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“Changing patterns of connectedness in the welfare institutions for mothers and children in early twentieth century Greece”

Being an association that combined voluntary participation along with expertise and state surveillance, the Patriotic Foundation for the Protection of Children stands as a characteristic example of ‘mixed economy welfare.’ Established in 1914 as a typical women’s philanthropic association, during the interwar period the Patriotic Foundation gradually evolved into the main institution that implemented social policy on motherhood and childhood.

The 1920s lends itself for the study of the association as it was at that period that it took on its particular character while the attempts to modernize the health and welfare services for children intensified. My paper looks into the way the political changes imprinted the character of the association; the networks within which public sociality developed; and the terms of affinity between state officials, volunteers, doctors and scholars who took action in the context of the Patriotic Foundation. It further explores the role experts played in the establishment of surveillance technologies in child health and welfare.

During its long run, the association underwent numerous changes in its institutional status, the volunteer networks and in its relation with the state. As the boundaries between the association and the state were not firmly established, their relationship went through various stages briefly described as follows: the voluntary stage until 1922; the intermediate/mixed stage or ‘semi-state’ as they called it, from 1922 till 1940 when apart from voluntary action, part of the collective action had been undertaken by the services of the Ministry of Health and Welfare; and the absorption of the association into the state during the postwar period. The changes in the relation of the association with the state were related not only with the discussion about the form the welfare for lower classes should take –whether it would be state-dependent or not– as well as with the internal political developments. The National Split which left its mark on the political history of

the first half of the twentieth century did, in fact, have an impact on the association as well. The frequent changes of its administrative board, aims and name testify to this impact. With respect to its name, the term Patriotic League of Greek Women was in use during the 'royal' phases while the Patriotic Foundation of Welfare was established by anti-royalist liberal governments. Although the association started its operation in 1914 as a volunteer movement on the initiative of Queen Sophia, three years later it was dissolved and changed into a welfare foundation affiliated with the Ministry of Welfare, a novelty introduced by Venizelos's government. The alternation from foundation into an association and vice versa continued for a decade following the political changes till 1929 when the association took its final form.

According to its constitution, the aim of the Patriotic League of Greek Women was to organize women's philanthropy in a more methodical way, adopting the new principles of the so called 'practical' social policy. Behind these general declarations, an ambitious plan of help could be discerned; this plan was based on the well-known nineteenth century schemata of women's philanthropy as well as on the experience women had gained as volunteer nurses during the Balkan wars. The establishment of the Association a few months after the outbreak of World War I highlighted the patriotic character women's philanthropy was taking and the wish of the royal family to cater for the welfare needs of the lower classes, especially of the soldiers' families. In the aftermath of the Balkan wars, similar gestures which aimed at the strengthening of the king's public image were taking on a more political meaning in the context of the National Split as beneficiaries were expected to support the monarchy. The frequent mobilizations of the 1910s had made the lack of state services for the welfare of the conscripts and for the resolution of the financial problems of their families more than evident.

This kind of association depended on private funds as well as on money given from the King and the state; yet, it was mainly dependent on social work and the initiatives taken by a group of active ladies under the aegis of the royal family. Most of these ladies came from renowned urban class families; many were wives or daughters of businessmen and politicians and had developed wide philanthropic action. Male members were mostly politicians, businessmen and jurists; later on, doctors and high rank state officials in their capacity as experts were added to its members. The members of the association were

connected with one another with familial, professional and social relations; in many cases, they shared the similar political ideology and formed networks which can be traced in other associations of the same period.

The organization of the Association was vertical and quite complex. It was directed by a central board; its members were mostly women while male members undertook legal and financial responsibilities. The top of its pyramid-like management was reserved for the Queen while the members of the board were to a great extent appointed by the Queen herself. The institution of the general board was maintained during the liberal phases but its members were replaced by others with liberal lea.

The League had double fold aims; on the one hand, it aimed to meet urgent war needs such as the preparation of hospital wear, the instruction of nurses and the treatment of wounded soldiers; in this respect, it was expected that the Association would assist the work of the Red Cross. On the other hand, it aimed to cover chronic shortages. It was expected that the members of the Association would undertake wider action in peace times. Their action would cover a wide spectrum of needs which aimed not only at the welfare but also at the education of the lower classes. During this period the protection of the poor was frequently invested with the meaning of moralization which ranged from the campaign against 'alcohol and other harmful substances' to the 'protection of the unprotected young ladies in big urban centers.' In a short time, the action of its members was directed to the so called departments of peace. The most active of them dealt with the organization of soup kitchens in various Athenian neighborhoods, the provision of work opportunities to poor women, the establishment of medical consultation stations for mothers and children, and the spread of hygiene principles among the lower class families. Among the works undertaken by the association the care for the instruction in hygiene was of prime importance and was attempted through the organization of lectures on hygiene and the publication of leaflets for the prevention of contagious diseases. Apart from these pedagogical actions, the department of hygiene collaborated with the School Hygiene Service of the Ministry of Education for the provision of welfare services which the state was unable to offer. Their collaboration resulted in the establishment of a student polyclinic in Athens where treatment, glasses, orthopedic equipment and food items were

provided to students, the operation of summer camps and the establishment of an open air school for pre-tubercular children.

The novelties of this intervention are to be found in a new kind of approach to the recipient of the aid. The distribution of aid was based on the verification of the living conditions of the poor while objective criteria were used to define poverty. The intervention of the Association's female volunteers aimed mostly at the instruction and practical help for solving the problems the lower classes encountered, and less at financial support. In this context, financial aid to the poor was not ruled out. Yet, it was provided in the form of medical care, provision of work or distribution of food and only after the real needs of the family had been thoroughly examined. Therefore, solidarity was not based on 'subjective emotions' but on 'rational planning' which justified the intervention of the volunteer in the private sphere of the recipient of the aid. An on-the-spot investigation of the living conditions was characteristic of the new control practices which were aligned with the views expressed in the Association's bulletin. The practice of charity departed from different motives and used different means in comparison with the past. In this context, the preventive character of the social intervention along with the new 'practical' perception of solidarity was highlighted.

The liberal phase 1929-1935: from sacrifice to expertise

From the late 1920s, the association underwent important changes in its operation. On the one hand, these changes can be seen in correlation with the attempts of the last interwar liberal government to modernize public health services; on the other hand, these changes can also be interpreted under the perspective of the relations the Foundation had developed with the international organizations for the protection of childhood. The two laws on the protection of childhood passed in 1929 evidence the attempts of the liberal government. The first one concerned the protection of childhood in general while the second stipulated the transition of the League to the Patriotic Foundation for the Protection of Children with the exclusive aim to protect motherhood and childhood. Part of the association's activities was taken by public services while volunteers could still participate in its management. The female volunteers bore the responsibility of organizing the various departments of help. The main characteristic of this phase was the increasing participation

of professionals in associational life. The liberal doctors' and scholars' intervention lent a scientific character to the planning of the action and at the same time contributed to the introduction of scientific tools for monitoring mothers and children. The cooperation of the association with the officials of the Ministries of Education and Health would continue till 1940 and develop along with the increasing state funding. In 1930 the Foundation absorbed the biggest part of the budget of the Ministry of Health for the protection of childhood. The Ministry aspired to make the Foundation a model institution in the Balkans.

Although the association was a female public sociality based on the action of female volunteers, the medical authority defined the terms of affinity with the lower class women who addressed the association in order to seek advice, get material aid or treatment. The campaign against infant mortality was based on planning a unified policy which was the government's responsibility; it also depended on the development of new tools for the technical control, monitoring and recording of the families. The cards used to monitor the developmental changes in the bodies of children; the family cards where the living conditions of the recipients of help were recorded and the instructions written to eradicate bad habits, are all inscribed in the attempt to initiate new terms of affinity between the doctors and the poor. Doctors offered consultancy to the association, imposed the standards of normality and deviance and contributed to the professionalization of the help. In this way, they contributed to the diffusion of the new technologies of power for the governance of the subjects.

The proliferation of social hygiene works addressed to children and the strengthening of the Foundation's pedagogical role in raising 'biological awareness' both in middle and working class families were characteristic of the 1930s. In order to pursue these aims, a number of consultation stations for expectant mothers and infants along with medical centers for children opened in Athens. Bringing into play a large group of middle class volunteer ladies who worked under the supervision of doctors in its various departments, the Foundation directed its action towards securing food and clean air for the infants as well as towards the instruction of young mothers in hygiene principles. The admission of weak children into hospitals, the search for foster families for adoption, the operation of soup kitchens, nurseries, summer camps and student polyclinics were among

the activities of the Foundation. Apart from the auxiliary work offered by the volunteer ladies in the stations, they had also undertaken a number of other responsibilities; to verify the family conditions of those in request of help by visiting their houses; to offer advice to mothers but also contact public services and perform bureaucratic tasks. In other words, their work included not only public relations and organizational and bureaucratic skills but also social work at a pre-scientific stage. To the extent that work was organized on a professional basis, it was assigned to the visiting nurses after the establishment of the first schools for nurses and visiting nurses.

The contribution of renowned doctors such as K. Charitakis, Emm. Lambadarios, S. Veras, K. Saroglou and G. Makkas was instrumental in the success of the attempt. These doctors sat on the Supreme Hygiene Board; they taught at the school of visiting nurses, their articles featured in the medical and daily press and they published popular leaflets for mothers. They also represented the Foundation, the ministry or the country in international congresses for childhood. Through the publicity of their work, they solidified their position and made the specialization of pediatrics necessary for planning policies on child health. Some of them were members of the liberal party and had shaped policy from a position of responsibility such as Lambadarios, director of the School Hygiene Service and K. Charitakis, director of the Ministry of Health on issues of motherhood and childhoods. It is not accidental that it was the same persons that played the leading part in the publication of the journal *Paedology* in 1920 and established the Hellenic Pediatric Association in 1931. A case in point is the example of Apostolos Doxiadis, minister of Health and Welfare in the 1920s who had served as president to the Foundation from 1924 to 1932. He had authored popular books about scientific motherhood, advocated the imposition of taxation on the unwed and was the inspirer of many novelties introduced during this period, among others ‘the children’s week’ and ‘the infants’ prizes.’

We come across the same people in the General Society for the Protection of Childhood and Adolescence which had been established in 1924 and was part of the International Union for the Protection of Children which had been established within the League of Nations. The society had included in its aims the protection of the child health. Since 1930 the society brought out the journal *The child* which serves as an important source of information for the way the Foundation operated since many of its features were

written by its members. Through the society the members of the administrative board of the Foundation took part in discussions held in international organizations about issues which concerned among others the health of mothers and children. Evidence of this osmosis was the first Balkan congress organized in Athens in 1936 after the proposal of the International Union for the protection of the child; the congress was an attempt to examine common problems the Balkan countries faced in the organization of the welfare services for the childhood.

The Foundation and the Society were intersecting circles while the Foundation collaborated with other associations such as the Greek Junior Red Cross and the interwar feminist organizations. Women's organizations presented the views of the Foundation's paediatricians in the columns of their journals. In this way, despite the dominant role doctors played in forming the character of the Foundation, the contribution of some educated women with studies in medicine, law, paedagogics and psychology was not of lesser importance. These women along with the volunteers and the visiting nurses graduated from the school of the Foundation formed a circle of dynamic women who had specialized to some extent in the protection of childhood. We could support that during the interwar, sociality shifted from the networks of political and social authority to networks that shared common scientific concerns.

As can be gleaned from the sources, as to the meaning those involved in this attempt gave to their action, it seems that they shared a common view on the protection of childhood and youth as this view had been developed in the context of the declaration of the rights of child in Geneva after World War I. The common denominator of this view was the faith in the progress through the prevention, education and professionalization of the attempt. In the context of this new social leadership which was taking form in the field of child protection, the meaning of the action was transposed from that of sacrifice to that of the scientific specialization of the help as the latter tended to be solidified within the international organizations under the impact of the experts. The persons who framed this public subjectivity aimed at the consent of the recipients of aid to a rational management of their biological capital. The latter implied the transformation of the subjects of governmentality, namely reconstructing the self through the cultivation of attitudes of responsibility and dignity.

To sum up, the collectivity under study underwent various transformations during the first half of the twentieth century. The political changes during the early 30s and the increasing presence of doctors shaped its profile as well as the networks of the volunteers who framed the foundation. In spite of these changes, the main consequence of this coexistence of various groups –volunteers, mainly namely women, experts and state officials– was a permanent characteristic of the foundation throughout its operation. From this point of view, this collectivity stands as a characteristic example of ‘mixed economy welfare.’ Under the influence of the doctors the content of the healthy childhood was determined according to indices and categories; at the same time, the attempts at the diffusion of new hygiene principles contributed to the introduction of the experts and the state in the private life of the citizens. At the same time expertise of any degree denoted hierarchical relations both with the recipients of intervention and between associational fellow members. The relations of the association and the state were characterized by collaboration between the experts and the high rank government officials who shared the same approach towards the protection of child.