

Historein

Vol 21, No 2 (2024)

Gendering the Mixed Economies of Welfare: Ruptures and Trajectories in Postwar Europe

Gendering the Mixed Economies of Welfare

Ruptures and Trajectories in Postwar Europe



historein
a review of the past and other things

21.2 2024

Gender and Anticommunism in Children's Social Protection in Postwar Greece

Efi Avdela, Dimitra Lampropoulou

doi: [10.12681/historein.32281](https://doi.org/10.12681/historein.32281)

Copyright © 2024, Efi Avdela, Dimitra Lampropoulou



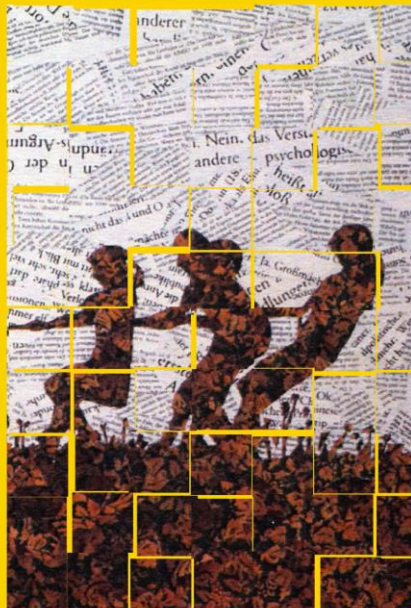
This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/).

To cite this article:

Avdela, E., & Lampropoulou, D. (2024). Gender and Anticommunism in Children's Social Protection in Postwar Greece: The Role of Royal Foundations. *Historein*, 21(2). <https://doi.org/10.12681/historein.32281>

Gendering the Mixed Economies of Welfare

Ruptures and Trajectories in Postwar Europe



Gender and Anticommunism in Children's Social Protection in Postwar Greece: The Role of Royal Foundations

Efi Avdela

Dimitra Lampropoulou

doi: 10.12681/historein.32281

To cite this article:

Avdela, Efi, and Dimitra Lampropoulou. 2024. "Gender and Anticommunism in Children's Social Protection in Postwar Greece: The Role of Royal Foundations". *Historein* 21 (2). <https://doi.org/10.12681/historein.32281>.

Gender and Anticommunism in Children's Social Protection in Postwar Greece: The Role of Royal Foundations*

Efi Avdela

University of Crete

Dimitra Lampropoulou

National and Kapodistrian University of Athens

On 16 October 1959 a special committee of the Greek Parliament discussed a draft decree that would officially recognise the profession of social worker. The majority rapporteur was Lina Tsaldari, former minister for social welfare in the previous right-wing government – the first woman to hold such a high-ranking political position. Tsaldari explicated that, in accordance with international and UN standards, the moment had come for Greece to establish the scientific and professional status of social workers – an exclusively female profession at that time – and expand their employment in various social services. The training of social workers up to that point was in the hands of four private schools while their employment, recalled the former minister, became possible in recent years only because it was financed by a nonstate organisation, the Royal Welfare Fund. The new law would maintain the formula of nonstate funding of social work positions. This involvement of nonstate actors raised serious objections from the left-wing main opposition. Its rapporteur, Maria Svolou – an interwar labour inspector and feminist, active participant in the resistance and an expert on welfare issues – insisted that, because of the delicate nature of their work, social workers should be hired, monitored and solely dependent on the state. Furthermore, the state should undertake a universal and unified programme of social welfare that would also integrate the existing private activities.¹

Svolou's worry about the extrastate influence over social workers was related to the omnipresence of the palace in the social protection system of postwar Greece. The bill under discussion pointed to the constant dependency of public social services on (private) royal funding. The opposition's apprehension over this dependency was also due to the blatant anticommunism of the palace that sustained political polarisation and exclusions ten years after the end of the Greek Civil War.

The crown was involved in probably most institutions of social protection of the time through two royal foundations, the Relief Fund for the Northern Provinces, later Royal Welfare Fund, and the National Foundation, later Royal National Foundation, led by the queen and king, respectively. To be sure, this was not just an indicator of the state's insufficiency to fully undertake its welfare obligations towards its citizens. Neither this

insufficiency nor the royal interest in social welfare were new. However, in the postwar context the scope of the crown's involvement in social provision was considerably larger and extensive in comparison to the past. It was a strategic choice for the political, ideological, social and financial nation-rebuilding that was undertaken since the civil war with the support and consensus of domestic elites and international players, such as US military and civil officials. It gradually became an integral part of welfare policies in the ensuing decades.

In what follows, the establishment and the activities of the royal foundations will be placed in the context of the civil war and its aftermath. Then the article will present their interventions concerning children and youth and their evolution over time. Finally, it will focus on the gendered character of this specific version of welfare state, and its elaborate mechanisms maintaining and reproducing patriarchal and social hierarchies while empowering elite women.

Up to this point of our research, the exploration of this idiosyncratic system of welfare has been mainly based on archival records produced from 1946 to 1968 by crown servants who, predictably, glorified the deeds of the monarchs, while maintaining a meticulous record of the dense network of actions, collaboration and communication that supported the welfare structure. We have principally tried to map the structure and activities related to the protection of children and show how women's volunteer work, as well as naturalising assumptions about the female caring nature, was central to the entire welfare system. We are aware that these one-sided sources do not allow us to address the ways that these activities affected their recipients' lives.

An idiosyncratic version of the mixed economy of welfare

Welfare policies in postwar Greece developed in a historical context characterised by intense political and social polarisation and comprising the civil war (1946–1949), the 1950s and 1960s, and the military dictatorship (1967–1974). During those years nearly half the population, the “defeated” of the civil war, communists, their families and those suspected to follow their ideas, were excluded from the bulk of welfare provisions, when they were not imprisoned or exiled. Welfare institutions were restructured with the aid of the Marshal Plan by US experts and with strong cooperation between public services and officials, and private actors. The reorganised state structures of welfare, the multiple parastatal services of social protection, including the royal foundations, and the private actors maintained a strong ideological perspective, pervaded by nationalist, anticommunist, patriarchal and Orthodox Christian ideas.

The royal foundations were to a very large extent concerned with the provision for children and adolescents. For this aim, they mobilised a significant amount of volunteer

work throughout the country – most of it involving women – and cooperated very closely with state services, but also with third parties such as the Greek Red Cross, the church or local and foreign charities, offering coordination, pooling of resources, management and personnel. We have chosen children's protection as the focus of our analysis because it is our contention that the social provision undertaken by both the Greek government and private or parastatal initiatives, including the royal foundations, in order to meet the urgent needs of Greek children from the late 1940s to the early 1970s are a marker for the idiosyncratic version of the mixed economy of welfare that characterised more generally postwar Greece. In other words, the services, practices and persons pertaining to the social provision for children, adolescents and youth that we discuss below help us illustrate how political bias, ideological content and gender assumptions jointly structured and supported the nature of the above mix of welfare.

More specifically, from 1946, year of the restoration of the constitutional monarchy in Greece and the onset of the civil war, to 1967, when King Constantine clashed with the military junta and was forced into exile, the institutions and associations of social care founded by or operating under the auspices of the crown amounted to several dozens. It has been argued recently that the two royal foundations were mainly a tool to enhance the national role of the crown and that their activities constituted a parallel welfare mechanism to the inadequate state.² It is our contention that, on the contrary, the intertwined state, parastatal and private initiatives, among which the royal foundations had a crucial if not hegemonic role, constituted *the* Greek welfare state of the period, whose workings can be better grasped through the perspective of the mixed economy of welfare. By this term we mean the complex set of arrangements between the various elements at play in the field of welfare provision, among which the state has always been only one.³ Instead of being inclusive and universal, this specific welfare state was highly conservative, patriarchal and normative, based on ideological, political, class and gender exclusions, and supported by voluntary action, especially women's voluntary or low-paid work, without which its complex welfare mechanism could not really operate.

The concept of the mixed economy of welfare is useful to our analysis for three reasons. Firstly, because it places the web of interrelated and interdependent institutional and private actors that undertook the aforementioned initiatives in the politically and socially polarised context of that period. Secondly, because it offers us an analytic lens through which we can reconsider the history of social protection and welfare policies during twentieth century Greece, especially regarding the most underresearched period, from the mid-1940s to mid-1970s. Thirdly, because as historical research has shown for some time now, the concept delineates a field structured by gendered assumptions.⁴

Research on the postwar Greek social policies has mainly focused on the state action in the strictest sense and the period since the late 1970s. Written mostly by political scientists, these studies point to the dominant view in Greek political and economic governing circles that only economic development, the general improvement of the

standard of living, as well as external and internal emigration, would alleviate the widespread problems of hardship and poverty.⁵ Furthermore, at the time, only a small percentage of the population was covered by public insurance, the level of social services was extremely low and any social legislation that was enacted – such as on the Agricultural Insurance Organisation (OGA) in 1961 – was confronted with constant lack of sufficient economic resources.⁶

This outline of postwar welfare history becomes more complex when we take into consideration the welfare activities of the royal foundations, not as part of the state – which they were not – but as an intermediate actor between the state and the private sector. As we shall see, they were not funded by the government budget, but relied on fundraising and indirect taxation, and used considerable amounts of volunteer work. The royal foundations were legal entities under private law – avoiding, thus, the maze of bureaucracy – they practiced long-known forms of paternalism and patronage, but also their activities were constantly publicised by the mass media, both domestic and international. They received numerous requests for individual or community financial support, which they could promote or reject without the constraints that state services faced. They could equally abandon welfare sectors when they considered them no longer affordable or as being under the jurisdiction of the state. Consequently, their welfare activities helped reduce social pressures and claims for the expansion and inclusiveness of social services while enhancing the power and prestige of the throne.

Placing the royal foundations in the postwar mixed economy of welfare

The role of the crown in the political history of Greece has been an enduring concern for historians and political and legal scientists. The same cannot be said for the royal initiatives in the domain of welfare, a highly ideological issue in popular culture. Therefore, few historical studies – and only lately – have shown how central was the crown's social action for the shaping of welfare policies in postwar Greece and its imprint on political, social and cultural relations.⁷

Certainly, royal welfare was not a postwar innovation. Its origins date back into the nineteenth century. During the long period before the Second World War, the crown had restricted itself to charitable interventions and the supervision of philanthropic activities – both public and private. Then, too, the role of female royals was very important. Comparing the queens of Greece, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia and Romania in that same period, Evguenia Davidova has highlighted how their interventions in nursing during times of war contributed to the “naturalisation” of ruling foreign dynasties, the militarisation of charity and the connection between the monarchy and the philanthropic sector.⁸ In Greece, networks of voluntary associations dedicated to the social protection of children and other vulnerable

groups, in close relation to state authorities and under the auspices of the monarchs, were active and took different forms in the course of twentieth century. As a result of the social and political upheavals between 1912 (outbreak of the Balkan Wars) and 1974 (the end of the 1967–1974 dictatorship), the close interaction of public and private agents covered important needs in social provision. However, a significant ideological transformation of the mixed economy of welfare can be observed between the interwar and the postwar period. The modernising and reforming trends characterising the former retrenched into a prevailing conservatism, nationalism and anticommunism during the later.⁹

Drawing from late interwar authoritarianism (Metaxas' dictatorship, 1936–1940) and the hardships of war and occupation, this shift culminated as the early Cold War ideology merged with the civil war state of emergency in Greece. In that political context, the triad of "fatherland, religion, family" remained as the ideological litmus test of the establishment. But at the same time communists and their supporters were now considered aliens that should be ejected from the national body. The urgent needs for aid to suffering populations and for reconstruction of desolate villages rendered social welfare a vital component of public policies, in conditions marked by a persistent lack of public funds.¹⁰ Amid desolation, poverty and destruction, the immediate patronship of social care by the royals was invested with new potential. The extent of royal involvement and the personal role of the king and queen as immediate patrons of welfare institutions during and after the end of the hostilities set up a new phase in the public action of the Greek crown.

Both royal foundations were established in 1947 – in the midst of the civil war – as private law entities but of a different character: the one run by the queen had the status of a fundraising committee with the goal to raise money and resources, while the second one, run by the king, had the status of a foundation aiming to "raise the moral, social, educational and living standards of the Greek people".¹¹ Until 1965, when King Paul died and Queen Frederica withdrew from public action, we can discern three phases in the history of the royal foundations regarding children's protection. The first one, from 1947 to 1949, covered the civil war years and the concentration of efforts for the "rescue" of children purportedly threatened by communist attacks on the war front. The second phase, from 1949 to 1955, started with the "repatriation" of civil war evacuees to their villages and the plans for rehabilitation and reconstruction, and ended with the renaming of both foundations.¹² The third phase (1955–1965) was marked by a considerable expansion of the foundations' activities in social and health care, culture and education. From the start, both foundations used children's social protection as a strategic and political means for promoting anticommunism, state reconstruction, the strengthening of royal authority and maternal ideology. While focusing on the Greek countryside, deemed more receptive to their mission, from the mid-1950s they were increasingly engaged in actions related to problems of urbanisation and its impact on youth.

The Northern Greek Provinces Relief Fund (often called the Queen's Fund), renamed in 1955 as the Royal Welfare Fund, was administered by a 37-member

coordinating committee, which included 34 male state and church officials, leading figures in the fields of education, finance and industry, representatives of professional federations, and three female representatives of conservative women's associations.¹³ The motivating force for the implementation of the fund's policies were the queen's "appointed ladies", the driving force of the fund, a sort of operational pivot entitled to take swift decisions on the ground. These women – whose numbers varied between 20 and 40 according to sources and timing – were members of a right-wing elite circle of Athenian families. They acted as the main instigators of all the activities and the voluntary associational work upon which the royal welfare system greatly relied.¹⁴ As for the National Foundation, renamed the Royal National Foundation also in 1955, it was at the beginning directed by a 12-member board comprising the king himself, the archbishop of Athens and ten university professors. In 1961 the board was increased to 18 to also include bankers, industrialists, engineers, and army and police officials.¹⁵ Both foundations had several branches across the country and collaborated with state and ecclesiastical authorities at the local level.

The resources of the Queen's Fund came from its legal monopoly to the right to fundraise for the causes it served; a special taxation on cinema and theatre tickets, cigarettes, bills in restaurants and bars, wine, and luxury goods; "voluntary" contributions by workers and employees; and donations from international organisations such as the International Red Cross, UNICEF, UNRRA, UNESCO and CARE.¹⁶ Throughout its history, the fund sponsored, besides its own activities, the majority of those undertaken by the Royal National Foundation, other private associations and institutions, as well as public programmes of social welfare that were mainly run by the ministries of social welfare, public works, agriculture, education and justice.¹⁷ Naturally, the management of resources that were massive by the standards of that time conferred great authority on the fund. However, it could also cause tensions when requests could not be satisfied. Especially in the first phase of extremely hard conditions in the country, conflicts would erupt even with state officials, regardless of the common framework within which both parties operated. "Misery is abundant, and I totally understand the will to relieve it, but it must be realised that we are not the State and that our mandate is limited in terms of both welfare jurisdiction and availability of resources," was the rather rigid reply that Michail Pesmazoglou, an appointee of the queen and one of the most powerful men of the fund, gave to complaints regarding insufficient funding that were addressed by the official representatives of the state to the Coordinating Committee for the Rescue and Care of Greek Children.¹⁸

The executives of the Royal Welfare Fund regarded it as the most successful example of private welfare initiative and of the indispensable cooperation between the private sector and the state in social protection. In an eloquent account of the fund's achievements, addressed to the Club of Volunteers under the High Protection of the Queen – most probably in 1954 – Alexandra Mela, one of Frederica's closest collaborators, head of

her appointed ladies and later of the fund itself, underscored the most important advantages of the cooperation between the “private initiative,” exemplified by the fund, and the state: the fund was quick to respond to emergencies, experimented and transmitted its experience, worked as an immediate aid to the state, functioned as a state instrument when it was needed, complemented the state services and pioneered the technicalities and methods of welfare. None of this could have been accomplished, according to Mela, if Frederica had not acted as a prompt and ideal leader, as a “Mother of the nation”.¹⁹ As it has been argued, the establishment of a countrywide welfare mechanism that, while collaborating closely with the state, had as point of reference the queen herself was of imperative political importance in that historical moment: it gave moral validity to the monarchy and it offered a means for the stabilisation of royal authority independent of parliamentary control.²⁰

Children's welfare: A rescue, protection and civilisation mission

Children's welfare was a major postwar preoccupation for all European nations, which mobilised multiple forces and fostered the establishment of new ideological and scientific frames, conceived mainly in the United States and applied by all international and private rescue organisations.²¹ In Greece the 1940s left their hard marks on children: extensive orphanhood, malnutrition, physical and mental disabilities, lack of proper family care, extreme poverty, unsuitable living conditions and inadequate education was the predicament of most children in both urban and rural areas, and remained so throughout the 1950s. So, Frederica's mission to “rescue” Greek children during the civil war could appeal to contemporary sensitivities and mobilise international organisations.

The Northern Greek Provinces Relief Fund was created with the aim to evacuate the children from the war zones in rural northern Greece, in tune with the military strategy to forcibly evacuate the population of these areas in order to deprive the partisans of local support. As hostilities intensified, in early 1948 the Democratic Army also started to evacuate children from areas under its control toward countries of the Eastern bloc. In response, the queen's operation was recast as an initiative for “saving the children from communist abduction”. Through systematic propaganda, at national as well as international level, the queen was presented as the “mother of the nation”, protecting its children from destitution, abandonment, orphanhood and, above all, communist abduction. Saving the children would mean securing the future of both the peasant community and the family as organic components of the nation.

The Queen's Fund established a system of children's colonies (*παιδοπόλεις*, henceforth *pedopoleis*) away from the conflict zones, with the goal to provide welfare to “orphans and abandoned children” from regions considered unsafe.²² The project was supported by the voluntary work of the appointed ladies and the voluntary or low-paid employment of a host of local women as well as the contribution of many voluntary

associations. Collaboration with the state was close; in the words of Frederica herself, presenting the project of the fund to her appointed ladies in June 1947, “the associations should consider themselves as the state’s mandatories, might act as consultants or rapporteurs, but should not under any circumstances take initiatives without the state’s permission”.²³

Between 1947 and 1950 the Queen’s Fund was responsible for the operation of 54 *pedopoleis* throughout Greece, hosting approximately 18,000 children between four and twenty years of age. The living conditions and the level of care varied greatly from one to the other. Each of the *pedopoleis* had one chief (αρχηγός), who were after 1949 almost exclusively women. The children were organised into groups under the care of a group leader (ομαδάρχισσα) who was typically also a woman and had the most immediate contact with the children. Group leaders were mostly local young women, teachers or members of religious organisations, but no specific educational requirements were demanded for the job. The *pedopoleis* offered inmates basic education and vocational training deemed proper for boys and girls. After the end of the civil war many closed down; those that remained received mainly orphaned or destitute small children. The military organisation of daily life, the religious, moral and political indoctrination and the minimum, if any, contact of the children with the outside world, rendered *pedopoleis* “total institutions”.²⁴ They have been described as Frederica’s main and successful creation in the civil war.²⁵

Vocational education also constituted the backbone of the Royal National Foundation. More known are the three royal technical schools on the islands of Crete, Kos and Leros, which received boys and male adolescents. At first, they admitted underage communists arrested during the civil strife, who were followed in the 1950s by juvenile delinquents and refugee children repatriated from the “people’s republics” of Eastern Europe. The schools aimed at “reconverting these unfortunate creatures into the national family, the Greek sentiments and humanitarianism” and “reforming” them according to “healthy Greek and Christian values”.²⁶

In 1950, 16,000 children from the *pedopoleis* were “repatriated” to their villages. Concerns about conditions in rural life after years of devastating warfare led the Queen’s Fund to establish in many villages of the northwestern prefectures Children’s Homes (Σπίτια του παιδιού) which would provide children, adolescents and youngsters, male and female, with practical and vocational education. According to the initial plan, in the homes the young people who returned from the *pedopoleis* would transfer as agents of civilisation and practical knowledge what they had learnt to their ravaged fellow villagers. The homes offered programmes that reinforced the traditional gender and social divisions: boys were trained in construction, ironwork, carpentry, cabinet-making, cobbling, etc., whereas girls were trained in childcare, embroidery, sewing, cooking, weaving, dressmaking and traditional tapestry. Each home was headed by a young woman called an *archigos*

(*αρχηγός*, chief) and every group of ten to twelve homes was administered by a male agriculturalist. Chiefs were graduates of housekeeping training schools – often in *pedopoleis* – teachers or later social workers. They were charged with the task to invigorate religious and patriotic feelings. Training promoted a gender specific mix of anticommunism, traditionalist conservatism, moralism and modernising (cum Europeanising) aspirations, characteristic of the royal welfare initiatives.²⁷

Increasingly after 1950 the Royal Welfare Fund became a crucial component of the Ministry of Social Welfare's agenda for the protection of vulnerable children. The official planning included: a) state subsidies to families in need in order to keep children at home; b) the creation or the reinforcement of public institutions for children's social protection (orphanages, kindergartens, and technical schools); c) close collaboration between the state and private institutions, especially the royal foundations and their own dense network of voluntary associations, most of which were funded by private donations *and* public subsidies.²⁸ The Royal Welfare Fund managed all the rest: it funded several initiatives, both its own and those of others, organised networks of volunteers – mainly women of different age groups and social status – mobilised considerable local forces, gathered donations and monitored the ideological framework of all interventions. The queen often operated as a broker between civilians/subjects and the state. The ministry acknowledged publicly the collaboration of the private sector as a necessity.²⁹ At the centre of the private sector stood the royal foundations, especially the Royal Welfare Fund. Then there was a host of semi-public entities (such as the PIKPA or the Mitera [Mother] Baby Centre),³⁰ also under the hospices of the queen, and private associations, funded by donations and state subsidies and which kept a close relationship with the fund. Last, there were several foreign, mainly US, organisations and philanthropic associations, such as the International Red Cross, UNICEF, UNESCO, CARE and others, who were also frequent interlocutors of the queen.

As the 1950s proceeded and Greek society was moving away from the threat of war, the protection of children was increasingly connected, by both voluntary and public actors, with urban life and its novel social, cultural and educational "hazards". The mixed economy of welfare discussed here expanded its activities to youngsters from the poorest urban settlements as well as internal migrants in pursuit of educational opportunities. In 1959 the Royal Welfare Fund established Urban Centres (*Αστικά Κέντρα*) in poor settlements in the Athens region, where, not accidentally, the Left – which shortly before achieved unprecedented electoral success – had considerable influence. The centres offered educational, vocational but also recreational and sports programmes so that "underage persons of poor neighbourhoods get healthy entertainment and [we can] successfully prevent their corrupt evolution".³¹ If during the "anti-bandit war" the Queen's Fund claimed to have "saved Greek children from the hands of the fatherland's enemies", it now also boasted to be saving "thousands of Greek children who, abandoned in the maelstrom of cosmopolitanism, social differences and various propagandas, would have certainly grown into antisocial and antinational elements".³²

By the early 1960s increasing numbers of village adolescents moved to towns in order to enrol in high schools.³³ The Royal Welfare Fund responded to this social tendency once again as a civilising and nationalising mission. It established Youth Centres (*Κέντρα Νεότητος*) for the support of poor male and female high school students who had moved from villages to towns.³⁴ In the words of an appointed lady, the centres were “brilliant efforts of civilising the plagued borderlands”.³⁵

Children from shattered families, girls and boys that “had gone astray”, also drew the attention of the Royal Welfare Fund. It extended its activities, together with organisations and associations under its auspices, into new areas of child and youth protection, such as juvenile justice and adoptions – intra- and extracountry. It undertook the funding of the Juvenile Probation Officers’ Service, dependent on the Ministry of Justice; the Mitera Baby Centre that handled adoptions; the Princess Sofia School of Baby Nurses; the Social Aid Stations and others.³⁶ However, these projects, a number of which represented groundbreaking social policies for children, were aligned under the dominant ideology of “national-mindedness”, which was often coloured with racial biological and gendered essentialist arguments. The protection of “delinquent children”, for instance, would be a crucial venture for the “future of the race”, that could “prevent the degeneration and decay” of young people, which could only mean “the effacement of our Greece”.³⁷

The mixed economy of welfare: A gendered space, a gendering enterprise

The proliferation of royal welfare would not have been possible without the energy of women that served in all its ranks. In fact, it was founded on the belief that women were by nature the more suitable for providing social care, especially to children. The female contribution prospered on the basis of this belief at a time when administrative bodies were unquestionably male dominated, as in the case of both royal foundations. Consequently, it is not surprising that the active and often autonomous intervention that the appointed ladies carried out from the start, in both local and central matters of planning and administration, was often a cause of serious dispute between them and the male officials of the fund’s executive committee. But the ladies’ unflagging engagement with practical and organisational issues, as well as their persistent support from the queen, who wished to fully control her fund, resulted after a long struggle in their eventual prevailing in the foundation’s management – even if unofficially. Loukis Hassiotis has analysed this struggle as an expression of the gender conflict in the interior of the conservative ruling group, triggered by these elite women’s will to actively participate in the postwar nation-rebuilding.³⁸

For a considerable period of time, they succeeded. Their first weapon was, of course, the unconditional devotion to the queen and the formation of a circle of trust around

her. Based on the queen's plan and support, they set out to continue the children's protection projects after the war was over, that would expand the achievements of the *pedopoleis* to more groups of "endangered" or ideologically "poisoned" children.³⁹ Thus, they contributed to deepening and increasing both the crown's political influence and the ideology of national-mindedness. They developed a profile of competence, expertise and effectiveness, drawn from an unmediated contact with the places and people they chose to aid and informed by a constant monitoring of both personnel and beneficiaries of their services. Pushing to its end the conventional conception of women as pioneers of caregiving, they constructed their agency as an expression of female volunteerism par excellence in the new era of the nation's history.

As royal welfare was extended geographically and thematically, the need emerged to expand the circle of volunteers that would continue the work of the appointed ladies and other high-ranking women in the field. In 1953, at the queens' initiative, a number of high-class women, among whom were several appointed ladies, founded the Club of Volunteers (*Όμιλος Εθελοντών*). Its explicit goal was to "edify and habituate its [exclusively female] members to the unselfish and efficient offering of their services to society, especially in the welfare sector in its broader sense".⁴⁰ In other words, the association intended to form future social workers selected by the veterans in the field from among their social circle. After their training period, the members of the club offered their services to welfare institutions that were directly or indirectly connected with the royal foundations, or served in administrative boards in various welfare associations.⁴¹ Imitating the American Junior Leagues, albeit in a dramatically different social and political context, the Club of Volunteers seems to have constituted a demarcated pool of volunteer executives for the queen's welfare apparatus which, at the same time, proposed to young high middle-class women a path for public action and recognition. Given that from the 1940s onwards Greece had many and various forms of solidarity associations and experienced women's participation in popular welfare and health-care initiatives,⁴² the club's operation, by promoting social distinction, was also an example set against other, grassroots forms of social activism.

Female personnel of the lower rankings, on the other hand, often local women, represent a phase of timid professionalisation of social work. The chiefs and group leaders of the *pedopoleis*, for instance, were usually mentioned in the ladies' reports as *prosopikon* (personnel). They had to obey instructions and limit their initiatives to the framework provided by the appointed ladies; they also systematically underwent inspection. Not surprisingly, royal welfare formed a space ordered by gender, class and cultural distinctions.

The prevailing idea holding this hierarchical edifice together was that social provision emanated directly from the mother of the nation, Queen Frederica. Hassiotis has defined the Royal Welfare Fund as the most massive, paternalistic one to have operated in the history of Greek monarchy.⁴³ It would be accurate to add that, following a long tradition of female royal and aristocratic involvement in social welfare, it expressed mainly "the

maternal side of a patriarchal regime”.⁴⁴ The idealised queen-mother offered maternal care and affection to the nation’s abducted, abandoned or poor children, through the workings of institutions that cultivated the bonds of “lively, selfless, tireless, ingenious Christian love”.⁴⁵ She was also a mother-substitute; not an abstraction, but each child’s actual-cum-virtual mother, whom boys and girls of the institutions addressed through ad hoc composed prayers and ritualised vows. And, naturally, she was a model-mother, a measure of comparison not only for all women engaged in her institutions, but also against all those poor, absent, communist, imprisoned, unqualified mothers of wrecked families whose offsprings would be rescued by her benevolence. This set of ideas and practices surrounding Frederica brings to mind a “secular salvation theology” that recasts “politics as a family drama,” which Laura Briggs has examined in visual iconographies of rescue in transnational and transracial adoptions since the Second World War.⁴⁶ However, in the Greek case, secularism was incomplete, not only because Christian Orthodoxy was a constitutive ideological element of the whole edifice, but also because the queen’s work was endowed with clear religious overtones. Frederica did not embody the iconography of “mother-child-in-need” – which, according to Briggs, came to represent the Third World – but rather the one of “mother-saviour-of-the-nation”. In other words, the “unprotected children” that were the queen’s object of interest served as a metaphor of the nation that the monarchs set out to rescue.

Conclusion

When the civil war broke out, domestic and international circumstances rendered the safety and welfare of children a promising opportunity for the fast, effective and dominating involvement of the Greek monarchs. The rescue of children created a visible link between the front lines and the home front. The mixed economy of welfare that was set in motion for this operation engaged the middle classes in the political struggle through voluntary action and organisational partnership and the bulk of the citizens through (compulsory) fundraising and taxation. After the war was over, royal welfare expanded and deepened its intervention to new areas, consolidating its political profile as a joint rescue and civilising mission.

The leading ladies of the Queen’s Fund acquired and maintained a crucial role as rescuers, managers and civilisers. Heralds of the crown’s authority and the queen’s personal excellence, they conceived and executed welfare projects, recruited volunteers, controlled subordinates and monitored beneficiaries. They combined in their activities the innovative methods of social welfare for children – female volunteerism and the timid professionalisation of low-ranking social work, family care, provision for children and adolescence, fostering of national identity, etc. – with “national-mindedness” and maternal ideology. The unreserved anticommunism and the strong conviction in the maintenance of

social and gender hierarchies situated the royal welfare system on a fine line between care and coercion.

What the recipients of this mixed economy of welfare thought about its provisions, their relationships with providers or the use they made of it is an understudied and controversial issue that cannot be dealt with here.⁴⁷ Be that as it may, this varied and geographically dispersed relief for children was well attuned to – and inspired by – similar concerns abroad. In the aftermath of the Second World War, children's protection attracted intense attention worldwide and became the concern and goal of action for both older and newly founded international institutions. At that time, children emerged as a crucial factor in governments' efforts to rebuild their nations demographically and ethnically.⁴⁸ During the 1950s, "youth" became an international concern, due to the purported increase in juvenile delinquency.⁴⁹ Transnational adoptions also grew into an important tool of ideological warfare during the Cold War.⁵⁰

In this complex setting, the children and adolescent care provided by the Greek mixed economy of welfare, in which royal foundations had a crucial position, was presented as participating in the concerted national and international efforts for the "betterment" and the "modernisation" – in the sense of Europeanisation – of Greek society. The social provision for children and youth mobilised material and human resources, public as well as private, and promoted the traditional ideological triad of "fatherland, religion, family", with the figure of the mother of the nation at its centre. Thus, the case of Greek postwar social provision can be seen as an expression of the typically Cold War process of conflating reconstruction with authoritarian conservatism.

* This article was written within the framework of the COST Action11819 "Who Cares in Europe?" (CA18119), supported by COST (European Cooperation in Science and Technology, <https://www.cost.eu>), and specifically its workshop "Gendering the Mixed Economies of Welfare".

¹ *Επίσημα Πρακτικά της Ειδικής Επιτροπής της Βουλής του Άρθρου 35 του Συντάγματος. Περίοδος Ε' – Σύνοδος Α'. Συνεδρίασις ΠΛΑ', 16/10/1959* [Minutes of the special parliamentary committee for Article 35 of the Constitution. Fifth period, first session. Sitting 131, 16 October 1959], General State Archives (GAK), Archives of the former Royal Palace (ARP), f. 1247.

² Tasoula Vervenioti, *Οι άμαχοι του ελληνικού Εμφυλίου: Η δυναμική της μνήμης* [The noncombatants of the Greek Civil War: The dynamics of memory] (Athens: Koukida, 2021), 437–42.

³ Bernard Harris and Paul Bridgen, "Introduction. The 'Mixed Economy of Welfare' and the Historiography of Welfare Provision," in *Charity and Mutual Aid in Europe and North America since 1800*, ed. Bernard Harris and Paul Bridgen (London: Routledge, 2007), 1–18.

⁴ Gisela Bock and Pat Thane, eds., *Maternity & Gender Policies: Women and the Rise of the European Welfare States, 1880s–1950s* (London: Routledge, 1991).

⁵ Maria Petmesidou, "Social Protection in Greece: A Brief Glimpse of a Welfare State," *Social Policy & Administration* 30, no. 4 (1996), <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9515.1996.tb00564.x>.

⁶ George S. Katrougalos, "The South European Welfare Model: The Greek Welfare State in Search of an Identity," *Journal of European Social Policy* 6, no. 1 (1996): 39–60, <https://doi.org/10.1177/095892879600600103>.

⁷ Loukianos Hassiotis, *Τα παιδιά του Εμφυλίου: Από την "Κοινωνική πρόνοια" του Φράνκο, στον "Ερανο" της Φρειδερίκης (1936-1950)* [The children of the civil war: From Franco's "Auxilio Social" to Frederica's "Fund" (1936-1950)] (Athens: Estia, 2013); Vervenioti, *Οι άμαχοι του ελληνικού Εμφυλίου*.

⁸ Evguenia Davidova, "Monarchism with a Human Face: Balkan Queens and the Social Politics of Nursing in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 64, no. 3 (2022): 788–819, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0010417522000238>.

⁹ Efi Avdela, "Performing the State? Public and Private Actors in the Field of Social Provision in Twentieth-century Greece," in *Public and Private Welfare in Modern Europe: Productive Entanglements*, ed. Fabio Gioni, Céla Keren and Morgane Labbé (Abingdon: Routledge, 2022), 107–31.

¹⁰ Ioannis D. Mastrogiannis, *Ιστορία της κοινωνικής πρόνοιας της νεωτέρας Ελλάδος (1821–1960)* [History of social welfare in modern Greece (1821–1960)] (Athens: s.n., 1960), 448–53.

¹¹ Royal decree "Περί συστάσεως Εθνικού Ιδρύματος" [On the constitution of National Foundation], *Εφημερίς της Κυβερνήσεως* [Government Gazette, FEK], 41A, 15 March 1947, 239–40; Spyros Dionysiadis, *Εθνικό Ίδρυμα Νεότητας 1947–2007: Εξήντα χρόνια κοινωνικής προσφοράς* [National Foundation for Youth, 1947–2007: Sixty years of social offering] (Athens: Pelasgos, 2010), 21–29.

¹² During the civil war, the army forcefully evacuated some 750,000 people from their rural residencies in the war zones with the aim to curtail the provisioning of the Democratic Army. The Royal National Foundation, financially supported by the Queen's Fund, promoted a national fundraising effort for the social provision of this population. After the end of the hostilities, the royal funds contributed to their return to their destroyed villages. On the renaming of the Queen's Fund, see the Royal Decree "Περί παρατάσεως θητείας Ερανικής Επιτροπής 'Πρόνοια Βορείων Επαρχιών' και τροποποιήσεως επωνυμίας αυτής" [On the extension of the term of the Fundraising Committee "Provision of the Southern Districts" and modification of its appellation], FEK, 181A, 13 July 1955; for the National Foundation, see Dionysiadis, *Εθνικό Ίδρυμα Νεότητας*, 42.

¹³ A detailed description of the administrative structure and the hierarchical model of the fund in Hassiotis, *Τα παιδιά του Εμφυλίου*, 218–29.

¹⁴ Tasoula Vervenioti, "Charity and Nationalism: The Greek Civil War and the Entrance of Right-Wing Women into Politics," in *Right-Wing Women: From Conservatives to Extremists Around the World*, ed. Paola Bacchetta and Margaret Power (New York: Routledge, 2002).

¹⁵ Dionysiadis, *Εθνικό Ίδρυμα Νεότητας*, 48–50.

¹⁶ The collaboration between the royal foundations and international organisations is a research subject of its own that cannot be analysed here.

¹⁷ "Γενικός προϋπολογισμός Βασιλικής Πρόνοιας 1960" [General budget of the Royal Welfare Fund, 1960], GAK, ARP, f. 1078, subfile 9; Hassiotis, *Τα παιδιά του Εμφυλίου*, 191, 327.

¹⁸ "Επιστολή Μιχαήλ Πεσμαζόγλου προς ΕΣΔΠΕ" [Letter of Michail Pesmasoglou to the Coordinating Committee for the Rescue and Care of Greek Children (CCRCGC)], 14 March 1948, GAK, ARP, f. 1214. The CCRCGC (*Επιτροπή Συντονισμού Διασώσεως και Περιθάλψεως Ελληνοπαίδων*), active from 1948 to 1950, was responsible for the children of the populations displaced during the civil war (note 12 above).

¹⁹ Alexandra Mela, "Περί ιδιωτικής πρωτοβουλίας" [On private initiative], lecture in the Club of Volunteers, n.d., typed, GAK, ARP, f. 1221.

²⁰ Hassiotis, *Τα παιδιά του Εμφυλίου*, 170–71.

²¹ Tara Zahra, *The Lost Children: Reconstructing Europe's Families after World War II* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011); also Zahra, "The Psychological Marshall Plan': Displacement, Gender, and Human Rights after World War II," *Central European History* 44, no. 1 (2011): 37–62, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0008938910001172>.

²² For a thorough history of children's colonies, Hassiotis, *Τα παιδιά του Εμφυλίου*, and Loring M. Danforth and Riki van Boeschoten, *Children of the Greek Civil War: Refugees and the Politics of Memory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011).

²³ *Το Χρονικόν της Βασιλικής Προνοίας* [The annals of the National Royal Fund], n.d., not signed, typed, Historical Archive of the Bank of Greece, 12. There are copies of this 306-page typescript in different archives; among others, in the personal archives of some appointed ladies, namely of Alexandra Mela at the Greek Literary and Historical Archive (ELIA), Loukia Efstratiadi at the Gennadius Library and Elli Zarokosta at the Benaki Museum Archive. This has led several authors to attribute it to the person whose archive they have consulted. However, all copies are identical and none are signed. The original copy of the typescript is to be found in Alexandra Mela's archive, together with drafts of chapters with corrections in her hand as well as outlines of individual chapters. The other copies, as well as the one that we use here, are undoubtedly photocopies of the original. It is our contention that Mela coordinated the whole endeavour, commissioning chapters to various authors and editing them until the final compilation of the typescript.

²⁴ Danforth and van Boeschoten, *Children of the Greek Civil War*, 98.

²⁵ Vervenioti, *Οι άμαχοι του ελληνικού Εμφυλίου*, 444.

²⁶ Dionysiadis, *Εθνικό Ίδρυμα Νεότητας*, 190–91.

²⁷ "Η Βασίλισσά μας" [Our Queen], n.d., not signed, typed, GAK, ARP, f. 1641, subfile 3. According to *Το χρονικόν της Βασιλικής Προνοίας* (107–61), by 1966 approximately 50,000 children had already been or were currently attending programs in 254 Children's Homes. However, there are various indications that the experiment of Children's Homes was not as successful as such narratives wish to show.

²⁸ Mastrogiannis, *Ιστορία της κοινωνικής προνοίας*, 512–13.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ On ΠΙΚΠΑ (Patriotic Foundation of Social Protection and Provision, *Πατριωτικόν Ίδρυμα Κοινωνικής Προστασίας και Αντιλήψεως*), see Vassiliki Theodorou, "La Fondation patriotique pour la protection de l'enfant en Grèce: De l'action des philanthropes à l'organisation des services publics de santé et de prévoyance pour la maternité et l'enfance (1914–1940)," *Revue d'histoire de la protection sociale* 11, no. 1 (2018): 72–91, <https://doi.org/10.3917/rhps.011.0072>; on the Mitera Baby Centre, see Gonda Van Steen, *Adoption, Memory, and Cold War Greece: Kid pro quo?* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2019).

³¹ "Εταιρεία Προστασίας Ανηλίκων Πειραιώς προς την Εκτελεστικήν Επιτροπήν της Βασιλικής Προνοίας" [The Society for the Protection of Minors of Piraeus to the executive committee of the Royal Welfare Fund], 16 January 1963, GAK, ARP, f. 1118.

³² "Εκθεσις πεπραγμένων Αστικών Κέντρων Πρωτευούσης έτους 1966, υπό του Διευθυντού κ. Α. Παναγοπούλου" [Report on the Urban Centres activities for the year 1966 by Director Mr. A. Panagopoulos], GAK, ARP, f. 1136. Very little is known about the actual operation of such centres.

³³ Dimitra Lampropoulou, "Working Youth and Education in Postwar Greece: Night Schools as Arenas of Political Struggle and Cultural Practices," *International Labor and Working-Class History* 90 (2016): 70–92, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43956696>.

³⁴ "Συνοπτική έκθεσις περί των Κέντρων Νεότητος-Γυμνασιοπαίδων" [Brief report on the Youth–High School Children Centres], n.d., Historical Archive of the Benaki Museum, Archive of the Royal Welfare Fund, box 458, f. 1.

³⁵ “Εκθεσις Επιθεωρήσεως Εντεταλμένης Δίδος Α. Παυλάτου εις Τομέα Σ. Π. Θεσπρωτίας από 7ης–10ης Σεπτεμβρίου 1967” [Inspection report by the appointed Ms. A. Pavlatou to the Children’s Home Section of Thesprotia, 7–10 September 1967], 26 September 1967, GAK, ARP, f. 1079.

³⁶ Respectively Efi Avdela, “Between Voluntary Workers and Public Servants: Juvenile Probation Officers in Greece, 1954–1976”, in *State, Economy, Society (19th-20th Centuries): Essays in Honor of Emeritus Professor George B. Dertilis*, ed. Ada Dialla and Niki Maroniti (Athens: Metaixmio, 2013), 27–53; Van Steen, *Adoption, Memory, and Cold War Greece*; Despo Kritsotaki, “Mental Hygiene and Child Guidance in Post-war Greece,” *Social History of Medicine* 27, no. 4 (2014): 751–67, <https://doi.org/10.1093/shm/hku045>.

³⁷ “Εταιρεία Προστασίας Ανηλίκων Πειραιώς προς την Α.Μ. Βασίλισσαν Φρειδερίκην” [The Society for the Protection of Minors of Piraeus to HM Queen Frederica], 26 May 1959, GAK, ARP, f. 1118.

³⁸ Hassiotis, *Τα παιδιά του Εμφυλίου*, 237–42, 326.

³⁹ Ibid., 305, 315.

⁴⁰ “Καταστατικό Ομίλου Εθελοντών” [Statute of the Club of Volunteers], GAK, ARP, f. 1247.

⁴¹ “Λογοδοσία ΔΣ από 1/1–31/12/1960” [Annual report of the Board of Directors from 1 January to 31 December 1960], GAK, ARP, f. 1221.

⁴² Eleftheria Papadaki, *Κοινωνική πρόνοια και ανοικοδόμηση* [Social welfare and reconstruction] (Thessaloniki: s.n., 1947).

⁴³ Hassiotis, *Τα παιδιά του Εμφυλίου*, 333.

⁴⁴ Alon Rachamimov, “‘Female Generals’ and ‘Siberian Angels’: Aristocratic Nurses and the Austro-Hungarian POW Relief,” in *Gender and War in Twentieth-Century Eastern Europe*, ed. Nancy Wingfield and Maria Bucur (Indiana: Bloomington University Press, 2006), 23–46; cited in Davidova, “Monarchism with a Human Face,” 813.

⁴⁵ Mastrogiannis, *Ιστορία της κοινωνικής προνοίας*, 471.

⁴⁶ Laura Briggs, “Mother, Child, Race, Nation: The Visual Iconography of Rescue and the Politics of Transnational and Transracial Adoption,” *Gender & History* 15, no. 2 (2003): 179–200, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-0424.00298>.

⁴⁷ Several memoirs of former *pedopoleis* inmates and fictionalised accounts have been published in recent years. For example, see memoirs: Yiannis Atzakas, *Θολός βυθός* [Blurred seabed] (Athens: Agra, 2010); Antonis Venetis, *Επιστολές* [Letters] (Athens: Armos, 2017); fictionalised accounts: Vassilis Boutos, *Τα δάκρυα της βασίλισσας* [The queen’s tears] (Athens: Nefeli, 2000); Thanassis Skroubelos, *Bella ciao* (Athens: Ellinika Grammata, 2005); Menios Sakellaropoulos, *Πικρό Γάλα* [Bitter milk] (Athens: Psychogios, 2019); Klairi Theodorou, *Οι κόρες της βασίλισσας* [The queen’s daughters] (Athens: Psychogios, 2019); Giota Kougiali, *Απόψε τι βλέπεις γύρω σου* [What do you see tonight around you] (Athens: Kastaniotis, 2020), and others. There are also innumerable sites containing testimonies or politicised accounts regarding *pedopoleis*. They all show that opinions among the child recipients and their offsprings remain divided and occasionally stir up fierce debate; and that the issue continues to be controversial and politically contentious.

⁴⁸ Zahra, *Lost Children*.

⁴⁹ Efi Avdela, *When Juvenile Delinquency became an International Post-War Concern: The United Nations, the Council of Europe and the Place of Greece* (Vienna: Vienna University Press, 2019).

⁵⁰ Van Steen, *Adoption, Memory, and Cold War Greece*.