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The Greek Diaspora in Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union

Preface

The aim of this survey is to provide certain information on the following topics:

- the development of a Greek Diaspora in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union between 1945 and 1997,
- the description of these Diaspora groups, their political and social situation,
- the efforts of the Greek state to protect and develop these Diaspora groups,
- the Greek governments' activities regarding return migration of these Diaspora groups in the form of:
 - government invitations for repatriation,
 - policy interventions, their intention and success,
 - development policies (projects oriented towards migrants or development aid grants),
 - direct intervention in terms of organizing Diaspora groups.

Since 1945 two main Greek Diaspora groups have existed in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union: the Pontian Greeks and the Greek political refugees. The Pontians are Greek descendants who, during ancient times, created colonies on the coasts of Euxinous Pontos. After the genocide carried out by the Turks in 1918-22 and the Soviet government's persecutions which

began in 1939, the Pontians found themselves in exile in Central Asia. The return of the survivors as well as their repatriation to Greece started in 1985-86. These Pontians have never lived in Greece. The political refugees, on the other hand, are Greeks who fled from Greece after the civil war (1946-49), because of the persecutions they did or would suffer due of their political actions and beliefs. They relocated mostly in Eastern Europe and Russia and their repatriation was prohibited by the Greek government until 1974.

The two groups mentioned above are very different from each other, both in their reasons for immigration and emigration; because of their differences they must be examined and presented separately. Nevertheless, the central focus for both of them is the Greek government's activities and policies regarding their repatriation.

1. Introduction

Since the 19th century and up to the 1970's, Greece had been an emigration country, meaning that a considerable percentage of the Greek population emigrated in order to seek a better life. The main destination of the emigrants was the USA, until the Second World War, and Germany after it, especially in the 1960's; other common destinations were Australia, Canada but also several European countries, mainly western ones.

Although a large number of Greeks were emigrating each year, it was only after 1936 that the Greek government started taking some precautions for those emigrants (i.e. by signing bilateral agreements with other countries), but we cannot describe those as a specific emigration policy. In reality, emigration was just seen as a positive solution to the problems of the peasants and to unemployment.

Return migration rates were always lower than those of emigration,

with two exceptions: the first was between 1922 and 1940, and the second from 1974 onwards. In the period 1922-1940, immigration overlapped emigration because of the population shift that was agreed with Turkey in the Treaty of Lausanne, which resulted in 1.5 million Greek immigrants from Minor Asia. The second period starts with and is characterized by the end of the colonels' dictatorship in 1974; after that date, many Greeks found their way back home, mostly motivated by sentimental reasons.

Table 1 is especially indicative of the migration current of the 1960's and 1970's. Unfortunately, the Greek National Statistical Organization only measured return migration from 1968 until 1977, when it stopped suddenly, and consequently there is no official data on the return migration for the years after, which proved to be the most crucial. We can see that in the 1960's the emigration rate was very high (reaching or exceeding one hundred people), whilst the return migration rate was much lower, but stable enough until 1974. After the junta's fall and the re-establishment of democracy, an increase of return migration with a simultaneous decrease of immigration was noticed; there was a negative migration for the first time after the population shift in 1922.

Table 1:
Immigration and emigration from 1968 to 1977

Year	Immigrants	Emigrants
1968	90,866	18,882
1969	91,552	18,132
1970	92,681	22,669
1971	61,745	24,709

1972	43,397	27,522
1973	27,525	22,285
1974	24,448	24,476
1975	20,330	34,214
1976	20,374	32,067
1977	16,510	12,572*

*January to September

Source: Greek National Statistical Organization

Despite the long-standing existence of some –though perhaps low– immigration and its significant increase after 1974, the Greek government did not develop any reception and support policies, except for some occasional initiatives. The returning migrants had to deal with enormous problems alone, or with some help from private associations or the Church. It was only after 1981, when Pasok (the Socialist party) was elected, that the situation changed somehow. Certain measures were implemented as part of a five-year development plan, including: economic and investment motivation, loans, subsidies, further education, personnel training, tax and duty exemptions. Some NGOs were also founded in order to support and help the immigrants.

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Two particular groups of Greeks abroad are those from Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, namely the Pontians and the political refugees. As mentioned in the preface, the Pontians are Greek descendants who lived by the coasts of Euxinous Pontos

until 1918, when the genocide by the Turks took place and the survivors fled to the Soviet Union. Although they had never been Greek citizens, we talk of their coming back or return migration so as to indicate their Greek origin and their strong bonds with Greece. As for the political refugees, they were Greek nationals who were persecuted for their political beliefs and were (self-)exiled during and after the civil war (1946-49). In this case, we can speak of return migration or, more accurately, repatriation, which is the correct term to describe their return to their country of birth.

The main focus of this survey is on the government's policies towards those two Diaspora groups. Nevertheless, a historical retrospection is also needed in order to understand the particularity of each case and the need for a different approach on behalf of the Greek government. In order to gain all the relevant and accurate knowledge and data for this survey certain systematic steps had to be followed.

The first step was the search and study of the available literature, both the general and the more specific. The general bibliography offers a theoretical background on immigration theories and, also, general information on the emigration and return migration currents in Greece (periods, causes, interpretations, descriptions of measures taken). The specific bibliography, which can be found mostly through references in the general literature, concerns the Pontians and the political refugees in particular and provides insights into the historical circumstances of the migration processes, existing statistical information, characteristics of the return migrants and their living conditions abroad.

After studying the bibliography the next step was to go directly to the public sector's services and get as much information on the migrants from Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union as possible. This information concerned surveys made and detailed measures taken to benefit those two groups (programmes, benefits and awards). Part of this second step was the listing of all laws issued by the Greek governments since 1946 that are relevant to this

research.

The third step was to approach some private non-profit organizations (NGOs) of Pontians and political refugees. Their records were extremely useful and illuminating, particularly as they revealed whether the governmental measures were actually implemented and to what extent but also whether the demands of the return migrants and the problems they encountered were resolved.

Finally, a few interviews were carried out: the people interviewed had positions of high responsibility in their departments, both in the public and private sector. They focused on the policies that are implemented with regard to migrants, the extent of the help that the state can provide and the particular problems they must deal with. Some problems arose while taking the above steps, excluding the last one. The first problem was the lack of literature; although there are plenty of books about migration in general and Greek migration in particular, very few of them concern Greek migrants from Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union because of their small number compared to that of other migrants. Most of the literature available concerns Greek emigrants to (Western) Germany which is where the vast majority of the post-World War II emigrants went. This problem was to some extent resolved by the plentiful information found in private associations.

Another problem was the lack of official statistical data on return migration. Although the Greek National Statistical Organization provides such data for emigration, there are no data available for return migration except for the years 1968-1977. All that is available are some official statistical data for the Pontian Greeks concerning the years 1986-1995 supplied by EIYAPOE (a governmental organisation responsible for these issues). The only way to find relevant information, especially for the political refugees, was by gathering the estimates of various associations and scholars and comparing them.

Last but not least, the negligent set-up of the public sector services for the Greeks abroad presented a problem: the relevant

data were usually littered among several offices of a department or even among different departments. Also, some departments did not have the records they were supposed to and, often, denied responsibility on the matter. Although such bureaucratic problems are difficult to resolve, they were overcome because of the friendly and helpful cooperation of the public servants contacted.

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The two diaspora groups examined in this survey will be presented separately as the difference between them must be reflected in their presentation. Thus, in the first part we will examine the case of the Pontian Greeks. The historical retrospection will describe how they came to live in the former Soviet Union, their living conditions there, their internal removals, the reasons for emigrating to Greece and the process of emigration itself, along with some statistical records and, where necessary, estimates. Some information will then be provided on their legal status in Greece and on recurrent aid expenses involved in helping them on their arrival and settlement in Greece.

In the following, we shall introduce EIYAPOE, a public service organization, whose main responsibility is to support the Pontians and to implement the “Thrace Programme”, which is a programme of subsidized accommodation and training for these migrants. Reference will be also made to certain programmes for the smooth integration of the Pontians into Greek society, derived both from Greek and non-Greek initiatives. In addition, there are some support measures taken by the Greek government on behalf of the Pontian Greeks in the former Soviet Union. Finally, reference will be made to the Pontians’ demands, complaints and comments on the efficacy of the measures and the problems they face. Instead of some recapitulation, we will refer to certain surveys conducted in the recent past, which reveal much about the living conditions of the Pontians, the efficacy of the measures etc.

The second part of the survey is about the political

refugees. In the historical retrospection we will refer to the Greek resistance (1941-1944) and the civil war (1946-1949), the reasons for the expatriation of the Communists, their arrival in Eastern Europe and their living conditions up to 1974. The period after 1974, when repatriation started, will be divided into two sub-periods; until 1981 and afterwards. The first period, 1974-1981, is characterized by the lack of any policy towards the political refugees; only some insignificant measures were taken, but free repatriation was not yet allowed. In the period after 1981, the new government changed its attitude by launching some measures for both the moral and the material restoration of the political refugees. These measures will be classified according to the area they belong to (i.e. employment or welfare measures) and will be presented simultaneously with the demands and claims of the political refugees of that area. Subsequently, we will refer to other support programmes, either Greek or non-Greek. The last step will be to present some results of recent surveys concerning political refugees.

In the third chapter I will compare the Pontians and the political refugees by using elements from retrospective surveys. This will provide us with a better understanding of their problems and the adequacy of the government's measures. In the last chapter, the epilogue, a selective recapitulation will be made so as to lead to the relevant conclusions.

1. The Pontian Greeks

a) Historical retrospection

The Pontians are descendants of the Greeks who, in the 8th and 7th century B.C., created colonies in the Caucasus, the Crimea and the coasts of the Black Sea; this area is called Euxinous Pontos, and so those Greeks were called Pontians. This population increased significantly during the Ottoman Empire and, before World War I, they numbered about 1.5 million, despite having been persecuted by

the Ottomans (these persecutions being most acute in 1777-1780 and in 1864). During 1918 and 1920, the Turks implemented a genocide plan against the Greek populations of the Turkish territory: 350,000 were executed, and the rest abandoned their goods and properties to save their lives. Some of them went to Greece, Persia, Europe or America, but the majority fled to the Soviet Union.

Three periods can be distinguished between when examining Pontians and their living in the Soviet Union: the period from 1917 to 1937, when Leninist ideology prevailed, the period, from 1937 to 1985, of the Stalinist persecutions and afterwards, and, from 1985 onwards, the period of perestroika and the collapse of the Soviet Union. These three periods determined the development of the Greek Diaspora in a very decisive way as will be described in the following.

The period from 1917 to 1937 was characterized by the 16th Conference of the Soviet Communist Party, which referred positively to the prevalence of political liberties for ethnic minorities, to the conservation of their mother tongue, their traditions and their national identity. Within this context, Hellenism in the Soviet Union was highly developed: Greek schools were established, many Greek newspapers were issued and the Pontian Greeks enjoyed a prosperous life. During this period the Greeks were mostly gathered in the Ukraine, Georgia, the Crimea, Armenia and South Russia, as in three of their districts the Pontians had gained a semi-autonomous status.

The second period between 1937 and 1985, particularly until 1953, was characterized by boundless suffering for the Pontian Greeks. When Stalin came to power, both the ethnic minorities and those people who had different political beliefs were persecuted, exiled, imprisoned or even executed. On the whole, one million people were arrested, and only 60,000 of them returned home within the next fifteen years. As regards the Greek population, their persecution was initially explained by political and class criteria. Later on, the criteria became national, as it was proved by the fact

that many Greek Communists were persecuted despite their being faithful to the Communist Party.

Most expulsions took place in Russia and the Ukraine, but also in Georgia: 50,000 or more Pontians were executed or died in Siberia; 350,000 were expelled, the majority to Kazakhstan, and 70,000 more to Uzbekistan. Almost all of the male population and those who did not have Soviet citizenship (men or women) were sent into exile. Greek schools and newspapers were closed and most of the “spiritual leaders” (teachers, priests etc.) were executed. Obviously, those expelled were living under squalid conditions and harsh, restrictive measures.

After Stalin’s death in 1953, only those who had the Soviet citizenship were permitted to return to their homes. In 1964, a bilateral agreement between Greece and the Soviet Union permitted a small number of Pontians to emigrate to Greece; a large influx of –potential– migrants emerged, but it soon broke down because of the colonels’ coup d’état on 21 April 1967.

The Pontian Greeks, although discouraged by the Soviet government, started to found Greek societies and associations after 1971. Their motive was to preserve their language, to support each other (economically and morally), and to facilitate their contact with Greece. These associations offered a lot of help and support and achieved their aims to a large extent. It is indicative of their success that, wherever the Pontians were organized in such societies, they were better represented within the local authorities.

The third period started with the accession of Gorbachev to power and his reformatory attempts. All measures that restricted ethnic minorities were dulled and many associations were founded. Unfortunately, the ethnic awakening that followed resulted in nationalistic disorders and riots. In August 1989, the Central Committee of the Communist Party pronounced that the roots of those ethnic conflicts were to be found in the mass expulsions and persecutions that had taken place during the Stalinist period and, as a solution, they decided to guarantee the rights of all ethnic minorities and to help them preserve their culture, language etc.

The Committee went even further to suggest an autonomous status for those regions where there was a significant articulation of ethnicity, which would have its representatives within the decision-making authorities. In 1991, the Soviet government proposed the maintenance of the Soviet Union as a federation of independent and equivalent states, but six out of fifteen states refused by claiming their full independence from the Soviet Union. Afterwards, the intensity of the ethnic differences became highly acute and several conflicts erupted.

Perestroika affected the Pontians in both a negative and positive way. The positive effect was that their newspapers, along with many books, were published again, Greek radio stations were established and the Greek language was taught at schools as a provisional choice or as a second language. In 1989 the Greek Union “Pontos” was founded under the leadership of A. Popof (Mayor of Moscow) as a central coordinating organ of all local Greek unions. “Pontos” expressed the opinion that only political autonomy would keep the Greeks living in the Soviet Union, and called for an autonomous, but not independent, district within Russia (in South Russia) where the Greeks, who were spread all over the Soviet Union, should gather and live peacefully.

The negative effect of perestroika was the increase of nationalistic exaltations, which were particularly acute in South Russia and the Crimea, both regions with large Pontian populations which opted for an autonomous Pontian district. On the other hand, the rise in nationalism, coupled with riots and conflicts, was reminiscent of the Stalinist persecutions; the reaction was the emergence of a large Pontian emigration movement whose destination was Greece. So, among these two trends –the demand for autonomy and the emigration to Greece– the second was much stronger. As a result, many Pontians finally emigrated to Greece. Other reasons for this emigration were the preservation of the emigrants’ national identity and language and the hope that they, or at least their children, would not be oppressed any more, since they did not foresee any improvement of their situation in the (former)

Soviet Union. It is important to mention at this point that the Pontians had never had any particular desire to emigrate to Greece, for they had never lived there, but still they considered it to be their national centre and it held an emotional importance for them.

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Some statistical information is necessary here. It is estimated that 700,000 Pontians were living in Soviet Union after 1918-1920; this number can be considered an accurate one, although there is no official information available. There are some official statistics from the censuses conducted by the Soviet government. According to these censuses, the Greek population was:

1937	268,889
1959	309,308
1970	336,869
1979	343,809
1989	358,068

Source: Katsikas, 1996:21 (data derived from the 1st Panunionist Conference of the Greeks in USSR in 1991)

These numbers, however, underestimated the real number of the Pontian Greeks, for two reasons. Firstly, they did not include those Greeks who held the Soviet citizenship. Secondly, the children of mixed marriages were counted as belonging to this parents' nationality which was more numerous and which usually was not the Greek nationality. Scholars, Greek institutions and Pontian associations estimate the Pontian population in 1989 at

500,000 people. At the second Universal Conference of Pontian Hellenism the following table was presented for the year 1989:

Abkhazia	50,000 Greeks
Ossetia	10,000 Greeks
Georgia	80,000 Greeks
Russia	100,000 Greeks
Ukraine	100,000 Greeks
Armenia	12,000 Greeks
Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyztan	135,000 Greeks
Siberia	unknown number

Source: Kasimati, 1993b:51

Similarly, S. Katsika (1996) reports that, in 1989, 25% of the Pontian Greeks were living in Russia, 27% in the Ukraine, 28% in Georgia and 13% in Kazakhstan; she also reports that in Georgia and the Ukraine there were a few villages whose population was 80% or more Greek.

The number of the Pontian emigrants to Greece varies according to the procedure they followed when emigrating. Pontians who wished to emigrate to Greece had to apply for a visa from the Greek embassy in Moscow by adducing papers that prove their Greek origin or nationality. Only after this procedure is followed they can be officially considered emigrants. The problem occurs because many Pontians returned to Greece as tourists although they actually planned to emigrate. They did so either

because they could not, for whatever reason, adduce the papers required, or because the bureaucratic procedure would take too long, or because they returned to Greece for a visit and then decided to stay. In any case, they were not officially considered to be Pontian emigrants and, consequently, there is no official record of them. As a result, they have no access to any welfare service or support programme and their status is illegal (they stay in Greece on the authorities' tolerance). In addition, they cannot acquire the Greek citizenship, nor can they go back to the (former) Soviet Union because their houses have been taken back by the state (which initially provided them). Even their children cannot go to school, because they are not registered anywhere. Those Pontians are estimated to have numbered 100,000 since 1987.

From the records given by the Greek embassy in Russia we know that emigration started timidly in 1987, but the large influx of Pontians came after 1989. Within nine years (1989-1995), Greece has officially received 65,772 Pontians; the division for each year is given in table 2.

Table 2:
Arrivals of Pontians emigrating from the former Soviet Union

Year	Arrivals
1987	527
1988	1,365
1989	679
1990	13,836
1991	11,420
1992	8,563

1993	10,926
1994	5,793
1995	6,551

Source: Ministry of External Affairs, 1992

By 31 October 1996, 4,799 more Pontians had arrived. It has been estimated that the arrivals in the following years have not altered significantly from those in 1994-95.

a) Accommodation and aid policies

The mass arrival of the Pontians raised certain issues which were of great concern for the Greek government. Some of them are matters of legal accommodation (formal acquisition of Greek nationality, military service for men, students' enrollment etc.), and others are matters of aid policy (recurrent expenses and other facilitation for financial support during their initial settlement).

Legal accommodation issues

A major issue for consideration is that of the nationality of the Pontians from the former Soviet Union. This matter was initially regulated by the Treaty of Lausanne (30 January 1930) and by the Agreement of Ankara (23 July 1930), but in a way that "deprived" a lot of Pontians of their Greek nationality. This unsatisfactory situation was resolved in 1993 with a governmental decision, according to which the Pontians can take (back) Greek nationality from the Prefecture, simply by completing an application form and presenting a copy of their passport and their birth certificate. They

can also ask for the adaptation of their name to Greek in those cases in which it was changed or falsified in the Soviet Union. Having acquired the Greek nationality, the Pontians can register with the municipality in which they would like to settle; they have the right to vote and, also, the obligation to do their military service or buy it out (if they are old enough).

Aid policies

As soon as the Pontians arrive in Greece, they receive some money to facilitate their initial settlement. Each person receives 40,000* drachmas from the Welfare Office when he/she arrives, and each family receives 60,000 drs. for the expenses of bringing their belongings with them. Furthermore, they also receive OAED³ grants of 45,000 drs., three times over a 30 month period, and 12,000 more for each child and those who are over 18 years old, unemployed, capable of working and do not receive any other financial assistance or pension.

The Pontians, after their settlement, are eligible to free medical and pharmaceutical care from public hospitals. The elderly get a pension of 15,000 drs. per month from the OGA (a public insurance company) and 1,500 (!) drs. from the Welfare Office. Disabled persons are eligible to a pension of 21,300 drs., unprotected children to 12,000 drs. and working mothers to 15,000 drs. per month.

A very important aid is provided by educational programmes in the form of Greek language programmes, because some Pontians (particularly the young ones) do not speak Greek or speak Pontian dialect. These programmes enable them to experience Greek society more closely. Some subsidized employment programmes organized by the Ministry of Labour are very helpful in that they provide subsidies for employees who hire

* One 340.75 drachma/1 euro

Pontian Greeks. In addition, the hiring limit for the public sector is 55 years of age for Pontians (the same limit is 45 years of age for native Greeks) and a 15% quota from the posts of the public sector in the counties of Thrace and Macedonia are allocated exclusively to Pontians.

Finally, the Pontians enjoy some facilitations and tax exemptions that are applied only to them. They can bring their cars without paying any duties, under the condition that they have owned it for at least six months before emigration and that they will not sell it for the next five years. Furthermore, they can bring their house equipment (clothes, furniture, household appliances) and sell it without paying any duties.

At this point it should be noted once more that these facilitations, tax exemptions etc. apply only to those Pontians who followed the legal procedures and declared their emigration to the Greek embassy in Moscow.

c) Formation of support institutions – The Thrace Programme

The increasing ethnic conflicts in the Soviet Union after 1985 and the mass emigration of the Pontians that this provoked caused a lot of problems in Greece. Because the Greek authorities were not prepared for such an influx of emigrants there was no (material or other) substructure in place. As a result, the Pontians who arrived in Greece from 1986 to 1990 had to face a lot of difficulties, e.g. unemployment, homelessness, linguistic difficulties, and their different social background, without any substantial support from the Greek authorities (except the aid policies we referred to earlier). Most of them settled in urban areas, mainly in Athens and its suburbs. Governmental intervention in favor of these people was urgently needed; thus, on 13 December 1990, the Ministry of External Affairs founded EIYAPOE (National Institution for the Reception and Rehabilitation of Greek Immigrants), which started its work on 1 January 1991.

EIYAPOE was founded, in the first place, in order to support and facilitate the reception of the Pontians exclusively. Afterwards, when the refugee influx from Albania began it broadened its mandate to them. EIYAPOE is financed both from Greek and European sources: 40.6% of its financing is provided by the Greek government (the Ministry of External Affairs), 11.4% by the European Union (subsidies and rehabilitation programs), 16.9% by loans (mostly from the Social Rehabilitation Fund of the European Council), and the remaining 31% by other sources (donations, interest rates etc.).

EIYAPOE's main task is the implementation of the Thrace Programme. This programme is a complete plan for the social integration of the Pontians into Greek society. It has four steps:

- 1st step: Hospitality Centres (first reception centres),
- 2nd step: Reception Settlements (preparation for social integration),
- 3rd step: Accommodation in Rented Residences – Vocational Rehabilitation,
- 4th step: Permanent Residence.

At the first step of the programme, the aim is to give some help to the arriving migrants. The Hospitality Centres are either EIYAPOE settlements or are based on student campuses or in hotels and are supposed to receive the Pontians for 15-30 days and provide them with a place to sleep, food, medical treatment, translation of their documents, lessons in the Greek language and any information that is needed. Unfortunately, after 1993 it was decided that Hospitality Centres should be limited or removed for three reasons. Firstly, because of the delay in implementing the third and fourth step; the consequence of that delay was that the Pontians often stayed at the Hospitality Centres even longer than six months. Secondly, because the centers were in urban areas and the Pontians did not want to move to rural areas for the next steps of the programme. Thirdly, because of the high costs of this first step, a cost disproportionate to its advantages, compared to those of the next steps. These problems were resolved when the next steps

were realized and, also, when the Hospitality Centres were moved to rural areas of Thrace.

The second step was accommodation in the Reception Settlements, which included organized semi-autonomous apartments and provided the following services:

- full nutrition;
- Greek language lessons for children and adults;
- vocational education / specialization;
- preparation of the children for their smooth integration into the Greek educational system;
- baby and child nursery;
- facilitation in job searching;
- medical care;
- knowledge, mediated by seminars and films, of everyday life in Greece, of traditions, customs, religious life, and the functioning of the Greek services.

Although these settlements were not appropriate for permanent residence, they did provide a lot of services, and many Pontians did not want to proceed to the next step. The duration of their stay at the reception settlements was often one year or more.

The third step was temporary residence in rented accommodation. EIYAPOE pays the rent for the apartments and houses until the Pontians become capable of paying the rent themselves or move to the next step; meanwhile, EIYAPOE takes care of the vocational rehabilitation of the Pontians. The whole idea of this step is that the Pontians take on some responsibility over their expenses (electricity, water bills etc.) until their economical situation ameliorates and they start paying for their rent too. Unfortunately, little by little, the Pontians started to neglect their economic obligations and EIYAPOE ended up paying for all the expenses of the houses. Nevertheless, the cost was still lower than that of the previous steps, and EIYAPOE extended the number of persons that could be accepted into it. In some cases, it accepted Pontian Greeks directly at the third step.

EIYAPOE's programme is brought to a completion with

the fourth step of the permanent residences. EIYAPOE has bought and built houses and apartments which, afterwards, are allotted to the beneficiaries (persons entitled to them). The aim was, apart from the Pontians' permanent accommodation, their permanent integration into Thrace (for reasons that will be explained).

The Thrace Programme has three important characteristics. Firstly, participation in it is voluntary. Secondly, it includes only those Pontians who have completed the formal procedure and have entered Greece with a visa of immigration. Thirdly, the purpose of the programme is the permanent residence of the Pontian Greeks in Thrace. Thrace is a demographically "weak" area; for that reason it has been chosen by the Greek government, considering the additional advantage of boosting this area demographically.

Until 1994, the Pontians could participate in the programme only within three months after their arrival but, after 1994, they could do so within twelve months. On the whole, 15,425 persons have participated in the programme since 1991, 58% of whom have entered the third and fourth step. Also, 25% have attended the seminars for vocational rehabilitation and, a larger percentage, seminars on Greek language.

The implementation of the programme has, naturally, faced, some difficulties; the director of EIYAPOE has mentioned two as the most important. The first concerns certain difficulties that EIYAPOE employees face when contacting the immigrants. The psychological condition of the Pontians is fragile upon their arrival in Greece and, also, they seem to feel uncomfortable when their immigration status is emphasized. In addition, they do not trust the social services. EIYAPOE is trying to overcome this problem by using an individual (as opposed to a "collective") approach, through which the social workers use their instinct when contacting each person and try to make him/her feel more comfortable – particularly in the case of children. The second difficulty concerns vocational rehabilitation, which is generally the most basic precondition for social integration. Thrace is not only one of the most underdeveloped regions of the country but, in

addition, the rates of development there are the lowest in Greece. The creation of new work positions requires economic development and a governmental plan for the development of the region. EIYAPOE and OAED are tackling this matter. In 1995, EIYAPOE started a subsidy programme for the Pontians in Thrace, so as to start business in the agrarian sector. During 1995, 559 persons received the subsidy which proved to be successful for 462 (83%) of the recipients, thus securing the continuation of this programme.

Another problem, closely connected to the previous one, is that the Pontians prefer to stay in urban centres or return to them after having participated in (some of) the steps of the Thrace Programme. It is indicative of this preference that when Pontians entering Greece were asked about their intended or desired place of residence, 17.7% preferred Attica (mainly Athens), 21.8% Salonica, 32.9% Thrace, and 27.6% the rest of Greece. This reflects the expectation of more job opportunities in urban areas and demonstrates why the creation of work positions in Thrace and other rural areas is so important.

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As mentioned earlier, only 23% (15,425) of the Pontians (who are officially recognized as immigrants) have received significant help from the Greek state. But what about the remaining 77% (50,347)? EIYAPOE has made certain provisions for all the Pontians, independently of their participation in the Thrace Programme. To begin with, EIYAPOE has placed information services at the main entrance points to the country: at borders and in the railway stations of Athens and Salonica (the entirety of the Pontians pass through at least one of these points). These services provide information about aid policies (things we mentioned earlier, such as allowances etc.), the Thrace Programme and the Pontians' legal status, and also provide them with translations of their documents. EIYAPOE has also made many suggestions to the government for legal reforms in favour of the Pontians, such as for

the creation of tutorial classes in the Greek language.

Apart from the support that EIYAPOE provides to the Pontian immigrants, it has taken certain measures to support the Pontian Greeks remaining in the former Soviet Union. Their number is about 350,000. In general, it has arranged the dispatch of humanitarian aid (food and medication), and of secretarial equipment (computers, fax machines), either alone or in cooperation with the WFP (World Food Programme). Some additional help has been provided to the Greeks of Russia and Georgia, who represent the highest proportion of Greeks in the former Soviet Union. When the war was about to break out in Chechnya in spring 1995, EIYAPOE spent \$13,500 on the evacuation of Greeks out of the area who were transferred to Southern Russia, and \$100,000 on the purchase of 25 houses which were given to Greek families. Some financial assistance and equipment was also given to the Institute of Humanitarian Studies of Marioupolis for the Chair of Greek Studies, and \$2,000 were given in financial assistance to teachers of the Greek language. As far as Georgia is concerned, EIYAPOE has offered some financial assistance to poor, elderly and disabled people as well as to unemployed artists, for a 6-10 month period. It has also established classes for the learning of Greek language, has subsidized a lot of teachers, and has sent books and other equipment (computers etc.). It has also cooperated with the University of Tbilisi for the training of graduates of Classical Literature in modern Greek.

The implementation of the “Golden Fleece” operation also constitutes important aid which was provided by the Greek government. This was an operation for the rescue of the Greek population that lived in Sohoumi area (Georgia). When the war between the Georgians and Abhazians erupted, the Greeks found themselves in the middle of the clashes and their lives were seriously jeopardized. EIYAPOE, with the permission of the Ministry of External Affairs, transported 1,523 persons who wished to return to Greece, from August 1993 to March 1995; 80% of them have participated in the Thrace Programme.

We should note at this point that such actions to the benefit of the Greeks staying in the former Soviet Union express some concern on the part of the Greek government towards Greeks abroad. Nevertheless, their efficacy is very low, to the extent that the Greek state has decided to implement real and positive intervention to the advantage of people. To be more explicit, according to some interviews with the staff members of EIYAPOE and the Ministry of External Affairs that are responsible for the Greeks abroad, Greek external policy has, since 1993, been (theoretically) based on the idea of supporting Greeks abroad. Thus, the Greek government has always cordially welcomed the Pontian Greeks, has tried to make their lives easier and to support them during their initial settlement, but it actually prefers them to stay in the former Soviet Union. The reason for this is twofold. Firstly, it is economically preferable to support the Pontians there, because it is cheaper and easier. Secondly, and most importantly, Pontian emigration would cause a further decline of Hellenism; Greek communities abroad are (considered to be) the best ambassadors of Greece, and Hellenism in general.

If we compare the intentions of the Greek government with the measures taken to implement them, it becomes obvious that nothing really important has been achieved. The dispatch of food, medical and other supplies does not constitute a real motivation for the Greeks to stay in the former Soviet Union, especially for people which have suffered as much as the Pontians.

d) Other support programmes

As we have already seen, certain support measures and programmes have been established in favour of the Pontian Greeks. Apart from these, there are a few additional programmes, for example for the poor, disabled, and unemployed persons, in which the Pontians can participate, not merely because they are Pontians, but also because they fulfill other requirements. At the same time, there are other

short-term programmes for the Pontians. Thus, under the abstract title of “other support programmes” we refer to programmes in which the Pontians can be placed, just as other people would, or to programmes that are explicitly for Pontians, but are provisional and have an application deadline. These programmes can be either set up by the Greek government, or by foreign organizations (most commonly by the European Union).

Greek programmes

1) Those who cannot afford to pay even for basic goods for living, due to poverty or to unexpected events (accident, fire etc.) are provided with 50,000 drs. on a recurrent basis: Greek citizens, Greek emigrants and foreigners who live permanently in Greece are eligible for this allowance.

2) The Ministry of Labour subsidized certain enterprises to hire 2,500 Pontians aged from 18 to 60 years for two years (1992-93). The Pontians had to be unemployed and they should have come to Greece after 1st November 1990. The subsidy was valid only for the following areas: Ipiros, Central, West and East Macedonia, and Thrace.

Foreign programmes

1) The European Community Fund announced three programmes for the “Confrontation of the Exclusion from the Market” for 1995. One of them was entitled the “Integration of refugees, immigrants and emigrating Greeks” and was funded with 7,963,410,000 drs. The programme was to be proportionately implemented in every Greek county so as to serve a multiple purpose: education and the learning of the Greek language, vocational training and rehabilitation, subsidized work or/and the setting up of new enterprises.

2) In 1992 the European Union enacted the INTEREG programme in which the Greeks returning home (not from a specific county) were included. This programme of vocational training, funded by INTEREG, was founded by OAED at the end of 1992 and the beginning of 1993. The programme was implemented in those counties that constitute the external borders of the European Union, that is East, West and Central Macedonia, Thrace, Ipiros, the Ionian Islands, the North and South Aegean, and Crete. It included 1,600 persons and the sum spent was 1.25 billion drs.

3) From 1991-1995, the European Union founded the HORIZON programme whose purpose was to facilitate the social and economic integration of the Greeks returning to Greece, independently of the country in which they had lived. Several public services and private enterprises applied for finance from HORIZON to implement parts of their programmes. EIYAPOE and OAED (Organization for the Recruitment of Workforce) are the two most important organizations that participated in this programme. EIYAPOE received responsibility for the teaching of the Greek language, but only for the Pontians. OAED, on the other hand, took three steps as part of the HORIZON programme. Specifically:

- a) the first step was the vocational training of 2,697 people which took place in four districts: East, Central, West Macedonia, and Thrace. 1.4 billion drs. were spent on this.
- a) The second step was the subsidy of enterprises in order to hire Greek emigrants for a 12 month time period in the same districts as mentioned above. The purpose of this measure was to reduce unemployment; 2,257 people were hired and 1.56 billion drs. spent. Unfortunately, at some point (usually after 5 months) some employers fired the subsidized persons, for unknown reasons, a fact that created two problems: firstly, that Greece could not absorb the sum that it was eligible to from the European Union and, secondly, that the problem of unemployment continued to exist.

a) The third step was to train nine OAED employees to qualify them for the implementation of certain programmes for the emigrants. The sum spent was 37 million drs.

4) From 1996 to 1999, INTEGRA took over from HORIZON and formed a unified programme called “Horizon-Integra” (to demonstrate the continuity of the former programme). INTEGRA dealt with ex-prisoners, drug addicts, one-parent families, immigrants, emigrants, refugees, and generally persons who could easily be discriminated against while searching for a job. Most of the programmes were concerned with vocational training and the creation of new job opportunities.

b) Pontian requests and propositions

The Pontians have, up to now, founded many societies and associations in order to support and inform each other and to achieve better representation, and they have frequently expressed their complaints and proposals to the Greek government through these societies. The most important of those concerns the exchange of properties between the Greeks and Turks as regulated in the Treaty of Lausanne. According to this treaty, signed in 1923, the Greeks emigrating from Turkey would take some of the leaving Turks' property, and vice versa. The Pontians argue that they should be eligible to the exchanged property because the Greek state at that time did nothing to help them emigrate to Greece, and because they involuntarily left for the Soviet Union and remained there without being able to escape. Even a small portion of Pontians who went to Greece in 1937 and 1957-65 were deprived of these properties. The Pontians also denounce the Greek state for, as they believe, it tried to usurp some of this property for its own interests. Thus, the Pontians claim that these properties should be given to the persons eligible to them since 1923, or to their descendants (who number about 5,000), and also to the Pontians who repatriated thereafter. The state's response to this demand was (and still is) that the persons entitled to it had already received their share and the

Pontian Greeks from the former Soviet Union were not recognized as emigrating under the status that the Treaty of Lausanne determined.

The second important issue is that of the transfer of pensions and the recognition of previous work experience. On the one hand, the Greek government has not signed any bilateral agreement with the republics of the former Soviet Union, so that the meetings that took place in Athens with the Russian representatives were in vain. Thus, the Pontians either do not come to Greece, or they come and lose their pensions. This is due to the fact that when the Pontians return to Greece they cannot enforce their right to receive a pension, because their previous employment in the Soviet Union is not recognized. In order to resolve these problems, the Pontians have asked the Greek government to proceed to bilateral agreements as quickly as possible.

The Pontians have also requested that the Ministry of Education reserve a special percentage of students' admissions in higher education exclusively for Pontians (in the Greek education system, students are admitted in higher education through examination). This request has been rejected by the Greek government, which argues that such a percentage (4%) has already been reserved generally for Greeks who have lived abroad for five years or more. There are usually 2,500 candidates from 50 countries each year, and thus a particular percentage could not be assigned to the Greeks coming from the Soviet Union.

Regarding a similar subject, also relevant to education matters, the Pontians request that their diplomas from the Soviet Union be recognized in Greece as the Greek equivalent and that Greek students from the Soviet Union be directly enrolled in Greek universities when emigrating. The Ministry of Education has replied that, regarding the first request, the graduates will have to sit an additional examination if their course in the Soviet Union is not the same as the counterpart in Greece. Regarding the second request it has answered that students from the Soviet Union can only be enrolled directly at the University of Thrace.

The Pontians accuse the Greek government of racist attitudes. They claim to be treated as second-class citizens and are sometimes called “Russians” or “Russian-Pontians” which is very offensive. The Pontians think that the Greek government is very much responsible for this situation because it has not, as it should have, informed the Greeks about the issue of the Pontians’ return, and because it has not included Pontian history, which is a part of Greek history, in the high-school curriculum.

A lot of problems have arisen because of some of EIYAPOE’s actions. It is characteristically said that EIYAPOE’s policy for the rehabilitation of the Pontians has created another minority in Greece composed of Greeks! The settlements created for the accommodation of the Pontians are in isolated areas, away from the cities, which alienates them from other people and gives their settlements the appearance of ghettos. In addition, the living conditions in these settlements are criticized as being poor. If we add unemployment to these problems, we can see that the situation has worsened considerably. As a result, the Pontians who are capable of work abandon the settlements in Thrace and flock to urban centres, especially to the suburbs of Athens and Salonica; there, however, the problems are the same, if not worse, and new “ghettos” arise.

Of the roughly 150,000 Pontians who have entered the country since 1986, only 10% are in the care of EIYAPOE, and only 43% are legally resident in the country. All of those who cannot find a job, do whatever trade they can think of, legal or illegal, and as a consequence face problems with the law. They also face legal problems for another reason: on their arrival in Greece, some of them bought small estates and built a place to live. Unfortunately, they were deceived: those estates were sold to them fraudulently and the sales are now considered to be illegal. Many of the houses built were demolished by the authorities, and the Pontians were accused of certain illegal actions; as a result, they had to pay a lot of heavy fines. The least the Pontians ask in order to deal with their problems is that those fines be deleted and that the

authorities permit them to build houses on the estates bought. They also ask for loans to facilitate the building of their homes.

Last but not least, a fact about EIYAPOE: its actions are far from “efficient”, and even the state’s authorities have spoken of “mistakes”, “errors” and “omissions”. EIYAPOE’s employees are supernumerary and overpaid, and the number employed cannot be diminished for political reasons (due to the votes of the political clientele). It is indicative of this lack of efficiency that 13 billion drs., out of 25 billion drs. spent for the Thrace Programme, concerned operational costs (salaries etc.). Furthermore, while EIYAPOE’s programme has been implemented in Thrace, 100 of its total of 400 employees work in Athens. All these problems have been notified by the government, which intends to change its functioning; it is not yet known when and how this shall be done. In the meantime, the Pontians keep returning to their homeland where they are considered a minority.

g) Existing surveys on the Pontian Greeks

Several surveys have been conducted on the Pontians; the most reliable survey has been conducted by K. Kasimati (1993b). I intend to present some elements which are very indicative of the living conditions of the Pontians in Greece. However, we should bear in mind that this survey was conducted in 1990 which means that the majority of the Pontians had arrived fairly recently; a fact that has certainly affected the results of the survey.

We should begin with some findings on the household structure, that is the family as an economic unit. The average Pontian household is composed of 4.5 members, while the average Greek household has 3.49. This is usually interpreted in the following way: because the Pontians are economically weaker than the “Greeks”, they gather into larger households in order to lower the living costs per person. Furthermore, the Pontians in Greece consist of 51% women and 49% men; their division according to

age is shown in Table 3. Table 3 presents us the following data: 36% of the Pontians are between 0-19 years old, 54% are between 20-59, which is the “productive age”, and 8.7% are over 60 years old. Most of them, as we know, reside in Athens (60%) and Salonica (15%).

**Table 3:
Pontian Greeks according to age before leaving the former Soviet Union**

Age groups	Percentage
0 - 19	36.8%
20 - 49	46.6%
over 50	16.6%
Total	100.0%

Source: Kasimati, 1993b

The educational situation of the Pontians upon their arrival in Greece is good enough, even better if we compare it with that of the Greeks, and if we bear in mind the difficulties they had to face in the former Soviet Union. For instance, 27.4% have a higher education diploma (this category’s percentage for the local Greeks is 6.5%), and 35.6% have a high school certificate (15% for the local Greeks).

As far as the economic integration of the Pontians is concerned, Table 4 is most revealing. In the Soviet Union, 48% of the Pontians were economically active, while the same percentage

in Greece has risen to 55%, which means that upon arriving in Greece their economic situation worsened, and thus more Pontians had to enter into employment. 7.8% of the Pontians were retired before moving to Greece; however, in Greece only 2.5% of Pontian immigrants are retired. This shows, among other things, the extent of the problem of the non-transferability of pensions, a problem which the Pontians want to be redressed.

**Table 4:
Distribution of Pontian Greeks' employment in Greece
and the former Soviet Union**

Professional situation in Greece	%	Professional situation in Soviet Union	%
Currently working	26.6	Were working	47.7
Looking for work	28.6	Were looking for work	0.4
Retired	2.5	Retired	7.8
Students	21.0	Students	25.2
Housewives	6.8	Housewives	5.6
Fund-holders	0.2	Fund-holders	0.8
Infants	8.3	Infants	11.1
		Not working	0.8
Other	6.0	Other	0.6

Total	100.0	Total	100.0
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Source: Kasimati, 1993b

Table 4 provides us with more data: 55% of the Pontians belong to “manpower” which means that they either work or they are looking for a job. Nevertheless, more than half of them is unemployed: 51.8% of the manpower is unemployed (the under- and unemployed who are searching for a permanent job, included), while the percentage for the same category in the Soviet Union was almost zero, and the proportion for the same category in the European Union is 9%. It thus becomes clear how difficult the Pontians’ economic situation is, especially if we consider the situation of the Greek labour market. The conditions and prospects in the Greek labour market are disappointing because of austerity measures, unemployment, and a significant decline in hiring. There are some jobs available, but most of them are “inferior” jobs that native Greeks usually would not take on. Concerning the restricted number of jobs that require vocational qualifications, there are two difficulties: firstly, there is already a redundancy of Greek workers and, secondly, the Pontians have to face some objective problems, such as the use of the Greek language or the recognition of their diplomas. The only Greek districts that have some potential for development are Eastern Macedonia and Thrace, but no significant action has been taken in this direction until now.

As we indicated, the 55% of the Pontians belong to the workforce but only 48% of them are employed. Thus, if we analyze the 48.2% of the work force that is employed, we can see that the age and gender composition has been changed. To be exact, 63% of those between 15-19 years old are part of the labour force, while in the Soviet Union it was only 5%; moreover, 82.7% of those between 20-25 are employed, while this was the case for 60.1% in the Soviet Union. Furthermore, 48.9% of the female Pontian

population is part of the workforce, while the same rate for Greek natives is 20% and 34.7% for the European Union.

It would be very interesting to look at the professional status of those Pontians who are employed. As Table 5 shows, the professional situation of the Pontians has worsened. To begin with, there is an acute decrease in the Pontians' participation in scientific professions which becomes more acute if we note that 45% of this category only concerns nurses. Concerning salesmen and traders, who are indicated in the table with 5%, 56% of this category work at open-air markets. In addition, there is a remarkable increase in technicians and manual workers from 42.2% to 78.5% (21.6% of this category are construction workers). In general, we can say that the Pontians have a high participation in professions of low prestige and low specialization, while they have very low participation in those professions that require certain qualifications, even when they do carry those qualifications. Their professional mobility is limited and only downward, their jobs are the worst paid, and 20% of them work over 45 hours per week. Finally, 80% of the Pontians in Greece are working in a job irrelevant to their studies or training, while the same percentage in the Soviet Union was 13-23%.

Table 5:
Classification of Pontians according to their professions

Professions	Pontians in Greece	Pontians in the Soviet Union	Greeks (in Greece)
Scientists, assistants and free professionals	4.7%	24.0%	12.7%
Directors, managers	–	1.7%	1.6%
Desk clerks	0.5%	8.3%	11.0%

Salesmen, traders	5.0%	5.4%	11.5%
Employees in the service industry	9.0%	11.0%	9.3%
Farmers, fishermen, foresters etc.	2.3%	7.4%	30.0%
Technicians and manual workers	78.5%	42.2%	42.2%

Source: Kasimati, 1993b

The last table to be presented here concerns the monthly income per household. In Table 6 we can see that 83% of the households have an income of up to 150,000 drs., while the majority's income (56% on the whole) does not exceed 100,000 drs. These incomes are very low if we bear in mind two elements. The first is that the households are rather large (4.51 members on average). The second is that 78% of the Pontians live in rented houses, with a rent ranging from 20,000 drs. to 50,000 drs. per month.

Table 6:
Distribution of Pontian Greeks according to monthly income

Monthly income	Households
up to 50,000 drs.	14.2%
50,000 to 100,000 drs.	42.2%

101,000 to 150,000 drs.	27.0%
151,000 to 200,000 drs.	11.1%
over 201,000 drs.	5.5%
Total	100.0%

Source: Kasimati, 1993b

Taking these records into account, it is clear that the economic integration of the Pontians is far from being realized. Let us turn to their social integration. Since economic and social integration are most commonly closely connected, the reader can draw certain conclusions him/herself, albeit not very encouraging ones. When answering questions on problems regarding their social lives, they gave the following answers: 58% said that they could not communicate because of language problems which is reasonable if we consider that only 7% of them could speak Greek when they arrived; 31% referred to the lack of privately owned houses (houses in the Soviet Union were not privately owned, but they were provided to them by the state for as long as they wished to stay in them), and the remaining 31% referred to the high cost of living.

It is also important to refer to the expectations the Pontians had before emigrating and to the expectations they have now. Before emigrating, 18.9% were seeking a better life, 17.2% wanted to return to their homeland, and 19% wanted to find a job (we assume that they meant a better job, since there was no unemployment among the Pontians in the Soviet Union). Furthermore, 9.8% knew that they would face difficulties in Greece and 13% expected nothing. This anticipation was altered when they finally emigrated. Thus, at the moment, 50% of the Pontians want to find a job and 27.8% want to have their own house; it is clear that, after facing the cruel reality of their situation in Greece, their

expectations became much more pragmatic.

Finally, the Pontians judge Greek society and their adjustment to it as follows: 9.4% think that Greek society is better than they thought it would be, 38% think it is worse, and 44% think it is the same as they thought it would be (without specifying if this is a positive or negative judgement). In addition, 24% found their adaptation to Greek society be easy, 29% answered indifferently, and 46% found it difficult. We shall finish by referring to their leisure activities: only 17% goes out to have fun or has an active social life, while the rest does not seem to have any significant social contact with the “Greek” (non Pontian) population (38% stay at home, 10% have no leisure time, 17% contact their relatives and 7% watch TV and play the lottery).

* * *

At this point, we can consider the presentation of the case of the Pontian Greeks to be complete. After starting with a historical retrospective, then examining governmental activities in favor of the Pontians and along with Greek and foreign support measures, and finishing with some critical remarks and the presentation of elements from K. Kasimati’s important survey, we have covered the most significant aspects of the issue. A selective recapitulation of this chapter will be given in the epilogue. Let us move now to the other group that will be considered in this survey, namely the Greek political refugees.

3. The Greek political refugees

The case of the political refugees will be presented in a different manner than that of the Pontians. After a historical retrospective and some statistical references, I shall refer to their repatriation which can be divided in two periods. Nearly all of the government’s measures towards the political refugees were implemented in the

second of these periods (1981 and onwards). However, these measures have usually been modified according to the political refugees' demands and claims. For this reason, every particular subject (pensions etc.) will be presented separately along with the refugees' claims.

a) *Historical retrospective*

The roots of the political refugees' tragedy trace back to World War II, which Greece entered on 28th October 1940. The Greek government, the King and the army abandoned the country and left for Egypt in April 1941, and thus Greece was surrendered to the Nazis. The first resistance group, EAM/ELAS (National Liberation Front/National Liberation Army) was founded by the KKE (Greek Communist Party) on 28th September 1941. A few other groups were also founded, but EAM was the biggest and most efficient. EAM's goal was to resist German occupation and to ensure a democratic government for the time after war (Greece was governed by the Metaxas dictatorship before the war). It attracted the broad participation and activity of the peasants, and thus was the dominant resistance group in the countryside.

During the war, Britain (whose sphere of influence Greece was under) had as its primary goal to inflict, in cooperation with the resistance forces of occupied Greece, as much damage upon the Axis as possible. Until the summer of 1943 Britain was not concerned about the political ideas of the Greek resistance organizations, but only about the efficiency of sabotage activities. But, as the war swung in favor of the Allies, a mutual suspicion and hostility started to develop. On the one hand, the antifascists of EAM/ELAS were not prepared to sacrifice their lives merely to see a foreign oppressive regime replaced by a similar domestic one, and they would not accept the return of the unpopular monarch or the Greek government in exile, because they did not consider any of them to be the legal representatives of the Greek state. On the other hand, Churchill had decided that after the defeat of the Axis,

Europe had to return to the pre-war political status quo. A democratic change in the Greek political situation was seen as a threat to British interests, and so they considered both the King and the dictatorial government-in-exile to be the legitimate rulers of Greece.

In late 1943, EAM and the other two resistance groups proposed that the King should not return until a plebiscite had been held and, furthermore, that the Greek government-in-exile should be broadened to include three representatives of the resistance organizations. King George II and the government rejected the proposal on the “advice” of Churchill and Roosevelt who assured them that they would offer their support, and supervised the purge of the Greek army from Communist and democratic officers. The next British step was to approach the other two resistance groups in order to obtain control over them.

When the war was over, EAM not only dominated the country but also had the support of the majority of the Greek population. However, it never tried (at this point at least) to gain power and rule the country alone. Many explanations were given; either that EAM doubted whether it had the power to fulfill its policies, or that its members had not clarified their ideological conceptions (EAM/ELAS did not include only Communists, partly because of the “do-nothing” attitude of the Greek political forces which prompted many people to join EAM), or that they strongly adhered to the objective of “national unity” and democracy. In any case, EAM negotiated with the government-in-exile and tried to achieve an agreement that would guarantee a democratic government for Greece.

In 1944, when the Greek all-party “Lebanon Conference” took place, the British ambassador, R. Leeper, helped the Prime Minister Georgios Papandreou bring about a crucial political victory over EAM, and they thus forced a dilemma upon it: either to enter the government as a minority party or to remain isolated and face the accusation of preventing national unity. Papandreou only accepted the proposal that the King return after a plebiscite. The

Greek government returned to Greece, but its attitude became harsher, since it was strongly supported by the British. On 4th December 1944, EAM organized a large protest against Papandreou's policy but, during the event, the police and certain extreme right and fascist groups started brutalizing the people; the result was the death of 100 unarmed citizens. Thereafter, a circle of violence started, with EAM on the one side and the police, the British army and the extreme right wing (many of whom had cooperated with the Germans) on the other. Although EAM's main target were the fascists, it took up violent action which damaged its reputation and shifted popular sympathy towards the rightists.

The Truce of Varkiza which was finally signed on 12 February 1945, settled the unconditional surrender of EAM/ELAS, although the latter still remained the dominant force in the countryside. This decision on the part of EAM can be best explained by the agreement between Great Britain and Russia concerning the division of their spheres of influence (Britain would "take over" Greece and Russia would "take over" Poland), and Russia's pressure upon EAM to capitulate. Nevertheless, while the agreement was in the process of materialization and EAM was surrendering its weapons, the persecution of all left-wing sympathisers started taking place: the fascists executed many of them and many were also expelled by the Greek authorities.

The Communists, Socialists and democrats decided not to participate in the elections of March 1945. This proved to be a major mistake because, although abstention from the elections was as high as 50%, it led to a parliament deprived of every democratic force while it legitimated the royalist government. The persecutions continued more intensively and many people were imprisoned or sent into exile for their political beliefs. All this, along with Stalin's protestation against the British policy in Greece (which gave the impression that Stalin would finally support the Communists), made the KKE and EAM to renew their fighting against the right-wing Greek government. Thus, the civil war erupted in August 1946.

The decision made by KKE, the communist party, to start fighting again did not prove to be a wise one. First of all, EAM was not as powerful as it had been two years previously. Secondly, the Greeks were extremely exhausted by the war against the Axis and, moreover, they did not want to fight for ideological reasons. Furthermore, having been elected, the Greek government had obtained legitimacy. Finally, many Communists disagreed with the decision. During the civil war the KKE made the additional mistake of adopting a very strict ideology, which excluded many peasants and petit-bourgeois from its forces who would otherwise have participated.

The British and Greek armies were not able to locate KKE's "Democratic Army" whose members had fought with EAM/ELAS and thus had great experience in guerrilla warfare. The "Democratic Army" was in full control of northern Greece until 1947. In 1947 Britain passed on its responsibility for Greece to the USA which had already been intervening since 1944. US policy was determined by the broader conflict of the Cold War; thus, it was motivated by the fear of a real or imaginary Communist, Soviet backed threat. For that reason, the USA supported the right-wing political forces, however fascist or oligarchic they were, condoned liberals and other centrists and, most importantly, supplied the Greek Army with arms.

The Communists had expected a revolution in the urban centres that, in the end, did not take place. In addition, KKE was banned and many Communists were imprisoned or executed. The number of volunteers began to dwindle because of the government's security measures, while public sentiment became increasingly hostile as a result of right-wing propaganda. The final blow was dealt by Tito: although Yugoslavia was the main supporter and supplier of the "Democratic Army", the Communists felt a bond with "Mother Russia", and they took its side when relations between Tito and Stalin cooled; consequently Tito stopped helping them and closed the Yugoslav borders to the Greek guerrillas. The "Democratic Army" found itself isolated and

exhausted, and on 16 October 1949 they ceased fire.

* * *

As mentioned previously, persecution had already started in 1945, even before the civil war. After KKE was banned, every member or supporter was considered to be an “enemy of the country and the people” and was imprisoned, sent to exile or even executed and his/her property was seized. Also, their relatives and any person with democratic or liberal beliefs were discriminated against, excluded from any job in the public sector and from most jobs in the private sector. When the civil war ended, every aspect of social and cultural life was permeated by anticommunist hysteria: every suspicion that someone had ever supported communism or socialism or ever had friendly relations with any communist or democrat would be enough to ruin his/her life.

For these reasons, many veterans of EAM/ELAS, their families, and other communists left the country. The flight had already started in 1946, when KKE organized safe passages for its supporters through the mountains and the northern borders. In many cases the population of whole villages in northern Greece left the country so as to escape the bombings and starvation. For the same reasons about 25,000 children were sent away in early 1948. These were mainly the children of members of the “Democratic Army”; their flight was organized by KKE, and some people were sent along in order to protect them. The flight reached its peak in 1949, when 20,000 to 25,000 fighters of the “Democratic Army” left the country.

There are no official records on the number of the political refugees but only some estimates. These estimations vary from 80,000 to 130,000 people. However, the most moderate estimate is that 25,000 to 27,000 children and 20,000 to 25,000 fighters of the “Democratic Army” left the country; in addition, there must have been about 15,000 KKE members and an unknown number of unarmed people from the countryside of northern Greece. The most

likely number is between 80,000 and 100,000 refugees. They left for Yugoslavia, Bulgaria and Albania and continued their journey to other Eastern European countries. Several stayed in Yugoslavia where they assimilated and never came back; unfortunately, there is no data on these refugees at all. A small number left for Western Europe, USA and Canada, mostly artists and left-wing intellectuals. The rest of the refugees who left from Yugoslavia are estimated to be 56,000 to 70,000 persons. There is plenty of evidence regarding their living conditions as well as some statistics.

KKE has published some data in 1951 which is presented in Table 7. As we can see, about 56,000 refugees left for Eastern Europe, 21% went to Czechoslovakia; 21% to the Soviet Union (mainly Russia and the town of Tashkent), 20% to Poland, 16% to Romania, 12% to Hungary, 5% to Bulgaria and 2% to East Germany. Of the refugees, 41% were men, 28% women and 31% children.

Table 7:
Destination countries of the political refugees

Country	Men	Women	Children	Total	%
Romania	1,981	1,939	5,132	9,100	16.0
Czechoslovakia	4,000	3,475	4,148	11,941	21.0
Poland	4,730	3,138	3,590	11,458	20.0
Hungary	2,161	2,233	2,859	7,253	12.0
Bulgaria	1,583	764	672	3,021	5.0
East Germany	–	–	–	1,128	2.0
Soviet Union	8,573	3,407	1,128	11,980	21.0
Total (in %)	23,028 (41.0)	14,956 (28.0)	17,529 (31.0)	55,881 (100.0)	

Source: Bartzioakas, 1995

The support and hospitality that those countries provided to these political refugees was exemplary: not only did they help them in every step they took, but they also granted them privileges. We shall first refer to the children. The mission for the flight of the children in 1947 was organized by the guerrillas' leadership: they had the consent of the children's parents or their relatives and cooperated with the Red Cross of each receiving country. The children were accompanied by some women (the so-called "mothers") and by some teachers who would take care of the continuity of their education. The first Greek school operated in Yugoslavia. After 1948, the children moved to other countries because of the dispute between the Communist Party in Yugoslavia and the Communist parties in other countries. Only 10% of the children were healthy upon arriving in Eastern countries because of the hardships they had suffered; for that reason, a number of public buildings were transformed into nurseries whose main aim was the medical rehabilitation of the children. These nurseries were under the surveillance of the United Nations, the Red Cross, the national ministries of Health, Welfare and Education, and an organization founded by KKE. The nurseries were closed down in 1955-56 as the children had to enter the regular education system.

A major problem that had to be confronted was the reunification of the families, meaning the process of bringing together the children and their parents. This was achieved in the majority of the cases until 1955: 5,000 children were sent back to Greece on their parents' or relatives' request, under the care of the Red Cross, and the rest met with their parents in other Eastern Europe countries.

The 60% of the children that arrived in Eastern Europe were illiterate. The governments there did the best they could do to educate them, as a sign of solidarity towards the Greek political

refugees; they offered, for example, scholarships and some extra facilities in order to facilitate them to enter higher education. Many of these illiterate children became scientists, technicians, doctors and they, generally, acquired a much higher level of education than their parents had.

As far as the rest of the political refugees are concerned, their most basic concern was to find a job, and their major problem was linguistic. The governments of the receiving countries provided them with a place to live, food and clothes for the first 6 months, and, for the next 6 months, with free food and a 50% discount on other expenses. Meanwhile, they took measures for the occupational rehabilitation of the Greeks. Thus, in 1951, only two years after their arrival, only 6,223 political refugees were unemployed, 3,000 of whom were elderly and 2,000 disabled because of the war. In the beginning it was very hard for the Greeks to adapt to the working conditions (most of them were peasants and were now working in the industrial sector), but soon they did, after they started to learn the local languages.

The political refugees established associations and Greek clubs in their countries of reception. Moreover, they started publishing newspapers, Greek literature and school books from the central printing office in Romania. Also, there were Greek broadcasting stations in every country. The expenses for all these were covered by the governments of the receiving countries. The political refugees wanted to preserve their identity but they mainly wanted their children to feel Greek, without being isolated from the society they belonged to. Thus, they kept their traditions, festivities, theatre, songs etc. and, simultaneously, they were integrated into the social life of the Eastern European countries in which they lived; they studied, received training and worked there and developed bonds of friendship and solidarity with the native populations.

a) *Repatriation*

The repatriation of the political refugees started after 1974. They had always hoped to return and had considered their expatriation as provisional. However, they were not allowed by the Greek government to return at an earlier stage. From 1948 to 1963 the Greek governments officially deprived 22,266 political refugees of their Greek nationality. In some cases, repatriation was allowed, but the process was insulting to the individuals' dignity: they had to answer a questionnaire concerning their political beliefs, their values, their opinion of the Soviet block and finally, they had to renounce communism. By this procedure, 7,722 persons had repatriated by 1974 (actually until 1967 because of the dictatorship imposed from 1967 to 1974). The political refugees' associations protested many times to the United Nations about their country's decision to forbid their return but the UN never recognized them as (political) refugees. This attitude could possibly be explained by the prevailing anticommunist context into which every decision made in Western Europe, and consequently in the UN, fitted at that time.

At this point we should present some statistical information concerning repatriation, starting with the number and composition of the returnees at the point when repatriation was about to begin. Table 8 shows the figures for political refugees in 1975 (before they returned home); according to this data, the political refugees in 1975 (without taking into account those in Yugoslavia) amounted to 56,200, most of whom had settled in the former Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia. According to some other information, 14,780 (26.3%) of them were children and students, 32,790 (58.3%) were employees, 7,295 (12.9%) retired, and 1,355 (2.4%) non-working (mostly women).

Table 8:
Political refugees in 1975

Country of destination	Total refugees	in %
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East Germany	1,500	2.6
Bulgaria	6,800	12.0
Hungary	4,800	8.5
Poland	9,000	16.0
Romania	5,600	9.9
Former Soviet Union	15,000	26.0
Czechoslovakia	13,500	24.0
Total	56,200	100.0

Source: Kasimati, 1993a

Another classification, according to age, provides us with the following data: 15,000 (26.7%) were born outside Greece (and were up to 25 years old in 1975), 20,000 (35.6%) were up to 18 years old upon leaving Greece (and up to 45 years old in 1975), and 21,200 (37.7%) were over 18 years old upon leaving Greece (and over 45 years old in 1975). This data reveal the tragedy of many EAM/ELAS fighters who died away from their country because of the long duration of their exile. The proportion of former fighters returning home would be even smaller after 1975 because mass repatriation did not begin earlier than 1982.

Table 9 shows the educational composition of the refugee work force in 1975 which is worthy to note. The work force of the 56,200 political refugees consisted of 32,790 persons, 3,385 (10%) of whom were graduates of higher education institutes, 4,434 (13.5%) were high school or technical school graduates, and 11,595 (35.3%) were graduates of occupational schools (specialized technical schools). Additionally, 11,320 (34.5%) had been had been given vocational training and mostly consisted of those political refugees who were over 18 years old on leaving

Greece and, due to their age and low educational level, did not proceed to further education. Regarding the 2,056 (6,2%) unskilled persons, they were either disabled or older people who did not achieve any vocational specialization.

Table 9:
Employed political refugees

Country of destination	Total Employees	Higher Education Graduates	Technical School Graduates	Occupational School Graduates	Specialized in the field	Unskilled Workers
East Germany	1,150	121	140	675	214	–
Bulgaria	4,050	450	280	1,240	1,650	430
Hungary	2,780	144	910	890	636	200
Poland	4,950	410	430	1,680	1,970	460
Romania	2,860	380	184	1,100	1,080	116
Former Soviet Union	8,600	1,300	2,200	2,450	2,050	600
Czechoslovakia	8,400	580	290	3,560	3,720	250
Total	32,790	3,385	4,434	11,595	11,320	2,056

Source: Kasimati, 1993a

These figures refer to the composition of the political refugees before repatriation began. The question is why these refugees decided to repatriate since their living conditions in exile

were good and, at the same time, their future in Greece was uncertain? The answer is that they had always wanted to do so. They did not return to Greece with the aim of finding an improved economic or political situation, but returned as soon when they were allowed to because of emotional reasons. Emotional reasons also applied to those who were children when leaving Greece and, to some extent, to their children, because they had been brought up with the hope of seeing their “homeland” some day.

The exact number of the repatriates is as yet unknown. It has been estimated that since 1974-75, 40,000 political refugees have returned; around 30,000 to 33,000 up to 1985 (most of them after 1978). The political refugees’ association in Athens reports that there are currently 18,500 Greek political refugees living in Eastern European countries. The presentation of the political refugees’ repatriation will be divided in two following periods as follows: 1974-1981 and 1981 and thereafter. These two periods are very different: although repatriation was allowed after 1974, it was only allowed on an individual basis and it was not accompanied by any support measures on behalf of the Greek government. On the contrary, it was not until after 1981 that mass repatriation began and the government took some precautions in favor of the political refugees.

1. Repatriation between 1974 and 1981

In 1974, the colonels’ dictatorship collapsed and democracy was restored. President Karamanlis legalized the Communist Party as an indication of goodwill and as a symbolic action that would show that a new political era had started in Greece. In addition, because of the political engagement of many left-wing groups against the dictatorship, the public opinion had turned toward the left-wing political forces. This was the political climate when the political refugees started to repatriate. We do not know exactly how many people arrived between 1974 and 1981, but we do have two

indicative facts: firstly, the majority of the 30,000-33,000 repatriates who came to Greece arrived after 1977, and secondly, according to some PEEPP (Panhellenic Union of Repatriated Political Refugees) records there were more than 31,000 political refugees living in Eastern Europe in 1980 and about 22,000 repatriates in Greece.

The Greek government took very little care of the repatriates: until 1979 they were given 1,000 drs. on arrival, and after 1979 they were given an additional 35,000 drs. for the transfer of their household appliances. No efforts were made to regulate the transfer of pensions and the social and medical insurance of the repatriates any earlier than 1977. Unfortunately, after 1977 no agreement was achieved except with Bulgaria: an agreement which regulated only the transfer of pensions of those who had already been retired before leaving for Greece was signed in Athens on 1 April 1978.

The above mentioned measures did not constitute any serious welfare provision for the political refugees, and the money given was insultingly low. In addition, the government did nothing for these peoples' employment, the return of their properties, their medical insurance, the recognition of their diplomas and of their previous work experience. In fact, not only did the government not facilitate the political refugees' return, but they also hindered it in two ways. Firstly, they did not allow the political refugees free repatriation, but permitted it only on an individual basis: each political refugee had to apply and wait, sometimes for very a long period, until his/her repatriation was allowed. We should note at this point that those persons whose nationality was forfeited could not return to Greece. Secondly, when the refugees were repatriating, they were given a "temporary admission permit without a work permit" and had to present themselves at police stations periodically, which was insulting.

On the whole, the political refugees had to face a lot of problems. It was very difficult to find a job because they were not accepted in the public sector and were not attractive to the private

sector (the prejudice against communists still existed). They had no homes or properties, because these were seized by the state between 1946 and 1949 or given to their relatives. In addition, they had no social security, their diplomas were not recognized, and they could not get their pensions (not even those returnees who were entitled to them).

In 1978, PEEPP was founded to coordinate the return of the political refugees, to facilitate repatriation, and to present their claims to the government. Their most basic claims at that time were:

- free and unconditional repatriation;
- bilateral agreements with Eastern European countries concerning pensions and social security;
- attribution of their nationality (to those deprived of it);
- abrogation of the consequences of the civil war;
- vocational rehabilitation;
- recognition of their diplomas;
- medical treatment measures.

These claims were the same when the second period (1981 and afterwards) began, as no measures had yet been taken, except for the recognition of the Ph.D. diplomas of university professors.

2. Repatriation after 1981

In 1981, PASOK (the Socialist Party of Andreas Papandreou) won the elections on the promise of bringing about a radical change in the Greek political sphere. Whilst in opposition, PASOK had adopted the political refugees' claims and had promised a lot of support to them. As a result, many political refugees voted for PASOK, despite the fact that most of them were communists. Indeed, during the period 1981-1989 when PASOK was in power, a substantial number of laws were instigated in order to regulate the political refugees' problems. Nevertheless, the political refugees have not been content because, as they argue,

there were many delays and it took a long time for some very vital issues to be regulated. Furthermore, they have also argued that the measures were inefficient.

Before we proceed to the presentation of the measures, some statistical information needs to be provided. PEEPP reports that, in 1996-7, there are currently 18,650 political refugees still living in Eastern Europe (5,000 in Tashkent, 5,000 in Poland, 2,500 in Bulgaria, 2,100 in (the former) Czechoslovakia, 2,000 in Hungary, 1,300 in Romania and 750 in (the former) East Germany; also, about 40,000 political refugees have repatriated, 20,000 of whom after 1981.

I shall present the measures taken by the Greek government since 1981 according to subject, along with the relevant claims made by the political refugees, divided into two main categories: issues of moral restoration, and issues of material restoration. Firstly, it is important to note the claims of the political refugees as a whole, as expressed in 1981:

- free and unconditional repatriation;
- attribution of the Greek nationality to those deprived of it;
- bilateral agreements with Eastern European countries concerning the transfer of pensions and social security;
- recognition of previous experience before returning to Greece;
- recognition of previous experience before leaving Greece in 1949;
- abrogation of the consequences of the civil war;
- attribution of their former properties;
- recognition of their diplomas and of the previous vocational experience of teachers of the Greek language and the history of Eastern Europe;
- welfare for their vocational rehabilitation;
- welfare for hospital and medical treatment;
- tax and duty exemptions, grants and low interest loans;
- enrollment of students at the corresponding school /

college / university.

2.1 Moral restoration issues

The first measure that contributed towards the moral restoration of the political refugees was taken on 17 August 1982, when the Greek parliament adopted a law on the “Recognition of the National Resistance of the Greek people against the occupation troops between 1941-1944”. By this law the government attributed moral recognition to those who, collectively or individually, had participated in the struggle against the German and Italian forces. A direct consequence of this law was that, for the first time, EAM/ELAS (whose members until that time had been considered as traitors and public enemies) were recognized as a legitimate political force.

The second, and most important, measure (since it was a basic claim made by the refugees), was the law enacted on 5 January 1983 concerning the attribution of the Greek nationality to those political refugees who had been deprived of it and free repatriation for all political refugees of Greek origin. Thus, this law revoked the decrees that had deprived 22,266 political refugees of their nationality during the period 1948-1963. Furthermore, the political refugees could thereafter return legally to Greece without depending on the goodwill and approval of the authorities.

Unfortunately, free repatriation was not unconditional: the condition was that returnees should be “of Greek origin”. This condition proved to be very problematic for two reasons. Firstly, it denied entrance to those Slavic-speaking Greeks who fought both with EAM/ELAS and with the “Democratic Army” against the foreign occupation, and who fled the country after the civil war. This extremely unfair precondition thus discriminated those refugees because of their origin, despite the fact that they had been Greek citizens and had risked their lives for Greece. Secondly, due to this precondition many families were separated while

repatriating. Quite a few refugees had married during the long period spent abroad and it is absolutely reasonable that, when the Greek partner wanted to repatriate, his/her wife/husband would (potentially) wish to follow him/her. Nevertheless, there are numerous cases in which repatriation was not allowed for the non-Greek partner and, even when it was allowed (on certain occasions), the partner had to wait 5-10 years until they were given the Greek citizenship and, meanwhile, paid 27.000 drs. every six months to be able to stay in Greece.

The political refugees protested against this regulation many times and asked for its abolition, but it is still in effect. According to the president of PEEPP, Grigoris Fotou, the then Minister of External Affairs admitted in private informal conversation, that it was indeed unfair and that something should be done about it. But, officially, in 1995, the Minister of Social Order responded to this grievance raised by PEEPP by saying that: "The condition of Greek origin has been in force for 13 years and has been accepted by a very broad political spectrum. Moreover, it is realistic and fair" (from my interview with G.Fotou).

The third measure taken, which had also been a long-standing demand on the part of the political refugees, came into force on 15 September 1989 and concerned the abrogation of the consequences of the civil war. According to this law, any consequence of the civil war that people had suffered due to their participation in it or due to their political beliefs was abrogated, including court convictions that would be erased from the records. This law, apart from the moral rehabilitation aspects, also had some material implications for the political refugees. Thus, those persons who had participated in the civil war, those who had been persecuted, imprisoned or exiled because of their political beliefs and any other person who had suffered any serious illness, injury or had been disabled because of the civil war, was made eligible for a pension by the Greek state to the extent that the person's incapability to work was more than 25%. Furthermore, wives, unmarried children or sisters and the parents of people killed or

executed during the civil war and whose incapability to work was 67% or more, were also made eligible for a pension.

2.2 Material restoration issues

2.2.1. Recurrent allowances

There are certain recurrent allowances that each political refugee and his/her family obtain when repatriating. According to the last schedule of the sums given, the political refugees are currently (1997) given 40,000 drs. per person for the expenses of their first settlement, 60,000 drs. per family for the transportation expenses of their household appliances, 7,000 drs. funeral expenses, and up to 200,000 drs. for the transportation of diseased relatives to Greece (before the readjustment in 1995 these sums were 10,000 drs., 45,000 drs., 7,000 drs., and 100,000 drs. respectively).

As of 1986 extra financial aid is given to those political refugees who repatriated after 1 January 1984, are over 18 years old, do not receive any pension and are able to work but are unemployed. They are given a sum equal to 25 days of basic salary three times over a period of 18 months (or over a period of 30 months after 1995). As of 1993, one also has to hold Greek nationality or citizenship in order to be eligible for this aid. Apart from that, additional aid of 50,000 drs. is regularly given to those willing to be relocated in Thrace. Finally, a pension of 15,000 drs. is given to political refugees who are over 60 years old if they receive no pension, are unable to work and have no relatives to take care of them.

The political refugees complain that the sums given are too low to offer any substantial help. For example, the state provides 60,000 drs. for the transportation of household appliances, whereas the real cost is no lower than 100,000 drs. Furthermore, the bureaucratic procedures take too much time which causes difficulties and even makes some people “give up” the money.

Finally, some people are considered to be “not eligible” for the aid even if they fulfill the requirements for it.

2.2.2 Pensions and social security

The pensions’ and social security issue has been one of the most important matters that needed to be resolved and it was regulated, not without problems, in 1985. The transfer of pensions and insurance claims has been in force since 1981 for all Greek emigrants coming from a European Union country. For all other countries it had to be regulated by bilateral agreements.

As we have seen, negotiations between Greece and Eastern European countries started in 1977, but an agreement was only reached with Bulgaria. Until 1986, the Soviet Union and East Germany paid pensions to the repatriates (who had to travel to these countries in order to collect them), and Czechoslovakia gave additional pensions to those repatriates disabled due to a labor accident.

- The intended goal of the negotiations was that Eastern European countries would give a sum of money to Greece so that the political refugees could enter the Greek pension and insurance system. At last, on 5th April 1985, Law 1539/85 was issued for every country of emigration, except for Romania. The agreement was foreseen to be in force at the date each country had signed it. Thus:
- Hungary signed on 1st October 1984 retrospectively; amount agreed: 840 million drs.;
- Czechoslovakia signed on 1st July 1985 retrospectively; amount agreed: 336 million drs.;
- East Germany signed on 1st October 1985 retrospectively; amount agreed: 280 million drs.;
- Bulgaria (new agreement) signed on 1st May 1986 retrospectively; amount agreed: 1,260 million drs.;
- Soviet Union (new agreement) signed on 1st July 1986

- retrospectively; amount agreed: 5,250 million drs.;
- Poland (new agreement) signed on 1st September 1986 retrospectively; amount agreed: 2,030 million drs.

Law 1539/85 regulated the social security problem created with the immigration of the political refugees who had worked abroad to the social security organizations. The right to receive a pension was settled for those over 50/55 years of age (women/men), but the pension was not calculated in relation to the time they had worked. This means that the Greek social security institutions recognized only 13½ years of previous work, which is the limit to establish a right to the lowest pension, despite the fact that the refugees had been working for more (usually more than 20 years). Initially, the working period in Greece for those who had also worked in Greece after repatriation, was not recognized; after 1989 it was recognized only for emigrants from Hungary, East Germany and Czechoslovakia, and after 1993 for emigrants from Bulgaria, Poland and the Soviet Union as well. Those who had not already retired when the agreements were signed would get their pension five years later.

These regulations concerned those repatriates older than 50-55 years. But what about those under that age? They do not receive recognition for more than 5 years previous work in Eastern Europe but they are recognized as being able to work in Greece, so as to establish a claim to a pension there. All the regulations were to be in force only for a 5-year period after the bilateral agreements with all the countries had been signed, except for Bulgaria with which a 3-year period had been settled. That means that those who repatriated after that period would not be eligible to a pension; exceptions would be made for those who had serious reasons to delay their repatriation (medical reasons, deaths etc.).

As far as Romania is concerned, an agreement was very difficult to achieve. Thus, in 1990 the Greek government decided to provide the political refugees or their families coming from Romania with a pension of 20,000 drs. (the lowest pension provided by IKA, the Social Security Institution), on the condition

that they were older than 60 years of age, and their income was lower than the sum of the pension. On this condition, each political refugee is given this pension, independently of the country he/she comes from. An agreement was finally signed with Romania on the 23rd February 1996, due to start in 1998.

In 1988, the Greek government took care of the administrative and material rehabilitation of the people who had lost or resigned from their jobs between 1940 and 1949, or even afterwards, because of their political beliefs or because they had participated in the resistance and/or civil war. A small pension would be provided to them. In addition, the fighters and participants in the Resistance against the German occupation and in the civil war are eligible to a pension if their inability to work is over 25%; in addition, their close relatives are eligible to a pension if their inability to work is over 67%. They are eligible to free medical and hospital care as well.

In 1991, when the neo-liberal party was elected in Greece, the pensions of the resistance fighters were cut off. Furthermore, the meager pension of 20,000 drs. given to poor persons of over 60 years of age was diminished to 12,000 drs. Finally, the new government cut off a 15% allowance that was added on the salary of the resistance fighters until that time.

The political refugees currently maintain a lot of grievances where both the laws and their implementation are concerned but, most of all, because of the delay in achieving bilateral agreements with Eastern European countries. Especially in the case of Romania, most of the people eligible to a pension have died without receiving any of the money they deserved and had worked for. Even when the agreements with the other six countries had been signed, the political refugees only received their first pension after continuous delays. PEEPP denounced the Greek government for receiving the money but delaying the payments so as to benefit from the interest rate. The government's reply was that some of the countries had not paid the money on time, and so these countries were responsible for the delays.

There are also other serious complaints. Firstly, although Law 1539/85 provides persons older than 50-55 with the right to a pension, they do not always receive it upon reaching this age. In fact, they depend on a particular Ministry's decision in order to start receiving their pension. Secondly, the Greek government recognizes only 13 ½ years of their previous employment in the countries of emigration, while they have often worked for far longer (20-30 years) and, consequently, deserve a much higher pension. The government's reply to this accusation is that because of the parity of exchange and the extremely low cost of living in these countries (compared to Greece), the money provided is not enough for a decent pension in Greece; Greece also had to contribute itself so that the political refugees would receive the pensions they now do, which are low indeed. Thirdly, many allowances are for a limited number of people, and very few actually benefit from the government's social welfare declaration. For example, 900 people had applied for the pension concerning either poor and elderly people or members of the resistance and civil war fighters, plus those people who had been dismissed or had suffered during 1940-1949; 575 of them were rejected for various reasons.

2.2.3. Attribution of former properties

As mentioned in the historical retrospective, all political refugees were deprived of their properties. Also, from 1946 to 1953, the Greek state seized the houses, land and properties of all the political refugees who had left Greece, of those who had participated in the civil war "against the state and the Greek people", of their husbands/wives, and of those who had supported them. Some of these properties were given to their relatives and the rest were kept by the state, which either sold them, rented them or utilized them in another profitable way; a few remained undeveloped.

In April 1985 the socialist Greek government tried to resolve this major problem by implementing Regulation 1540/85 “for the attribution of the political refugees’ properties”. However, the issue was not to be easily regulated, and the following problems were foreseen:

i) The property was still available and could be attributed only if the state had taken no advantage of or developed it. In these cases, the political refugees (or their close relatives) could reclaim their property by paying a tax equivalent to 1/10 of its value. Unfortunately, these cases were very few after so many years. This is demonstrated by the fact that the state had seized over 111,000 square miles of land and that, in 1985, only 20,000-25,000 square miles had remained unexploited, probably the less fertile land.

ii) In the majority of these cases the state had either sold the property or rented or developed it (by building on or extending it). In this case the political refugees (or their relatives) could only receive a sum equivalent to 9/10 of the property’s value as an indemnification (1/10 is held as tax payment). PEEPP has traced two problems in the attribution of the indemnifications. The first concerns the delay in examining the applications of the returnees; by 1990 the offices responsible for this had only examined 50% of the applications. The second concerns the delays in indemnifying the returnees whose application had been examined and ratified. What usually happens is that the money is attributed only 3-5 years after the authorities give an estimate of the property’s value. Consequently, the amount is of less value than that of the property, due to inflation during this period of delay.

iii) In the case of properties given to the political refugees’ relatives, it depends on these relatives whether they want to give these properties back to their former owners or not. By regulation of Law 1540/85 they are not obliged to give the properties back to the original beneficiaries, and they most commonly do not. Thus, the political refugees have to go through legal procedures that cost them a lot of money and are generally time-consuming.

The political refugees can apply for their properties within

five years beginning from the promulgation of the law, under the condition that they have already repatriated. If not, they can apply only within two years of its promulgation. This condition, as PEEPP claims, is very unfair and deprives many political refugees who cannot repatriate within two years of their property rights, due to various reasons.

2.2.4. Vocational rehabilitation

In 1981, the Ministry of Labor took the first necessary step when it abolished the phrase “without work-permit”, that until then had accompanied all political refugees’ documents, and from then on the refugees were free to work. It also gave instructions to OAED (the Greek service for unemployed) to help political refugees find a job. OAED organized many vocational training seminars and employment programmes. Also, a number of employers were given subsidies in order to recruit political refugees.

A negative measure was taken in 1991: although every employee in the public sector is eligible for a salary increase according to his/her studies, previous work experience and years spent working, the people born in Eastern Europe were deprived of this right, with the excuse that no legal reference had been made regarding the political refugees’ children. This constitutes discrimination against the political refugees’ children and is denounced as such by the political refugees and their associations.

In actual fact, the Greek state has not made any significant achievement toward the vocational rehabilitation of the political refugees. It is characteristic that 32.5% of the political refugee workforce is unemployed, whereas the same percentage in Eastern Europe was only 1%. As we mentioned earlier, 80% of the political refugees were peasants upon leaving Greece. At the time of repatriation, 70% of them were working in several industrial areas, 20% were intellectuals and 10% peasants. Most of them had studied and graduated from universities, colleges and training schools. A very significant scientific workforce emigrated to

Greece and is still searching for a job. Most of them have not yet been used in any position appropriate to their qualifications; they face problems of low payment, of recognition of their diplomas and of their previous work experience. Furthermore, the age limit of 35 years that exists for recruitment in the public sector is a serious obstacle to those returnees who are over that limit.

2.2.5. Social welfare regulations

In 1982, the Ministry of Health and Welfare decided that every Greek political refugee repatriating from Eastern Europe, independently of his/her origin, would have free access to medical, pharmaceutical and hospital treatment. Despite this fact, not many persons have taken advantage of it because they had already signed up with a particular insurance institution which would provide them with all the above treatments.

Since 1983, those political refugees who want to settle in the countryside and carry out agrarian work have been given priority when applying for a loan. Furthermore, former political refugees can either obtain a housing loan or participate in a draw for free houses that are provided to poor and disadvantaged workers, but only if they have been employed in Greece for a certain number of years. The returnees complain that the loans are given very restrictively, and that the working period required to participate in a draw for a free house is very long for them.

Furthermore, the political refugees are included as a particular group in the social tourism programme. This is a programme for cheap vacations that are offered to poor and elderly persons as well as to persons of low income. In this programme, however, there is a limited number of places for the former political refugees.

2.2.6. Education and training issues

The Greek state set up many tutorial classes in the Greek language for the descendants of the political refugees who, obviously, do not speak and comprehend Greek very well. Additionally, it financed since 1987 a similar programme for about 550 returnees. The applications for this programme exceeded this, and certain restrictions had to be made: thus, the applicants had to be up to 25 years old, to have been repatriated within the last 5 years, be members of large families and not have attended a Greek school in Greece. These classes ended (together with many other benefits and support programmes) in 1992.

Regarding the recognition of the political refugees' diplomas as being equivalent to the Greeks', problems usually arise because of the lack of correspondence between the Greek and the foreign departments. Medical schools' graduates have to take some examinations in order to have their diplomas recognized. Only the Ph.D. diplomas of those who were working at universities (as tutors or researchers) are clearly recognized.

2.2.7. Military service

According to their age, the repatriates are either exempted from military service, buy themselves out of the army, or receive a two year exemption to adjust to the country before serving.

c) Other support programmes

There are additional programmes that are enacted for a short or long period, not specifically for the political refugees, but in which they can participate if they meet the requirements. These programmes have either been set up by the Greek government, by foreign organizations (most commonly by the European Union) or through the cooperation of both. These support programmes are exactly the same as those presented in the chapter "Other support

programmes” for the Pontian Greeks, except for the second of them which is only for Pontians. Thus, the reader can refer back to this chapter for information on other programmes and measures taken from which the returned political refugees can benefit.

The only thing that should be particularly mentioned here concerns the political refugees and their relationship to the United Nations. The political refugees have tried to win recognition of their status (as Greek political refugees) from the UN since the 1960's for two reasons: firstly because they hoped that the UN would put pressure on the Greek government in order to allow their repatriation, and, secondly, because this would make them eligible for allowance provided by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees for recognized refugee groups. When their repatriation was allowed, the refugees reduced the pressure on the UN although they did not abandon their claim. Nevertheless, the UN High Commissioner has not yet recognized the Greek political refugees as such.

d) Existing surveys on the returned political refugees

Very few scientific surveys have been conducted on the political refugees; in fact, only three have been considered for the purpose of this paper. Two of them examine the living conditions of the political refugees in some specific poor urban areas, and consequently cannot provide an overall view of this group. The third one to which I have often been referred was conducted by K. Kasimati (Kasimati: 1993a); it is rather brief but is very reliable and offers an idea of the repatriates' situation.

According to Kasimati's survey, the households of the repatriates (at the time of the survey) had an average of 3.48 members, equally divided by sex. Unfortunately, 6% of these household members had not repatriated with their families (they probably could not do so). The composition of the households according to age was: 25% below 20 years of age, 47.5% between

20 and 49 years old (productive age), and 26.7% over 50 years old. The most important reasons declared for repatriating were that they followed their families and/or had relatives in Greece (27%), that they wanted to return to their homeland (30%), or were seeking a better life (36.6%).

What is very revealing about the economic situation of the political refugees is that the only rate that has significantly changed is that of the employed and unemployed: 99% of the workforce in Eastern Europe was working, while the same percentage in Greece has fallen to 67.4%. It is surprising that the workforce has remained the same (53% in Greece and 52.3% in Eastern Europe, as we shall see in Table 13).

As Katsika (1993a:137) informs us, unemployment rates are dependent on the duration of stay in Greece. Thus,

- 67.3% of the unemployed have been staying in Greece for 1 year;
- 14.2% of the unemployed have been staying in Greece for 2 years;
- 9.7% of the unemployed have been staying in Greece for 3 years;
- 4.4% of the unemployed have been staying in Greece for 4 years;
- 1.8% of the unemployed have been staying in Greece for 5 years;
- 2.6% of the unemployed have been staying in Greece for 6 years.

Unemployment usually strikes the weaker groups of a population. In this case it has affected the women: 2/3 of the unemployed are female. It has also struck the most productive age groups and the most educated repatriates (50% of the unemployed are higher education graduates).

Concerning the employed, some important remarks can be made regarding Table 10, which presents the political refugees' professions before and after repatriating. Their participation in scientific and free professions has diminished from 44.9% to

25.5%, a fact that confirms one of the political refugees' complaints that the scientists who came from Eastern Europe were not employed in Greece. The fact that the same percentage for native Greeks is 12.7% does not indicate a preference for the returned scientists because the percentage of higher education graduates among the political refugees is 38%, while the same percentage for native Greeks is 6%. The share of returnees working as salesmen and traders is 16.6% in Greece, compared to 4% in Eastern Europe, but 78% of them work in the open-air markets which is usually a temporary or second job. Finally, more political refugees work as technicians, an alternative that is usually followed when unemployment occurs.

Table 10:
Professional classification of the returned political refugees

Professions	Political refugees in Greece	Political refugees in Eastern Europe	Greeks (in Greece)
Scientists, assistants and free professionals	25.5%	44.9%	12.7%
Directors, managers	0.2%	2.5%	1.6%
Desk clerks	4.6%	8.4%	11.0%
Salesmen, traders	16.6%	4.0%	11.5%
Employees in service providing agencies	9.4%	5.1%	9.3%
Farmers	0.6%	–	30.0%
Technicians, manual workers	43.0%	35.1%	42.2%

Source: Kasimati, 1993a

In Eastern Europe, vocational mobility was limited but the trend was upwards. In Greece, on the other hand, the refugees have increased vocational mobility but this is generally downwards. This proves that their professional lives have suffered after repatriation.

Table 11:
Classification of returned refugees' assimilation difficulties

Assimilation difficulties	
Language	16.3%
Unemployment	11.4%
Accommodation	2.2%
Communication culture	17.1%
Financial problems	15.7%
Attitudes towards them	4.2%
In every area	2.8%
No difficulties at all	28.0%
Other	1.7%
Total	100.0%

Source: Kasimati, 1993a

Regarding the difficulties the returnees face in adjusting to Greek society, Table 11 presents several answers. Language has been referred to as a difficulty by 16.3% which is quite reasonable since 14% of the repatriates did not speak Greek at all. 32% of them mentioned lack of employment and economic problems in general. 17% claimed that they had difficulties with communication and culture, which reflects their different social background and, perhaps, the problems they might have faced

because of being communists. But still, there is a significant 28% that had no problems at all adjusting to Greek society. This could probably be explained by the fact that 77% of the political refugees had visited Greece before repatriating from one to three times and, thus, had an overall idea of what it would be like which resulted in a more realistic consideration of their repatriation.

The above data are based on K. Kasimati's survey conducted between 1986 and 1992. The figures and percentages are not absolute but are indicative of the political refugees' situation. This section has presented a wide view of the former political refugees' repatriation. A brief recapitulation will be made in the epilogue.

4. Comparative approach to the Pontians and the political refugees

In this section I shall attempt a comparative analysis of the Pontians and the political refugees in order to understand the degree of their assimilation or integration to Greek society, compared to each other. This analysis will be based on K. Kasimati's surveys (Kasimati 1993a, 1993b) which enable a comparison on the same terms. Only the most important and revealing data will be used in this analysis.

To begin with, the average Pontian household has 4.4 members while the average political refugees' household comprises 3.4 persons which is the same as the average of native Greeks' households. This fact could be a consequence of the Pontians either being more traditional (a broader instead of a nuclear family) or being economically more disadvantaged and therefore settling bigger households in order to deal with this difficulty. The composition of these households according to age is shown in Table 12.

Table 12:

**Division of the Pontians
and the political refugees according to age**

Age groups	Pontians	Political refugees
0 - 19	36.8%	25.0%
20 - 49	46.6%	47.5%
over 50	16.6%	26.7%

Source: Kasimati, 1993a,b

We can see that the Pontian households comprise of more children, which results in an aggravation of their economic situation.

The education level of both the Pontians and the political refugees is very good and much better than that of the native Greeks. For example, 27.4% of Pontians, 38.2% of the political refugees and 6% of native Greeks are higher education graduates; also regarding to technical/training schools, 22.7% Pontians, 43.2% political refugees, and 23.5% Greeks have graduated. It is rather obvious that the political refugees are more educated than the native Greeks and that the Pontians' level is also fairly high. We should take a look at the status of the Pontians and the political refugees concerning their current situation compared to that before coming to Greece.

**Table 13:
Current and pre-repatriation status
of Pontians and political refugees**

Status	Political refugees	Pontians
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	Current	Past	Current	Past
Working	35.0%	51.7%	26.6%	47.7%
Looking for work	18.0%	0.6%	28.6%	0.4%
Retired	16.1%	15.3%	2.5%	7.8%
Student	19.2%	20.8%	21.0%	25.2%
Housewives	3.3%	1.7%	6.8%	5.6%
Fund-holders, farmers	0.1%	0.2%	0.2%	0.8%
Infant	7.7%	9.4%	8.3%	11.1%
Other	0.5%	0.2%	6.0%	1.4%
Total (in %)	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Kasimati, 1993a,b

According to the data presented in Table 13, it is clear that the economic situation of both groups has worsened after their emigration; however, it is much worse for the Pontians. The Pontians' workforce has risen to 55.2% from 47.7% in order to confront the economic difficulties, but the rates of unemployment are very high: 51.8% of their workforce are unemployed whereas

the same percentage is 33.9% for the political refugees, while 9% for the native Greeks. With no intention of underestimating the figures and percentages, we should keep in mind that when the surveys were conducted, the majority of the Pontians had not been in Greece for long (up to 3 years) whereas the political refugees had repatriated long before them. In addition, 7.8% of Pontians in the former Soviet Union were retired whereas in Greece only 2.5% are retired. This means that 67.9% of retired Pontians lost their pensions while emigrating, thus revealing the major problem in the transfer of pensions that the Greek government must resolve as soon as possible.

It would be rather interesting at this point to compare the Pontians and the political refugees according to their profession, before and after repatriating, with each other and with the native Greeks as well. A great deal of information is provided in table 14:

Table 14:
Professions of Pontians, Greeks and political refugees before and after repatriation

Profession s	Political refugees		Pontians		Greeks
	Greece	abroad	Greece	abroad	Greece
Scientists, assistants and free profession als	25.5%	44.9%	4.7%	24.0%	12.7%
Directors, managers	0.2%	2.5%	–	1.7%	1.6%
Desk clerks	4.6%	8.4%	0.5%	8.3%	11.0%
Salesmen, traders	13.1%	4.0%	5.0%	5.4%	11.5%

Employees in the service industry	9.4%	5.1%	9.0%	11.0%	9.3%
Farmers, foresters etc.	0.6%	–	2.3%	7.4%	30.0%
Technicians, manual workers	43.0%	35.1%	78.5%	42.2%	42.2%

Source: Kasimati, 1993a,b

The percentage of Pontians occupied in scientific professions in Greece is 4.7% while the corresponding figure was 24% in the former Soviet Union; 25.5% of the political refugees are occupied in this field in Greece while in Eastern Europe the figure was 44.9%, and the percentage for native Greeks is 12.7%. Thus, participation in these professions has decreased because of emigration; the decrease was 80% for the Pontians and 43% for the political refugees, which might indicate that the political refugees were better treated or simply that they had less communication problems because they had better knowledge of the Greek language. In any case, 50% of unemployed political refugees and 36.6% unemployed Pontians are higher education graduates.

Regarding farmers, foresters etc., the Pontians employed in this sector are very few (2.3%) and the number of political refugees negligible (0.6%) while the Greeks represent 30%. This can be firstly explained by the fact that this sector is in crisis, secondly by the settlement of emigrants in urban areas, and thirdly by the fact that neither the Pontians nor the former political refugees have ever had any significant participation in this sector. The last remark we should make concerning table 14 regards the technicians. Jobs that are hard, low paid and which Greeks tend to avoid, such as technicians, construction workers etc., are usually undertaken by

disadvantaged people. For this reason, the percentages of the Pontians and the political refugees in this category have risen. Particularly in the case of the Pontians, their participation in these professions has almost doubled, from 42% to almost 80%, which indicates the extremely disadvantaged situation of these people.

We can draw the following conclusions from some other data and information. Although the economic situation of the repatriated political refugees is not good, it is much better than that of the Pontians. Furthermore, the political refugees have easier access to Greek society for three reasons: they have a better knowledge of it, they have less language problems, and they are familiar with participation in associations etc. and therefore have learnt to be active and to communicate with other people. Nevertheless, the political refugees seem to have a great deal more complaints and demands addressed to the Greek government than the Pontians. This can probably be explained by the fact that after all those years of forced expatriation, after having defended their country against the Germans, they expected at least to be completely redressed of the unfairness visited upon them and to be supported by the Greek government; anything less than that would not be enough. Finally, we can say that the Pontians' living conditions are very likely to be even worse, because the data available concern those who entered Greece through legal means. The illegally repatriated emigrants presumably live under worse conditions.

5. Epilogue

So far we have seen, in a descriptive way, two cases of return migration from Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union to Greece: the political refugees and the Pontians. I shall now proceed to a recapitulation of the two cases so as to stress their differences and similarities.

The Pontian emigrants from the Soviet Union had never

lived in Greece, though their origin is Greek and some of them had relatives there. They were forced to abandon Euxinus Pontos in 1919-1922 and most of them turned to South Russia, Armenia and Georgia (some others went to Greece and elsewhere), where they had a satisfactory way of living until 1937 when Stalin started to persecute them. They lived dispersed, suffering much in the Soviet Union. It was not before the 1960's that they were allowed to have a more or less decent life but, still, no help was provided for them. The political refugees, on the other hand, are Greek citizens who were forced to expatriate because of their political beliefs. Obviously, no help was given to them either by the Greek government or by international organizations, for they were communists. The seven countries they turned to received them with hospitality and treated them even better than their own citizens.

The Pontians could be accepted by the Greek state during the whole of this period but, except from isolated cases, they could not flee from the Soviet Union. It was only after 1985-1986 and the beginning of political reforms in Soviet Union that they started to emigrate; the large inflow began in 1989. It has been estimated that 150,000 Pontians had (legally or not) entered the country by October 1996. In contrast, the political refugees were not accepted by the Greek state for a long time, even though their return would have been facilitated by the Eastern European asylum countries. They started repatriating after 1974 when the colonels' dictatorship collapsed, but the large influx began after 1978. These repatriates number about 40,000 while an estimated 18,000 are still residing in Eastern Europe.

The Pontians, when arriving in Greece through legal procedures (about 65,000 people), were eligible to certain allowances and grants and could participate in certain support programmes funded by the Greek government and the European Union. After 1991, they could participate in the Thrace programme of accommodation, the only substantial and organized measure taken in favor of the Pontians. Unfortunately, their pensions cannot be transferred and a bilateral agreement has not, as yet, been

signed. The political refugees, in contrast, had negligible help from the state until 1981, but thereafter they were entitled to allowances and grants and, like the Pontians, could participate in support programmes launched by the Greek state and the European Union. Under the pressure exerted by the political refugees associations, many of their demands were met, of which the most important were the transfers of their pensions and the attribution of their properties. Problems, however, occurred in those cases too.

The Greek government's policy towards the Pontians has been to support and help them overcome the problems that arise after emigration. At the same time, it was decided in 1993-94 to offer support to the Pontians in the former Soviet Union so as to encourage them to stay there. Despite this decision, the Greek government has made no serious actions until now in that direction. The policy toward the political refugees after 1981 was to satisfy the fair demand made by some people "deprived" of their homeland, to allow their repatriation and attribute to them what they deserved. However, between 1990 and 1993 many allowances were cut off because of the austerity measures taken by the new government. After 1993, the pre-1993 policy was restored, but only in theory: in reality, very few measures have been taken thereafter, except for one very important, namely the bilateral agreement with Romania.

Despite the allowances, measures, programmes etc., the economic situation of the repatriated political refugees is bad, and that of the Pontians is even worse. A full explanation cannot be offered for this, but we could definitely argue that the sums given to them are too little to ameliorate their situation in a substantial way, that the measures taken are not always implemented and that the programmes are usually fragmentary. For example, the pension of 15,000 drs. that the elderly receive is not enough for even half a month's nutrition. The ineffective implementation of the measures is also demonstrated by the attribution of the properties to the former political refugees which was so delayed that, finally, less than the half of them were attributed.

The question is: if the Greek government had the intention of supporting these emigrants, why did it not succeed in doing so efficiently? This question is difficult to answer and is not within the scope of this article. Nevertheless, a very likely hypothesis can be made at this point. Greece is a poor country in development and has been implementing an economic programme for at least the last ten years. It is significant that in 1989 Greece had the lowest rate of social protection benefits within the European Union: it spent 16.3% of its Gross National Product on benefits while the European Union's average was 23.7%. Consequently, lack of money is a serious reason. A further reason could be bad administration and corruption. Even when money is provided for a purpose, some people can benefit from it without being eligible to do so, or the benefits are badly administered. EIYAPOE, for example, had a significant amount of money to implement its aims, but more than 50% of that amount were paid in the salaries of a super-numerous staff which was hired mainly in order to serve political purposes.

In conclusion, I believe that the Greek state can offer more substantial help to these two disadvantaged emigrant groups who have suffered much and deserve better treatment in their country. Of course, this requires a lot of work on the part of the authorities and many changes in the administration system, but is something that has to be achieved in the short term.

Notes

- 1) K. Kasimati disagrees with this number and estimates them at 700,000. Nevertheless, other scholars and many Pontians' associations estimate them at 1.5-1.6 million (see Tsakiris: 1996; and also Katsika: 1996).
- 2) Whether a Pontian has Greek nationality or not depends on when he/she arrived in the Soviet Union and on the period he/she obtained Soviet citizenship (for those who did).

- 3) OAED (Organization for the Recruitment of Workforce) is a public service which the unemployed can make use of when searching for a job. It usually implements subsidized training programmes and works under the supervision of the Ministry of Labour.
- 4) See Bartzioakas: 1951.

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