Famine and Death in Occupied Greece, 1941–1944

A pioneering study of the impact of the famine that occurred in Greece during its occupation by German, Italian and Bulgarian forces in 1941 and 1942. Violetta Hionidou examines the courses and politics of this food crisis, focusing on the demography of the famine and the effectiveness of the relief operations. Her interdisciplinary approach combines demographic, historical and anthropological methodologies to offer a comprehensive account of the famine. This book is the first to explore the International Red Cross Committee archives relating to this famine which offer new insights into the politics and practice of the relief operations. Dr Hionidou argues that food was used as a propaganda instrument by almost all of those involved, including the British and Greek governments as well as the occupying forces. This important study makes a major contribution to current debates about mortality and its causes during famines.

VIOLETTA HIONIDOU is Lecturer in Modern History at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne. She has taught at Southampton, Crete and the Ionian Universities. She has published widely on the demographic and social history of modern Greece.
Recent work in social, economic and demographic history has revealed much that was previously obscure about societal stability and change in the past. It has also suggested that crossing the conventional boundaries between these branches of history can be very rewarding.

This series exemplifies the value of interdisciplinary work of this kind, and includes books on topics such as family, kinship and neighbourhood; welfare provision and social control; work and leisure; migration; urban growth; and legal structures and procedures, as well as more familiar matters. It demonstrates that, for example, anthropology and economics have become as close intellectual neighbours to history as have political philosophy or biography.

For a full list of titles in the series, please see end of book.
To my cheeky monkey Ilia and my little pumpkin Yuri
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I am deeply indebted to the many archivists and librarians who have helped me research this book. On Syros Aggelike Psilopoulou and Taina Hietala welcomed me, endured the intensity of my searches and the plethora of my questions; Hara in the library was equally patient and helpful. On Hios, Aristoula Koufopantele went well beyond her obligations as librarian at Koraes library, coming up with references, smoothing my way to the archives of Hios and those of the Hospital, locating potential informants and offering me loukoumades on dull Hian mornings. Maria Monioude, though a newcomer to the library at the time, was a gem of a librarian in the making. Eirene Fragkou at the Municipal Office of Hios generously shared her space there with me for a couple of months, taught me a lot about civil registration and also brought me in touch with left-leaning informants. Though it started as a professional encounter, all the above became dear friends who opened up their houses and their hearts. For both I thank them very much.

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List of abbreviations

AA Ministry of Provisioning, General State Archives, Athens
AAT Tsouderos Archive, General State Archives, Athens
AC General State Archives, Cyclades, Hermoupolis
ACI General State Archives, Cyclades, Hermoupolis, Italian archive
AH General State Archives, Hios
AT General State Archives, Thessalonike
ATE Agrotike Trapeza Ellados (Agricultural Bank of Greece)
AUEM Autonome Uperesia Episitismou Makedonias
(Autonomous Provisioning Service of Macedonia)
AMFA Archives of Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Athens
ARGA Argenti archive, in Koraes library, Hios
DEASA Deas Archive, Benaki Museum, Historical Archive, Athens
EA Ethnike Alluleggue (National Solidarity)
EAM Ethniko Apeleutherotikos Metopo (National Liberation Front)
EDES Ethnikos Demokratikos Ellenikos Sundesmos (National Democratic Greek League)
ELAS Ethnikos Laikos Apeleutherotikos Stratos (People’s Liberation Army)
EOHA Ethnikos Organismos Hristianikes Alluleggues (National Organisation of Christian Solidarity)
ETOTA Society for ‘The Support of the Family of the Fighter’, founded by the Greek Orthodox Church
FO Foreign Office files, Public Record Office, Kew, London
GAK General State Archives
GDEOA Genike Dieuthunse Episitistikou kai Oikonomikon Anagkon (General Directorate of Provisioning and Financial Requirements)
ICRC International Committee of the Red Cross
List of abbreviations

ICRCA International Committee of the Red Cross Archives, Geneva
KEPES State cereal company, responsible for the purchase of cereals from the producers
KES Kentrike Epitrope Sussition (Central Committee of the Soup Kitchens)
KKE Kommounistiko Komma Ellados (Communist Party of Greece)
MAE Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, Archives Diplomatiques, Nantes
NES Nomarhiake Epitrope Sussution (District Committee of the Soup Kitchens)
THEA M. Theotokas archive, in Koraes library, Hios
UNRRA United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration
WO War Office files, Public Record Office, Kew, London

It should be noted that modern transliterations of Greek names are used in preference to ‘traditional’ ones: thus Hios, Lesvos not Chios, Lesbos.