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ARTICLE

"This expulsion is explained in many ways": Ottoman Greek Orthodox internal exiles during the Great War (1914–1918)

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Abstract

This article investigates the Ottoman Greek Orthodox internal exiles, focusing on the deportees' experiences and the intricacies of their agency during the Great War (1914–18). It does so by examining deportees' understudied ego-documents, taken either from the collections of the Centre for Asia Minor Studies in Athens or from family archives. Organized into labor-battalions or housed in open internment camps in town quarters, the inland exiles were deported to secure the rear front and homogenize the country, but their deportation was characterized by local influences and inconsistencies. Several of the Greek Orthodox exiles managed to survive and maintain their cultural ties by exploiting such inconsistencies, either by selling their skills or by resisting exile through solidarity, desertion, and resistance.

Keywords: Great War; Ottoman Greek Orthodox; internal exiles; ego-documents; oral testimonies

Introduction

> On the morning of 4 January 1916, at $1^{1/2}$ a.m. Turkish time, we were asleep when the door slammed. I woke up and came down in my underwear, opened the door and saw policemen who told me verbatim "in half an hour you will evacuate the city and clear out." At first I thought that it only concerned me as a Russian subject and I replied apathetically "very well," then half a minute later I turned to the policeman and asked him if such an order concerned only me. "No," he replied, "in half an hour the whole Roman [Greek Orthodox] nation will evacuate the city." (Sigalos 2011, 107)

With this passage, Dimitrios Avgerinos, a shop owner in Erzurum who self-identified as Greek [*Graikos*], begins his diary. After the gendarme left, Avgerinos and his family began worrying that they might soon suffer the same fate as the Armenians half a year earlier. In his diary, Avgerinos wonders, "what are the reasons behind this, did Greece declare war on Turkey or the Russian troops advance" (ibid., 108),

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acknowledging early on that the resettlement measure demonstrated that for the Ottoman government, the Greek Orthodox were considered to be enemies within, whose fate was connected to the actions of third parties, such as Russia and Greece, and not their own individual or communal stance.

This article provides a closer examination of the Greek Orthodox internal exiles, who were displaced, interned, and used as forced labor during the Great War (1914–18) by the Union and Progress Party (*İttihad ve Terakki Fırkası* [*İTF*]) government. Drawing from ego-documents and oral testimonies it historicizes and complicates Greek Orthodox inland exiles' experiences as part of a wider civilian experience during the Great War and explores the intricacies of their agency, such as their ability to navigate the state's and its agents' unprecedented interventions in the deportees' everyday lives.

The Great War proved to be an extremely traumatic experience with many intense physical and psychological challenges for the Greek Orthodox population of the Ottoman Empire. It revealed the limits of civic Ottomanism, the extent of antiminority radicalization and demographic engineering in the context of total war, and the will of many to survive this ordeal. The minorities were, after all, victims of the *İTF*'s homogenization policies and their identification as a threat to the empire's security because of their actual or alleged connections to Greece and the Entente.

Ottoman historiography has addressed the Ottoman policies of demographic engineering, exile and internment toward enemy aliens and minority populations, such as the Greek Orthodox exiles (Doumanis 2013; Efiloğlu 2012, 2014; Morack 2014; Özdemir 2007; Ozil 2020; Sigalas 2020) or studied them together with other groups (Akın 2018; Demir 2019; Dündar 2008; Zürcher 2003). Scholars have also focused on the German influence behind the deportations (Dordanas and Kalogrias 2023; Fotiadis 2004, 2018) and on the Greek Orthodox soldier-laborers (Minasidis 2020), sometimes studying them as part of the larger pool of soldier-laborers (Karagöz 2019; Mutlu 2007). Similarly, the literature also examines those assimilated (Çilingir 2016; Kaya 2019), and the ethnic-cleansing and genocidal campaigns targeting the Greek Orthodox (Akçam 2012a; Bjørnlund 2008; Erol 2016; Fotiadis 2004; Grigoryan, 2019; Hofmann, Bjørnlund, and Meichanetsidis 2011; Majstorovic 2019; Morris and Ze'evi 2019). Polychronis Enepekides argues for "a flowing Auschwitz" (Enepekides 1997) and Vlasis Agtzidis refers to a "white massacre" (Agtzidis 2005) when commenting on the death toll of the deportations in Pontus. Tessa Hofmann broadened the question to include the rest of the Greek Orthodox communities, arguing for a "cumulative genocide" against the Ottoman Greeks (Hofmann 2011).

This article argues that the Greek Orthodox perceived their deportation inland as an attempt to destroy their community and as a unilateral cancellation of the Ottoman war contract that had promised the protection of both the conscripts and their families, as long as they served legally during their mobilization. It also argues that the repercussions of their deportation led to cases of community collapse and undermined solidarity. In either case, most Greek Orthodox tried to resist the state's coercion and homogenization policies by surviving their exile, preserving their identities and cultural ties, and reconstructing their lives after November 1918. The article also claims that although the *İTF*'s deportation policies aimed to demographically engineer the country, they were inconsistent, diverted valuable manpower to the home and rear fronts, and threatened the war effort. Interestingly,

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several of these inconsistencies opened up new opportunities to the Greek Orthodox. Soldier-laborers could regain their agency and navigate the new structure that had been imposed on them by successfully bartering their skills while in the labor battalions (Minasidis 2020). For women, children, and elderly men, agency was much more difficult to regain. Their skills were not needed by the armed forces and they could only escape from the open internment camps to the mountains with the assistance of men.

Initially, the exile inland was part of an effort to homogenize specific regions demographically and economically by separating the reliable from the unreliable groups within strategic areas, thereby securing the territorial integrity of the state. As Nikos Sigalas argues, the nineteenth century witnessed the emergence of a new notion, that of the "rear front" and its politics. In a war, the rear front meant a territory where the rule of law did not apply, as military commanders obtained exceptional powers. This meant that civilians could be expropriated, displaced, interned, or even executed, especially if they were considered internal enemies that could act as a fifth column during a war (Sigalas 2020, 165–66). The distinction between loyal and potentially disloyal civilians was made possible by what Cynthia Enloe calls "ethnic state security maps" and defines as "mental maps [that] become the basis for state élites' structuring inter-ethnic relations in a fashion that best secures the current state structure" (Enloe 1980, 15). Thus, cognitive "ethnic state security maps" were the by-products of states' need for reliable or desirable censuses and actual ethnographic maps that defined or propagandized existing or desired ethnolinguistic and ethnoreligious borders and mapped potential rear fronts. In a similar manner, the *İTF* carried out censuses and produced ethnographic maps on which its antiminority policies and selective ethnic-cleansing campaigns and genocides were based (Dündar 2010, 45, 94–103). The epitome of the *İTF*'s antiminority policy is summarized in the following objectives, "liquidating the concentrations of non-Turkish population that had accumulated at strategic points, and which were susceptible to negative foreign influences" (qtd. in Akçam 2006, 133).

The successive wars and the will to preserve the empire in conjunction with the post-1909 minority groups' resistance toward the centralization and Turkification policies and the disillusionment of many Young Turks with liberalism and parliamentarism led to a spiral of radicalization that allowed proauthoritarian initiatives and antiminority and antipluralist radicals to gain influential positions. As a result, minority groups were reduced to the status of second-class citizens or even enemy aliens. At the same time, the arrival of the Balkan Wars' Muslim refugees allowed the *İTF* to initiate the redesign of the Ottoman society by demographically engineering the ethnic and religious composition of strategic areas crucial for state security (Akın 2018; Dündar 2014; Üngör 2011). By subduing, neutralizing, and normalizing any potential or alleged threats through the resettlement of the Greek Orthodox elites and communities, the authorities were also eliminating their agency and potential influence.

A Greek national consciousness became vital for many Greek Orthodox only after the post-1909 disillusionment with the Young Turk Revolution and Ottomanism (Gondicas and Issawi 1999; Kechriotis 2005, 2012). After the 1910 boycott, Greek Orthodox became aware of the state and the Muslim majority population's conviction about their actual or alleged connection with Greece. State officials and many

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Muslims perceived the Greek Orthodox either as a monolithic group with clear Greek national consciousness, and therefore as enemies within, or as easy targets to be exploited and looted (Erol 2016). However, because of the Greek Orthodox communities' connectedness to Greece, neither their assimilation nor their extermination were viewed by the authorities as the best possible solution. For its part, the liberal Greek government succeeded in 1915 in forcing both the Ottoman Empire and Germany to accept a tacit agreement seeking the toleration of the Greek Orthodox population, but under the subsequent monarchist governments its interventions remained weak and indecisive, and indirectly acknowledged the Ottoman reasoning behind the deportations inland as a preventive measure under the pretext of military necessity (Ploumidis 2016).

In fact, the relocation of whole communities was implemented in an indiscriminate manner, impacting both loyal and disloyal citizens under the Deportation Law of 27 May 1915, which allowed for the relocation of those minority communities whose "espionage and betrayal has been felt" (Bayır 2013, 61). *İTF*'s goal was to neutralize any potential threat in strategic areas and to demographically engineer the country, and it impacted around 300,000 Greek Orthodox who were deported inland between 1914 and 1918 (Akın 2018, 165). The reestablished liberal Greek government estimated that 628,945 out of 1,725,929 Ottoman Greeks had been deported (either abroad or to the interior) by November 1918, "not on strategic grounds, as some have been pleased to assert—which would, strictly speaking be defensible during a state of war—but solely on alleged political grounds," and at least 150,000 died (Comité des étudiants hellènes 1921, 7–8). However, it is not clear if the latter number also includes those sent to the labor battalions.

As the Ottoman government could not force the Greek Orthodox to leave the country, they neutralized them by exiling them in the interior. During the Great War, these new security measures targeted four Greek Orthodox groups: (i) most citizen-soldiers, (ii) military fugitives' families, (iii) those suspected of being disloyal, and (iv) whole communities. The exiles from the first and second groups could originate from any region, but those from the third and fourth groups were limited to communities living in strategic areas. In the Ottoman Great War setting, this meant those located along the Aegean and Mediterranean coasts. However, the Russian advance into the Ottoman northeastern provinces and the British and French landings around the Dardanelles and their submarine operations in the Sea of Marmara allowed the authorities to exile inland several Greek Orthodox communities of Erzurum, Pontus, and the Marmara Sea. The article examines the nature of exile to the labor-battalions or to the towns and cities in the interior of Asia Minor. The closed internment camps of the labor-soldiers included only drafted males, many of whom were able to barter their skills and therefore improve their chances of survival. All civilian deportees were displaced to towns and cities in the interior of Asia Minor, which were transformed into open internment camps. Most exiles settled in the houses of Armenian or other Greek Orthodox deportees, further evidence of the low security threat these communities posed to the state. These houses had been looted, and the deportees did not have any means to sustain themselves, as the state was not able or willing to provide them with any assistance (Akın 2018; Erol 2016; Üngör & Polatel 2011). For this group the only way for them to survive and maintain their cultural ties

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was to resist their community's collapse and have those men still with them resist any draft that would transfer them away from their families.

The current article expands on demographic engineering literature by drawing from grassroots sources such as diaries, memoirs, letters, and oral interviews that allow it to produce a history of the inland exiles from below and delve into their experiences, emotions, and agency. It relies heavily on material from the Centre for Asia Minor Studies (KMS) in Athens. KMS holds the largest Ottoman exile survivors' archive. It consists of oral testimonies from more than 5,000 Greek refugees taken between the mid-1930s and the mid-1970s and also hundreds of ego-documents collected over the years. This initiative offered a voice to the voiceless by giving thousands of illiterate people the chance to share their culture, experiences, views, and emotions (Papailias 2005, 93–138). These sources remain largely untapped except for Nicholas Doumanis's work (Doumanis 2013). The article also utilizes published ego-documents, such as autobiographical accounts (Axiotis 2016), and the diary written by Dimitrios Avgerinos while in exile in 1916, the only known Great War ego-document of its kind (Sigalos 2011).

Targeted groups, inconsistencies, and resistance

Following the establishment of this new policy in late 1914, the first group that fell victim to the new measures was the citizen-soldiers. The decision to disarm most non-Muslim conscripts and use them for unarmed service inland was taken the same day the general mobilization was declared, on 3 August 1914 (Beşikçi 2012, 128–132). Although they were not exiles per se, the fact that most non-Muslim soldiers (i) had been downgraded to labor-soldiers, a clear statement by the state that it did not trust them to carry a weapon, (ii) had been transferred to labor camps, which in reality would also function as internment camps for the allegedly disloyal, (iii) were used for forced labor under very poor conditions, and (iv) had witnessed the mass execution of their Armenian fellow soldiers, demonstrated to them that they had been marked as second-class citizens to be interned, exploited, and possibly killed. Eleftherios Karakizoglou, mentions that his father, a rich merchant living in Azîziyye (modern-day Emirdağ) near Afyonkarahisar, was "exiled" to Belemedik near Adana, more than 400 km to the southeast. He was part of a group of forty-five mobilized men who worked in road construction, half of whom died from typhoid fever. Karakizoglou's father managed to survive because he was receiving remittances from home (Mavridis 1957a, 1957b). The hard work and miserable weather, malnourishment, illnesses, lice, corruption, and beatings by the commanding officers and guards caused many deaths among the labor-soldiers (Axiotis 2016; de Nogales 1926, 176–77; Iordanidis 1956; Ntervisoglou 1961; Paschalidis 1961; Tsiligkiris 1961). However, there were also cases of labor-soldiers who were hospitalized and took sick leave (Kampanou 1959; Nikolaïdis 1962).

Local elites were also targeted and deported inland. However, the authorities were cautious and included in this group of exiles only prominent members of less populous communities, avoiding attacks on the elites of populous communities with more political and economic leverage that could have led to mass reactions both inside and outside the country. The case of Efstratios Toustzoglou is illustrative of this

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group of exiles and of the limitations and tergiversations of the *İTF*'s antiminority radicalization. Toustzoglou was a merchant and teacher at the Greek school of Antalya for seventeen years. In 1915, he and forty other members of the Greek Orthodox community of Antalya were exiled to Bozkır near Konya. After the intervention of a Muslim acquaintance, he managed to return to Antalya five months later, but soon after he was exiled again, this time to Elmalı, west of Antalya. His second exile ended five months later when he was mobilized to fight. As he was literate in Ottoman Turkish, he was trained as a reserve officer for a year and, in 1917, was transferred to the Palestinian Front (Toustzoglou 1964). It is ironic that a twice-exiled alleged subversive ended up being trained as a reserve officer. Toustzoglou's case shows that after 1916, the authorities begin to think that the antiminority radicalization was damaging the war effort and, thus, decided to arm and train the new conscripts and transfer them to fronts in need of manpower instead of the labor battalions (Akın 2018, 100–5; Minasidis 2020, 341–73). However, local elites who could not be useful at the front because of their age continued to be exiled (Ploumidis 2016, 163).

Early in the war, the *İTF* began targeting Greek Orthodox communities again. The Entente's attempt to attack the Dardanelles in February 1915 offered the *İTF* an opportunity to end the tacit agreement concerning its tolerance toward the Greek Orthodox, at least locally. It argued for the military necessity of displacing the remaining Greek Orthodox population before any Entente landing operation to prevent collaboration and avoid having civilians on the new front. The first communities that were exiled inland under the new war policies were those still remaining on the Gelibolu peninsula and along the opposite shore of the Dardanelles in March 1915. These deportees were relocated to the area around Balıkesir, southeast of Çanakkale (Gingeras 2009, 43; Kaloteridou 1961; Papas 1962; Ploumidis 2016, 154). The communities around the coast of the Sea of Marmara followed, as the state authorities were afraid of an enemy breakthrough and also aimed to deny the enemy submarines operating in the Marmara Sea any potential local assistance with their intelligence gathering. The deportees were exiled in Kirmasti, modern-day Mustafakemalpaşa, Karacabey, and the lake of Uluabat (Relief Committee for Greeks of Asia Minor 1918, 5–7). Half a year after the end of the Gallipoli Campaign, in the summer of 1916, several of them were relocated again, this time to Erdek, which although on the shores of the Sea of Marmara and closer to their island, was still on the mainland (Marmarinos 1998, 4–5). Ironically, many of Kirmasti and Erdek's local Greek Orthodox, along with other Greek Orthodox from neighboring towns and villages, had been exiled to Çorum and Kayseri (Gingeras 2009, 43), to settle in the houses of the exiled and massacred Armenians (Gözel-Durmaz 2015, 13).

The Gallipoli Campaign also led to the recommencement of the paused relocations of the Greek Orthodox communities of the Aegean coast. Only rural communities were affected, as the government was cautious to avoid any Greek or international reaction and, thus, did not try to displace any urban populations. However, this did not mean that the violence on the ground was limited. Properties were looted and destroyed, young women were kidnapped and people died in their hundreds. Even if several of these deportees resettled in nearby areas, this did not mitigate their hardships and misery. In one sad case, Nikolaos Giasmatlis died during his relocation from a heart attack after his seventeen-year-old daughter was kidnapped (Giasmatlis 1965a, 1965b; Nychta 1937).

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The aforementioned cases are indicative of the inconsistencies of the deportation policy, which targeted people living in security sensitive areas but sent them to areas close to their homes, often to stay in the houses of local Greek Orthodox or Armenian deportees who had been relocated to the central and eastern provinces. If there had been any concern about the security of these regions, no Greek Orthodox exiles would have been relocated there, so why had the previous residents been sent away in the first place? Of course, this implies that the main goal behind the resettlements was the demographic engineering of the Ottoman human landscape, and that security was an excuse to minimize opposition. It might also demonstrate that the authorities had understood that the complete removal of the Greek Orthodox from the region would have disastrous consequences amid a total war and that the areas to the East could not support any more exiles, especially amid a famine, as many of them lacked the means to survive in their new locations (Akın 2018, 111–43; Ozil 2020, 113).

The Russian advance in the northeastern provinces from February to August 1916, offered the *İTF* the opportunity to end the tacit agreement that protected the Greek Orthodox communities in the region. In fact, the deported Greek Orthodox of Upper Mesopotamia and Pontus faced significantly more dangerous conditions than those of northwestern Asia Minor, as many of them were forcefully relocated under winter conditions and escorted by paramilitaries who had participated in the Armenian Genocide. Having witnessed the Armenian Genocide a year earlier, they would have constantly feared that they would suffer the same fate. For many of them it was clear that the *İTF* government had targeted its minority populations and after the Armenians, the Greeks would follow (Gavriilidis 1924, 5–39; Salpigktidis 1973; Tsiligkiris 1961). In the testimonies of several of them, this was a crucial factor for their decision to evade the draft, desert, and escape in mountainous areas, while there were even cases of mass suicides by young women, like those who found temporarily refuge near the monastery of Vazelonos (Grigoryan 2019, 281). The resistance to mobilization took place in defiance of measures taken by the authorities to fight draft evasion and desertion by threatening military fugitives' families and even communities with deportation inland and confiscation of their properties and by exiling inland all those assisting draft evaders and deserters, such as Tanash (Thanasis), a Greek citizen resident of Constantinople, who was displaced inland (Beşikçi 2012, 279, 287). Many Greek Orthodox soldiers were afraid for their families. For instance, in his interview from 1964, Pantelis Tosounoglou, from Manavgat near Antalya, an area far from the front but on the Mediterranean coast, acknowledges that his family was not harmed during the war because of his service (Tosounoglou 1964). In some cases, such as that of Giresun, it was Vehip Pasha, the commander of the Third Army, who protected the Greek Orthodox communities under his control from resettlement (Sigalas 2020).

Even so, the authorities punished whole communities more frequently from 1916 onward. In fact, the simultaneous mobilization of new minority recruits for combatant positions and the exile of whole minority communities from 1916 onward demonstrates how inconsistent and contradictory were the Ottoman war policies, as they could not serve successfully both the war effort and the demographic engineering campaign. By exiling the whole community, they were also targeting any support or any mobilization pools for the guerrilla bands that were organizing in regions, such as Pontus, as a response to mobilization and the deportations. However,

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the authorities also exiled loyal soldiers' families. Georgios Nikolaïdis, from Mousagka near Eğin, managed to get promoted to master sergeant immediately because he was literate in Ottoman Turkish. In 1916, he was disarmed despite his skills and sent to the labor battalions. When Nikolaïdis returned to his village on sick leave, he found that all the Christian houses had been confiscated by the state and the families had been relocated. Contrary to its promises, the state did not protect the property and families of all its loyal soldiers (Nikolaïdis 1962). In a similar fashion, Pavlos Stefanidis, from Poulantzak near Giresun, a soldier since 1914 who took sick leave in 1915, found himself and his community in exile in 1916 because of fears of a further Russian advance and the activities of local Pontic Greek guerrillas (Stefanidis 1962).

Although the exile exemption for officers' families still stood, it had to be claimed and it did not include the full protection of their property. Written in 1924, while he was imprisoned in Erzincan, Konstantinos Raptarchis's memoirs are indicative of this. His uncle Alkiviadis, being a pharmacist, was not mobilized in 1914 but in 1915, receiving the rank of second lieutenant. On 28 December 1916, the authorities gathered the whole village, Kadiköy near Samsun, and marched it southward. The family of doctor Thomaïdis, who was also an officer, informed the authorities immediately about their status. The official exemption from exile for all officers' families reached the town five hours later. Although the Thomaïdis family had been exempted, the Raptarchis family had already been marched southward, allegedly because they had not informed the authorities about their status. Only during the night, on the Thomaïdis family's initiative, did the authorities search for the Raptarchis family among the deportees, and the following day they were provided with the necessary documentation and allowed to return. However, their brief absence meant that their household articles had been "confiscated," and they were only able to "save" half their furniture, while later the authorities would also requisition three-quarters of their merchandise (Raptarchis 1924, 15, 34–39, 48–49, 57). Their inability to protect their merchandise or to get their household articles back demonstrates that behind the requisitions and the confiscations was the motivations of local Muslim elites to loot the deportees' property. Moreover, Alkiviadis's status could exempt the female and minor members of the Raptarchis family from exile, but not his brothers. Thus, Polyvios, Konstantinos's father, a merchant and notable, was exiled southward on 25 January 1917, along with twenty other Greek Orthodox merchants, while Evros, another of Konstantinos's uncles, also a merchant, was protected and hidden by local influential Muslims on the initiative of their wives. Alkiviadis intervened and released his brother the following day. Simultaneously, rumors began circulating about a new wave of deportations inland, with the aim, according to Konstantinos, of forcing those Greek Orthodox who had not yet been exiled to sell their properties at humiliating prices. Soon, Konstantinos was left alone in Samsun, where he was serving, as almost all his relatives had been exiled, and his immediate family was in Merzifon (Raptarchis 1924, 50–55, 86).

Particularly interesting are several comments Raptarchis makes in his memoir regarding the presence of at least four "secret policemen" operating in his town in early 1917, responsible for spying on, interrogating, arresting, and determining the property of future deportees (ibid., 50–52, 55–56). Policemen, gendarmes, agents, soldiers, officers, paramilitaries, and various volunteers who constituted what Mehmet Beşikci calls an "internal security mechanism" (Beşikci 2012) participated in

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several or all the stages of the minority populations' internal exile, and, in the case of the Armenians, also their mass extermination. However, the large number of men responsible for the resettlement operations, even in places in which there was no military threat, and the prioritization of the destruction of minority communities that impacted the empire's economy, trade, and manufacturing, industrial, and agricultural production is reminiscent of Robert Paxton's "fascist radicalization." He defines it as "[Nazi Germany's] runaway spiral that ultimately prevented rational war making, as vital resources were diverted from military operations to the murder of the Jews" (Paxton 2004, 171). Similarly, *İTF* was diverting valuable manpower from the front and the armed forces' military needs to completely homogenize certain areas, while it had already prevented hundreds of thousands of non-Muslim conscripts from serving as combatants or in positions where they could better utilize their skills, and even massacred the Armenian soldiers. For all those Muslims participating in the deportation operations, they seemed a more desirable posting than the war fronts. Not only were they in a much safer environment, as most of the minority populations had been disarmed, but they could also make a fortune by receiving bribes and looting the properties of those deported or buying them at a discount. At the same time, the demographics of the minorities and their demonization by the authorities and the majority population allowed these men to continue working in the deportation business, as there were always other communities to target. They were holding back from participation in the war effort to succeed in the "internal (civil) war" and also gain materially for themselves.

The destruction of whole communities and family networks are common themes in many ego-documents. Charalampos Eleftheriadis, from Panagia at Kuşkaya, near Giresun, who was fifteen years old when his village was deported in 1916, writes extensively in his memoirs about the exile of the whole community, the competition between the local officials to see who could acquire the belongings the deportees were leaving behind, and the looting of their belongings even before their deportation. It seems that the village's leadership trusted the local gendarmes more than the local administrator, a Muslim Cretan and Young Turk extremist. Eleftheriadis records the places they passed, the murders of those who could not keep up during the march southward, the rapes of women, the continued theft of their belongings by the gendarmes that accompanied them, the hunger throughout the march, and their willingness to eat the dead animals they came across. He records by name and in detail the many deaths due to these hardships and the typhus that transformed death into something banal for the deportees, who became so indifferent that, at one point, they sat waiting for an unconscious toddler, one of Eleftheriadis's nephews, to die to put him into a grave that had already been dug for a man who had died earlier. In the end, the toddler was saved by his grandmother, who refused to bury him and instead carried him until he regained consciousness. Eleftheriadis even began selling (after cleaning) the abandoned clothes of all those dying from typhus. However, he also mentions that in Karahisar, modern-day Şebinkarahisar, doctors vaccinated the deportees en masse, although this did not save most of them from typhus, while their priest's wife was allowed to stay in her home village when they passed it, as she could not walk any further. Their column passed Zara and then turned westward to Tokat, where they finally settled, although there was a shorter route to Tokat, through Niksar. The authorities' decision to march them to Tokat using a longer route either

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demonstrates their willingness to transform deportation into a death march or shows how chaotic many of these relocations were, with the authorities deciding the final destination on the way and according to local needs and updates. During the ordeal, Eleftheriadis was also hospitalized for typhus, while he lost all his immediate relatives except for his elder brother, Polychronis. The latter was conscripted during the march but deserted and reconnected with his younger brother; however, he was traumatized by his experiences. Interestingly, after a talk with a guerrillas' liaison, who tried to have them enlist in the Pontic Greek guerrilla movement, sixty-five surviving deportees from various Pontic villages, twenty-five of whom were women, decided to leave Tokat on 5 April 1917. They successfully left the city (which also shows that the authorities' surveillance was not so close) and moved northward to their home villages to join the guerrillas there. Eleftheriadis's elder brother did not allow him to stay with the guerrillas and, pretending to be a Muslim, he moved to Giresun to stay with his godmother. However, even if Eleftheriadis's family had a vast network of relatives and friends, both Christians and Muslims, it was hard for him to find shelter, as most were afraid they would also be deported if the authorities discovered his identity. At the same time, he managed to avoid a second exile by taking advantage of the need of various Muslims for workers. According to Eleftheriadis, of the initial 660 deportees, around ten to fifteen survived (Eleftheriadis 1957, 3–153). This was a moving genocide, causing deaths by attrition.

Both the low number of survivors among the exiled and the unwillingness of most in his home area to offer Eleftheriadis shelter demonstrate the community collapse that occurred because of the war, antiminority radicalization and the inland deportation policy. This community collapse was both physical and moral. The exile to an unfamiliar place and the mass deaths that accompanied it decimated the Greek Orthodox communities; simultaneously, they severed the communal and familiar ties between individuals, even family members, who out of fear for their material and physical well-being abandoned previous moral codes and norms in the atomized wartime world. Thus, even many of the nondeported Greek Orthodox had been neutralized and normalized. Moreover, several Muslims' antiminority extremism allowed them to break prewar ties by aligning with the contemporary majoritarian view, thereby demonstrating their allegiance to the new order. However, the solidarity shown to Evros Raptarchis by the local Muslim elites (mainly his female customers), demonstrates the importance of ties with people in influential positions and social capital in times of community collapse. In that respect, the efforts of Pontic Greek guerrillas to convince the deportees to leave their open internment camps and join them demonstrate another form of solidarity, and an attempt at community reconstruction that would allow them to survive a possible mass execution (like that of the Armenians) and also maintain their cultural ties (Yérasimos 1989, 15).

The next group to be deported were the urban populations of the Aegean coast. The occupation of the northeastern Aegean islands by the Entente and the pro-Entente Movement of National Defense in Salonika offered Constantinople a pretext to abandon the tacit agreement and to target the urban Greek Orthodox populations of the Aegean coastline in September 1916 (Erol 2016, 200–1; Toynbee 1922, 142–43). The military authorities began by exiling 300 prominent members of Ayvalık in late 1916, soon to be followed by the majority of the population of Ayvalık and the surrounding areas. Although Talât had initially spared them, the last few hundred

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remaining inhabitants were eventually exiled (Efiloğlu 2020, 738; Ozil 2020, 112–13). In July 1917 even the German commander Otto Liman von Sanders ordered the deportation inland of the whole Ayvalık Greek Orthodox population because of accusations of pro-Entente espionage. Yet, after he learned that the operation had caused 200 deaths among the deportees he canceled it and ordered the repatriation of the rest, admitting that the deportation of such a large population is unnecessary and should be avoided. He was unwilling to be seen as responsible for such mass deaths (Hull 2005, 286). Even so, the repatriation of several deportees was not carried out immediately. Some of them finally returned to Ayvalık after eight months, and yet even then they were not allowed to return to their houses, which were occupied by Muslims (Kalyva 1971).

Both community collapse and solidarity were byproducts of the brutalization imposed on the deportees during their long ordeal. In that respect, their perseverance and maintenance of their cultural and religious ties were part of their everyday resistance (Scott 1985). The end of the war allowed most of those who survived to return to their hometowns and villages and try to reconstruct their lives and communities. However, this proved a challenge for many of them. In some cases, they found that their properties had been completely destroyed or occupied by Muslim refugees or other Greek Orthodox deportees (Axiotis 2016; Koudroglous to Theophanidis 1921; Raptarchis 1924).

Avgerinos's reflections on internal exile: a day-to-day account

After the initial shock of the deportation order, Avgerinos continues his diary by recording in detail his emotions, fears, and agonies, as he had heard witnesses describing the horrendous conditions under which the Armenians had marched and how they were finally exterminated. The rest of the family had similar reactions and the atmosphere in the house immediately resembled that of a "funeral" (Sigalos 2011, 109). His emotions turn to anger when he records that he has been forced to leave all his merchandise and property behind. In his diary, he mentions the initial responses of the rest of the Greek Orthodox community, with some members declaring that it is better to fight and die than to be slaughtered. However, the majority preferred to obey the authorities, hoping that they would not be executed like the Armenians. Avgerinos said to a policeman, "[v]ery well, we will be gone but, Cemal Efendi, we are not like the Armenians" (ibid.). A remark that most probably was made to remind the local *İTF* authorities that the local Greek Orthodox were not as politically active as their Armenian neighbors. Some hours later, the Greek Orthodox priest, Theodoros, announced to his worried flock that he had managed to negotiate a three-day delay to their departure to allow them to better prepare for the winter march. Three days later, on 7 January, several Greek Orthodox met with the local German counselor, who intervened to allow them to stay in Erzurum. The following day various members of the local Greek Orthodox elite decided to bribe the local authorities to protect the Greek Orthodox community from any harm and allow it to remain in Erzurum and avoid a forced march under harsh winter conditions. They managed to collect 650 gold liras, 600 for the notables and 50 for the Muslim fixer. On 19 January 1916, they also tried to have the Greek government intervene on their behalf through the local Greek consulate, but the embassy in Constantinople declared itself unable to intervene as the evacuation was presented as targeting the whole population of

Erzurum and not just the Greek Orthodox community (ibid., 107–32). This was not far from the truth, as most Muslims were also about to evacuate the city, but the Greek Orthodox feared for their safety and their lives.

The trajectory of the responses of Erzurum's Greek Orthodox community offers several important insights. Contrary to other communities, they were quick enough to postpone their immediate resettlement, although the Russian army was advancing toward Erzurum, and they demonstrated a unified front in their decision to bribe the authorities. Their most interesting decision was not to seek the immediate intervention of Greece. It seems that they decided to avoid validating *İTF*'s suspicions about their connections with Greece, and thus set out to bargain with the local authorities and the German consul first. Only after that had failed, as a last resort, did they seek help from Greece. Their uneasiness to attach themselves to an external state actor, at least initially, also demonstrates their unwillingness to abandon the traditional consensual strategy of pluralistic societies amid total war and rampant antiminority radicalization. Even when they decided to move beyond negotiation with the empire because it had not brought about the desired result, they next chose to seek the intervention of an Ottoman ally, Germany, to remind Constantinople of the tacit agreement for the toleration of the Ottoman Greeks. The final approach to the Greek consul only shows how desperate they had become. The lack of any earlier intervention by the Greek consulate most probably had the same reasoning. In fact, the Greek embassy's response demonstrates that Greece accepted the Ottoman argument about the military need for the resettlement of the community of Erzurum. Their simultaneous intervention against the planned deportation of the Ayvalık community, in January 1916, seems to have been because there was no military need for any deportation of the communities on the Aegean coast. At the same time, it shows how selective and weak the Greek interventions for the protection of the tacit agreement were, aiming to save only populous communities and leaving less populous ones, even on the Aegean coast, unprotected.

While Avgerinos writes positively about many Muslims who tried to help them or proved true friends, he also makes many negative remarks about the *İTF*, its people and all those who wanted to benefit from the situation. Avgerinos and probably many Greek Orthodox by that time had connected the *İTF* with a tyrannical regime, antiminority extremist policies and radicalized cadres, and unprecedented mass violence. All three, in conjunction with the war, had not only impacted their everyday lives negatively but also threatened their well-being and even their lives. The *İTF* had chosen to use violence to achieve its goals for the preservation of the empire, its economic and political independence from foreign and minority influences, and the empire's demographic remodeling along Muslim-Turkish majoritarian lines. As a result, it had also attracted members and supporters who viewed violence as a means of accumulating capital and political power and had accepted the destruction of those not belonging to the majority population. When, on 9 January, several paramilitaries, came to escort them, he painted a grim picture of them: "[i]n general, their appearance was demonstrating cruelty, terror, and hopelessness. As soon as I saw them, my last hope for the safety of our lives disappeared. How can there be hope. Destruction, looting, murder, savagery were clearly painted on their faces" (Sigalos 2011, 118). At the last moment, the paramilitaries were bribed by the whole community, while they also asked Avgerinos to give them his keys before their final departure, so they could loot the house before the state authorities did so. Even when

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the Greek Orthodox elites of Erzurum were discussing how to bribe the local officials, Avgerinos still wondered if "the government would not send after the notorious gangs to assassinate us, to rob us on behalf of the committee [*İTF*]" (ibid., 121).

In the end, the bribes did not bring about the desired outcome and on 20 January 1916 250 Greek Orthodox of Erzurum were forced to leave the city. However, seven of the poorest families remained, most probably because they did not have the means to acquire a cart or survive the deportation. The deportees marched for six days, under harsh winter conditions, and even crossed the Kop mountain, but they were also able to spend the nights in local houses until they reached Gümüşhane. In just a few days, Gümüşhane had completely changed its demographic makeup. More Greek Orthodox deportees were arriving while almost all the Muslims were fleeing westward (ibid., 142–44, 147).

These movements offered Avgerinos another chance to criticize the government and its policies. When he witnessed how the Greek Orthodox exiles from Maçka had been deprived of their flocks, while the column of Muslim refugees that followed had enlarged their own, he wrote on 9 May "the Government seizes from the Christians and leaves the Turks [Muslims] undisturbed. This expulsion is explained in many ways[;] maybe it is an economic war against the Christians, maybe [the government] removes us inland as hostages over Greece's stance, maybe out of envy: why should the Turkish nation be destroyed while the Christians are happy" (ibid., 178–79). This was the second time that he explicitly connected *İTF*'s deportation policies with Greece. His remarks suggest his understanding of the hyperpoliticization of the connections, real or imagined by the Ottoman authorities, between the Greek Orthodox and Greece. The Greek Orthodox were not to be annihilated en masse, at least for now, but to function as hostages by being deported inland, for Constantinople to be able to continue blackmailing Athens. At the same time, most likely he had fallen victim, as a merchant, to the anti-Greek (Orthodox) boycott movement since 1911, and thus, he does not fail to connect both events and argue that the Young Turks had declared an economic war against the minorities following their "national economy" campaigns (Çetinkaya 2014).

The hardships of the deportees did not cease after their initial deportation. In early March, Avgerinos mentions that the authorities began conscripting the men older than sixteen years old, even those who had paid to be exempted. This entailed a second exile, solely for males (most certainly to the labor battalions for the older men), while their families had to face losing their main protectors, which meant that they would not have the means to support themselves as they were already in exile. The men began hiding and the authorities responded by burning several houses and threatening the women and children left behind. Avgerinos, who was also evading the draft, records on 24 March, "[t]he threat of deportation inland is before our eyes. No one can give any interpretation to the mysterious plans of the Government. We will see what the result will be. We always lean toward the worst because we do not expect anything good from the Government" (Sigalos 2011, 183). He managed to evade any further deportation, and by June he was writing about the frequent killings of deportees and rapes of women by Muslim soldiers, while more and more deportees began dying from starvation. As Avgerinos comments on the aforementioned crimes and life under expulsion, "[m]igration after all is but a virtualized death, it is the spectrum of death, it is death itself" (ibid., 184–93). At the same time, the Russian

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advance continued and the Ottoman authorities did not seem willing to transfer the deportees further inland. The latter were again afraid of being massacred by the retreating troops or the Muslim refugees, as had happened to other Greek Orthodox communities. However, nothing happened in Gümüşhane. Instead, with "pulses of joy and terror," they awaited their "liberation" by the Russians, which occurred on 7 July 1916 (ibid., 184–98). This was the date of the last entry by Avgerinos, who died some months later, possibly in Yekaterinodar, modern-day Krasnodar, where he found refuge with his wife (ibid., 20). It seems that they were unable to return to Erzurum, and that all these resettlements had taken their toll on Avgerinos's health.

Avgerinos's testimony, in conjunction with that of Eleftheriadis, offers a staggering insight into the Ottoman resettlement policy. In both cases, the deportees were dropped off in towns transformed into open internment camps and left to "survive" by themselves, as they were not provided with welfare or offered jobs, livestock, or fields to sustain themselves. This was part of a wider problem of provisioning impacting the whole empire that had been caused by the general mobilization of manpower and was leading to famine in both Anatolia and Greater Syria. The failure to provide exiles with any assistance can be seen as one of the weaknesses of the *İTF*'s deportation measures. However, by 1916, when the mass deportation of the Pontic Greek communities began, the state was aware of the problems caused by the war and had decided to centralize the provisioning system (Akın 2018, 111–43). Thus, their internal exile to places that could not sustain them was a deliberate act, not only intended to normalize and neutralize them but also to exterminate them slowly and quietly. Moreover, the Greek Orthodox were moved to cities that had been deprived of their Christian populations and had their economies shattered by the war, and were settled in looted houses, emptied of all the basics. Furthermore, the conscription of the male exiles so they could be sent to the labor battalions—a second exile—meant that all families would lose their sole breadwinners in a place where they did not have any family or communal networks. For the women and children left behind, this meant death, prostitution, or conversion to Islam and complete assimilation. Under these circumstances, draft evasion, as in the case of Avgerinos's exiled group, or escape and resistance, as in the case of Eleftheriadis and those who fled Tokat, were the only solutions for anyone seeking survival not only for themselves but also for their families. War and genocidal policies did not offer much room for maneuver.

Conclusion

Regardless of the loyalty or disloyalty of the Greek Orthodox, many of them were deported inland or were threatened with deportation. They were considered enemies within by the Ottoman government, as the main criteria of their expulsion inland were their Orthodox Christian faith, locality, and alleged connections with Greece, and not their individual or communal loyalty or disloyalty toward the state. This policy managed to demographically and economically homogenize regions that had previously had a Greek Orthodox majority or significant minority populations, neutralizing and normalizing not only the deported populations but also the nondeported ones. At the same time, it served the Ottoman war effort by exploiting the forced labor of the exiles, either soldier-laborers or even whole communities.

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Greek Orthodox exiles' ego-documents reveal an interesting set of insights about the Ottoman resettlement policy. They demonstrate an awareness of their demonization and endangered position and the state's unjust and opportunistic policies toward them. At the same time, the coercive structure of the deportations, which led to the collapse of their communities, did not completely break all of them. The ego-documents demonstrate a resilience among many Greek Orthodox and a willingness to adapt and find a new path, either as soldier-laborers or as simple exiles. In a few cases, they even dictated their fate. They managed to exploit the damaging effects of antiminority radicalization on the Ottoman war effort and the inconsistencies of the deportation policy. When they could not protect themselves, solidarity remained their last refuge, not only for their survival and the maintenance of their cultural ties but also for the protection of Ottoman pluralism, as solidarity was also shown by Muslims. However, at the same time the ego-documents only offer a partial view of the Greek Orthodox experience. Although KMS offered a voice to the voiceless by collecting and maintaining the testimonies of thousands of refugees, many of whom were survivors of exile, many others did not survive the process or were assimilated by the majority population.

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