹⁰³.

101. *Nansen Papers*, R 1761 (1922), 48/24318/24318, Colban (Constantinople) to Drummond (Geneva), October 31, 1922; and League of Nations, Report by Dr. Nansen, Part 1, *Reciprocal Exchange of Racial Minorities between Greece and Turkey* (Geneva), November 15, 1922. Nansen's aides, de Roover and Colban, were asked by their chief to draw up the preliminary draft agreement, given their extensive experience with a similar agreement between Greece and Bulgaria.

102. *Ibid.*

103. *Nansen Papers*, R 1761 (1922), 48/24929/24357, *L'œuvre du Docteur Nansen concernant: l'organisation de secours aux réfugiés du Proche-Orient – L'Échange de prisonniers de guerre et d'otages – L'Échange de populations civiles* (Prepared by Nansen's staff), November 15, 1922.

The Greek Response

Meanwhile, Nansen sent an urgent cable to Politis, the Greek Minister for Foreign Affairs, apprizing him of the results of the October 31 meeting with Hamid. He conveyed his understanding based on the information he had received from Venizelos and on the authorization of the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs of his mandate to arrange for a population exchange that the Greek Government had agreed to the principle of a forced exchange even for Constantinople. He asked for confirmation that Greece was still disposed to accept the principle with regard to the Greek population of that city and assumed that a compulsory exchange was in order. The cable read in part as follows¹⁰⁴:

... Personally, after careful consideration, I believe that if there is no other way of reaching an accord, it would be to the advantage of the Greek Government to accept the principle of forced emigration, even for Constantinople. I believe the Turkish Government will find that it cannot afford to expel the Constantinople Greeks if it has to pay for their immense possessions. If there is no treaty a large part of the population will probably leave without the ability to sell their property and will be without the legal rights they would have under a compulsory exchange treaty. If during the peace negotiations it were possible to secure real guarantees which the Turkish Government would accept and which the Greek population of Constantinople would find satisfactory, it would then be possible to introduce a clause into the peace treaty providing for the non-application of the treaty of compulsory exchange for the Greeks of Constantinople... Please send me a complete response of your views on the points I have made and in case of the need to continue the negotiations on this bases...

Nansen also asked Politis to send experts to Constantinople who could agree on the details of a treaty if the basic principles were accepted by the parties and who would be authorized to sign an agreement without further delay.

104. *Nansen Papers*, R 1761 (1922), 48/24318/24318. Nansen (Constantinople) to Politis (Athens), October 31, 1922 and *AYE*, 1922: 88 (2)1,1. Simopoulos (Constantinople) to Politis (Athens, November 1, 1922; and *Venizelos Papers*, 31, Simopoulos (Constantinople) to Politis (Athens), for Venizelos, November 1, 1922.

He received the reply of the Greek Government through its High Commissioner in Constantinople two days later, indicating that it could not accept a population exchange which would include the Greek population of Constantinople. Politis made the point of stressing that “neither the letter of Venizelos, nor in your memorandum 173 [of October 22]¹⁰⁵, nor in my acceptance of said memorandum is mention made of the Greek population of Constantinople. We have always had in mind only the Greek population of Asia Minor and Thrace where forced emigration was already a *fait accompli*”¹⁰⁶. He said that Greece simply wished the departure of those Greeks remaining in Asia Minor, whose families had already emigrated, and the emigration from Greece of the Muslim population, whose houses were necessary, “*par une juste réciprocité*”, to provide shelter for the unfortunate Greek refugees already expelled from Turkey. It never entered our thoughts that some other Greek population and especially that of Constantinople should be obliged to leave their homes. (“*Il n’a jamais pu entrer dans notre pensée de préposer que d’autres populations grecques et spécialement celles de Consp[le] [Constantinople] fussent obligées de quitter leurs foyers*”). This particular sentence may be viewed as confirmation that Athens had accepted the idea of a compulsory population exchange for Asia Minor and Thrace but not for “other Greek population” such as Constantinople. In any case, Politis pleaded, Greece was already saturated with refugees and could not possibly accept others. He then went on to explain that the Greek public would revolt if the Government, which was only a provisional one, accepted such a monstrous thing as the uprooting and forced departure of the 400,000 Greeks of Constantinople. Moreover, he believed that the question also had an international character, reflecting on the economic interests of the Great Powers in Constantinople and their heavy dependence on the Greek population of the city. Politis concluded the cable by stating that until a satisfactory accord of principle was reached with Turkey, it appeared to him, at the present time, useless and dan-

105. AYE, 1922: 88 (2)1,1. The Memorandum of Nansen [173] on the Exchange of Population in Macedonia, Thrace and Asia Minor. The memorandum does not mention Constantinople but does state the opinion that “the Treaty required [for the population exchange] will differ from previous exchange treaties in that it would give each party the right compulsorily to expel subjects of ethnic minorities.” (Italics added). See also note 95.

106. *Nansen Papers*, R 1761 (1922), 48/24318/24318, Simopoulos (Constantinople) to Nansen, November 3, 1922.

gerous to bring together the experts of the two Governments; and asked Nansen to proceed with the negotiations for a population exchange, excluding Constantinople¹⁰⁷. Although clearly implied, nowhere in the Politis response is there a definite acceptance of a *compulsory* exchange. The issue was left open since there was no direct reply to Nansen's recommendation that Athens accept the principle of compulsion.

On the same day, Nansen replied to Politis that he too "had the conviction that it would be impossible to negotiate an accord between the Governments of Greece and Turkey on the basis of a forced exchange of populations including the city of Constantinople" and that he was relieved and happy to note that the Greek Government shared his opinion on the subject. And that the Allied High Commissioners in Constantinople had agreed with him that it would be impossible to negotiate with the Turks if they insisted on including the Greeks of Constantinople in the exchange¹⁰⁸.

Nansen's Last Bid for Negotiations with Ankara

Nansen was, not surprisingly, perplexed and frustrated by Turkey's dilatory tactics which appeared aimed at foiling all serious agreement. Not being able to negotiate with the Ankara Government but having received three separate assurances from it that it was in principle agreeable to a population exchange, he decided on one last ditch effort to move the negotiation process forward. On November 2, he sent a memorandum, through Hamid, to the Ankara Government, explaining his desire to obtain a solution to the questions which kept him so long at Constantinople and that it was impossible for him to remain there much longer. However, in spite of the considerable demands on

107. *Ibid.*, and *Venizelos Papers*, 30, Politis (Athens) to Simopoulos (Constantinople), November 3, 1922 (also in *AYE*, 1922: 88(2)1,1). For the exchange see also Report of Dr. Nansen, dated November 15, 1922 (C.736. M.447, 1922), in the *LNOJ*, 4th Year, No. 1 (Part II), January 1923, pp. 128-129. By 1930 less than 120,000 Greeks remained in Constantinople. Today, there are less than 3,000, while the Muslims of W. Thrace have reached over 130,000, a 1/3 increase.

108. *Nansen Papers*, R 1761 (1922), 48/24318/24318, Nansen (Constantinople) to Politis (Athens), November 3, 1922 and 48/24722/24357, Report of Dr. Nansen on the refugee situation in the Near East, Part A, *Points Submitted for Consideration in Connection with the Lausanne Conference*, (1) *Contemplated expulsion of the Greek and Turkish populations including the population of Constantinople*, November 15, 1922; and *AYE*, 1922: 88(2)1,1, Nansen (Constantinople) to Politis (Athens), November 3, 1922.

his schedule, he let it be known that he was willing to remain in the city for a limited time if the information given to him by the Turkish authorities seemed to offer any possibility of reaching a solution. To this end, Nansen invited the Ankara Government to respond to three questions, expressing the hope of a reply by November 6¹⁰⁹:

1. Is the Ankara Government prepared to negotiate without delay, and independently of the Peace negotiations, an agreement for the exchange of populations on the principle of a voluntary emigration of the racial minorities in Turkey and Greece?
2. Is the Ankara Government prepared to appoint delegates with full powers to conclude with Greek representatives, and under my auspices, an agreement which would be submitted immediately for ratification by the two Governments?
3. Does the Ankara Government accept that the male refugees deported in Asia Minor will be included in the population exchange?

Nansen also asked for a separate reply as to whether the Ankara Government was willing to negotiate for an immediate exchange of prisoners of war and civil hostages. He wished to treat this matter apart from the exchange of populations. He also sent Ankara a detailed draft treaty drawn up with the help of his aides who had served on the Greek-Bulgarian voluntary population exchange Commission and based on the same principle of a voluntary emigration. Nansen went along with their advice that the principle of voluntary emigration was the only safe one, although he had some reservations. He was not quite certain, given the very critical situation, that a system of compulsory emigration may not be necessary and possibly even desirable, provided that it has the full consent, and is followed by the loyal cooperation, of both the Turkish and Greek Governments¹¹⁰.

109. *Nansen Papers*, R 1761 (1922), 48/24318/24318. League of Nations. Report by Dr. Nansen, Part 1, *Reciprocal Exchange of Racial Minorities between Greece and Turkey* (Geneva), November 15, 1922; and for a summary of the memorandum to Hamid, see the letter of Nansen to Rumbold, Constantinople, November 3, 1922. Nansen also wrote to Pellé informing him of his memo to Ankara and asking him to telegraph the French representative in Ankara if "he would give his precious support in order to quickly obtain a favorable response." *Nansen Papers*, R 1761 (1922), 48/24318/24318, Letter of Nansen to Pellé, Constantinople, November 2, 1922.

110. *Nansen Papers*, R 1761 (1922), 48/24722/24357, Note by Dr. Nansen, supple-

Meanwhile, on the following day Nansen was called to Athens on urgent business relating to refugee relief. Having been informed that there was no boat to Athens between the 4th and 8th of November from Constantinople, he decided in order not to lose time to leave for Athens on November 4. Prior to his departure, he sent the following letter to Hamid¹¹¹.

Your Excellency:

With reference to our correspondence and our previous conversations on the subject of an exchange of populations between Turkey and Greece, and finally to my note with memorandum of November 2nd, I have the honour to inform you that I find it necessary to consult the Greek authorities on various questions. I feel bound to take advantage of the departure of a boat for Athens this afternoon, otherwise I shall not have an opportunity of leaving until Wednesday next.

In this way I shall be free to continue, without lose of time, the negotiations already begun between us.

I beg you to be good enough to send me any communication from the Government of the Turkish Grand National Assembly to my office here, addressed to Osman Bey, Techvikie djadessi 62. I have given instructions at my office that any communication from you or from your substitute at Constantinople shall be telegraphed to me, or if necessary sent me by wireless in order that I may be informed without delay, and so be able to take the steps which such communication may require.

Although a day earlier, Nansen had received the reply of the Greek Government on the question of a total and enforced exchange of populations, including that of Constantinople, he saw fit to withhold this information from Hamid. He reasoned that it was unwise and unproductive to inform Hamid of the Politis response since they had not received the reply on similar questions submitted to Ankara¹¹².

mentary to his Report concerning the points to be submitted for consideration by the Lausanne Conference (Geneva), November 15, 1922.

111. *Nansen Papers*, R 1761 (1922), 48/24318/24318, Letter of Nansen to Hamid, Constantinople, November 4, 1922.

112. *Nansen Papers*, R 1761 (1922), 48/24318/24318. League of Nations, Report by Dr. Nansen, Part 1, *Reciprocal Exchange of Racial Minorities between Greece and Turkey* (Geneva), November 15, 1922.

While in Athens, Nansen touched on many issues pertaining to the refugees and their settlement in Greece. It was there that he first explained to the Greek Government the possibility of negotiating with the League Council an international loan for Greece, to facilitate urgently needed new aid for the refugees. To help secure the refugee loan, Nansen suggested to Athens the formation of a Committee under the presidency of the Minister of Public Assistance, with an executive sub-committee presided over by a representative of the League of Nations in Athens¹¹³.

He remained in the Greek capital until November 9, without receiving any information from his office in Constantinople to the effect that his communication had been received by Ankara. The silence from Ankara and the news of Hamid's sudden departure for Switzerland, brought the negotiations to an end; and Nansen left for Geneva – not entirely enamored with Turkish diplomacy.

How does one explain the evasive and dilatory tactics that were clearly adopted by the Ankara Government in its dealings with Nansen? One can accept the Turkish position that “it did not consider the issues [posed by Nansen] to have a character of urgency and that its examination could wait until after the conclusion of peace.” For Ankara, there were more profound and pressing issues of a military and political character to command its immediate attention. Others have argued that the most likely hypothesis is that the Turkish leaders wished to postpone a binding decision until after they completed their policy of getting rid of as many Ottoman Greeks as possible before the conclusion of peace¹¹⁴. According to Svolopoulos, the destruction of Hellenism in Asia Minor, preferably before the conclusion of peace, would strengthen Turkey's diplomatic position, which would have the possibility either to negotiate the principle of the population exchange on the basis of the removal of the Greeks from Constantinople; or, by refusing an exchange, to compel Greece to keep its Turks with established minority rights¹¹⁵. One can also advance the thesis that the refusal of the Ankara authorities to deal with Nansen on a wide range of issues – a population exchange and the release of detainees, POW's and civilian hostages, was part and parcel of its military and political strategy to undermine the Greek state. Such action was necessary because the renewal of hostilities

113. Clouzot, *op.cit.*, p. 978.

114. Kalliopi K. Koufa and Constantinos Svolopoulos, *op.cit.*, p. 279; and Public Record Office (PRO) FO 371/7960 [E 13187], *Turkey*, Henderson (Constantinople) to the Foreign Office, November 26, 1922.

115. Svolopoulos, *op.cit.*, p. 22.

with Greece on territorial and financial matters was still a very real possibility, at least until an agreement on a Near East peace was secured at Lausanne.

Ankara's treatment of Nansen is also explained by the fact that no official relations existed between Turkey and the League of Nations. Thus, the Ankara Government refused to participate in the talks Nansen attempted to initiate and sought to restrain the widening of his activities because it regarded him simply as a private individual¹¹⁶. In conclusion, the talks failed because Turkey did not wish them to succeed. And, indeed, it was Nansen's determination that they succeed which irritated them and led them to tell the French that Nansen had not been tactful in conducting his now abortive negotiations with Ankara and that he was much disliked by the Turks¹¹⁷. However, the work of Nansen and his staff was not to be in vain.

Nansen's Legacy to the Greek Refugee Question

The opening of the Lausanne Conference was delayed until November 20, 1922 at the request of the Turks. Symbolically, it was on the same day that the Mudanya armistice permitted total administrative control of Eastern Thrace by Turkey. Circulated among its participants were a series of reports by Nansen and his staff on the Greek refugee question and a preliminary draft accord presenting their views relative to the voluntary exchange of populations between Greece and Turkey. These and the principle Nansen had established that an accord on a Greek-Turkish population exchange be reached, without delay and independent of the negotiations for peace were to serve as an important guide to the conference; and as a blueprint for the Greek-Turkish population exchange agreement signed at Lausanne in January 31, 1923. Moreover, practically all of the participants, including the former three Allied High Commissioners in Constantinople who served as advisors to their respective national delegations, were intimately aware of Nansen's efforts to resolve the Greek refugee question. And, with the exception of Turkey, had been supportive of Nansen's labor on behalf of the refugees, including the exclusion of Constantinople from the population exchange. Their support of Nansen's recommenda-

116. Koufa and Svolopoulos, *op.cit.*, p. 279.

117. *DBFP*, Vol. XVIII, Harding (Paris) to Curzon (London), Doc. 196. [E 12745/27/44], November 15, 1922. Perhaps they recalled Nansen's proposal in 1920 that the League send 60,00 troops to the Near East to save the Armenians from the Kemalist onslaught. See note 10.

tions at Lausanne drew the ire of the Turkish delegation which resented his presence as the League's High Commissioner for Refugees as well as for POWs at the conference. For example, at Lausanne the Turks demanded the immediate release of civilians detained by Greece but were not willing to release the Greek detainees until after a peace had been signed. The Greek position and Nansen's recommendation had been that all the detainees be released immediately and simultaneously¹¹⁸.

After much debate, often acrimonious, Greek-Turkish agreements on the issues which had preoccupied Nansen at Constantinople were signed at Lausanne on the morning of January 30, 1923. They included: (a) an Accord concerning the reciprocal restitution of civilian internees as well as the exchange of POW's; (b) an Accord on the obligatory exchange of populations, excluding Western Thrace and Constantinople; and (c) a Protocol signed by the Turkish delegation stipulating the derogation of Article 1 of the convention of population exchange. Namely, that "the Turkish Government from the day of the signature of peace will free the Greek able bodied men in accordance with article 4 of the convention." Whereas, The Greek Government will undertake all necessary measures for the execution of the convention on the immediate release of Turkish civilian detainees and military POW's.

From the available documents and public statements, including the discussions at Lausanne, it seems that all of the thinking and decisions concerning the necessity for a population exchange were the result of Turkey's policy of fait accomplis in forcing the bulk of its Christian minority from its territory. And its determination not to allow the refugees to return to their homes and to expel the remaining Christians from Asia Minor. The presence of large non-Turkish or non-Muslim minorities, especially Greek and Armenian minorities with a strong sense of nationalism and deep Anatolian roots, was deemed a potential threat to national security and could no longer be tolerated. On the other hand, their insistence that the Muslims of Western Thrace be excluded from the exchange, during the Nansen negotiations and at Lausanne, was designed to bolster their demand for a plebiscite in that province in accordance with their National Pact. But it was their insistence that there be an exception to a total compulsory exchange, that weakened their stance when it came to Constantinople. Finally, by agreeing to a compulsory population exchange, they were able to legitimize their severe action of ethnic cleansing.

118. *Venizelos Papers*, 33, Caclamanos (Lausanne) to Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Athens), December 1 & 2, 1922.

For the Allied Powers, recognition of the Turkish decision to rid the country of its Christian minority as irreversible would relieve them of attempts to impose and police a minority rights agreement, without which the refugees would not return to a hostile Turkey. In any case they were hardly prepared to antagonize the Turks and to risk their interests at the Straits, Mosul, Syria or elsewhere in the Near East, which were especially vulnerable to Turkish pressure. This was demonstrated, in part, by their acceptance of Turkey's demand at Mudanya for the immediate restoration of Eastern Thrace to Turkish civil authority, without provisions for amnesty, before even going to a peace conference. Officially, for the Allied Powers at Lausanne, "the conference had only yielded to the demand that the exchange should be compulsory because all those who had studied the matter most closely seemed to agree that the suffering entailed, great as it must be, would be repaid by the advantage which would ultimately accrue to both countries from a greater homogeneity of population and from the removal of old and deep-rooted causes of quarrel"¹¹⁹. In other words, ethnic cleansing should be tolerated and indeed encouraged if it can contribute to peace and bring an end to hostilities.

For Venizelos, the acceptance of the forced expulsion of the Greeks from Turkey was deemed a necessary act of state. While it is true that the obligatory exchange led to the further Hellenization and development of Macedonia and Western Thrace, it was not as some have suggested the initial reason which prompted Venizelos to accept a forced exchange. Turkey's refusal to allow the return of the refugees made any other solution impossible. Venizelos explained his position as follows: "The expulsion of the Asia Minor population has not been a consequence of the Exchange Accord, but it had been already an accomplished fact – in it I merely received the consent of Turkey to move the Turkish Muslims from Greece in order to reestablish the Greek refugees"¹²⁰. The compulsory exchange convention, the most radical provision agreed to at Lausanne, merely formalized the existing state of affairs. Since one million Greek refugees had already been forced out of Turkey, the exchange was essentially between about 400,000 Muslims from Macedonia and the remaining 200,000 Greeks from Asia Minor; namely, from the Pontus and Cappadocia. Venizelos was particularly sensitive to international public opinion in the event the Muslim population was evicted from Greece without an agreement

119. Lord Curzon's response to Venizelos at Lausanne, January 27, 1923, LCNEA, 412.

120. *Le Messager d'Athènes*, July 6, 1923.

with Turkey. He believed that Greece would have no choice but to force them out and that "it is imperative that every Turkish refugee be treated with respect and in a civilized way and [that Greece should] be prepared [to deal with a] hostile world opinion because of the barbarous measures necessitated by the highest need... the arson and violent acts committed by our retreating army. That is why our position in the civilized family has a low moral standing and why we should do all we can to get an agreement with Turkey"¹²¹.

Nansen was the only participant in these events who openly admitted to having initiated the idea of an obligatory exchange of populations, although not for several years after the fact¹²². He believed that given the conditions at the time it was necessary to separate the Greek and Turkish populations. And that the compulsory exchange was the only way to get the Turks out of Greece and to accommodate the settlement of hundreds of thousands of Greek refugees, evicted from their homes in Turkey with no hope of return¹²³. Nansen reasoned that if there were no treaty the majority of the Turks would stay in Greece but that the majority of the Greeks would leave Turkey without being able to sell their properties and without the legal standing they would have in a compulsory population exchange agreement¹²⁴. The acceptance and settlement of the refugees in Greece was seen as the only practical solution for their well-being and for the release and safety of the Greek detainees, the POW's and the civil hostages.

Nansen's extensive efforts to raise refugee relief funds in the West and among the Greek diaspora communities and his widely circulated detailed reports to the League on the condition of the refugees and his efforts at a settlement, kept world public opinion focused on the Greek refugee predicament until a final settlement was achieved. He was instrumental in saving countless lives and for this effort there is at least one street named after him in Athens in the Hymettos district and undoubtedly many more in the refugee communities of northern Greece. In Thessaloniki, the 'Armenian Old People's

121. *Venizelos Papers*, 31, Venizelos (London) to Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Athens), October 17, 1922.

122. Note 65.

123. A. A. Pallis, "The Refugee Question in Retrospect" (Speech given on February 15, 1962 to the Philological Society (Syllogos) Parnassos, Reprint from *Μικρασιατικά Χρονικά* 11 (Athens 1964), pp. 22-31.

124. *Venizelos Papers*, 34, Venizelos (Lausanne) to Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Athens), December 21 & 23, 1922. Also file *AYE*, 1922: 88(2)1,1.

Home is also named after Nansen. He was perhaps the first person to reach the conclusion that a permanent solution could only be found by settling the refugees on Greek soil and/or by some kind of Greek-Turkish population exchange. He understood that the mission of the relief agencies was to save lives and not to extend relief indefinitely nor to assume the burden of making the refugees self sufficient. The later was beyond their resources and mandate. His organization provided both temporary relief and concurrently initiated permanent refugee settlement schemes. Being prepared for all contingencies, Nansen did not hesitate to tell the Allied High Commissioners in Constantinople that in the worse case they must be prepared to take provisionally some of the Greek refugees in their own countries¹²⁵.

In conclusion, Nansen set the standard for the ideal international civil servant – a person of international stature with exceptional organizational skills and fully committed to confronting the challenges of his time, an ardent interventionist with the rare gift of grasping the essence of problems and in short order arriving at their appropriate resolution, and above all a person most sensitive to the human condition. Such a man was Fridtjof Nansen.

“The world needed a Nansen then. It needs a Nansen now.”

125. *Venizelos Papers*, 31, Politis (Athens) to Venizelos (London), November 9, 1922. The American Red Cross and Near East Relief had informed Greece that relief work would terminate on June 30, 1923. *Venizelos Papers*, 39, T. E. Johnson, Asst. High Commissioner for Refugees, League of Nations (Geneva) to the Greek Delegation, June 15, 1923.

APPENDIX I

CONVENTION CONCERNING THE EXCHANGE OF GREEK -
TURKISH POPULATIONS, AND PROTOCOL,
AND SIGNED AT LAUSANNE, JANUARY 30, 1923.¹

The GOVERNMENT OF THE GRAND NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF TURKEY and the GREEK GOVERNMENT have agreed upon the following provisions:

Article 1.

As from the 1st May, 1923, there shall take place a compulsory exchange of Turkish nationals of the Greek Orthodox religion established in Turkish territory, and of Greek nationals of the Moslem religion established in Greek territory.

These persons shall not return to live in Turkey or Greece respectively without the authorisation of the Turkish Government or of the Greek Government respectively.

Article 2.

The following persons shall not be included in the exchange provided for in Article 1:

- a) The Greek inhabitants of Constantinople.
- b) The Moslem inhabitants of Western Thrace.

All Greeks who were already established before the October 30, 1918, within the areas under the Prefecture of the City of Constantinople, as defined by the law of 1912, shall be considered as Greek inhabitants of Constantinople.

All Moslems established in the region to the east of the frontier line laid down in 1913 by the Treaty of Bucharest² shall be considered as Moslem inhabitants of Western Thrace.

1. Ratified by Turkey, August, 23, 1923, by Greece, August 25, 1923.

2. British and Foreign State Papers, vol. 107, page 658.

Article 3.

Those Greeks and Moslems who have already, and since the October 18, 1912, left the territories the Greek and Turkish inhabitants of which are to be respectively exchanged, shall be considered as included in the exchange provided for in Article 1.

The expression "emigrant" in the present Convention includes all physical and juridical persons who have been obliged to emigrate or have emigrated since the October 18, 1912.

Article 4.

All able-bodied men belonging to the Greek population whose families have already left Turkish territory, and who are now detained in Turkey, shall constitute the first instalment of Greeks sent to Greece in accordance with the present Convention.

Article 5.

Subject to the provisions of Articles 9 and 10 of the present Convention, the rights of property and monetary assets of Greeks in Turkey or Moslems in Greece shall not be prejudiced in consequence of the exchange to be carried out under the present Convention.

Article 6.

No obstacle may be placed for any reason whatever in the way of the departure of a person belonging to the populations which are to be exchanged. In the event of an emigrant having received a definite sentence of imprisonment, or a sentence which is not yet definitive, or of his being the object of criminal proceedings, he shall be handed over by the authorities of the prosecuting country to the authorities of the country whither he is going, in order that he may serve his sentence or be brought to trial.

Article 7.

The emigrants will lose the nationality of the country which they are leaving, and will acquire the nationality of the country of their destination, upon their arrival in the territory of the latter country.

Such emigrants as have already left one or other of the two countries and have not yet acquired their new nationality shall acquire that nationality on the date of the signature of the present Convention.

Article 8.

Emigrants shall be free to take away with them or to arrange for the transport of their movable property of every kind, without being liable on this account to the payment of any export or import duty or any other tax.

Similarly, the members of each community (including the personnel of mosques, tekkes, medresses, churches, convents, schools, hospitals, societies, associations and juridical persons, or other foundations of any nature whatever) which is to leave the territory of one of the Contracting States under the present Convention, shall have the right to take away freely or to arrange for the transport of the movable property belonging to their communities.

The fullest facilities for transport shall be provided by the authorities of the two countries, upon the recommendation of the Mixed Commission provided for in Article 11.

Emigrants who may not be able to take away all or part of their movable property can leave it behind. In that event, the local authorities shall be required to draw up, the emigrant in question being given an opportunity to be heard, an inventory and valuation of the property left by him. Procès-verbaux containing the inventory and valuation of the movable property left by the emigrant shall be drawn up in four copies, one of which shall be kept by the local authorities, the second transmitted to the Mixed Commission provided for in Article 11 to serve as the basis for the liquidation provided for by Article 9, the third shall be handed to the Government of the country to which the emigrant is going, and the fourth to the emigrant himself.

Article 9.

Immovable property, whether rural or urban, belonging to emigrants, or to the communities mentioned in Article 8, and the movable property left by these emigrants or communities, shall be liquidated in accordance with the following provisions by the Mixed Commission provided for in Article 11.

Property situated in the districts to which the compulsory exchange applies and belonging to religious or benevolent institutions of the communities established in a district to which the exchange does not apply, shall likewise be liquidated under the same conditions.

Article 10.

The movable and immovable property belonging to persons who have already left the territory of the High Contracting Parties and are considered, in accordance with Article 3 of the present Convention, as being included in the exchange of populations, shall be liquidated in accordance with Article 9. This liquidation shall take place independently of all measures of any kind whatever which, under the laws passed and the regulations of any kind made in Greece and in Turkey since the October 18, 1912, or in any other way, have resulted in any restriction on rights of ownership over the property in question, such as confiscation, forced sale, etc. In the event of the property mentioned in this article or in Article 9 having been submitted to a measure of this kind, its value shall be fixed by the Commission provided for in Article 11, as if the measures in question had not been applied.

As regards expropriated property, the Mixed Commission shall undertake a fresh valuation of such property, if it has been expropriated since October 18, 1912, having previously belonged to persons liable to the exchange of populations in the two countries, and is situated in territories to which the exchange applies. The Commission shall fix for the benefit of the owners such compensation as will repair the injury which the Commission has ascertained. The total amount of this compensation shall be carried to the credit of these owners and to the debit of the Government on whose territory the expropriated property is situated.

In the event of any persons mentioned in Articles 8 and 9 not having received the income from property, the enjoyment of which they have lost in one way or another, the restoration of the amount of this income shall be guaranteed to them on the basis of the average yield of the property before the war, and in accordance with the methods to be laid down by the Mixed Commission.

The Mixed Commission provided for in Article 11, when proceeding to the liquidation of Wakouf property in Greece and of the rights and interests connected therewith, and to the liquidation of similar foundations belonging to Greeks in Turkey, shall follow the principles laid down in previous Treaties with a view to fully safeguarding the rights and interests of these foundations and of the individuals interested in them.

The Mixed Commission provided for in Article 11 shall be entrusted with the duty of executing this provisions.

Article 11.

Within one month from the coming into force of the present Convention a Mixed Commission shall be set up in Turkey or in Greece consisting of four members representing each of High Contracting Parties, and of three members chosen by the Council of the League of Nations from among nationals of Powers which did not take part in the war of 1914-1918. The Presidency of the Commission shall be exercised in turn by each of three neutral members.

The Mixed Commission shall have the right to set up, in such places as it may appear to them necessary, Sub-Commissions working under its order. Each such Sub-Commission shall consist of a Turkish member, a Greek member and a neutral President to be designated by the Mixed Commission. The Mixed Commission shall decide the powers to be delegated to the Sub-Commission.

Article 12.

The duties of the Mixed Commission shall be to supervise and facilitate the emigration provided for in the present Convention, and to carry out the liquidation of the movable and immovable property for which provision is made in Articles 9 and 10.

The Commission shall settle the methods to be followed as regards the emigration and liquidation mentioned above.

In a general way the Mixed Commission shall have full power to take the measures necessitated by the execution of the present Convention and to decide all questions to which this Convention may give rise.

The decisions of the Mixed Commission shall be taken by a majority.

All disputes relating to property, rights and interests which are to be liquidated shall be settled definitely by the Commission.

Article 13.

The Mixed Commission shall have full power to cause the valuation to be made of the movable and immovable property which is to be liquidated under the present Convention, the interested parties being given a hearing or being duly summoned so that they may be heard.

The basis for valuation of the property to be liquidated shall be the value of the property in gold currency.

Article 14.

The Commission shall transmit to the owner concerned a declaration stating the sum due to him in respect of the property of which he has been dispossessed, and such property shall remain at the disposal of the Government on whose territory it is situated.

The total sums due on the basis of these declarations shall constitute a Government debt from the country where the liquidation takes place to the Government of the country to which the emigrant belongs. The emigrant shall in principle be entitled to receive in the country to which he emigrates, as representing the sums due to him, property of a value equal to and of the same nature as that which he has left behind.

Once every six months an account shall be drawn up of the sums due by the respective Governments on the basis of the declarations as above.

When the liquidation is completed, if the sums of money due to both sides correspond, the accounts relating thereto shall be balanced. If a sum remains due from one of the Governments to the other Government after a balance has been struck, the debit balance shall be paid in cash. If the debtor Government requests a postponement in making this payment, the Commission may grant such postponement, provided that the sum due be paid in three annuities at most. The Commission shall fix the interest to be paid during the period of postponement.

If the sum to be paid is fairly large and requires longer postponement, the debtor Government shall pay in cash a sum to be fixed by the Mixed Commission, up to a maximum of 20 per cent of the total due and shall issue in respect of the balance loan certificates bearing such interest as the Mixed Commission may fix, to be paid off within 20 years at most. The debtor Government shall assign to the service of these loans pledges approved by the Commission, which shall be administered and of which the revenues shall be encashed by the International Commission in Greece and by the Council of the Public Debt at Constantinople. In the absence of agreement in regard to these pledges, they shall be selected by the Council of the League of Nations.

Article 15.

With a view to facilitating emigration, funds shall be advanced to the Mixed Commission by the States concerned, under conditions laid down by the said Commission.

Article 16.

The Turkish and Greek Governments shall come to an agreement with the Mixed Commission provided for in Article 11 in regard to all questions concerning the notification to be made to persons who are to leave the territory of Turkey and Greece under the present Convention, and concerning the ports to which these persons are to go for the purpose of being transported to the country of their destination.

The High Contracting Parties undertake mutually that no pressure direct or indirect shall be exercised on the populations which are to be exchanged with a view to making them leave their homes or abandon their property before the date fixed for their departure. They likewise undertake to impose on the emigrants who have left or who are to leave the country no special taxes or dues. No obstacle shall be placed in the way of the inhabitants of the districts excepted from the exchange under Article 2 exercising freely their right to remain in or return to those districts and to enjoy to the full their liberties and rights of property in Turkey and in Greece. This provision shall not be invoked as a motive for preventing the free alienation of property belonging to inhabitants of the said regions which are excepted from the exchange, or the voluntary departure of those among these inhabitants who wish to leave Turkey or Greece.

Article 17.

The expenses entailed by the maintenance and working of the Mixed Commission and of the organisations dependent on it shall be borne by the Governments concerned in proportions to be fixed by the Commission.

Article 18.

The High Contracting Parties undertake to introduce in their respective laws such modifications as may be necessary with a view to ensuring the execution of the present Convention.