

My grandfather, Anargyros Patsourakos, son of Vasileios, was a medical doctor in Piraeus but served as a Reserve Second Lieutenant of Artillery during the Greek-Turkish war of 1912-13, when the Greek Army liberated Epiros and Macedonia from the Turks and the Bulgarians. At the time all northern Greece was still under Turkish occupation and the borders of Greece were in Thessaly (Larissa).

While serving in Metsovo, near Ioannina, he had the opportunity to see the wretchedness of the Greek population of the region who lived under the Turks for more than 500 years.

Towards the end of the war he decided, even though still unmarried and professionally uncreated, to take under his protection two little girls. He raised them, first alone and later together with his own family and children when he married, educated them and when the time came, dowered and married them.

The following extract of his memoirs is, I think, very interesting as it carry us back to another era, an era of wars, misery and poverty, but also an era when the manners of the people and their feelings towards their homeland and their compatriots were extremely different than today.

FRYNI AND ANNA

Randomly and fatefully, among other good or bad of my actions, either by superficiality or ignorance, or by false or plausible thoughts, or by a simple instant charity or not, among my many mistakes and successes I committed in my juvenile, I also committed the following and let anyone judge me like a faithful Christian and with indulgence.

Serving in Metsovo and seeing the refugee's misery, either by a frivolous thought, or excessive mercy, unmarried, without family, because my parents were old living in Gytheio, away from Piraeus where my permanent home was, without even considering the undertaken responsibilities, I decided to take up a baby, e.g. a young and poor girl.

I took up the little girl under my protection ignoring when the war will end, what I shall do, what the girl will do if I would get killed, but "what happened, happened" and let God guide us both.

Frini or Stamatia or Stamata was the daughter of Alexandros Giotis and Maria. Her father was from the village Kosmira but was living with his family in the village Adramitsa. The village is built on the coast of Lake Ioannina below the mountain Driskos and next to the Turkish fortress of Gastritsa. They had left their village because of the war and were refugees in Metsovo.

The family had three girls and two boys. Stamatia was the youngest, they told me she was 8 but I think she was probably 6 and they made her older fearing I wouldn't take her. One of the girls had a small indelible mark on her front as the Greeks, enslaved by the Turks, used to make to their girls to avoid the Turks to take them in their harems.

At first I refused to take her because I wanted an orphan but they told me she was double orphan, because they had many children and were refugees. They gave me the young girl and told me: «We hang her on your neck. Do whatever you want with her, whatever God wants, without any claim or payment or dowry». This was told by both parents and in front of other witnesses and several fellow soldiers. They just wanted to get alleviated from the little girl because they had five children and could not feed them all. Other people around were saying "Fortunately, that someone was found to exempt them from feeding the girl". This made me feel bad, but the misery in which they were, justified them in my mind. They were almost naked, hungry and wandered in the straits of Metsovo to get a piece of bread from the Army Logistics and feed the whole family. Miserable in their village and more miserable as refugees.....

Stamatia was very clever, blonde, with light blue eyes and looked happy with me. I took her together with her mother and went to a general store in Metsovo and bought her some clothes. I also bought a few meters of cloth for her mother and her two sisters and

gave the mother 16 drachmas, so I paid in total 50 drachmas.

We departed for Kalambaka around 11am and we were accompanied by many relatives and friends who were saying "how lucky the little girl was that someone was found to take her out of her misery because her father was miserable and could not take care of his family in the village" and her mother told me that "her father wanted me to kill the baby when she was born because she was a girl, he wanted a boy and he would have killed her if the war did not start".

The mother asked for my address but I give her a false name and address because I thought that if the father was so miserable he may one day come to blackmail me.

On our way to Kalambaka I also decided to change the name of the girl and name her Fryni and say that she comes from Kozani. She is young and by the time, she will forget her real name. It was Friday, February 1st, 1913.

From Kalambaka I sent Frini to Piraeus with my assistant Christos Sereleas, who was from Mani. Together was my first sergeant Evangelos Antypas sergeant of infantry, from Lixouri Cephalonia. I sent her to a friendly family to take care of her until my return. They traveled by rail to Volos and then by steamship to Piraeus.

Thessaloniki, November 1913.

When I took Fryni and sent her to Piraeus, some in the neighborhood dished the dirt that she was my illegitimate daughter and I was presented her as an orphan.

Being in Thessaloniki I thought to get another orphan to help my parents. Let's see what my dearest foes will say now.....

When I was in Kavala and Drama had also tried to find an orphan there but as I didn't stay long didn't succeeded. Now staying in Thessaloniki I got permission from my Commandant to look at the various institutions.

I went first to the "Bulgarian Institution", where a thousand families were living as refugees, since they were deported by the Bulgarians. They were fed by the Greek Government, but were in a miserable situation.

An employee approached me and asked me what I wanted. I was an officer, therefore worthy of more attention. I explained to him and he said that there was a little girl like the one I was looking for, but was not there at that time. As we talked a small flock of girls and mothers gathered around me, urging me to get one of them. Such was their plight.

The girl came after a while. Her name was Anna; she was about 10 or 11 years old, very cute and had finished the third class of the primary school in her village Stromnitsa. I asked her if she wanted to follow me and she was on the verge of tears but I had to get the consent of the father. I asked her if she had any mother and said that she had died. She added that her father killed her by a kick and that very often he spansks her also, because she asks for bread and obliges her to work anywhere. She exaggerates a little, but can be corrected. She asked to follow me immediately, without asking her father, but I want to be okay and I refused. After discussing with two employees of the institution, we agreed that they ask her father's consent and I would return the next day. The little girl was crying thinking that I wouldn't come again and that I would take another.

The next day I went to the church of Aghios Dimitrios and I had almost regretted, because I had a Fryni also to look after, but then I met the man who introduced the little girl to me the previous day. He told me that the little did not stop crying since I left and that her father had consented and even felt fortunate that he was exempted from the girl.

I was convinced and went back to the institution with him. When the little girl saw me, she run towards me in tears and was kissing both my hands. Her father was not there again but the two employees told me that he had given permission, so I took her with me, after I gave 5 drachmas to each one of them, as they asked me for their trouble.....

Immediately I went to the Commandant House to report that I found an orphan who would take with me. The qualified Officer told me that there was no problem since her

father has consented. So I took her with me and we went to Tsarsil, a commercial center of Thessaloniki at the time, and bought her a pair of shoes from a Turkish shop, because the Greek and Jewish shops were closed, the Jewish ones because it was Saturday and the Greek ones because it was the celebrating day of Agios Dimitrios, protector Saint of Thessaloniki. After that we went to a restaurant and ate. She was eating with gluttony because she hadn't filled her stomach for a long time and then I left her sleep at the hotel and went out to buy her some underwear.

In the afternoon I had planned to go along with my nephew Evangelos Patsourakos, sergeant of artillery to the fest at the square of the White Tower, so I took the girl with me. Once the fireworks begun the little was very scared and started to shout "Bulgarians, Bulgarians, go, go, the Bulgarians are coming ..." Everyone looked at us, I tried to reassure her, but it was impossible, so we left and went close to the place where the fireworks came from, to reassure her that there weren't any bombs, but at each explosion she was shouting "Go, Bulgarians ..." Such was her terror for the disasters and murders committed by the Bulgarians.

The next day (27 November 1913), before leaving on a steamer to the port of Piraeus, I took Anna and I went to the Jewish commercial shop of Mr. Tirig and bought her some European clothes. After that, I left her at the steamer and returned to pay the hotel. There, I found a peasant waiting and trying to tell me something. I asked him but he could not speak Greek, so I asked the hotel owner to interpret for us and learned that he was Anna's father. I was happy to meet the father and protector of Anna and arrange any requirements he may have. Through the hotel owner I asked him if he wants to get her back. He answered "Nou-Nou, Niema" or "No-No, I do not want". His name was Lazaros Athanasiou, he was Greek and about 28 years old, rather tall, dowdy, but spoke only Bulgarian. I gave him 25 drachmas and he kissed my hands. The hotel owner said that once he got rid of his daughter would probably return to his village. Unfortunately, after some months Stromnitsa was totally destroyed by a Bulgarian attack and the man gave no other signs of life.

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When I returned to Piraeus, after the War ended, I put Fryni and Anna to a private school and was paying 16 drachmas for food and tuition fees. There were like sisters and I made no distinction between them, but because Fryni was more diligent pupil I was planning to make her a teacher and send her back to her village after her studies.

But "Gods think differently than men". Venizelos came into power again, King Konstantinos left Greece and I was chased by my political enemies and was obliged to take refuge to Mani for several months. Then I was exiled to Skyros island for one year and after that imprisoned in Chalkida for another year and after many adventures I returned to Piraeus. While I was away, Fryni and Anna followed my brother's Ioannis Patsourakos family, also chased by political enemies, to our village in Mani, Konakia and after that Strotza, so my plans were overturned.

In December 1919 I got married, then got a family. Fryni and Anna were like older, loyal sisters to my children. They took good care of them and advise them when needed and even after their marriages they always looked after them.

Anna was married at the age of 25-26 years, on July 16th, 1930 to Georgios Pipinos, a fine young man working at the Railway Company of Piraeus. I endowed her with a plot in Piraeus, where I built a house with three rooms and kitchen and gave her clothing and furniture of around 20,000 drachmas.

After some time, Fryni was also married, in June 1932, to Nicholas Leandros from Santorini, a third master in steamers, excellent man and fine husband. I endowed her with a house next to that of Anna's, to communicate with each other, as well as with all the clothing and furniture.

I have no complains from any of them. They were excellent girls, never gave me any reason to be sad, they were wise, moral and dutiful. We had difficult times but they both remained loyal to the upbringing I gave them. It pleases me to see that they live dear to each other but I ignore if they are happy, even though they never complained to me. The only thing that makes me sad is that none got any children, but who understands the thoughts of our Lord.....

Anargyros Patsourakos
Doctor – Pharmacist
November 1940

(Transcribed by: Anargyros (Agis) Patsourakos, May 2009)