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AMERICAN FARM SCHOOL • THESSALONICA, GREECE

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News-Letter

November, 1951

GREECE NEEDS TRAINED FARMERS

Charles L. House, Director of the American Farm School who has spent most of his life in Greece, describes the situation there as follows:

"Greece is primarily an agricultural country, with about 1,500,000 rural families, most of them on farms which average only 8 to 10 acres. The scant rainfall (less than 20 inches per year) and the use of primitive methods of farming result in low production per acre, probably the lowest of any country in Europe. Low production means a bare subsistence for both man and beast, and consequent lowered efficiency.

"Only elementary schooling through the 6th grade is available to village children, and the farmers, while intelligent and eager, rarely have any knowledge of agricultural science or what it can mean to them. Their small farms do not provide full productive employment, but as they lack technical skills they cannot devote their spare time to the development of the small rural industries which would better their conditions.

"The Greek government, with the help of the E.C.A. and other agencies, is attempting to deal with the problems of increased food production and improved living standards, but the ultimate solution will depend upon the farmers themselves and the extent to which they can adopt modern farming methods; increase their livestock; use mechanized equipment; become carpenters, plumbers and machine shop mechanics; and operate such rural industries as dairies, flour mills and electric plants."

The hope of Greek farmers for a better life, and the hope of Greece for a more self-sustained economy, lie in the kind of training which the American Farm School is providing.

THEY LEARN - TO TEACH AGAIN

Fourteen recent American Farm School graduates are now working in Rural Youth Centers in remote villages of northern Greece. One of them, Petros Toundjis, who was an International Farm Youth Exchange student in the U.S. last winter, writes of his work:

"In this little village there is a house painted with blue and white colors that mean the Greek flag. It is named the House of Children, and most of the children go there every day to learn a song or hear a nice story or hear something about agriculture and so on. In this House lives a lady (they call her Chief) who has been trained how to take care of the little boys and girls, and also there is a boy who takes care of a small farm, the Boys' Field, where the boys suppose to go every day and practice. Also the boy (as I am) teaches the boys new agricultural ways, how to do the work better, to help the people when they have a problem to make it out, and so on. I cannot find plenty to eat either, and nobody wants to cook for me. I eat once in a week when I go to the town - Didimotihon - and the rest of the week I eat cheese, eggs and tomatoes."

GREEK TEACHERS STUDY IN THE U. S.

Demeter Hadjis and Theodoros Litsas of the Greek staff have been in the U.S. this year. Mr. Hadjis studied extension training methods under an E. C. A. grant at his alma mater, Cornell, and at other agricultural colleges. Mr. Litsas, who arrived in October, has a Smith-Mundt Act grant to observe American activities for the betterment of rural youth through 4-H clubs and other groups. Long interested in scouting and now Assistant National Commissioner of the Hellenic Boy Scouts of Greece, Mrs. House describes him as "the most wonderful man with boys I've ever seen or hope to see."

SHORT COURSES TO BE EXPANDED

The short courses for young adults, begun in a small way in 1948 with the co-operation of the Greek Ministry of Agriculture, will be substantially expanded during the next two years under an agreement with the Technical Cooperation Administration of the Department of State (the Point 4 Program), executed in May just before Mr. and Mrs. House returned to Greece. Plans call for practically continuous operation of these courses, winter and summer, each devoted to one of the following subjects:

- Farm machinery
- Improved farm practices
- Rural home improvement
- Farm structures
- Pasteurization and processing of milk and milk products
- Community canning
- Sanitary slaughter house practices
- Packing and marketing of farm products
- Farm youth organization
- Mechanical refrigeration
- Rural electrification

AMERICANS AT THE SCHOOL

Never before has the School had so many Americans on the campus! Three more joined the School "family" in September.

Charles Storrs Barrows, Jr., an agricultural engineer (B.S. Va. Polytechnic Institute 1950) is working in connection with the short courses. Roger M. Frey (B.S. Milwaukee State Teachers College 1949; M.A. Wisconsin State College 1951) teaches English under a Fulbright grant and helps with athletics. His wife, Joan Hansen Frey (B.S. Lawrence College 1949) helps with music and other activities.

Mr. Barrows and Mr. Frey had had previous experience overseas, Mr. Barrows operating refrigeration plants in India, Mr. Frey teaching radio operation to the Turks. The young American teachers bring enthusiasm and a fresh point of view to the work, and as one Greek teacher said: "They teach not only the boys, but the Greek teachers too."

NEEDS OF THE SCHOOL

The new short courses have been made possible by government funds, but the American Farm School remains an independent, non-political, non-sectarian institution, which must rely on private contributions for its continued existence. Its operating costs have been increasing since the war. Its needs are many -

- ... funds to meet the general expenses of its main activity - the four-year course for rural boys
- ... help for many boys who cannot pay for their food (none are asked to pay for tuition)
- ... sheets, pillow cases, towels, pyjamas and drugs for the infirmary
- ... 24 blankets to replace those taken when guerrillas raided the School
- ... additional athletic equipment, so that every boy can participate in some form of organized games
- ... paint for doors, windows and woodwork - lumber to build henhouses and fences, and tables and benches for the Play Room
- ... 12 high-bred cockerels, to improve the poultry breeds
- ... machine shop accessories, to put in use milling, grinding and boring machines lacking essential parts

What a wide variety of things is required to run a farm school for boys! And this is only a partial list of the needs Mr. House has written us about.

The American Trustees keep closely in touch with the School. Two of them - Herbert P. Lansdale, Jr. and Charles H. Morgan - visited it during the summer.

Olive L. Sawyer

Olive L. Sawyer,
Executive Secretary