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“Meeting children’s needs? Entangled aspects of the mixed economy of welfare in post-war Greece”

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Studies on social welfare in Greece, both in history and social sciences, seldom refer to the mixed economy of welfare. That is, they seldom examine the interconnections, the co-constitution of the public and the private sectors in welfare provision in this country. Moreover, there has been an implicit division of labour between historians and social scientists on the issue: most historians study the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century while social scientists focus on the period from the re-establishment of democracy (1974) to the present. As a result, the first three postwar decades (late 1940s to early 1970s) remain understudied. The most usual remarks about social welfare replicate the assumption that the welfare state in post-war Greece was inadequate, uneven and fragmentary in comparison with what was happening in Western European countries, while Greece’s structural backwardness is considered to be the main cause of that meagre condition. However, things seem to be more complicated.

In what follows we will focus on the first postwar decades in an attempt to unravel the characteristics of the mixed economy of welfare for the social protection of children that was put in place during this time. We will argue that the social provisions undertaken by both the Greek government and private or ‘semi-state’ initiatives in order to meet the urgent needs of Greek children, from the late 1940s to the early 1970s, constitute a marker for the idiosyncratic version of the mixed economy of welfare that characterised post-war Greece. By ‘mixed economy of welfare’ we mean a web of interrelated and interdependent institutional and private actors that undertook the aforementioned initiatives in the politically and socially polarized context of post-war Greece. That web was weaved by the state, the royal foundations, and various voluntary associations and ‘semi-state’ organisations. From the numerous welfare activities that emerged within this web, we shall address in this paper the ones pertaining to the social provision of children and adolescents, because we believe that they illustrate our main argument concerning

the nature of the above mix of welfare. As part of an ongoing research, our examination of these forms of welfare has yet to be enriched through new source material and historical analysis.

It has been argued recently that the royal foundations in Greece were mainly a tool to enhancing the national role of the crown and that their activities constituted a parallel welfare mechanism that overtook the inadequate state.[1] It is our contention that, on the contrary, the intertwined state, 'semi-state' and private initiatives, amidst which the royal foundations had a crucial if not hegemonic role, constituted *the* Greek welfare state of the period, whose workings can be better grasped through the perspective of the 'mixed economy of welfare.' But instead of being inclusive and universal, this welfare state was highly conservative, patriarchal and normative, based on ideological, political, class and gender distinctions and exclusions. Its complex welfare mechanism had voluntary action at its core, especially women's voluntary work without which it could not really operate. Precisely because it was so largely depended on female volunteerism, the mixed economy of welfare for children in post-war Greece did not conceive welfare as a social right for those in need, but as a social and national duty of the capable to the most vulnerable, children in particular.

The period under investigation is not only the most under-researched in respect to the Greek mixed economy of welfare but also a compelling one. It comprises the Civil War (1947-1949), the 1950s and 1960s (what was termed the period of 'cachectic democracy'), and the years of the military dictatorship (1967-1974). This was a time of intense social and political polarization. Nearly half the population, the 'defeated' of the Civil War, communists, their families and those suspected to follow their ideas, were excluded from the bulk of welfare provisions, when they were not imprisoned or exiled. Welfare institutions were restructured with the aid of the Marshal Plan by American experts and with strong cooperation between public services and officials, and private actors. The reorganized state structures of welfare, the extended 'semi-state' services and the private actors maintained a strong normative and ideological perspective, pervaded by nationalist, anti-communist, patriarchal, and orthodox Christian ideas.

Created by Queen Frederica and King Paul in the midst of the Civil War, the royal foundations (the Royal Provision and the Royal National Foundation) would prove to be

[1] Tasoula Vervenioti, *Οι άμαχοι του ελληνικού Εμφυλίου. Η δυναμική της μνήμης* [The non-combatant of the Greek Civil War. The dynamics of memory], Koukida Editions, Athens 2021.

crucial for the post-war mixed economy of welfare. With the aim at fostering 'national-mindedness' (*ethnikofrosyni*) and economic and cultural development in rural populations, but also in poor urban areas, they inscribed their multiple initiatives to the joint plan for the 'betterment' of Greek society and the 'battle against the communist threat.' As legal entities of private law, they were managed by state, academic and ecclesiastical officials, run by volunteers, and funded by private donations, nationwide fundraising, special tax levies, and international organizations; purportedly also by undeclared state funds.

Of course, royal philanthropic activities had existed in the past. However, the post-World War II context and the Greek Civil War state of emergency invested the immediate patronship of the royals with a new potential. Throughout but especially after the end of the hostilities, the urgent need for reconstruction rendered social welfare a vital component of public policies, in conditions of persistent lack of public funds. In this context, the royal foundations proved much less bureaucratic than state interventions in respect to welfare initiatives. Through their extensive collaboration with public authorities, voluntary associations and private citizens at various levels, they managed to become part and parcel of the post-war welfare state. This allowed them to promote the social role of the crown in the countryside but also in urban centres.

Queen Frederika created the 'Relief Fund for the Northern Provinces of Greece' in 1947, in the midst of the Civil War, with the aim to evacuate the children from the warzones in rural Northern Greece. The evacuation of children was in tune with the military strategy to forcibly evacuate the population living around the warzone in order to deprive the partisans of local support. As hostilities intensified, the Democratic Army started also to evacuate children from areas under its control toward Eastern European countries. In response, the queen's operation was recast as an initiative for 'saving the children from communist abductions.' Through systematic propaganda, at the national as well as the international level, the queen was presented as the 'Mother of the nation,' protecting its children from destitution, abandonment, orphanhood, and, above all, communist abduction. Children were regarded as the most vulnerable members of the nation torn apart by the destructive action of communist 'bandits.' Saving the children would therefore mean securing the future of both the peasant community and the family as organic components of the nation.

The 'Queen's Fund,' as it came to be known, established a system of *paidopoleis* (literally, children's towns) far from the conflict zones. These institutions would "provide

temporary shelter and welfare for orphans and children abandoned and destitute […] and hailing from regions considered unsafe, owing to present tragic circumstances”.[2] The project was supported by the voluntary work of the ‘queen’s ladies’ (commissioned upper-class ladies) and other women as well as a host of voluntary associations. The twenty ‘commissioned ladies,’ members of a right-wing elite circle of Athenian families, were the driving force behind all its activities. The ‘Queen’s Fund’ was presented as constituting an extended ‘first-aid operation’ that could circumvent bureaucratic hurdles and mobilize resources quickly. However, it was to remain in close collaboration with the state. In the words of a commissioned lady, “the associations should consider themselves as the state’s mandatories, might act as consultants or rapporteurs, but should not under any circumstances take initiatives without the state’s permission.”[3]

King Paul’s foundation, the ‘Royal National Foundation’ (henceforth RNF) was also created in 1947, a few months after the Queen’s Fund. It was also a private-law entity whose purpose was “to raise the moral, social, educational, and living standards of the Greek people.”[4] Financed for the most part by the Queen’s Fund, but also by other private and public sources, the RNF launched a wide range of social, educational, medical and cultural projects, the backbone of which constituted vocational education. The three royal technical schools on the islands of Crete, Kos, and Leros received boys and male adolescents with the aim to ‘re-educate’, ‘rehabilitate’, and ‘reform’ them according to ‘healthy Greek and Christian values.’ Their first inmates were underage communists arrested during the civil strife, but later also juvenile delinquents and repatriated refugee or pauper children.[5]

Either in respect to the rescue and guard of children (*paidofylagma*) or the protection of children of the internal refugees of the Civil War (*simmoritopliktoi*), royal social provision developed in the context of an emergency regime and bore its mark, at least for the first period of the foundations’ activities. However, after the end of the hostilities and especially during the 1950s their field of intervention expanded

[2] Stelios Hourmouzios, *No Ordinary Crown. A Biography of King Paul of the Hellenes*, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London 1972, 197, cited in Loring M. Danfoth and Riki Van Boeschoten, *Children of the Greek Civil War. Refugees and the Politics of Memory*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago 2012, 90.

[3] *Το Χρονικόν της Βασιλικής Προνοίας* [The Chronicle of the Royal Provision], typed manuscript, Archive of the Bank of Greece, [1967], 9-11.

[4] Typed manuscript on the history of the National Organisation of Provision, the successor of the Royal Provision, 1977, cited in L. Danforth and R. Van Boeschoten, *op.cit.*, 100).

[5] A detailed, but clearly biased chronicle of King Paul’s foundation is Spyros Dionysiadis’, *Εθνικό Ίδρυμα Νεότητας 1947-2007. Εξήντα χρόνια κοινωνικής προσφοράς* [National Foundation of Youth 1947-2007. Sixty years of social contribution], Pelasgos Editions, Athens 2010.

significantly. In 1955 the ‘Relief Fund for the Northern Provinces of Greece’ was renamed ‘Royal Provision’ [*Vassiliki Pronoia*]. It had branches in every prefecture, that were constantly monitored by the commissioned ladies. The name change facilitated the expansion of the Fund’s activities in the following years. These were undertaken in connection with a web of associations and institutions through sponsoring and/or common actions. Our working hypothesis is that this expansion was based on a considerable increase of voluntary work, by men but mostly by women, mobilised through a multitude of networks hierarchically organised.

It is important to note that meeting children’s needs was not only a Greek urgent necessity after the devastating years of war, occupation and civil war. It was a major post-war preoccupation for all European nations that mobilized multiple forces and fostered the establishment of new ideological and scientific frames, conceived mainly in the USA and applied by all international and private rescue organisations. In Greece the 1940s had left its hard marks on children: extensive orphanhood, malnutrition, physical and mental disabilities, lack of proper family care, extreme poverty, unsuitable living conditions and inadequate education was the predicament of most children in both urban and rural areas throughout the 1950s. Still, it is worth noting that as the 1950s proceeded and the Greek society was distancing itself from the threat of war, the voluntary mobilization for the protection of children was increasingly connected with the sufferings and the dangers that the latter were facing in urban environments. Even so, in terms of their ideological content and given the prolonged political polarization of the time, social policies for children were aligned under the dominant ideology of ‘national- mindedness,’ not only during the Civil War, but also for a long time after its ending.

The forms that the social provision for children (and youngsters) took during the period under investigation, as well as the relative institutions and agents, constitute a vivid illustration of the mixed economy of welfare: Since 1948, but more systematically after 1950, the Ministry of Social Provision gave priority to the protection of vulnerable children, and coordinated several of its services to this end. The official planning included: i. subsidies to families in need in order to keep children at home; ii. the creation or the reinforcement of public institutions for children’s social protection (orphanages, kindergartens, and technical schools – funding through private donations and public subsidies); iii. the close collaboration with private institutions, especially the royal foundations and their own dense network – a host of voluntary associations, most of which were funded by private donations *and* public subsidies. The Royal Provision

managed all the rest: it funded several initiatives, among which the Royal National Foundation and its activities, organized several hierarchical networks of volunteers – mainly women of different age-groups and social standings –, mobilized considerable local forces, gathered donations and monitored the ideological framework of all interventions. The Queen often operated as a broker between civilians/subjects and the state.

In fact, the state drew a general plan, provided its auspices and took under its supervision all the entities that received state subsidies and were willing to participate in the realisation of the plan. The Ministry acknowledged publicly the collaboration of the private sector as "a necessity."[6] The private sector comprised three types of agents: first, and at its centre, the royal foundations, especially the Royal Provision; then a host of public entities (such as the PIKPA or the Baby Centre 'Mitera'[7]) and private associations, funded by donations and state subsidies; and third, several foreign, mainly American, organisations and philanthropic associations. The case of the Foundation for Orphans in Greece, founded in New York in 1950, whose local representative was the former mayor of Athens and prominent lawyer Angelos Tsoukalas, is a telling example. But International Red Cross, UNICEF, UNESCO, and CARE were also frequent interlocutors of the Queen.

Since the early 1950s and more intensely toward its end, the mixed economy of welfare discussed here expanded its activities to children from shattered families, girls and boys that 'had gone astray' and youngsters from the poorest urban settlements. New areas of child and youth provision, such as juvenile justice and adoptions, intra- and extra-country, drew the interest of the Royal Provision and the organisations and associations under its protection. New crucial services were funded, such as the Juvenile Delinquent Service, dependent from the Ministry of Justice, the Baby Centre 'Mitera' [Mother], that handled adoptions, the School of Baby Nurses 'Princess Sofia,' and others.[8]

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[6] Ioann. D. Mastrogiannis, *Ιστορία της κοινωνικής προνοίας της νεωτέρας Ελλάδος (1821-1960)* [History of social provision in modern Greece (1821-1960)], Athens 1960, 622-624.

[7] PIKPA = *Πατριωτικόν Ίδρυμα Κοινωνικής Προστασίας και Αντιλήψεως* [Patriotic Foundation for Social Protection and Provision] was a public entity, the final form that an inter-war women's association took in 1939 after successive transformations. See Vassiliki Theodorou, « La Fondation patriotique pour la protection de l'enfant en Grèce. De l'action des philanthropes à l'organisation des services publics de santé et de prévoyance pour la maternité et l'enfance (1914-1940) », *Revue d'histoire de la protection sociale*, 11/1 (2018), 72-91. For the Baby Centre 'Miterea' see I. Mastrogiannis, *op.cit.*, 527-529.

[8] For the mechanism of juvenile justice and the role of Royal Provision see Efi Avdela, *«Νέοι εν κινδύνω». Επιτήρηση, αναμόρφωση και δικαιοσύνη ανηλίκων μετά τον πόλεμο* ['Youth in danger.' Surveillance, reformation and juvenile justice after the war] Polis, Athens 2013. For extra-country

In this mix of social welfare, where financial difficulties were pervasive, volunteerism was based on a persistent critique of philanthropy according to the post-war *zeitgeist*. Drawing from new approaches of social provision, developed in the USA and tested in post-war Europe, this critique promoted volunteer social work as a duty for social justice. At the same time, its agents combined in their activities both the innovative methods of social provision for children – female volunteer social work, family care, provision for children and adolescence, the fostering of national identity, etc. – and the exclusionary ideology of 'national-mindedness.'

It is impossible here to summarise all the activities of this mixed economy of welfare for children and adolescents. Suffice is to say that it was characterized by a division of labour by both gender and class: the bulk of the driving force in the myriad collectivities were volunteer women of all social strata, with only upper-class ones in positions of power and decision. Ideology was a crucial factor in all activities about children, especially in respect to the imagery of the future: how would children grow, what would they become, and to which future? Research has already highlighted that amidst the pervasive political polarisation, emerged two opposing imageries about the role of the 'new generation' in the country's future, one right- and one left-wing.[9] In that context, the royal foundations and their networks of collaborating collectivities and state services, constituted for a long time the main mechanism of mobilisation for personnel and funds. Only they could persuade wealthy individuals to contribute to some sort of social care activity, and at the same time offer to wider populations alternatives of social action fully identified with the dominant and diffused ideology of 'national-mindedness,' as were the specific initiatives for children's provision. In fact, children's provision became an important mode of displaying 'national-mindedness.'

What the recipients of this mixed economy of welfare thought about its arrangements, their relationships with providers or the use they made of it, is not possible to access at this stage of our research. Be that as it may, and as we noted earlier, this varied and geographically dispersed relief for children was well attuned with similar concerns abroad. Children were the objects of all sorts of political activism during the 20th century; especially in the aftermath of World War II, provision for them attracted an

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adoptions and the role of the Baby Centre 'Mitera', see Gonda Van Steen, *Adoption, Memory, and Cold War Greece: Kid pro quo?*, University of Michigan Press, 2019.

[9] Efi Avdela, "'Corrupting and Uncontrollable Activities': Moral Panic about Youth in Post-Civil-War Greece", *Journal of Contemporary History* 43/1 (2008), 25-44.

intensified worldwide attention and became the concern and goal of action for both older and newly founded international institutions. Tara Zahra has shown that in the post-war years children became a crucial factor in governments' efforts to rebuild their nations demographically and ethnically.[10] Moreover, during the 1950s 'youth' became an international concern, due to the purported increase in juvenile delinquency. Transnational adoptions also grew into an important tool of ideological warfare during the Cold War. In this complex setting, children and adolescent care provided by what we see as the Greek mixed economy of welfare was presented as participating to the concerted national and international efforts for the 'betterment' and the 'modernization' – in the sense of Europeanization – of Greek society. By means of mobilising material and human resources, public as well as private, and promoting the traditional ideological triad of 'fatherland, religion, family,' social provision for children was also significantly gendered. Thus, the case of the Greek post-war social provision can be seen as a version of Zahra's "Europe's laboratories of rehabilitation," that is to say an expression of the typically Cold-war process of conflating reconstruction with authoritarian conservatism.[11]

[10] Tara Zahra, *The Lost Children. Reconstructing Europe's Families after World War II*, Harvard UP, Cambridge Mass. and London 2011.

[11] *Ibid*.