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## From Labour to National Ideals: Ending the War in Asia Minor—Controlling Communism in Greece

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**Abstract:** This paper will try to shed light on a very particular angle of Greek political geography after the end of the Asia Minor War. As a result of this conflict almost 1.3 million refugees fled to Greece and changed dramatically its political space. The traditional view among the scholars of the period promotes an “exceptionalism” of the Greek-Orthodox refugees who fled to Greece after 1922. It is argued that the Asia Minor workers did not largely espouse an *a priori* notion of class, since they had a bourgeoisie economic and social background. However, in the 1930s there was a sharp increase in the support of the Left. Accordingly, the Communist Party pulled 5.76% of the vote, which was the highest in the inter-war period. Although the percentage of the communist vote was not so high all over Greece, Communism had a real electorate appeal for urban refugees. This study will challenge the exceptionalist perspective and will investigate why the same people who voted for Liberals in the 1920s voted for Communists in the 1930s. It will also examine how the Greek political system managed to incorporate the left-wing vote by transforming the division of society from labour and political demands to national ones in the period under examination. The focus will be also on the interplay between Communism and refugees, which is undervalued by most research on the topic, even though the communist threat was used as a reason or pretext for the abolition of parliamentary democracy and the establishment of Ioannis Metaxas’ dictatorship in 1936.

**Keywords:** Greece; political geography; refugees; clientilism; Liberal party; nationalism; Communism; exceptionalism; labour law

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## 1. Introduction

This study begins with the Lausanne Peace Treaty of 1923, which ended the Greco-Turkish War (1919–1922) and called for the first obligatory exchange of populations in history based exclusively on the criteria of religion. By April 1923, some 355,000 of the Muslim population of Greece had been removed from Greece to Turkey. Finally, the census of 1928 recorded 1,221,555 refugees who were finally settled in Greece ([1], p. 31). Greece was a war-weary and poor country with a population of 5,016,889 that had been called upon to absorb all these panic-stricken, homeless people [2]. The overwhelming majority of these refugees did not vote for the Communist Party (CP) in the 1920s. They instead supported the Liberal (or Venizelist) party. The CP's share of the vote was not more than 4% ([3], p. 109). Although it did not pose a serious threat to the *status quo*, the CP was hounded during the 1930s by Prime Minister Ioannis Metaxas, who used the rise of Communism as a scapegoat to establish his dictatorship. Indeed, he imprisoned its entire leadership ([3], p. 66).

Extensive refugee flows tended to be common in Europe during the inter-war years. As Michael Marrus notes, many of those who sought asylum abroad during this period resembled exiles rather than refugees ([4], p. 22). The redrawing of the European map with the transformation of empires into nation-states and the policy of ethnic unification of the latter resulted in wars and large population movements. Aristide Zolberg describes the emergence of this phenomenon as the adoption of a mononational formula, which entailed some form of exclusion—either extreme segregation or expulsion of—unwanted minorities ([5], p. 13).

The case of the exchange of populations of 1923 is unique in itself for two reasons. First, the obligatory character of the exchange ruled out any prospect of repatriation for these destitute populations, which today is regarded as a priority for states which have admitted refugees. The world had to wait until the 1951 Convention to see a definition of the term “refugee” as well as the rights to which the refugees are entitled ([6], p. 5). Second, in the 1920s, the unconditional enfranchisement of the refugees created 300,000 new voters in addition to a pre-existing voting population of 800,000. This was without precedent in the parliamentary history of Greece ([7], p. 159).

Despite the extensive literature dealing with various aspects of the refugee question, there is no research published about the role of refugees in the rise of Communism in Greece. Most studies consider the refugees' contribution to the rise and consolidation in power of Liberal Party during the period under examination. It is also worth noting that all the studies about the labour movement in Greece during the same period ignore the refugees. All research about the political integration of the Greek Orthodox refugees endorses an exceptionalism of their work force. It is argued that the Asia Minor workers did not largely espouse an *a priori* notion of class, because they had a bourgeois economic and social background.

These studies fail, however, to explain why in the 1930s there was a sharp increase in the support of the Left among the same people who voted for the Liberal Party of Eleftherios Venizelos in the 1920s. All of the studies simply assume the pro-Liberal orientation of the refugees and consider the role of the state only in terms of the settlement policy. They perceive political incorporation as *ad hoc* measures that led to the enfranchisement or to the exclusion of this new electorate without particular emphasis on Communism.

In particular, Dimitris Pentzopoulos has examined some significant aspects of settlement upon Greece. In terms of political space, he takes for granted that the mass refugees voted in favour of Venizelos without focusing the state's methods of restricting communist support during this period. When he refers to the pro-Left voting of refugees, he considers the Ankara Convention of 1930 as real cause for the political expression of the refugees' dissatisfaction. This agreement wrote off Turkey's debts towards the refugees for the properties they left behind [8]. While the Ankara Convention led to friendly relations between Greece and Turkey, it came at the expense of the destitute refugees.

From the perspective of politics, George Mavrogordatos' research covers the entire inter-war period in a unique and exhaustive way. His excellent work is focused on the study of mass politics and their implications for party strategy and conflict in Greece for the years 1922–1936. In his view, refugee voters played the role of arbitrator in domestic politics and were for a long time a repository of votes for the Venizelist Party. He is a pioneer in making the distinction in the political behaviours of Old and New Lands (which were incorporated in the Greek borders after the Balkan Wars of 1912 and 1913) of Greece. His exhaustive analysis of the rural settlement, as well as of the multi-ethnic composition of the electorate, outlines the nationalism of the Greek Orthodox populations who lived, were identified with the Venizelist dream of their liberation, fled to Greece after 1922 and redrew the political map of Greece in favour of the Liberal Party.

In Mavrogordatos' view, they supported Venizelism to protect their settlements against the natives, who had a different religion or language in addition to their ownership of the lands. His penetrating study considers them as an electorate strongly identified with Liberalism and completely cut off from local political structures or with no experience with or knowledge of the Greek parliamentary politics. One may argue that he does not avoid the "anthropomorphic" conception of the refugees, portraying them as a cohesive electorate body that was discriminated against by the native supporters of anti-Venizelism. Mavrogordatos detects no different phases of Venizelist policy in the 1920s or in the 1930s towards the refugees or towards the Communist "threat". Although he sees refugee voters as playing the role of arbitrator in domestic politics, he considers them as providing for a longstanding repository of votes for the Venizelist Party. He argues about the marginal existence and role of the communist ideology in the refugee settlements based on the interpretation of the electorate results of the interwar period [9].

Another scholar, Spyros Karavas, examines the electoral preferences of refugees in some suburbs of Athens. He analyses how the refugee vote contributed to the configuration of the Greek parliamentary map in the inter-war period (mainly after 1926). His study emphasises the political behaviour of the refugee quarters in the respective areas, and analyses how the rapprochement of contradictory tendencies—militaristic and left-wing—led to the abolition of the parliamentary regime in the 1930s.

He fails, however, to provide an explanation of why the same institutions were effective in integrating the refugee electorate in the 1920s but not in the 1930s. He does not take into consideration the role of the state politics or the clientelist politics or other aspects of state policy (in labour, education, *etc.*) in the refugee settlements. His study is focused on Athens without reference to other areas of Greece. He considers the communist vote as a response to the failure of the Greek settlement policy in segregated urban settlements around Athens and does not connect this electorate with the labour movement in Greece. His study concentrates on the political behaviour of these particular

refugee quarters in the respective areas, and analyses how the rapprochement of contradictory tendencies—militaristic and left-wing—led to the abolition of the parliamentary regime in the 1936 [10].

It is worth noting that there is no study that makes reference to the role of labour legislation during this period to the incorporation of left-wing voting. There is no emphasis on the interplay between refugees and Communism throughout Greece though the communist threat was used as a reason or pretext for the abolition of parliamentary democracy and the establishment of Metaxas' dictatorship in 1936. The paucity of research on these aspects of the state policy towards the refugees' political incorporation of left-wing tendencies underscores the importance of this survey. This study challenges the exceptionalist perspective or refugees' electorate explanation and instead investigates why the same people who voted for Liberals in the 1920s voted for Communists in the 1930s. The article also examines how the Greek political system managed to curb the radicalization of the refugees and the left-wing vote by transforming the division of society from labour and political demands to national ones in the period under examination.

In terms of methodology, an effective analysis of the refugees' political incorporation patterns requires a balanced approach between the mass of almost 1.3 million people, state policy or legislation, and the voices of the people who were involved in this process. A methodological assumption is that the refugees were both actors and audience in the political space that was produced in the period under examination. Therefore, this study seeks to illuminate the political impact of Greece upon the refugees in a dialectical way between state and society; in other words, it tries to show how the Greek State influenced these people to curb their mass radicalization, and, respectively, the extent of the effect of the refugees on the process of the construction of a political community in Greece along with the native population in the 1920s as well as in the 1930s. The article takes into consideration different aspects of Greek policy-making without also going to the other extreme of portraying refugees in a static, passive way, as mere effects of structures, subjected to deterministic changes of social and economic life.

The article is organized as follows. Part one critically presents the narrative about the Liberal identification and the exceptionalism of the refugees based on an analysis of historical literature and in a dialogue with new archival sources. After reviewing some of the main arguments of the current literature that espouses the exceptionalist theory, part two indicates new directions in which our understanding of the Left-wing electorate behaviour of the refugees might best be developed in the 1920s. Part three investigates reasons that could provide an explanation for the identification of refugees with Communist party in the 1930s and the contribution of the state policy-making to the averting of the radicalization of the Greek electorate. Parts two and three also focus on the ideologies of Communism *versus* nationalism that form the major dilemma for the Greek natives as well as for the refugees in the process of their incorporation in the social space that was produced after the end of the Greco-Turkish War. Finally, this article draws conclusions about the impact of war on the political space of Greece as well as the general role of war in countries that receive refugees.

## **2. Why Did the Refugees Support the Liberal Party?**

According to the electoral results, the refugees made a large contribution to the consolidation of the Liberal governments after 1923. In any case, all the governments from 1924 until the elections of 1928

had a Liberal orientation. One may argue that the majority of refugees voted for the Liberals because they had closely connected the dream of their liberation with the realization of Venizelos' national purpose (the Great Idea).

The dream of Greek irredentism—designated as “the Great Idea”—took form in the speech of the Prime Minister Ioannis Kolettis at the opening of the Greek parliament in 1844. The official expression of this expansionist myth deriving from the dream of a restored Orthodox Byzantine Empire would be the fundamental concern of the Greek foreign policy for almost 80 years. In the twentieth century, the Young Turkish revolution of 1908—aimed at overthrowing the Sultan and establishing a secular national society—as well as the new rise of Balkan nationalisms in the interior of the Ottoman Empire, paved the way for the aspirational aims of the Prime Minister Eleftherios Venizelos (who served from 1910 to 1920 and from 1928 to 1932), who as a Cretan and ex-‘unredeemed’ Greek was identified with the dream of a Greece of two continents and five seas ([11], p. 172). He became the leader of the Liberal Party in Greece. From 1910 to 1920, he managed to fulfil the national target. His policy provided Greece with many territorial gains and signified the resurgence of the Greek national vision. In the Balkan Wars of 1912–1913 against Turkey, the Greek national state gained Southern Macedonia, Southern Epirus and the islands of the Eastern Aegean from Thasos to Samos, as well as Crete. Greece increased her territory by 68% and her population from approximately 2.7 to 4.4 million ([12], p. 472).

During this period, Venizelos' opponent was the Royalist (or People's) Party who were mainly supporters of the monarchy. After the death of King Georgios in 1913, Venizelos confronted a new king in the implementation of the foreign policy. Participation in the First World War was seen by many Balkan powers as an opportunity for furthering their territorial interests and regaining the provinces they had lost in the Balkan Wars. Bulgaria joined the Central Powers in September 1915. Nevertheless, the same choice was hard to make in Greece. In pursuance of his irredentist goals, Venizelos demonstrated his support for the Entente in the First World War. With his second resignation in 1917, he established a provisional government in Salonica, where he created a pro-Allied army, supporting a policy of immediate participation on the side of the Allies. In this way he opposed King Constantine, who was brother-in-law to Kaiser Wilhelm II, and he therefore advocated a policy of neutrality. The King admitted in his communication with the Kaiser that he was compelled to think that “neutrality was forced upon us” ([13], p. 454)

For the first time in the period 1915–1917, the vision of the Great Idea as the overriding goal of the Greek foreign and domestic policy stirred up national divisions which contributed to the social and political fragmentation of Greek society. In other words, it precipitated the so-called National Schism in Greek political life ([14], p. 110). For many years the Great Idea served as a unifying factor in what was a highly fragmented society. As Paschalis Kitromilides notes, from the middle of the 19th-century onward, nationalism provided outlets for the diversion of domestic discontent toward external aspirations, as its populist overtones appealed to the chronic disaffections of the working classes and the peasantry ([15], p. 168). According to Anthony Smith, myths of common ancestry and memories of a golden age may unite and inspire the members of an ethnic community over several generations ([16], p. 441). The myth of the restoration of the Byzantine Empire became the type of nationalism that Eric Hobsbawm identifies as a substitute for social cohesion through a national church, a royal family or other cohesive traditions, or collective group self-representations, a new secular religion ([17], p. 303).

In the mid-1910s, the National Schism was virtually a state of civil war between the supporters and the opponents of Venizelos. After the abdication of the King, Venizelos, who served as prime minister until 1920, took part in the allied victory against Bulgaria and Turkey. Greece gained Western Thrace and in 1919 received a “mandate” from France and Britain to land forces at Smyrna, under the pretext of preventing the Christian populations from being massacred ([18], p. 192).

After the conclusion of the First World War, the Treaty of Sevres vindicated Venizelos’ decision to join the Entente. Although his expansionist plan seemed to be potentially realised, on 5 December 1920 a plebiscite in Greece unexpectedly resulted in his abdication and King Constantine’s return. In the meantime, the nationalist Turks led by Mustafa Kemal (later Kemal Ataturk) had managed to stir up national feeling among their people. The Greek troops commanded by the Greek king expanded their zone of action and launched a major offensive in 1921 against the Turkish army almost 40 kilometres from Ankara. Richard Clogg notes that “In April 1921, all the allies declared their strict neutrality, although neither the Italians nor the French had qualms about selling arms to the Turkish nationals” ([3], p. 97). The failure of a diplomatic compromise, proposed by the British side, led the Turks to mount an overwhelming counter-offensive against the Greeks, who lost the decisive battle on the Sakarya River on 24 August 1922.

In Greece, King Constantine abdicated and was replaced by his elder son, who reigned as King George II. In a poisonous political climate, eight politicians and soldiers were court martialled on charges of high treason and six of them were executed. Among them were General Georgios Hadzianestis and the former Prime Minister Dimitrios Gounaris ([3], p. 100). After the Greco-Turkish War, the leader of the Liberal Party was Andreas Michalakopoulos; Venizelos would resume power in the period 1928–1932. King George II left Greece and would not return until the restoration of 1935. The defeat in Asia Minor and the political tensions in Greece also led to the abstention of the pro-royalist parties in the elections of 16 December 1923 because they were protesting against the persecution of the pro-royalist press and the arbitrary change of the electoral system initiated by the Liberals who were in power ([14], p. 126). King George II was also obliged to leave Greece in the same month and the monarchy was abolished in 1924. In the referendum of that year, which resulted in a 70% (758,472 to 325,322) vote for the republic, “the refugees voted heavily for the abolition of the monarchy” ([3], p. 108).

Henry Morgenthau (Chairman of the Refugee Settlement Commission in Greece) attributed the anti-monarchical political orientation of the Anatolian Greeks to the fact that “they had not lived in Greece, they had none of the sentimental affection for royalty as a symbol of country that still held the imagination of many native Greeks” ([19], p. 134).

At that time, mainly the Greeks of the mainland, and in particular those of the southern and central Greek state (Old Greece), were strongly identified with the Royalist Party. A 1922 report by the English MP Sir Samuel Hoare points to the same trend: “I am a Venizelist and a personal friend of Venizelos. I nonetheless came to the definite conclusion in Smyrna and Greece that King Constantine is the most popular man in Greece and that the Venizelists out of Asia and Crete are a very unpopular minority” ([20], p. 6).

The refugee newspaper *Prosfygikos Cosmos* (Refugee World) put the blame on the King’s policy as well as on the Populist Party for their presence in Greece. The paper drew its readers’ attention to the fact that the Populists were responsible for many political mistakes. It cited the examples of the

restoration of King Constantine to the throne which brought about, according to the newspaper, the rupture of relations with the Allied powers and consequently the absolute political, economic and military isolation of Greece, which in turn resulted in the collapse of the front in Asia Minor. The article outlines that the Populists, at that time, “prohibited the mass landing of refugees in Greece” ([21], p. 1). Mavrogordatos accurately points out that if the natives alone had voted, Antivenizelism and the monarchy would have already won a sweeping victory. Moreover, without the defection of some refugees to Antivenizelism and the Left, Venizelism would have retained a comfortable majority in 1933 and in 1936, and would have remained in power throughout the interwar period ([9], p. 185).

The unconditional enfranchisement of the refugees underscored the Liberal Party’s belief that the refugees from Asia Minor would line up behind the Liberal Party. In parallel, this attribution of the Liberal political identity to the Anatolian Greek-Orthodox populations led to the newcomers being discriminated against by the indigenous population of Greece, who ascribed certain political characteristics to the refugees. The following oral evidence substantiates this process of discrimination against the newcomers. According to their own descriptions, the refugees from Kerasous of Pontus (in northern Asia Minor) were labelled with a political identity from the very beginning of their settlement:

After eleven days they loaded us onto a boat for Greece. They put us off at Patras. Winter. Christmas, early morning of the 22nd. What wonderful people they were! Callous, very callous, the people of Patras. Hungry, tired and weary from the journey, we heard them welcome us: What do you want in our country, sons of Turks? Go and see your friend Venizelos. They made us sleep in open sheds. They saw our babies lying on the cement and didn’t even say, here’s a sack to put over your baby. From there they spread us out to the villages around Patras. They put us in wagons covered with coal dust, and took us to the villages. They didn’t even wait to give us our belongings. We lost them, and so did others like us, who didn’t have menfolk to chase after their belongings ([22], p. 51).

Many refugees encountered a considerable degree of prejudice on the part of the natives. Nikolaos Markoglou spoke with bitterness about their experiences:

The citizens of Old Greece, the royalists, did not treat us well. They disliked us because we were Venizelists. They called us Tourkosporous [Turkish seeds] and laughed at us ([23], pp. 43–44).

One may argue that this discrimination against refugees operated as a “self-fulfilling prophecy”, which led the people who accepted such treatment to develop a political behaviour fulfilling the initial expectation or anticipation of their aggressors.

Several reasons, however, could also account for the pro-Liberal electorate behaviour of refugees. First, it is legitimate to argue that the refugee problem had an eminent place in every electoral campaign of Venizelos. When Venizelos sketched out his domestic policy program in a speech delivered at Salonica before the elections of 1928, he stressed that one of his priorities was the “completion of the settlement of refugees” [24]. The British annual report of 1929 (reporting the progress made in the settlement of the refugees on the land in Macedonia) conceded that the refugees were of great political importance to the Venizelist Party, “to whom they looked for salvation, inasmuch as they had no connection with the Royalist Party, which they regarded as largely responsible for all their misfortunes after the Sakarya campaign” [25]. Venizelos was, therefore, quite frank with the refugee electorate.

Due to the electoral proportional representation system, the victory of Venizelos with 47% of the votes was translated to 71% of the Parliamentary seats in 1928. The Populists had many reasons to resent the participation of the refugees in the Greek election, because the Venizelist orientation of the refugees presented them with a problem. In 1928, the leader of the People's Party (Panagis Tsaldaris) maintained that:

When the issue of indemnification was raised, the [Liberal] Minister of Finance recognized that the given solution had merited his party, for if they had been deserted by refugees, his party would have been annihilated by the votes of the indigenous population [26].

In the course of the same parliamentary discussion, the MP of the People's Party, K. Demertzis, denounced the existing electoral proportional representation where the majorities "resulted from refugee votes" and asked for a return to the majority electoral system. Demertzis anticipated that "the democracy is to be brought down, since it is not a national but rather a military one." He also sparked vigorous protests by the refugee MPs when he pointed out that "1.5 million refugees had no spirit of emulation and was drawn by necessity from one only party's slate." He therefore stressed that it was essential to not only change the electoral system, but also to separate the indigenous from the refugee constituencies in order to form a political consciousness [26].

The examination of the political background of the refugees proves that though they were coming from a different institutional world comparing with natives in Greece, they were not entirely alien to democratic procedures. Scholars are correct that the refugees had no experience whatsoever of parliamentary politics and were "totally unfamiliar with the institutions of the kingdom, and they did not have previous ties with the system" ([27], p. 128). This does not mean, however, that they had no experience of democratic procedures. On the contrary, the communal system which functioned at local level in the ethnic communities (millets) of the Ottoman Empire socialized them in a democratic environment.

In the mid-19th century, the promulgation of the 'hand-written note' (Hatt-i Sherif innovations initiated by the Ottoman administrative framework guaranteed the privileges of the non-Muslim populations seemed to be promising. The Greek Orthodox subjects experienced an expansion of education and commercial activities after the mid-19th century. Proclaiming civil equality, the Tanzimat reform removed all restrictions on the building of schools and recommended the setting up of committees consisting of both clerical and lay members ([28], pp. 32–33). The communities elected councils at local level that made a high contribution to the running of schools but also to the management of the financial affairs of the community which until the 1910s were extended to the employment of teaching and administrative staff, cleaners or even to investments in buying stocks and lottery bonds in particular on the grounds that it would be detrimental to the interests of the community "if the money stayed inactive" ([29], p. 237). In the same year, the community Council of Panormos, assembled under the chairmanship of the same ecclesiastical authority, decided to appoint another teacher (Pantelis Anisaropoulos) and authorized the treasurer of the community to invest a sum of more than 300 pounds from the budget surplus and "to buy 40 bonds of the Underground Tunnel of Constantinople, which might get a return with interest of 5%" ([30], p. 240).

These data imply a clear indication of the independent enterprising spirit of those communities, which allowed them to take responsibilities in the managing of the communal and school financial

affairs. We cannot, however, generalize about 1.3 million refugees who fled not only from urban but also from rural areas of Asia Minor. Some communities did not have the wealth of the urbanized areas and were totally dependent on the church or other donators to survive. Particularly after the Young-Turkish revolution and the antagonism of nationalisms in the Balkans, many schools and communities were cut off from the previous cosmopolitan environment that offered wealth and communication with the national centre of Greece. In the mid-1910s, many schools in Asia Minor asked for the financial support of the Greek state. Even one of the most prestigious Greek education institutions, the 'Evangelical School' of Smyrna, sent a letter to the General Consular of Greece (K. Dimaras) asking for money from the Greek state to cover her administrative needs ([31], p. 1). In the same context, the Anaxagoreios School that had 2,750 students from nursery to high school and many other smaller schools asked for assistance from Greece to cover the deficits ([32], pp. 1–2).

We also cannot generalize about the economic or cultural background of refugees and argue that it provided the only reason for curtailing the appeal of Communism. It is true that not all the refugees resided in the same category in terms of wealth or in terms of established links with the Greek mainland. Some of them already had businesses, relatives or children who were studying in Athens. According to the report of the Special Commissioner of the Ministry of Public Assistance (B.P. Salmon), 50,000 of the Greeks who were exchanged in 1923 managed to immediately find a means of support and to be absorbed in Greek economic and social life. "the large number of Greek business and professional men who with their families have left the city and neighbouring villages, going either to relatives in Greece, or having sufficient funds to pay for their living in hotels and private houses throughout Greece. These people cannot be classified as 'refugees' in the sense that the word is usually used" [33]. Nonetheless, the majority of the refugees fled to Greece as destitute people who lived many years there with the dream of compensation for the properties abandoned in Turkey and were integrated in the labour market as cheap work force.

Nonetheless, Harris Vlavianos insists on the exceptionalist perspective. He argues that it would be wrong to link the impoverished situation of refugees with an inclination towards Communist ideology. He notes that "despite their destitute condition, the majority of them had previously constituted the middle and upper classes of the main towns in Anatolia and as a consequence had never relinquished their bourgeois mentality" ([34], p. 218). Thus he suggests that although the Communists considered them as proletarians, in terms of ideology, they were in fact "impoverished bourgeois" [34]. On the same issue, Dimitris Pentzopoulos provides two reasons for the exceptionalism of refugees and their political alignment which determined their affiliation with Liberals: first, the deep personal devotion of the refugees to Venizelos; and second, the progressive outlook of the refugees that they developed after their continuous contact with Western Europe through Greek businessmen and merchants([35], p. 252).

One can justifiably suggest that although the refugees were coming from a totally different institutional world compared with the natives of the Greek state, they had experience of electorate behaviour at local level. No one can deny, however, that after their expulsion from Asia Minor they were totally dependent on the Greek state to provide compensations and settlement or to negotiate on their behalf for their properties abandoned in Turkey. The questions that arise are: what was the relationship between Communism and the refugee electorates; how the Greek political system managed to neutralize the power of Communism; and why the same ideology that held no massive appeal among these impoverished refugees in the 1920s was espoused by them in the 1930s.

### 3. Communists in the 1920s

Until the 1930s, the British Annual Reports of Greece stressed that the development of the Communist movement in Greece had been “a complete failure and that” Moscow had realised that there was little probability of seriously endangering the internal political organization of Greece ([36], p. 37). According to the same reports, “the General Confederation of Labour and most of the trade unions were under the influence of the right or conservative wing of the Labour movement, and they were doing everything possible to defend themselves against their absorption by the Communist party” [37].

Moreover, the Communists in Greece did not endorse the incorporation of refugees in the native labour movement, stressing the incompatibility of the refugees’ interests with those of native workers. The Communist Party resented the settlement of refugees and the land acquisition in this area as a plan of the Greek bourgeoisie for the forcible alteration of the ethnic composition of the northern regions of Greece ([9], p. 219). From this perspective, the support of the refugees was lost by the Communists rather than won by the big parties.

The Third International had particularly instructed the Greek party to infiltrate the refugees and wrest them from bourgeois influence ([9], p. 218). Thus, after the pan-Balkan conference in March 1924 in Vienna, it was stressed that “propaganda was also carried on vigorously among the refugees” ([38], p. 22). It was reported to the Balkan Communist Federation, however, that “Moscow recognized Greece would never be a serious Communist focus like Bulgaria, but the Greek Communist party might play a very useful part in the case of a Bulgarian rising, by preventing the Greek Government from going to the help of the other bourgeois Balkan Governments. The usual Comintern plan was adopted of keeping the country in a state of general disorder” ([38], p. 22).

In 1925 another report concluded that “Moscow sees clearly Greece is useless in herself as a focus of Communism; but if local grievances, labour and other, are exploited, Greece can play a very useful part in any future Balkan imbroglio by checkmating the sending of help by a bourgeois Greek Government elsewhere. Greece is now being prepared, not unsuccessfully, for this role” ([38], p. 22). In 1927, the Communist party in Greece endeavoured to organize 12 anti-fascist guardships. All of them were to be established in the urban centres of the country (six of them in Piraeus) where the refugees had recently been settled. The first organizing centres were established in Kavalla and in Thessaloniki, while amounts of money were sent to Ioannina, Xanthi, Komotini, Serres (in northern Greece), Chania and Heraklion (in Crete) ([39], p. 598).

The Communist party explicitly instructed “with the sent money to organize anti-fascist guardships at every factory, refugee settlement and military base, all over Macedonia and Thrace” [40]. The same organizations were called by the Greek Public Security “red guardships”. Their subversive action was said to be aimed at instigating workers to go on strikes, to organize workers’ demonstrations and Communist propaganda, to suppress strike-breakers and to perform policing duties in the case of revolution. Reports of the Greek Public Security provided also a catalogue of weapons that were alleged to be in possession of the Communist party and its Youth [41].

Another cause of the Communist’s failure to enlist the support of the refugee electorate body could be detected in the oppressive actions of the Greek Security Police that was formed in 1925. Its priority was “to have under surveillance every act of questionable behaviour, to persecute spies and to police

the foreigners” ([42], p. 1). In the eyes of the Greek Orthodox Church, it safeguarded the national values of the Greek state. It is not accidental that the Senior Archimandrite of the Orthodox Church in Greece expressed his deep regret when informed about the removal from their post of the Security Police personnel, especially of her General Director (Georgios Fessopoulos), who was alleged to “have worked with unselfishness, zeal and integrity, his main objective being to offer his good offices to the country, to the church and to society” ([42], p. 5). In the course of the Greek parliamentary discussions of 1920 it was emphasized that the Greek Orthodox Church was the only responsible agent of Christianization and Hellenization of all the populations in the Greek peninsula and in the Near East ([43], p. 459).

In the Greek state that was almost homogenized in terms of religion, the Greek Orthodox Church perceived as questionable behaviour the heretical attitudes of Communism. The ecclesiastical magazine *Ekklesia* (Church) expressed in an explicit way its anti-Communist feeling when it wrote that the Communist struggle of the labour movement was unjust, immoral and inconsistent. In this article it was argued that the most inconsistent claim was that syndicalism was the enemy of capital, whilst, with the strikes, it hits only the poor workers and not the capitalists. It also nurtured the exceptionalist myth by maintaining that by employing these immoral methods the labour movement was hateful to the majority of Greek society, which consisted of petit bourgeois. It was concluded that it was not possible to satisfy the demands of an insignificant labour minority to run the life of the country in an arbitrary and riotous way ([44], p. 134). In the Greek parliament, Communism was considered to contribute to the nation’s decadence, and it was allegedly proclaimed that the atheist communists wanted to abolish religion ([45], pp. 3, 11).

In the mid-1920s, the repressive measures of Pangalos’ dictatorship were known to have disorganized the Communist Party by sending into exile many of the leaders and diminishing whatever confidence Moscow may have had in its value. Hagen Fleischer claims that “there is established proof of the infiltration of the Communist Party (although not of its extent) by agents of Constantine Maniadakis, Metaxas’ Minister of Security, and of the resulting state of chaos, distrust, and doubt within the party in the spring of 1941” ([46], p. 69).

One may suggest that the appeal of Communism to refugees was also curtailed by factors related to the fulfilment of national goals in the foreign affairs of the country. The anti-war policy of the Communist Party did not satisfy the overwhelming majority of the Greek electorate that was committed to the dream of the Great Idea, which also concerned the “unredeemed” refugees before 1922. In actual fact, the official line of this Party had denounced as imperialist the Venizelist irredentist dreams and had developed continuous anti-war propaganda in the course of the Asia Minor conflict ([9], p. 218).

An important reason for the failure of Communism to embody support by the refugee population, particularly in the northern provinces of Greece, could be traced to its unpopular policy towards the so-called “National Question” (for an independent Macedonia and Thrace). It has been suggested that the “Communists were weakened by their reliance on Russia and by their refusal to co-operate with other parties” ([47], p. 231). Spyros Linardatos notes that until 1931, the leaders of the Greek Communist Party transferred dogmatically the theoretical creeds, as well as the decisions of the Communist International, without any effort of elaborating or adapting them to the peculiarities of Greece ([48], p. 151). This dependency on Moscow obliged the Communist Party to adopt, on the

so-called National Question, a policy that was considered treasonous. This policy provided the most compelling grounds for the Communist Party's suppression, and deprived it of its potential audience, especially among the refugees in northern Greece, to whom the policy casually and callously promised no less than a new uprooting ([49], p. 41). Within this framework, the adoption of the Third Extraordinary Congress of the Comintern directive that supported the creation of a separate, united and independent Macedonian state had a high electorate cost in Greece. In actual fact, the endorsement of that directive "would have entailed the detachment of a large area of northern Greece" ([3], p. 106). In this region, the overwhelming majority of the population was Asia Minor refugees, who had recently settled as agriculturalists [50].

Concerning the rural settlement, we mostly focus on the Northern provinces, where there was mostly a rural "settlement of 750,000 refugees" ([51], p. 3). In these northern areas there also remained almost 82,000 Bulgarians [52], the Muslims of Thrace who were exempted from the obligatory exchange, along with Spanish-speaking Jews and Vlach or Albanian-speaking populations. The use of a certain dialect or language implied a political division even among the refugee populations. To occupy land in these regions signified national as well as financial incorporation. In this case, the rural settlement and the acquisition of Muslim estates triggered many clashes with the native population of the northern provinces of Greece. Tragic events were reported in the course of parliamentary debates in particular from Serres (in the prefecture of Macedonia). As was noted, "Locals or refugees could be massacred for a stremma" (0.247 acres) ([53], p. 223). According to the MP's reports, all the refugee huts were burnt in a refugee establishment in Nigrita. The bloodiest incident happened among the refugees of Nea Pafra and the villagers of Koupji, which effectively challenged the prospect of a stable settlement ([54], pp. 98–166). There were also vivid descriptions of the friction occurring in Plevna in the district of Serres, where the indigenous inhabitants started fighting against the refugees in the fields: "In their efforts to enforce discipline, the police clashed with them and arrested 18 refugees, who attacked the policemen in the general confusion" ([55], p. 479).

Bulgaria claimed that the Greek authorities had decided to expel the Bulgarian element in Western Thrace with a view to replacing them with Greek refugees from Eastern Thrace and Asia Minor, and "thus alter the ethnic character of the country", and argued that "an ever-increasing stream of refugees is arriving in Bulgaria every day" ([56], p. 642). According to the Refugee Settlement Commission (RSC) officers the villages of these deportees were taken over by the Greek refugees, who were accommodated in them temporarily because of the lack of other shelter ([57], pp. 137–138). In response to these plans, the Bulgarian Government complained loudly and brought the matter before the Council of the League of Nations ([58], p. 212).

In some cases, cultural space defined the political one. The use of a certain dialect or language became a clear-cut dichotomy even amongst the same ethnic refugee group.

The reports coming from foreign observers identified in oversimplified ways groups of dialect-speakers with certain political beliefs. For instance, a report of 1929 noted the increase of propaganda "among the refugees, whose miserable condition had been successfully exploited", and it was outlined that "the whole lot of Pontos refugees had become Communists" ([36], p. 37). We should not forget, however, that there were a small percentage of Pontic Turkish-speakers who were clearly distinguished not only from the indigenous population of Greece, but also from their compatriot

refugees. This refugee group, according to scholars who have studied their political behaviour, followed different patterns of political socialization in 1930s as well as in a later period (1941–1944).

Koliopoulos, who surveyed this long-term pattern of the refugees' incorporation along the linguistic dichotomy of the same ethnic group, concluded that there were two competing perceptions of authentic Greekness by the Turkish-speaking and the Greek-speaking Pontic refugees. His analysis of Western Macedonia in the period 1941–1944 points out that the first had to ally themselves with religion and royalism in order to compensate for the unintelligibility of their language. Therefore, their most “reactionary” faction sided with the German occupation forces. The Greek-speaking Pontic Greeks were massively recruited into the Communist resistance forces (ELAS) in Macedonia ([59], p. 91).

For the Turkish-speakers, the atheist, Communist ideology which supported the idea of a separate Macedonian state, as well as the co-operation of ELAS with the British, “who were considered by them as responsible for the Asia Minor disaster” ([59], p. 101), seemed incompatible with their royal, religious, “patriotic” values. Within this framework, patriotism and Greekness, which could be demonstrated by voting against the left-wing, was the passport of refugees to permanent settlement on the land against the native landless minorities that claimed plots in the same geographical areas. Conversely, Communism as an anti-patriotic ideology or vote could not be an option for the majority of the Asia Minor refugees.

The permanent rural settlement curtailed the appeal of Communism in another way. This process required not just land to build on, but especially land that could be cultivated. In any event, the need to rehabilitate the huge refugee mass through land distribution led to “one of the most radical land-reforms in post-1918 Europe” ([60], p. 78). It turned Greece into a nation of small landholders. From this perspective, the officials of the RSC estimated that the majority of the refugees were agricultural workers and were “mostly concentrated in Western Thrace and Macedonia, where they will have to be established, as Southern Greece does not admit of agricultural development on a large scale” [61]. In 1928, the majority of cultivators were also the owners of the land (178,756 out of 202,483 in Macedonia, 43,215 out of 46,428 in Thrace and 150,164 out of 167,318 in the Peloponnesus) [62]. Respectively, the agricultural settlement was concentrated in the northern provinces of Greece (87,170 families in Macedonia and 42,790 in Thrace) ([1], pp. 104–105). During the same period, 145,758 families (or 578,824 refugees) had been settled and productively employed in the rural sector.

The rural settlement of the Asia Minor refugees signified the end of these big landed properties in Greece. After the reform, land was held in small individual plots. Broadly speaking, in liberal, social and political systems, the prospect of individual progress creates a commitment to the free market and renders socialism unappealing to those people who think of themselves as upwardly mobile ([63], p. 172). Some scholars argue that the requisition of unoccupied and occupied real estate promoted not only the interests of the landless native and refugee classes, but also the bourgeois ideology among the refugees. They maintained that small agricultural holdings led to the creation of “petty-bourgeois” classes, regarded as “valuable for social equilibrium” ([64], p. 121).

Even the Chairman of the RSC, Charles P. Howland, stressed that the Greek state gave expression to an egalitarian agrarian policy. Pointing out the results of the adopted agricultural policy he noted that “not only have the estates of the departing Muslims been divided among refugees and natives, but the domains of large proprietors, including some of the most influential and richest men of Greece

have been freely expropriated and divided among the native and refugee cultivators.” He also stressed that having the cultivator in Greece now owning the land “should create social stability and the foundations of greater political stability” ([65], p. 613).

This situation concerned mainly the rural refugees who had some property. Ownership was considered the panacea for bridging the social barriers between natives and refugees.

Along with that was a clear-cut differentiation among the urban refugees. The differentiation in the quality of urban housing not only brought about tension in the spatial relations of its residents, but it also produced inequality and segregation among the refugee quarters. There were those who were settled as poor refugees by the State or the RSC and those who managed to get loans to build their own house or to get a house in auction sales ([66], p. 213). There were communities of houses in areas like Ymittos and Nea Philadelphia, where the refugees themselves supervised the building and also made significant financial contributions from their own funds. In suburbs like Nea Smyrna and Ymittos, the refugees built their houses without any help and the result was a class apart from all other refugee dwellings ([67], p. 176). In this context, the suburban home was seen as a tangible way of atoning for the losses in the migration process. It served as a symbol of success in the adopted country and as a means of maintaining cultural, religious and personal links with the past [68]. At the same time, Kokkinia, Kaisariani, Nea Ionia, Pankrati, Vyronas and other refugee areas were much less privileged, and houses were constructed by the RSC ([69], pp. 192–195). For those refugees even a having job could tarnish the exceptionalist image of self-made middle-class men in the labour market.

The impoverished situation of the latter category of urban refugees was largely instrumental in causing these people to be severely exploited by employers. In order to achieve the development of its economy, a cheap and skilled work force was in great demand both in industry and agriculture. Until 1928, Greek industry had employed 114,512 refugees out of 429,831 workers, and 83.8% of its new workers were refugees. At the same time, the sharp increase in the population of the urban centres offered many employers the opportunity to reduce the daily wage by 20% in 1923 and by 50% until 1927 ([70], pp. 425–426). At the pan-Balkan conference of March 1924 in Vienna, it was pointed out that the refugees “formed a reserve of strike-breakers, which capital could always rely on in every strike” [38]. The exploitation of the destitute urban refugees in the labour market implied not only another reason for curbing their radicalization, but also another reason for being resented by those left-wing natives involved in syndicalism.

These urban refugees expected more than the rural ones in terms of the compensation that the Greek state promised to get from Turkey for the properties abandoned by the exchanged Greek-Orthodox population. This is proven mainly by the disproportionably high expenditure on agricultural rather than on urban establishments. As a result of this policy, by 31 December 1928 the policy-makers dealing with the refugee problem had spent almost 9/10 of the refugee loan for agricultural settlement and only 1/10 for urban settlement ([71], p. 88). Among the rural refugees there were some who did not share the appalling situation of the overwhelming majority. The refugees from Eastern Thrace were the only ones who managed to bring their own ploughing animals, seed and tools, and, as Stephen Ladas notes, “the Commission did not have to supply these” ([72], p. 655). They constituted 256,000 out of 578,824 who were finally settled as agriculturalists ([62], p. 41). According to Nansen, “the settlement of the refugees from Eastern Thrace did not present such grave difficulties as those of the Asia Minor refugees” ([73], p. 9).

However, even these rural workers who carried animals and tools in Greece could not verify the exceptionalist theory. Communist ideology never found ground for development among local agriculturalists in the 1920s. There was in the agricultural life of Greece a traditional lack of rural political movements like those developed in other Balkan countries. In addition, the cultivation of a pro-royalist myth among the rural population of the country prevented the cultivators or proprietors of land from developing an ideology or forming a movement of a radical character ([74], p. 145).

The form of occupation in small landholdings or businesses implied also an increase in the refugees' dependence on state funding or loans and, accordingly, contributed to the incorporation in the two big parliamentary parties in two ways: first, it prevented refugees from rebelling against a State which promised to support these small cultivations, as well as to help those refugees not only to pay off their housing debts and loans; and second, it also made it a necessity for the refugees to receive full compensation for the properties abandoned in Asia Minor and to settle the question of ownership titles in Greece that was perpetuated into the post-war period and up to the 1950s ([35], p. 234).

Policy-makers could also create expectations and give promises that tied the refugees up with the clientelist political mechanisms of Greece and prevented their constituencies from defecting from the two powerful parties. The leader of the People's Party, Georgios Kondylis, was supported by the refugees in 1933 and in 1935, who even after the Ankara Convention and the economic crisis promised the immediate repayment of their long-delayed compensations ([75], p. 97). The refugees were severely exploited not only by the native politicians who made failed promises, but also by the mediators of the leading political parties who took advantage of their desperate situation. Until 1930, the refugees had been fully incorporated in the clientelist logic of the Greek political system that could afford promising the success of the refugees' economic or social advance. In the Greek state, this clientelist logic meant that access to public goods and services were subjected to political intervention or patrons' control. This well-established clientelist system provided a functional reason for the perpetuation of the existing political balances in a society where politics was essential for settling individual economic conflicts and for tempering administrative exaction and public office was highly valued for the advancement of private interests ([27], pp. 35–36).

The refugees who fled from the non-urban areas of the Asia Minor had also the experience of the clientelist system. For instance, if a Greek community wished to set up a school in Asia Minor, the community council informed the bishop of the diocese of this request and later communicated it to the superior bishop, who then acquainted the Greek Patriarchate with the matter. The latter, as head of the Greek Orthodox ethnic community [millet], had to obtain the Sultan's permission. Karl Dieterich notes that "in obtaining this, money plays a not unimportant role. The richer the community is, therefore, the more easily it obtains the permission, and since the Greek communities of the coast of Asia Minor have always been, for the most part, very rich, they were able to proceed to establish their own schools at an early date" ([76], p. 44).

The other Balkan states were no exception to this rule. Since the Ottoman times, *baksis* [bribery] was institutionalized by the authorities in any candidacy for office in the empire. Even in the semi-autonomous principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia, where the Rumanian nobles or boyars could elect their own princes or hospodars, the candidates for office customarily bribed the Sultan's ministers for their favour ([77], p. 102). Even in the communist period, Yugoslavia remained a traditional state whose sinews were the clientele of individual leaders with no working-class

consciousness or a commitment to equality. Within this framework, “recruitment, promotion and the allocation of resources were often based on kinship and localism. The same was largely true in Bulgaria, Rumania and Albania, which were not federations, whose political systems allowed ample opportunities for patron-client relations” ([78], p. 75).

In the Balkan context, the system of political patronage thrived where the distance between state agencies and citizens was big ([79], p. 260). In the case of the refugees, this distance was even bigger. Under these conditions, the refugees were defenceless and locked out of the system of their new homeland, where impersonal rules for the allocation of resources or public goods were lacking or ignored. In the Balkans, the rural economies or localized cultures were not penetrated by modernism in social or economic terms and did not create a class-divided society that followed the patterns of modern western societies of its times. They were rather hierarchical societies, where vertical lines of distinction were much more meaningful than the horizontal ones. In these societies, face-to-face relations were far more important than any other legislation or state intervention in order to receive some benefits. Within this context, only the nexus of personal relations through political patronage could modify oppressive control and led to their incorporation in the given political system. In this system, the electorate behaviour of natives and mainly of destitute refugees could be easily bought ([80], p. 342).

Primary sources also show that a system of material rewards was conferred by a political superior on the unprotected or discriminated refugee in exchange for political support. Tryphon Sarantis, a powerful local party boss in the district of Ilia, wrote to the Ministry of Education (C. Gontikas) a letter in which he made reference to the political situation and noted bluntly that he could easily win the loyalties of the Lappa villagers for 15–20,000 drachmas. He also mentioned that during the last elections “100 refugees from Nea Manolada were lost who voted various candidates, and another 65 refugees went to Sageika because they were bought for 6,000 drachmas” ([81], p. 1).

Due to their vulnerability, refugee citizens placed demands on the Greek state, resulting in the welfare state. However, testimonies emphasize the assumption that the behaviour of the native civil servants contained a discriminative undercurrent. Sometimes the tactless, if not discriminative and inhuman behaviour, of the Greek RSC officials proved to refugees that dignity was not taken for granted in their case. The refugee MP A. Iasonides accused two RSC officials (Troulinos and Pantazides) in Thessaloniki of beating the refugee Miltiades Papadopoulos and throwing him down the stairs of the Office of Colonization. He also asked that they should be punished as an example, because the Public Prosecutor’s office had taken no action against them ([82], p. 309). After 1922, the political divisions, and especially the confrontation between refugees and native (*i.e.*, Greek state) civil servants or policemen, were reinforced through the experience of this bureaucratic harassment and administrative discrimination at a time when Greece was in need of protracted national integration. According to Vassilis Gounaris, the threat of Communism in Macedonia expanded the authority of local representatives of the deputies as local patrons who offered to their own village clientele’s mediation in dealings with an alien state with Cretan gendarmes and Peloponnesian public servants, who knew nothing of the local languages and habits ([83], pp. 33–55).

Apart from clientilism, an effective way to neutralize the power of Communism was to adopt protective labour laws. The 1910s represent the period of the first protective intervention of the Greek

state in the social and economic space. It bequeathed to subsequent generations a number of protective laws for the work force that were enacted when Venizelos was in office.

Among the legislative decrees worth mentioning is the “Sunday off” law of 1909, the law concerning the sanitation and safety of the workers and their working hours, the law concerning the payment of the workers’ wages and the salaries of the servants and employees in 1912, the law concerning the women and miners in the same year as well as the law concerning the labour accidents along with the law establishing trade unions in 1914, or the law that established the objective responsibility of the employer for the indemnification of the workers following a labour accident in 1920.

That trade unions in particular were institutionalized implying not only the recognition of the most natural or spontaneous expression of the labour movement, but also as Venizelos outlined the necessity of representation of the workers through trade unions. In 1914, on the occasion of the typographers’ strike, he admitted in the parliament that the struggle of the workers is a social phenomenon and argued that in civilized states trade unions were the best way to protect the interests of the working class and to settle its differences with their employers ([84], p. 880). In this context, Venizelos enacted a labour legislation that created a welfare state and interfered in the social relations to regulate class struggles for the first time in Greek history. As Georgios B. Leondaritis highlights, the capitalistic relations in Greece have preceded the industrialization as well as the proletarianization of the work force. Venizelos enacted protective laws for the labour force to curb its radicalization ([85], p. 51).

The proliferation of social policy is further exemplified by the establishment of the Ministry of Relief and Public Welfare in 1922. In the 1910s as well as in the 1920s, the legislation signified the emancipation of labour from the civil law in Greece. In principle, it implied the limitation of an unadulterated liberalism based purely on the law of supply and demand that had led to the decline of per capita income as well as to the low standard of living of the native work force. In practice, however, the laws were not implemented. The police or the inspectors of labour failed to pressurize employers to enforce the law and did not impose any penalties for their violation. The MP A. Sideris admitted that the laws on security or sanitation in the working space were enacted only on paper but never to be implemented ([86], p. 451). It is worth noticing that in 1923 we see the first judiciary decision that condemned an employer in a textile industry of Volos who employed four young girls in violation of Article 14 of a law that was enacted in 1912 and demanded a doctor’s certificate for under age workers ([87], p. 547).

Discrimination and exploitation due to the appalling impoverished conditions of the refugees came to be added to the network of clientelist relations. It can be argued that the majority of refugees never adopted a Lockean attitude towards the government of the Greek state. In other words, they never considered themselves as being in a sovereign state of nature or giving their consent to be governed under the provision that the governors will not abuse their power and authority. If there was any consent to the governors that functioned on the basis of expectations for compensations, or in exchange for state provisions that would facilitate their settlement.

The world economic crisis of 1929 and the Ankara Convention in June 1930 was a milestone in breaking the ties of many refugees with Venizelism (or the Liberal Party). It broke the solidity of the refugee vote and produced a political separatism in the refugee ranks after the elections of 1932 until Metaxas’ dictatorship of 1936.

#### 4. Communists in the 1930s

The 1930s elections mark a turning point in terms of refugee support for the Communist party. The bilateral agreement between Greece and Turkey signified the demise of the refugees' dreams either for an eventual return to their former homes, or for full compensation for their properties left in Asia Minor. As a result, the Liberal government was bitterly attacked by refugee voters. On the one hand, the People's Party took advantage of the situation. The disappointment of the refugees over the Convention presented an excellent opportunity to criticize Venizelos severely and to struggle for the loyalties of refugees. Thus, the leader (Panayis Tsaldaris) of the Anti-Venizelists who were supporters of the People's Party accused the Venizelists of fabrication and play acting when the prime minister introduced the slashing of refugees' taxes. According to the conservative leader,

One evening—29th March 1930—Venizelos appeared in the Parliament and declared that he was giving away nine million British pounds sterling to the refugees. However, according to Tsaldaris, the rural refugees remained debtors to the state with eight and a half million British pounds sterling, which had to defray unfailingly from the 1st January 1931 onwards. Considering that every rural family with a yearly gross income of 20,000 drachmas had to pay 2,500 drachmas annually to cover this debt, a tax of 21.5% burdened their revenue [88].

In reality, the result of protracted negotiations respecting the problem of liquidating properties was the agreement to leave each country in possession of the properties vacated by refugees. The refugees mainly resented Venizelos' acceptance of the Turkish argument that Greek properties in Asia Minor had amounted to less than those vacated by the Muslims in Greece. As Mavrogordatos notes, "Venizelos not only defended the (Ankara) Convention, but also emphatically declared that the vision of 'full-compensation' had to be irrevocably replaced by the vision of 'full rehabilitation', that is, adequate settlement for all refugees" ([9], p. 211). Within this framework, he violently attacked the very few refugee deputies, who refused to submit to the Liberal Party's discipline and denounced the Convention as a sell-out of refugee rights, "as a 'threat to national unity', opening a new rift between refugees and natives and pushing the country to the brink of civil war" ([9], p. 211). Even the pro-government (*i.e.*, Liberal) newspaper *Ergasia* (Labour) admonished the refugees in the spring of 1930, insisting that they "put an end to their demands and devote all their energy in this new economic environment to the development that would be decisive for their future" ([89], p. 61).

To alleviate the refugees' pain, the Greek government issued bonds to the refugees which provided for their partial indemnification. Ladas points out that "the total of the indemnities due to the agricultural refugees for property they possessed in Turkey would reach 8,500,000 sterling" ([72], Ladas p. 696). Giannakopoulos notices that,

"In all, some 6.7 billion drachmas were advanced to about 480,000 refugees between 1926 and 1933. Of this total, 20% was given in cash and the rest in bonds. (...) It was a temporary measure, however, not the final solution to the problem. Refugee organisations invoked the Convention to Lausanne to demand compensation in full and, as was to be expected, the question assumed great dimensions and was used as a weapon in the party conflicts" ([22], p. 38).

But after the ramifications of the world economic crisis and the Greek bankruptcy of the 1930s, the refugee bonds were to be of much lesser value. The Greek financial crises of 1930 and 1931 initiated a period of political chaos, since Venizelos was unable to address the economic dilemma effectively ([90], p. 155). The leader of the People's Party Tsaldaris took advantage of the intense criticism of Venizelos' policy over these matters by attacking the Convention and defending those refugees opposed to it. As a result, the People's Party that had never received a massive support from the urban refugee voters won the elections of 1932. Moreover, the resettled Asia Minor refugees who had received plots of land joined the ranks of the small landowners who traditionally supported the Populists and switched their allegiance from the Liberal party. At that time, the electoral power of Venizelists in the refugee quarters around Athens was 86%, while in 1936 it was 81%. The power of Venizelism in Greece had been reduced at a rate of 15% in comparison with the polls of 1926 ([91], p. 149).

The refugees' indignation over the issue of the liquidated properties was best exemplified in the electorate results of the 1932 elections. According to Campbell and Sherrard, almost 20% of the refugee votes shifted mainly to the Agrarian and Communist parties and partly to the Antivenizelist opposition, which was comprised largely of royalist parties who won only 1% ([92], p. 142). In the elections of 1933, the Anti-Venizelist party secured a victory over the Venizelists after many years of continuous electorate defeats. The same elections marked the culmination of refugee separatism, as 14% of the refugee votes of 1932 shifted to the People's Party (Antivenizelism) and 2% to the Communist party, at the expense of both the Liberal Party and the Agrarian Party. In 1933, the newspaper *Prosfygikos Cosmos* (Refugee World) an article (titled "To sort it out with you once and for all: why the refugees will hate you if you do not change your attitude towards them") addressed to the People's Party claimed that "if you were only outvoted by almost 500 votes in Athens and by the same number in the whole country, this happened only because of the equal number of refugees (who voted for you)". The author of the article points out that "it is no wonder that the vast majority of the refugees are on the side of Liberals. The fact is these very few refugees came with you for entirely personal reasons. (...) You, the Populists, did and still do your best in order to distance the refugees, and to widen gradually the gap which you opened once between them and your party" ([93], p. 225).

During the period under review, however, the new inclinations in the refugee votes to the left and right indicated the existence of a salient political rift, which was to beset the political stability of the Greek state and lead to the polarization of Greece's subsequent political life. In fact, many of the leaders of the recently founded (1918) Greek Communist Party were of Anatolian origin ([3], p. 105), and after 1930 all of them were of Anatolian origin ([89], p. 65).

As indicated by election statistics of 1931 relating to the places of the refugee settlement, the same people who had denounced any radical forms of political expression in 1922 by voting for the Liberal Party did not express their loyalty to Venizelism in 1930. In 1933, the People's Party came to power and expelled Liberal Party appointees from the military and the civil service. They were able to rig a referendum, and restore the monarchy that same year. However, they failed to secure a decisive majority in the elections of 1936 that produced a hung parliament, with the balance of power held by the small Communist Party, which elected fifteen deputies to the 300 seat Vouli (parliament) ([94], p. 64).

In many refugee suburbs, the refugees voted for Communism though they did not support them in their first settlement for fear of becoming outcast or being characterized as anti-patriots. In the urban centres, where refugees were employed in the industrial sector, there was support for the Communist

party by this refugee proletariat. Mainly in the industrialized districts of Athens-Piraeus, Thessaloniki, Larissa, Volos, Naousa, Kavalla, *etc.*, where there were identifiable refugee enclaves characterized by poverty and general insecurity—people supported the Left ([27], p. 211). As Chris Woodhouse notes, “the suburb of Athens known as ‘New Smyrna’, where thousands of refugees lived for many years in poverty-stricken discontent, became notorious as a breeding-ground of Communism” ([95], p. 209). In the labour neighbourhoods and the refugee settlements of Keratsini, Kokkinia and Peristeri, the respective percentage increased to 10% and in Piraeus to 19% in 1935 ([57], p. 191). Even today, some ex-refugee quarters around Athens witness a high percentage of left-wing voting [96]. Additionally, “in Mytelini, a town where half the inhabitants were refugees, the sharp increase in support for the Communists in the 1931 by-election” up from 7–21% since 1928 “was a worrying portent” ([64], p. 122).

During that period, British officials noted the existence of a proletariat at the refugee settlements, though they could detect neither an infiltration nor an effective propaganda coming from the Soviet Union:

In explanation of the frequency with which strikes are now occurring, people are still inclined to say that Communism is responsible, believing that there is Russian influence behind the unrest. I have made enquiries about this during the month in a district in which Bolshevism might be expected to find converts more readily than everywhere else in Greece and it would appear that there is no trace at all of Russian propaganda or of Russian money, the existing unrest being entirely spontaneous and of local origin. The district is the Drapetsona area, lying between Piraeus and St. George’s Bay. It is a slum district inhabited mainly by refugees who have for seven years lived very miserably in mean, demoralizing surroundings with little prospect of betterment to look forward to. Many of the men are employed irregularly while the standard of pay even of those in regular employment is not high (...). At the last elections Mr. Venizelos promised a great deal, and the working classes looked for more than he promised; they have seen his efforts and in particular his success at The Hague but matters have not greatly improved for the rank and file of the nation. The ordinary working man is now looking to trade unionism as the hope of the future and unions are being formed in most trades. This development is natural and spontaneous; it is quite unnecessary to turn to Russian Bolshevism for an explanation [97].

In 1931, it was reported by the British Embassy in Athens that “Venizelos had lost ground over the concessions made to Turkey, in order to secure a lasting arrangement with that country” [98]. Also noted were the necessity for the stricter collection of taxes to meet increased expenditure, the world economic crisis, the threatened strikes of civil servants, and the necessity for restricting the license enjoyed by the Greek press [98].

The potential radicalization of the refugees and the appeal that Communism had on them could not only be attributed to the lack of economic mobility through compensation, but also to the restricted social and economic mobility through employment or education. Apart from the unfulfilled promise of compensation, the crippling unemployment in the refugee urban quarters before and mainly after the world economic crisis, high levels of welfare dependency in a poor state and low housing quality, repeated state or municipal failure to supply adequate facilities and maintenance as well as an all-pervading sense of impotence were among the main characteristics of the refugee social life that produced uncontrolled electoral behaviour. In addition, the world economic crisis signified the failure of many sectors of the economy supported by refugee workforce in the urban centres (carpet industry,

building sector, *etc.*). This crisis put under more pressure the urban refugees who were mainly gathered in the big towns (Athens, Piraeus, Salonica). They were “out of reach of assistance and consequently of supervision by the Commission. Such assistance as has been given to them—they are a minority—has been in respect of dwellings only, since neither the Commission’s resources nor its organisation enabled it to procure them a direct means of earning a living” ([99], p. 20).

Moreover, the education reforms of 1929 had closed the avenues of upward mobility through schooling. Particularly in the impoverished refugees, education and occupation was a crucial factor for their social advancement and the eradication of social inequality, many Greek politicians wanted to limit access to secondary education. They proposed to make children sit for rigid exams in order to have access to high schools. They noted that “these exams will make the primary school pupils understand that high school is not a game, and is not for all those who will decide to go on to secondary education ([100], p. 91).

The graduates of the secondary schooling system were looking for jobs in the main source of urban employment which was the public sector. During the period under examination, these people were seen as a real threat not only to the social or economic system, but also to the political one. In 1933, the parliamentarian Alexandros Michalopoulos considered this mass of job-seekers and unemployed graduates of secondary schools as a source of political instability. Focusing on large villages of his polling district he contended that,

“There were 129 graduates who were not appointed to a job and thus considered themselves as being unfairly dealt with by society, without, however, deigning to help their father in his agricultural labour. They spend their day in the coffee-houses reading and ill-digesting books, and at the end they become communists, not because of ideology—what ideology anyway would want half-educated people?—but because of disappointment about their failure to find a job. We created miserable people, unhappy parents, miserable youth, who have nothing else to do than transmitting unconstructive and anarchic microbes” ([101], p. 1564).

Constantinos B. Gontikas who introduced most of the education reform bills of 1929, not only institutionalized entrance exams at all the levels of the Greek education system, but he also put emphasis on the technical and practical education of the Greek children. Before 1920 there was only one agricultural school in Greece, whereas there were 100 agricultural, technical and public or private commercial schools with almost 10,000 students in 1930 ([1], p. 346).

The formation of a left-wing ethos of the refugees was also related to their socialization in their settlements. The refugees created new suburbs and new neighbourhoods. The structure of their settlements blurred those boundaries between public and private life. This was a structure where the public squares lined with small shops, street markers, taverns, and cafes (patronized only by men) intensified social life within the locality ([102], p. 57). The fact was, however, that the public realm of life in the urban refugee quarters was exceptionally stronger than the private ones. Since 1948, as Judith Tannenbaum has noted “anomie” is usually a problem created by the bringing together of large groups of people. She also defines an anomic society as one characterized by weak integration and a lack of cohesion between members of the collectivities thrown together in the cities. She suggests that “group support is the strongest factor making for security in the individual” ([103], pp. 358–359).

In the case of refugees, solidarity was given in exchange for belonging to the collective political, social or cultural ethos of the locality. Within the small bounded space of the neighbourhood,

protection of private life from any sort of intervention was unmanageable and exposure to collective social control was the norm. Lila Leontidou suggests that in the areas of self-housing conditions, the smallness of the home space forced the family to spend more time on the sidewalks or in the yards, which were also used as kitchens or even workrooms. Women developed an unprecedented degree of collectiveness and mutual help. Their unofficial socialization on their doorstep gave them a sense of participation and solidarity ([66], p. 245).

One may argue that this type of social behaviour that blurred the boundaries between private and public life created a common social and political ethos.

Before the early twentieth century, the lack of welfare housing provisions had led to an absence of collective spirit among the inhabitants of the urban centres. That started to change in the case of the multi-ethnic Thessaloniki as a result of conscious urban planning. In this urban centre, the new town planning introduced after the destruction of the city-centre by fire in 1917 marked a clear break with the nineteenth-century planning tradition. The main objective was to resuscitate the territorial unit (the quartier or neighbourhood) as the basis of social solidarity ([102], p. 137). It was completed in this town as well as in all the other cities after the refugees' settlement. Particularly in the areas where land and constructions were provided by the policy-makers of the settlement, the lack of great variation in design produced a monotonous uniformity ([103], pp. 192–196). One may assume that the pattern of housing in the respective localities produced not only a homogeneity of aesthetic forms in the town planning, but also solidarity, cohesion and new political ethos that promoted collectivity and nurtured radicalism in the public realm of life in these neighbourhoods.

In the same context, there was a great bitterness among the refugees due to the high levels of welfare dependency and the low quality of their quarters. The majority of their urban settlements seemed to be going through the same first phase of development in Western industrial cities before 1900—called “densification”—whereby the priority was the provision of homes for workers on the fringe of the city and more and more living spaces were crammed into the existing building area. Differentiation in the quality of urban housing brought about inequality and segregation in the refugee quarters. Kokkinia, Kaisariani, Nea Ionia, Pankrati, Vyronas and other refugee areas were much less privileged, and houses were constructed by the RSC ([104], pp. 192–195). Due to the lack of sewage or water supply systems in areas full of animal farms, carpet factories or other industries, the areas were primitive. The public services, such as they were, necessarily sagged under the strain of population density. In Athens alone it was estimated that the population had more than doubled within eighteen months. International reports noted the dreadful situation in the city:

“A town of 300,000 inhabitants has swollen to over 700,000. That the water supply has broken down, that light is bad, that the roads consist of potholes is hardly surprising under the circumstances. Save in China I have never been in a place where the sense of overcrowding was more acute. Polluting is the only word I can apply to the population which swarmed in every quarter. And no contrast could be greater than that presented by the northern slopes of the Acropolis, the heights crowned by the peerless fauns, ruined though they are, of the golden age of Greece, and the unspeakable hovels at their base in which the refugees have found shelter” ([105], p. 179).

In this environment, an expression of the lack of integration in the given social space of Greece was also the composition of a certain style of music by the refugees. The failure to integrate in the urban

centres led the refugees not only to vote for the Communist Party, but also to unify their bitterness with the natives who lived on the margins of the society and express it in rebetika songs. This music was the means of expression of all those natives and refugees who had no prospect of advancement by adopting middle class values. Therefore, “this urban song tradition was by its nature likely to be immune to the effects of the values and attitudes propagated by the nation state” ([106], p. 193). It is not a simple coincidence that Metaxas’ dictatorship in 1936 applied severe censorship to all references to rebetika songs on gramophone records. Music was not the only field of antagonism between the rejection of the national values and the adoption of a way of living on the margins of the society.

The obstacles to the refugees’ integration in the Greek labour market could be also placed in the context of financial antagonism with the natives who were not Christians. The antagonism acquired a national context and can be traced not only in the rural space where allocation or property of land was at stake, but also in the urban settlement of refugees where segregation between natives and new comers was the rule.

Financial connotations also led the legislative decree of 1925, which discriminated against Jewish populations in northern Greece. It did not allow the permanent establishment of foreign nationals in Thrace close to the boundaries with Turkey. As was explicitly pointed out by the Prefect (M. Kalogeropoulos) of Evros in a letter—classified as strictly confidential—addressed to the General Government of Thrace, “in any case the establishment in Thrace is not in our interest, particularly by Jewish Ottoman subjects” ([107], pp. 1–2).

It was alleged that it was a matter of national necessity to populate this area with people of purely Greek national sentiments. In a meeting with the General Director of the Ministry of Domestic Affairs (Lianopoulos), the authorities concluded that “the creation close to the borders of such minorities, mainly Jewish at that, has to be prevented at all costs” ([107], p. 2). The real motives were more financial than national. The native population of Orestiada protested that “the Jewish population, having greater capital, managed to control the biggest part of the commercial activities in the town at the expense of the Greek refugee bread-winners” ([107], pp. 3–4).

This rivalry among the refugees and the natives was also registered in Thessaloniki, a city with a large Jewish population. This community had lived in this urban and cosmopolitan centre since the 15th century and, to a large extent, controlled the commercial activities of the city. Moreover, the Jewish community had a crucial role in the founding of the Socialist Workers Federation. Abraham Benaroya, a Jew from Bulgaria, played the key role in the creation of this cross-community group of Sephardic Jews, Bulgarians, Greeks and Turks in 1909, as well as in the production of combative trade unions.

The establishment of refugee middlemen and small traders in the urban centres fuelled a growing anti-Semitism among the Greek merchants. Apart from any emotional charges, these contradictions acquired a profound national and financial connotation. Anger over the control of the commercial life of the city led to the appearance of a National Macedonian Organisation in 1926 calling for a commercial boycott against the Jews of the town ([9], p. 255). “The following year the National Union of Greece (EEE) was founded, with a mostly refugee membership; this organisation was responsible for the worst anti-Semitic outrage of the inter-war period, the Campbell riots in Salonica in June 1931, when a Jewish neighbourhood was set on fire” ([64], p. 130).

For the first time in Greek history, the British minister in Athens, Patrick Ramsay, reported that anti-Semitic disturbances took place in Salonica on the 23–24 June 1931 owing to the discovery that a representative of the Jewish Maccabee Society had taken part in a meeting of the Macedonian committee in Sofia, Bulgaria, where a resolution was adopted in favour of the autonomy of Macedonia. On receiving this news, the “National Union of Students” at Salonica issued a violently-worded appeal to the people to boycott the Jews, who were depicted as being mostly foreign subjects making money in Greece and co-operating with Communists and comitadjis. The latter constituted the Bulgarian irregular army that kept on fighting for the liberation of Macedonia after the Balkan Wars when the borders between Greece and Bulgaria were defined by International Treaties.

An attempt on the part of some Jews to prevent the circulation of this appeal led to scuffles and to panic among the Jews. As a result, a mob of 200 people smashed windows, entered the offices and attacked the occupants. Five people were injured and a number were arrested [108]. It was reported, however, that “an active part in the disturbance was played by refugees from the Calamaria district and it appeared that Communist elements were also in evidence, but rather as elements of disorder than as giving a further complexion to the affair (...)”. He also opined “that the disturbances were probably caused by economic rivalry as well as by racial or religious antagonism” [109].

As Peter Mackridge and Eleni Yannakakis point out “the Orthodox Christian refugees from Turkey often resented the presence of the Jews in Salonica, whom they perceived as rivals for housing and their competitors in commerce” ([110], p. 7).

The matter came up in the Chamber on 25th June 1931, when the prime minister stated that the attacks on the Jews were lamentable and absolutely without justification, because the proposal for Macedonian autonomy had been made after the Greek member of the Congress had left the meeting. Venizelos remarked that it was unfair to blame the Jews for being Communists as a whole. Some of them were, but so were some Christians. Other Greek MPs (Tsaldaris, Zavitsianos and Papanastasiou) also condemned the students’ actions ([111], p. 786). To express their solidarity with the Jewish families whose properties and houses were lost in the fire, the Communists organized a demonstration on the 30 June 1931 which was terminated after the intervention of the police ([112], p. 200).

It seems clear that national and in particular the Macedonian issues provided fertile soil for strong non-negotiable identification of the Greek citizens and fuelled discrimination against anyone who did not pay tribute to the national ideals.

The leaders of the Communist Party attempted to moderate their anti-patriotic attitude towards Macedonia in the 1930s. During this decade, the party attempted to create a coherent radical policy and to bridge the factions, sectarianisms or the ideological differences exhibited during the 1920s. Harris Vlavianos argues that the adoption of the anti-Fascist “Popular Front” strategy, promulgated officially by the Comintern in 1935 helped the party to emerge from two decades of sectarian isolation and turn its attention to the task of strengthening its “alliances” with all democratic forces, especially the Socialists and the Liberals, and seize the historical opportunity offered by the failure of the two bourgeois parties to reconcile their differences ([34], p. 195).

In 1935, the Communist Party spoke about national and political equality among the minorities of Greece, and no more about independence of Macedonia ([48], p. 151). The Popular Front strategy imposed an essential change in the Communist Party’s policy by admitting the Hellenization of Greek Macedonia after the establishment of the Asia Minor refugees. Mavrogordatos argues that although

commonly hailed as a radical break with the past, it was nothing of the sort. In this view, the Popular Front strategy merely represented a tactical and half-hearted move. It imposed only an essentially cosmetic change in the Party's policy that left the Communists to be plagued again in the coming years by the National Question. ([49], p. 41).

Nonetheless, the sixth conference of the Communist Party incorporated smaller socialist and agricultural parties in the continuous pursuit of the enduring interests of the wage-earners as well as in the escalation of its action. The government responded with fierce suppression. Fearing that a left-wing orientation of the refugees might threaten the established political order, the Greek state made use of its monopoly of power not to protect but to suppress the working classes. In the early 1930s, the most effective method to curb the radicalization of political expression was the enactment of the anti-Communist Idionymon Law in 1929, which safeguarded the socio-political regime and essentially penalized the right to strike. The new legislation left little room for further particularistic refugee agitation and aimed exclusively at precluding any allegiance to Communism, whose largest share of the vote in the 1920s was 4% ([3], p. 109). The State became fearful not only of the potential emergence of new forms of labour organizations and agitations, but also of the electorate results in the 1930s. In the elections of 1932 the percentage of the Communist party was 4.97%, whereas in the elections of 1935 it got 9.59% of the votes. It did not, however, elect any representatives in the Parliament due to the electorate system ([113], p. 44). In the elections of 1936, its total percentage was 5.9%.

It is nonetheless worth focusing on the results of some geographical areas. The Communist party won more than 20% in all the cities with population over 20,000. In Drama, Xanthi and Serres its percentage was 20–25%, while in Larisa, Volos and Mytilene it got almost 30%. Its highest percentage was more than 40% in Cavalla ([114], p. 227). Either neighbourhoods of natives (Petralona, Votnicos, *etc.*) or refugee settlements (Drapetsona, Nikea, *etc.*) voted massively for Communism in Athens and Piraeus ([114], p. 228). The tobacco worker's strike that started in Salonica was transformed into a Pan-Hellenic one on 8 May 1936. A demonstration of 150,000 people on the attack of the policy on the next day was dealt with. Ten workers were killed ([70], p. 453).

Agitation and mass campaigns conducted by working people proved that legislation could no longer cover only individual labour relations as happened with the admittedly pioneering laws of the 1910s. Natives and refugees joined forces in the strikes of tobacco workers as well as in other cases to pursue their common interests and concerns. The next decades demanded collective forms of action by the workers as well as "treatment" of the problem by the state.

In the 1920s, despite the fact that some labour laws were implemented and trade unions were more "mature" in terms of a stronger bargaining position for the working classes, the high level of exploitation in the labour market was unaffected. The employers discovered a new degraded labour force among the most vulnerable parts of the social space—*i.e.*, the waves of the destitute refugees. Even children were used as a cheap unskilled labour force, though since 1912 and in 1913 there were enacted laws that banned the occupation of children under the age of 15 and 16 respectively in mines or industries. They were often occupied in working places lacking sanitation measures.

Since 1913, the MP Th. Skasis spoke about the tobacco workers in Cavalla who were in need of the philanthropic intervention of the state against the industrialists who violated all sanitation rules. Women and children working in the fields were subject to chronic poisoning of their health. He presented the report of scientists who argued that 30% of the labourers suffering from tuberculosis

were tobacco-workers ([115], p. 297). In the same town, eleven years after that parliamentary discussion, school inspectors of northern Greece argued, “1,500 refugee children were roaming through the streets of Cavalla, whereas the pupils who attended regularly were stacked into overcrowded classrooms” ([116], p. 941). These children who were employed as unskilled labour constituted a proletariat that voted in the 1930s.

Not by accident, Cavalla elected a Communist mayor in 1934 (Dimitris Partsalides) and registered the highest percentage of pro-Communist vote in the elections of 1936. On the eve of the education reform of 1929, the minister of education denounced the existing policy-making on the grounds that it led the refugee school world into the streets, doomed to ignorance and countless moral dangers ([117], p. 13). As the MP Alexandros Pappas emphatically stated, “Although obligatory education had been decreed by the legislation of 1834 and this provision had been repeated ever since, according to statistics 200,000 children were out of the education system” ([118], p. 19).

In addition, the refugee hopes about social mobility through an open education system, where the hard-working of humble beginning could claw their way to the top, were shattered after the education reform of 1929 [119].

The world economic crisis of 1929 shed light on the failure of a capitalist system which led to the decline of per capita income and consequently the ruthless exploitation of the refugee as well as the native working force.

At that time, collective measures were adopted to regulate working conditions and address the demands of the trade unions. In 1935, the labour movement was granted the signature of the first collective labour contract. It was the year of the restoration of monarchy after a referendum where 97.80% voted for the return of a king to Greece. In 1936, the failure of the parliamentary parties to co-operate fruitfully and lead democracy out of the crisis brought about the Metaxas’ dictatorship imposed by the king as a last resort to maintain stability against the threat of an alleged Communist takeover of the country. After the failure of the Venizelist coup organized by the General Nikolaos Plastiras in 1935, Venizelists and Communists were persecuted indiscriminately and joined forces against the threat of the restoration of the monarchy ([49], p. 37). For their opponents, the real threat was Communism. The Communist party went underground and was to be regarded as the enemy of the nation. During Metaxas’ rule, thousands of Communists were arrested and sent into exile.

## 5. Epilogue

One may argue that war and the resulting refugee flows that constitute a destitute and needy collective body of deported population have a significant impact upon the political space of the receiving country. They can not only feed into domestic politics by defining voting behaviour, but by influencing the perception held by electorates of foreigners in general, and introducing a focus on asylum ([6], p. 13). Before the Second World War, the protection of refugees was not subject to international regulations and the burden for the receiving state was even bigger. The refugees were fully dependent on welfare provisions. In this respect, the war dictated that state intervention had to be the order of the day even in peaceful times to alleviate the social or economic pressure as well as to curb any radicalization against the existing political system.

As in the Greek case, the refugees could serve to discredit or legitimize certain government after their enfranchisement. They posed an existential threat to the political system because they could precipitate or bring about radical changes on the political identification of the receiving society. Their impoverished existence had a profound effect on the decision-making policy of the Greek state. When the refugees were enfranchised and claimed their slice of political action, there were certain mechanisms to incorporate them in the given political space of Greece.

Until the 1930s, Liberal governments won the support of peasants or urban refugees and natives for the existing political system. They managed to curb the radicalisation of their political expression in three ways: first, through protective laws that regulated at least in theory the labour market; second, through legislative or policing measures showing to every native and refugee that Communist ideology would not be tolerated; and third, through welfare provisions, failed promises and political mediators that increased dependency on the state. The latter method reproduced the structures of the well-established clientele system that involved natives and refugees in the patron-client relationship of local politics. During this period, even the promises of full compensation functioned as an emotional substitution for social justice and helped them to set all their hopes on the electorate programmes.

In the 1920s, the newly-established Communist Party suffered from a lack of experience in terms of mobilizing the working class. Functioning also as a devout daughter of Moscow in the decision making about the national issue of Macedonia frightened many of the native or refugee wage-earners, who had recently earned their properties in these areas and prevented them from adopting radical ideologies or breaking their class barriers. State intervention in the form of rural reform or loans that allowed the refugees to support their homes and small business averted their radicalization.

After 1930, the Communist Party gathered strength as the failures of world and Greek economic policies had an impact upon the settlements of the impoverished refugees who struggled to survive in marginal neighbourhoods. These refugees were disillusioned about the dream of returning to Asia Minor or receiving any compensation or even a job. The exceptionalism—even if we accept it as a cultural baggage carried from Asia Minor—of the destitute refugees was insufficient to prevent them from voting for Communism after losing any prospect of social betterment. In the 1930s, it was clear that welfare provisions, employment or education were not to be the great equalizers of men and social mobility could not be attained through schooling or even hard work.

Within this framework, the Greek state seemed ineffective and unable to preserve social cohesion. Although voting for Communism could be considered an action of revenge against the old political order rather than as a conscious identification with an ideology that promised a brave new world, it threatened the political rulers of Greece as many others in Europe. The bitterness or rage of the refugees united with the disappointment of the unemployed native workers.

When the Communist Party moderated its Bolshevization over the issue of Macedonia and attempted to unify its internal factions, the Greek authorities realized that they could not afford the wage-earners or the unemployed in the sub-urban and rural areas acting independently or collectively in radical or revolutionary ways. The Greek state demanded the political incorporation of its native and refugee citizens by reasserting its national values as well as by transforming labour and financial conflicts into national ones. Nationalism and Communism were the two sides of the “dilemma” addressed to the Greek citizens. The first option of the refugees was to support the values of a nation-state which had to protect its boundaries against competing nationalisms and irregulars from the

neighbouring states. Sometimes the enemy was perceived to be internal in the form of native minorities that remained in the northern provinces of the state (Slavs, Jews, *etc.*). These minorities competed with the refugee settlers either for property in the same national land or for domination in the local markets. The other choice was to adopt the left-wing values of a class-divided society and align themselves with the internationalist principles and the labour ideals of the Communist party dependent on the doctrines of Moscow, which were also perceived as the enemy of the Greek nation-state. The first option was more convenient for the refugees since it provided land, access to local market sometimes at the expense of native religious or linguistic minorities.

When the political parties failed to reach a power-sharing agreement in 1936, the answer to the dilemma was given by the extreme right-wing politician Ioannis Metaxas, who dissolved the parliament and banned political parties to avert the alleged left-wing conspiracy for the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat. He tried to create an “organic” community in political terms which cannot tolerate agitations or radical action and demands all its members to assert their loyalty to the dominant national values.

The answer that was imposed by Metaxas’ dictatorship was regarded as a last resort towards political stability. The same ideological dilemma would bring Greece to the brink of civil war in the 1940s.

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The author declares no conflict of interest.

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