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Violent Uprooting and Forced Migration: A Demographic Analysis of the Greek Populations of Asia Minor, Pontus and Eastern Thrace

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On 30 January 1923 the representatives of the Greek and the Turkish governments signed at Lausanne the ‘Convention Concerning the Exchange of Greek and Turkish Populations’, according to the first article of which ‘a compulsory exchange of Turkish nationals of the Greek Orthodox religion established in Turkish territory, and of Greek nationals of Moslem religion established in Greek territory’ would be imposed as from 1 May 1923. According to the same article, these persons would not have the right to return and live in Turkey or Greece without the explicit authorization of the Turkish or of the Greek government respectively.¹

In reality, as far as the Greek side was concerned the Convention did nothing more than legalize the already existing situation, since after the defeat of the Greek army in Asia Minor and the 1922 Disaster that followed² the vast majority of the numerous Greek populations of Anatolia (that is, Asia Minor and Pontus) and Eastern Thrace had already been forced to leave their domiciles and had fled to Greece to find a safe haven in order to protect themselves from the advancing Nationalist army of Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk). At the same time, the Convention determined the future of those Greeks who had not yet left their birthplaces as those persons would be subject to the forthcoming compulsory exchange. Moreover, the retroactive character of the Convention’s stipulations, which included in the exchange those Greeks and Muslims who had since 1 October 1912 left the territories the Greek and the Turkish inhabitants of which were to be respectively exchanged (article 3), significantly broadened the time limit of its enforcement as it included persons who had for different reasons emigrated within a whole decade, from the outbreak of the First Balkan War (1912) until the end of the Greek–Turkish War in Asia Minor (1922).

This article systematically examines the historical demography of the Greek refugees from Asia Minor, Pontus and Eastern Thrace from the beginning of the 1910s until the aftermath of the signing of the Convention of Lausanne and even later until 1928 when the first general census after the Asia Minor Disaster took place in

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