

Amphibious Employee Thanassis Aghnides & the Genevan Intervention in Greece, 1920-1930

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“After the Asia Minor *katastrofi* my entire family fled to Free Greece, like the rest of the refugees”, the Greek League of Nations official Thanassis Aghnides wrote in 1928. At the time, he worked to assist the Greek government in securing international loans and restructuring their health sector to absorb the enormous influx of refugees. What did it mean to be an international official in such a situation? This lecture explores how Aghnides’ work with the aftermath of the Greco-Turkish compulsory population exchange saw the coming together of his personal life, his professional ambitions, his patriotic feelings, and his international loyalties. As I will argue, Aghnides’ confluence of loyalties acted as a sort of multiplier of influence. Like an alchemist, he balanced and combined these elixirs of power carefully: for the cause as much as for his career. Through this prism, the lecture shows the deep and sustained intervention of the League of Nations in ‘modernizing’ Greece from above. This was – I argue – not only an economic, humanitarian or even political project, but an ideological project of ‘muscular’ liberal internationalism. An internationalism that contained all the contradiction that Aghnides himself embodied.

