Humanitarian mobilization in Central and Eastern Europe

Local, national and international perspectives

Edited by Doina Anca Cretu and Michal Frankl

HUMANITARIANISM
KEY DEBATES & NEW APPROACHES

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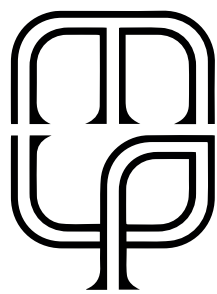

Manchester University Press

HUMANITARIANISM

KEY DEBATES & NEW APPROACHES

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MANCHESTER UNIVERSITY PRESS

Published by Manchester University Press
Oxford Road, Manchester, M13 9PL

www.manchesteruniversitypress.co.uk

British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN 978 1 5261 8993 6 hardback

First published 2025

EU authorised representative for GPSR:
Easy Access System Europe, Mustamäe tee 50,
10621 Tallinn, Estonia
gpsr.requests@easproject.com

Image Credit: Refugee aid committee in Brno, Czechoslovakia, 1938. Photo courtesy of Austrian National Library.

Typeset
by Cheshire Typesetting Ltd, Cuddington, Cheshire

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Abbreviations

ACSC	American Committee for Service in Czechoslovakia
AFSC	American Friends Service Committee
ANIMI	Associazione nazionale per gli interessi del Mezzogiorno d'Italia (National Association for the Interests of Southern Italy)
ARA	American Relief Administration
BCRC	British Committee for Refugees in Czechoslovakia
CC KSČ	Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia
CDU	Christlich-Demokratische Union (Christian Democratic Union)
CRTF	Czech Refugee Trust Fund
ČSČK	Československý červený kříž (Czechoslovak Red Cross)
ČSM	Československý svaz mládeže (Czechoslovak Youth Union)
DFD	Demokratischer Frauenbund Deutschlands (Democratic Women's League of Germany)
ECF	European Children's Fund
EVOP	Epitropi Voithia sto Pedi (Committee for Child Aid)
FDGB	Freier Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund (Free German Trade Union Federation)
GDR	German Democratic Republic (East Germany)
HERP	Hungarian Emergency Relief Program
ICEM	Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
JDC	American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee
KKE	Kommounistiko Komma Elladas (Communist Party of Greece)
KSČ	Komunistická strana Československa (Communist Party of Czechoslovakia)
LDP(D)	Liberal-Demokratische Partei (Deutschlands) (Liberal Democratic Party /of Germany/)

LRCS	League of Red Cross Societies
LWF	Lutheran World Federation
PS	People's Solidarity (Volkssolidarität)
RCRA	Romanian Child Relief Association (Asociația Româna pentru Ajutor Copiilor)
SBZ	*Sowjetische Besatzungszone* (Soviet Zone of Occupation)
SCF	Save the Children Fund
SCIU	Save the Children International Union
SED	Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands (Socialist Unity Party of Germany)
SO ČSČK	Sociální odbor Československého červeného kříže (Social Department of the Czechoslovak Red Cross)
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNRRA	United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration
VVN	Vereinigung der Verfolgten des Naziregimes (Association of Persecutees of the Nazi Regime)
WCC	World Council of Churches
WILPF	Women's International League for Peace and Freedom
YIVO	Yidisher Visnshaftlekher Institut (Yiddish Scientific Institute)

Introduction: humanitarian mobilization in Central and Eastern Europe

Doina Anca Cretu and Michal Frankl

The Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 generated the displacement of large numbers of people. They waited at borders and crowded transit junctions. And many of them arrived at the Main Railway Station in Prague, Czech Republic (Figure 0.1). The busy station became an early and highly visible space where displaced and disoriented families searched for material, as well as other forms of, assistance. Many were stuck in webs of bureaucracy or simply lacked a clear destination. Yet the station also quickly turned into a site of humanitarian mobilization. Within days, Czech activists, including many students and non-governmental organizations, mobilized aid on an emergency basis. Volunteers with vests and bilingual signs distributed food and other necessities, registered refugees and provided advice. Professional and ad hoc social workers mediated between the displaced and the authorities and guided them to the state-run registration centres. Spontaneous at the beginning and based on voluntary work, the humanitarian action soon involved coordination and cooperation with the police, fire-fighters, city officials and/or the Ministry of Interior.

The highly publicized aid in February 2022, as well as in the following months, was in stark contrast to the prior mainstream discourse and politics of migration in the Czech Republic. The so-called migration crisis of 2015 generated populist instrumentalization and, to all intents and purposes, informed a practical suspension of refugee recognition.[1] Fast forward to 2022: as Ukrainian refugees were camping in the railway station, politicians showed an almost unlimited openness and a widespread willingness to help. Like other European countries, the Czech Republic introduced an imperfect, yet comparatively generous, regime of temporary protection. In that moment, the Main Railway Station in Prague became a physical expression of multiscale humanitarian encounters between activists and politicians, as well as Czech and international media. Similar scenes of humanitarian mobilization played out in Warsaw, Vienna, Bucharest and many other locations in Central and Eastern Europe.

Figure 0.1 Volunteers helping refugees at the Main Railway Station in Prague, March 2022

Source: Photo © Charles University Prague/Martin Pinkas, all rights reserved.

The building of the art nouveau station in Prague is a good point of departure for the exploration of the entanglements of humanitarianism (here on behalf of refugees) and difficult histories of Czechoslovakia, as well as of the broader region of Central and Eastern Europe, over the twentieth century. Historically, the station has repeatedly been a spatial interface between forced mobility, the city and its social structures. For example, during the First World War, Jewish aid workers stationed there assisted refugees coming from the war front areas; later on, this aid targeted Jewish migrants without a permanent home. After the Munich Agreement in 1938, the station saw the influx of tens of thousands of refugees from the border areas of Czechoslovakia, already taken over by Nazi Germany, as well as people hastily fleeing the endangered country. Prague station also became one of the first sites of *refugeedom* in Czechoslovakia around the demise of state socialism: in 1989, refugees from East Germany transferred there in their desperate attempts to reach West Germany. In 1990, just after the collapse of various communist regimes in Central and Eastern Europe, Romanians

fleeing undemocratic politics and poverty also arrived, challenging the state's and the city's capacity to provide emergency assistance.

In 2022, one of the first objects which Ukrainian refugees could see, on platform 1, was a statue of a man helping a group of children (Figure 0.2). The recently planted memorial celebrates British activist Nicholas Winton who, for a few months after the Munich Agreement in 1938, acted as an organizer of aid to children.[2] Rediscovered in the 1980s, he was made into a symbol of transnational humanitarianism and a 'rescuer' who saved almost 700 – mostly Jewish – children on the 1939 *Kindertransports* to Great Britain. In 2022, his statue was decorated with Ukrainian flags and colours. This expansion of its meaning drew direct parallels between Winton's transnational aid work, the station as a space of refugeedom and the local humanitarian mobilization.[3]

The spontaneous mobilization on behalf of Ukrainian refugees in early 2022 expressed the expansion of volunteer work and professionalization of aid in post-communist decades. At the same time, it also made visible hierarchies that are implicit in refugee categorization and in humanitarian activity. For example, the seemingly flawless cooperation in favour of Ukrainians perceived as white and Slavic changed dramatically once smaller

Figure 0.2 Statue of Nicholas Winton at the Main Railway Station in Prague decorated with Ukranian colours, March 2022

Source: Photo © Charles University Prague/Martin Pinkas, all rights reserved.

groups of Roma from Ukraine arrived, with many remaining stuck at the station and later living in provisional tent camps on the outskirts of Prague.[4] Taking all this into consideration, Prague's Main Railway Station has long represented a physical expression of the core central topic of this volume: a multiscale and multifaceted humanitarian mobilization in Central and Eastern Europe.

Humanitarianism and the making of Central and Eastern Europe

This volume seeks to open new perspectives on humanitarianism from and within Central and Eastern Europe: a significant site of aid provision over the twentieth century. The chapters contribute to the already rich and ever-growing scholarly conversation about the history of humanitarian ideas, actors (institutional, communal or individual) and practices.[5] Historians, sociologists, anthropologists or political scientists have explored the language and ideas of humanitarianism, as well as their shifts and turns over time.[6] Scholars have examined the cross-border and on-the-ground practices and interventions. They have paid attention to individual institutions of aid, their birth, ideologies and the actors in play.[7] Other studies focused more prominently on particular aspects of aid (e.g. famine relief, child relief), their meanings and their agents, in specific time frames and locales.[8] Combined, this large and growing body of research significantly contributes to transnational history and the study of internationalism.

Much of the literature has analysed and critiqued humanitarian organizations and their activity as *Western* forms of aid, thus replicating in new ways West–East and North–South inequalities and hierarchies. Arguably, the largest and most influential humanitarian organizations originated in the imagined 'West', in Geneva, New York or London.[9] Studying humanitarianism thus became a function of a critical approach to ideas, social, political and economic structures, and the international politics of the West. In these interpretations, various scholars have understood humanitarianism as a highly political activity carried out through Western global dominance.[10] For many, providing aid was not (only) an altruistic activity but rather a form of governance subordinating local or national authorities, as well as aid recipients, to transnational logics and techniques. To support, and also challenge, this perspective, historians have started to look at specific countries, regions and people as direct objects of relief.[11] By doing so, they have not only addressed potential historiographic lacunae but also aimed to add new questions and perspectives from within particular sites and regions.[12] This collection, focused on Central and Eastern Europe, adds to this line of exploration.

This volume originated in the workshop Humanitarian Mobilization in Central and Eastern Europe during the Twentieth Century, held on June 2021 and organized through, as well as conceptually inspired by, the European Research Council Consolidator project Unlikely Refuge? Refugees and Citizens in East Central Europe in the 20th Century.[13] The project challenges dominant perspectives imagining the region as a place to leave due to political instability, authoritarian and totalitarian regimes, and ethnic conflict, violence and cleansing, and because of economic underdevelopment and poverty.[14] It examines how refugeedom has been entangled with histories of citizenship and state building, and it analyses the places and spaces in which refugees interacted with state officials, local residents and humanitarians.

Our regional focus seeks to contribute to the decentring of the research on the history of humanitarianism. Rather than always starting from Western capitals and other centres of power, the contributions in this volume reconstruct ideas and acts of help from and within a region, which in narratives of humanitarianism typically figures on the recipient side of an imagined geopolitical divide. The open, multidirectional and multiscale approach allows our contributors to bring together a variety of transnational, national, local and personal motivations and forms of aid. While recognizing the agency of transnational actors, mostly coming from the West, we highlight the role of those whose ideas and practices were rooted and formed in the region. To a different degree and in various tones and ways, the chapters show that even though crossing borders was an important part of the grand story of humanitarianism, it would remain incomplete without initiatives developing locally and nationally.

The region itself does not allow an easy demarcation, as it is mostly defined through opposition or comparison, from within or without. An in-between position of Central and Eastern, or East Central, Europe has been often invoked and disputed by scholars, publicists, dissidents and others. To name just a few prominent aspects of the public debate about the 'nature' of this part of Europe, Milan Kundera's late Cold War description of Central Europe as 'kidnapped', truly belonging to the West,[15] the stereotyped reactions to Yugoslavia's bloody dissolution,[16] and the disputes about Eastern Europe's reluctant reaction to the 2015 'migration crisis' all show how these discourses continue to shape our assumptions of what makes the 'East' of Europe. Scholars have critically engaged with these and other forms of geopolitical imagination. Larry Wolff masterfully demonstrated how travellers, writers and scientists looking or arriving from the West co-produced the readings and meanings of Eastern Europe.[17] From another perspective, Maria Todorova exposed the idea of Balkanism as a discourse in which this region is imagined as neither part of Europe nor outside of it.

At the same time, so Todorova claims, the Balkans have not only been an *idea* but also a *real region* shaped by and imagined through postimperial legacies.[18] These and other hierarchies of culture and civilization, economy and politics are also important for understanding the meanings attributed to providing aid in parts of Europe which are perceived as situated beyond the 'West'. Humanitarianism emerges, therefore, as part of this imagination and of the making of the 'East', as aid workers arriving from the West as well as those working locally co-produced the readings and meanings of this region.

To avoid any essentialization of its character and geography, we adopt a pragmatic definition of Central and Eastern Europe, keeping its territorial as well as conceptual borders open. We include chapters devoted to aid delivered in Austria, Czechoslovakia, Germany (especially Eastern Germany), Hungary, Poland, Romania and Russia. Apart from being in the eastern and south-eastern part of the continent, there are three broadly conceived facets which play an important role in our understanding of this region and through which the contributions read the histories of humanitarianism. These are the collapse of imperial frameworks and the building of nation-states, ethnic conflicts and nationalism, and the experience of state socialism.

Mostly following in the footsteps of Western humanitarians, historians have already uncovered many sites and aspects of their activity in Central and Eastern Europe. As for the actors they examine, this research often rendered the region as a space attended by political, social and natural catastrophe in its different forms. It is therefore unsurprising that varied analyses have zoomed in on the responses to displacement, hunger and the social impact of both world wars. These include aid action in revolutionary Russia, as well as in Central and Eastern Europe, in the wake of the First World War and the Bolshevik Revolution.[19] Adopting a similar perspective, a strand of historical studies focused on the humanitarian activity in early post-Second World War Europe, and on displaced persons camps as an arena in which aid to Eastern Europeans was delivered and where the politics of repatriation transformed into the Cold War notion of political refugee.[20] The interest in the role of humanitarianism between the competing political blocs also structured the examination of exit: the enforced end of activity of these organizations, be it of the American Relief Administration (ARA) from the Soviet Union after a few post-First World War years, or of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) in Eastern Europe in the late 1940s and early 1950s attracted attention. Another key facet of modern humanitarian activity, and even intervention, was the protection of minorities, thus connecting to one of the key themes of Central and Eastern European history in the era of the nation-states. The analysis of British

humanitarian engagement in Eastern Europe highlighted solidarity towards Christian minorities in the Ottoman Empire,[21] and the same concerns guided British (and other) policies of intervention and aid in the Balkans.[22] Many differences notwithstanding, this also indicates a more general pattern of solidarity and action, such as the later, religiously motivated, Christian aid across the Iron Curtain and the campaigns to assist Jews oppressed in the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc.[23]

In recent research, scholars have analysed the region as a source of internationalization. When the Habsburg Empire decomposed into nation-states, Natasha Wheatley has argued, key elements of international ideas, rules, practices and institutions were crafted. Humanitarian responses were one part of these parallel processes of nationalization and internationalization.[24] Similarly, Jessica Reinisch has emphasized that 'not only questions of internationalism, but also of nationalism and the future of the nation-state' were negotiated through post-Second World War activities of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) in Poland and elsewhere in Eastern Europe.[25] Similar impulses arrive from research in transnational history. For instance, Katja Naumann has analysed the building of Red Cross associations and of their cross-border networks as an example of a successful transnationalization of Central and Eastern Europe, which had already started in the nineteenth century.[26] In a significant part of this research, Central and Eastern Europe is interpreted as a peripheral political, social and cultural space, ripe for the adoption of Western policies and hierarchies. This turns it into a disaster space where Western humanitarian responses could be developed, framed and tested.[27]

In contrast to the appreciation of humanitarian internationalization, researching Central and Eastern Europe has also advanced highly critical perspectives on Western, as well as regional, practices, focusing on colonial and other hierarchies of power expressed through aid. For example, Tehila Sasson reconstructed the transfer of knowledge and techniques applied in dealing with famine caused by the British colonial administration in India to post-First World War Communist Russia.[28] Recent research in solidarity and aid under state socialism indicates the potential for decentring humanitarianism. Čarna Brković explored this using the example of the Yugoslav Red Cross which, at a conference of Red Cross societies in 1975, attempted to reframe the scope of activity of the humanitarian organization from its stated neutrality to engagement for worldwide political freedom and emancipation. The case, she argued, made clear the ambition of the elites of state socialist Yugoslavia to build a platform offering an alternative approach to transnational aid.[29] Focusing on relief to Romanians affected by catastrophic floods in 1970, Cristian Capotescu examined not only the renewal of flows across the 'Iron Curtain' but also analysed the

transformative activity of 'private humanitarians' who operated outside of institutional frameworks and were inspired by news media, ethnic ties and their own prior refugee experience.[30] Christina Schwenkel follows the stories of East German experts who helped rebuild Vietnam after the devastating war; in her analysis, she describes them as 'socialist humanitarians' and argues that this type of solidarity and aid is an overlooked yet 'critical lineage' of humanitarianism. Lastly, research focused on responses to wars in the post-Yugoslav space in the 1990s contributed critical perspectives on humanitarianism. It indicates how productive a closer view on humanitarian engagements and encounters at the perceived edge of Europe can be. On the one hand, scholars brought attention to tensions related to the loss of sovereignty and the replacing of political organization with allegedly apolitical aid, and to inequalities in aid provision between European and other sites around the globe.[31] From a different angle, anthropological research on local constructions of solidarity and aid exposed the failures of humanitarianism to have a transformative effect in justly redistributing resources.[32] Thus, these studies already show that instead of a universal regime of values and practices, humanitarianism should be treated in the plural.[33]

Studies on local aid activities and connections to state building have lagged when compared to explorations of transnational humanitarian organizations. In this context, we argue that mainstream historiography thus runs a risk of applying a filter in which local actors only become visible and appreciated in interaction with transnational humanitarian structures. Some research, however, has attempted to include the local and national contours of humanitarianism, in interaction with transnational aid. For instance, Friederike Kind-Kovács has turned attention to the aid given to children in Budapest after the First World War.[34] Kateřina Čapková reconstructed local humanitarian mobilization for refugees from Nazi Germany and Austria to Czechoslovakia in the 1930s and the ties to transnational aid organizations.[35] Other research rediscovered the Czechoslovak Jewish social worker Marie Schmolka, discussing her impact on transnational aid as well as the gender aspects of aid.[36] Doina Anca Cretu has analysed the ways state builders shaped trajectories of international humanitarianism in interwar Romania.[37]

At the same time, national historiographies are slow to integrate humanitarianism into national histories and the construction of national institutions, economies or health systems. The role of aid and welfare in shaping citizenship or changing its parameters, especially in Eastern Europe, also remain insufficiently researched. Since writing humanitarianism into national master narratives would require revisiting and revising canonical actors, sites and chronologies of nation building, these mostly separate historiographic traditions are difficult to reconcile. For instance, histories of humanitarianism

in post-First World War Austria focus on hunger and feeding children, and highlight the personality of the paediatrician Clemens von Pirquet (in this volume, see Chapter 7).[38] Overviews of Austrian history, on the other hand, examine the transitions between the imperial and national orders and emphasize political cleavages as the defining feature of the unstable interwar Austrian state. Historians researched the drawing of territorial borders, nationality tensions and economic crisis, cultural representations of these phenomena,[39] and veteran care as a basis for welfare systems.[40] In Soviet historiography, the ARA in Russia has mostly been analysed through the files of the Soviet security services and interpreted as US attempts to undermine the Communist regime.[41] Similarly, as demonstrated by Jessica Reinisch, UNRRA's contribution to post-Second World War reconstruction was mostly neglected in national historiographies in Eastern Europe.[42] These absences and gaps as well as the potential of exploring various scales of humanitarianism from a perceived periphery guide the contributions in this volume.

Scaling the humanitarian arena

The chapters in this collection jointly use the lens of aid giving within Central and Eastern European locales to shed light on varieties of humanitarian actors, agendas and practices. Taking methodological inspiration from geography, the volume brings together different levels of operation of humanitarianism under the concept of *scales*. Human geographers have theorized scale as a unit of analysis beyond traditional, measurable geographic areas. The areas of analysis can be as small as the human body, continue through the household and community, and further focus on national, regional and global levels. We understand scales as socially constructed arenas – in our case, of the activity and perception of humanitarianism. Thus, we adopt the concept of scales as a useful analytical tool to research everyday practices, relations and power settings embedded in different iterations of local, national and transnational humanitarianism in Central and Eastern Europe during different moments of the twentieth century. Moreover, scales do not represent insulated social and physical spaces. In fact, researchers emphasized the complex and multidirectional influences and relationships between scales and developed concepts such as upscaling, downscaling and rescaling.[43]

The contributions in this volume extend existing research on transnational institutions and their workers who crossed borders and were instrumental in structuring what was mostly Western relief action on the ground. They show that transnational humanitarianism could not

operate without the interaction with local and national actors and institutions. In this context, we posit, humanitarianism should be understood as a multidirectional exchange of ideas and practices in which the hierarchies created by Western financial and political powers not only played a significant role but also merged with and were influenced by local and/or national projects of assistance. In that sense, we anchor analyses of scales within the concept of the *humanitarian arena* suggested by Dorothea Hilhorst and Bram J. Jansen; they argue that transnational, seemingly neutral and value-driven humanitarian actions 'are negotiated through the micro-physics of power in humanitarian arenas'.[44] Similarly, in her research on *humanitarne akcije* (humanitarian actions) in Bosnia, anthropologist Čarna Brković examined scales as 'specific socialities, procedures and materialities [which] enable particular enactments of humanitarianism'.[45] In this context, this volume proposes three broadly conceived scales of interpretation of actors and their processes in the making of diverse humanitarian arenas in Central and Eastern Europe.[46] The structure and respective chapters of this book mirror these three scales, in which various humanitarian practices originated and were grounded in for the most part. Thus, the volume starts from the local, with chapters shedding light on those engaged within their communities; some of these community-anchored actors of aid remain local, while others cross international borders. We further upscale our perspective by examining the entanglements of humanitarianism with the national, transnational and cross-border scope of humanitarianism.

All the chapters in the volume bring the 'local' into the exploration of humanitarian motivations, practices and/or effects on the ground. However, some authors put the broadly defined 'local' at the heart of their analysis. Scholars have rather tentatively delved in the ways grassroots actors mobilized and addressed various humanitarian crises. Notable is Bertrand Taithe's exploration of 'demotic humanitarians', mundane actors of humanitarianism who depart from the highly technocratic language and practice of professional humanitarians.[47] Čarna Brković has proposed further attention on 'vernacular humanitarians'; these are aid givers that count on universal principles of humanity towards those in need. Importantly, similar to Taithe's demotic humanitarians, they employ 'ad-hoc, non-professional, non-bureaucratized forms of helping'.[48] In Part I, we adopt the umbrella term *local humanitarianism*, which includes grassroots (both formal and informal) mobilization to aid. We define it in relation to the actors who perform it and the space of the humanitarian process overall. The authors engage with local and localized assistance schemes through the lens of their formation and their engagement with national and transnational aid organizations, as well as through their physical areas of action.

The first two contributions probe humanitarianism in the space of a single community and actors deeply embedded in local social structures, networks and politics. Friederike Kind-Kovács focuses on Budapest, a city coping with the disruptions caused by the First World War and the dissolution of the Habsburg Monarchy; at the same time, this was a city that was a site of aid, with children emerging as its core recipients and objects of humanitarians' compassion. She analyses the establishment and development of kindergartens for children from poor families in Budapest and, through this, reflects on the agendas and outreach of the Hungarian branch of the Save the Children movement. Franciszek Zakrzewski zooms in on the Polish town of Lubartów as a space of humanitarian engagement on behalf of local Jews. His microhistorical reading of town archives sets different accents and reconstructs local meanings of aid and welfare. The humanitarians in this smaller locality were social workers, as well as town administrators, both Jews and non-Jews. Zakrzewski shows how a seemingly universal thinking of helping those in need was adapted to the political and social microcosm of the town of Lubartów and productively connects the discussions of humanitarianism and welfare policies.

Other chapters tap into the grassroots formation of humanitarian aid as an interpersonal, unmediated and one-to-one activity. Here, the local is small scale and deeply private. Cristian Capotescu's chapter contributes to the exploration of a still understudied humanitarianism in state socialism through a case study of private networks of assistance from the German Democratic Republic (GDR) to Romanian German communities of Banat and Transylvania in the 1980s. In so doing, he navigates aid giving beyond state institutions and international organizations. Humanitarians here are community-driven and, indeed, community-centred; the act of giving is direct and interpersonal and informal. Maren Hachmeister dissects the everyday practice of local and localized aid, as a response to close rather than 'distant suffering'. In her chapter, she shows the emergence of forms of grassroots humanitarianism in the transformation from and *after* state socialism. Through her analysis of People's Solidarity, a former socialist mass organization in the GDR, she focuses on neighbourhood relief for older people.

The state and governance at the level of the nation-state, or their absence, are important sites and circumstances of humanitarian mobilization, be it local or transnational. Throughout this volume, the presence of the state as a humanitarian actor and as a key framework for humanitarian action is highlighted in the overlapping themes of nation building, construction and reconstruction. Perhaps not surprisingly, states played an essential role in providing and structuring aid during state socialism, and the chapters

brought together in Part II under the label of *national humanitarianism* provide new perspectives on state-driven aid in the Eastern Bloc. Julia Reinke and Nikola Tohma analyse the building of aid structures for refugees evacuated from the Greek Civil War and from North Korea, respectively, as an important aspect of postwar political and social transformation. Examining the campaign in favour of Greek children in the GDR, Reinke looks at how notions of internationalism and socialist solidarity intersected with the legacies of National Socialism and the needs of German refugees expelled from Poland and Czechoslovakia. Tohma reconstructs the aid provided by the Czechoslovak Red Cross to Greek Civil War and North Korean refugee children. Her analysis shows how the humanitarian mobilization and practices in the name of these children contributed to the ideological indoctrination and top-down operation of one of the oldest humanitarian organizations and the use of its extensive social support in a context of socialist transformation.

Part III sheds light on *transnational humanitarianism* by emphasizing interactions between aid givers traversing national borders and domestic actors: these were local mediators of assistance (e.g. domestic philanthropists, state leaders) or recipients themselves. In this way, these chapters depart from a mere institutional perspective and explore humanitarian practices in the Central and Eastern European space. Two contributions examine different humanitarian engagements in postimperial contexts after the First World War. Establishing a connection between the national and transnational scales, Gábor Egry's chapter draws attention to conditions of transnational humanitarianism in several new nation-states in the region. Against a backdrop of the collapse of European empires and of the making of new or transforming nation-states, Egry analyses the humanitarian mobilization of the ARA as a dimension of state building through an attempted infusion and transfer of welfare schemes, from the rich American humanitarian landscape into the wanting Central and Eastern European countries. Ruth Nattermann takes a different route and challenges an arguably conventional interpretation of who humanitarian actors were. The chapter focuses on diplomats and activists as humanitarians in post-revolutionary Russia, during a period of famine crises and weak sovereignty in the early 1920s. Historians have already asked and reflected on what drives humanitarians, tapping into issues such as empathy, morality and solidarity shaped by ethnic, religious or, indeed, political motives.[49] By taking a biographical approach, Nattermann's chapter dissects these rationales of very diverse political figures, whose activity framed a humanitarian schema in relation to their national agendas, their involvement in international politics and their heightened concern towards Russian material needs and Russian-Jewish refugeedom.

Laura Brade's chapter on Western engagement in Czechoslovakia after the Munich Agreement also highlights the mutually reinforcing processes based on active interactions between local and transnational relief actors. Brade points to the rapport and tension between American and British humanitarian organizations and local committees, as Czechoslovakia shifted from an aid *partner* to an aid *recipient*; this affected the perception of agency of local aid workers in the eyes of their Western interlocutors. Finally, interactions between Western institutions of aid and local actors represent the backbone of Sarah Knoll's chapter on the World Council of Churches (WCC) in Cold War Austria. Knoll points out the paradox of secularization of humanitarianism of a faith-based organization such as the WCC and sheds light on how 'taking care' of Hungarian or Czechoslovak refugees became both an international and a national agenda of humanitarian work. In Austria, the state, as well as various local relief organizations, fed into the WCC's planning of relief work and, thus, saw the mobilization of a reciprocal and deeply transnational humanitarian network. Knoll shows not only the dilemmas and tensions between religious and secular aid but also how the shifting balance and emphasis within the WCC during the decolonization period changed the perception and lessened the aid provided to refugees from the Communist bloc.

Read together and from the perspective of an orientalized and marginalized region, the chapters in this volume enrich the understanding of the history of humanitarianism in several ways. The instances analysed here show the mutual influences and shifts between the different scales, each with their specific actors and institutions, languages and worldviews, practices and techniques. In most chapters, and in different configurations, the transnational, national or local actors of aid work interact with one another, converge in their common goal to assist people in need, or diverge in their methods, ideologies, ambitions and/or practices. These, in turn, travelled not only from a so-called West to the East, or from the global to the local. They also moved in the other direction.

Several chapters highlight connections between institutional frameworks on different scales. Kind-Kovács points out the 'glocal' character of humanitarian work for Hungarian children in need, which was built on intersections of local conditions and actors, national(ist) politics and globally oriented humanitarian phenomena and institutions in a post-First World War world. At the same time, much like Kind-Kovács, Zakrzewski unearths an intertwining of local, national and transnational work designed to assist people in need and provide them with material aid. His narrative needs to be read against the background of the rich JDC activities in Poland and contributes to a globally relevant story of intersecting humanitarian actors in the interwar period. Tohma localizes the Red Cross, one of the

oldest transnational humanitarian organizations, on the ground, through its national organization and in the context of socialist aid. Here, local and national assistance were also strongly structured by transnational communist frameworks and notions of a highly politicized 'solidarity'.

These rescalings were often enabled by translocal and transnational actors moving across scales. For instance, Egry highlights the intersections and direct interactions between ARA leaders and workers and local officials and philanthropists as fundamental to a transformative dimension of humanitarianism in the region. He demonstrates how the ARA struggled to design a unified approach to countries such as Hungary, Romania, Austria and Czechoslovakia. Furthermore, Nattermann shows the double local embeddings of humanitarianism: in domestic politics in their own countries and cultural and political frameworks, and in the interactions with local actors at the site of assistance. Although operating directly and on a group basis, Capotescu's humanitarians were transnational actors who not only travelled and moved their aid across borders but also navigated national frameworks which enabled their respective aid processes.

Examining humanitarianism from below and from the East does not imply idealized alternatives to the West. Actors in humanitarian arenas created and recreated by the entanglements across scales negotiated various socio-political or economic aspects of the region, including the making of new nation-states, ethnic conflicts and hierarchies, and the rise and establishment of state socialism. The authors argue here, in different ways and using different cases, that these not only impacted assistance processes within the region but also potentially shaped humanitarianism more broadly.

As demonstrated here most clearly by Egry's and Brade's chapters, humanitarian operations inevitably became part of the processes of (late) *state building*, *unmaking* and *reconstruction* at different historical junctions. The moments of the largest and longest involvement of Western humanitarian organizations in the region, most importantly in the wake of the First World War, intersected with drawing new borders, the enforcement of state sovereignty and the construction of state institutions. As shown by contributions on transnational humanitarianism at different moments in time, aid officials understood the entanglement with citizenship regimes and the forging of state welfare and health policies of the new nation-states. In the post-communist transformation, also perceived as a form of political, social and economic reconstruction of nation-states, humanitarianism strongly intersected with the discussion about the role of civil society and of the non-governmental sector vis-à-vis the state in securing welfare service and structuring aid.[50]

The chapters also explore how *ethnic diversity and conflicts* played in important role in structuring solidarities and aid policies in the region.

To whom assistance was provided – and by whom – thus touches upon key histories of Central and Eastern Europe, which include ethnic competition, conflict, cleansing and even genocide. Given the region's multiethnic histories and patterns of competing forms of nationalist mobilizations, coming to help could not escape entanglements in nationalist projects. Ethnic solidarities therefore resonate in a number of chapters. Capotescu's aid givers were very much driven by ethnic and national solidarity in their informal relief mobilization and practice. Nattermann reveals the solidarity towards persecuted Jews as an underlying feature of the humanitarian biography of Lucien Wolf. These ethnic hierarchies of aid cannot be easily reserved for aid developed at local and national levels and separated from the operation of Western, transnational humanitarianism. Solidarities and networks which came into being because of previous migration trajectories resulted into the support of Poles in the US for their country of origin during and after the First World War,[51] or aid to Jewish brethren in Eastern Europe. Studies about the JDC in particular sketch both the lines of solidarity and the West–East hierarchies in the Jewish world.[52]

At times, providing aid also meant entanglement with the ethno-nationalist regimes or outright persecution. Zakrzewski's detailed analysis indicates the impact of ethno-national solidarities on the intersection of the developing national welfare regimes and both local and transnational aid. He demonstrates the failure of the attempt to create a more generic and equal aid regime reaching across ethnic boundaries – both in Poland and at the local level in Lubartów. In the turn towards ethno-politics and antisemitism, by the mid 1930s, Jews were increasingly marginalized in the town's distribution of resources and thus also dependant on national and transnational Jewish humanitarianism. Kind-Kovács's chapter tackles the interplay between aid to children conducted by transnational humanitarian organizations and an authoritarian regime centred around ethno-nationalist and anti-Communist mobilization. These motivations and practices of interwar care for Budapest children often remain unspoken yet obvious. Brade decodes the hierarchies of aid constructed in this crucial period of the ethnic categorization and exclusion of Jews. Her analysis needs to be read against the background of an ethno-nationalist shift in Czechoslovakia after the Munich Agreement, in which citizenship was increasingly linked to ethnicity and German or Jewish refugees were pressured to emigrate. The aforementioned statue of Nicholas Winton at the Prague railway station embellished in Ukrainian colours is thus also a reminder of the underlying restructuring of citizenship along ethno-national lines which advanced the emigration of an unwanted ethnic group.

Not only nationalist but also class solidarity is explored here as a basis for aid given across the different scales of humanitarianism.

Looking beyond the West also implies a new view on the so-called 'socialist humanitarianism' in its different forms. Examining help during and in the aftermath of *state socialism* provides an especially productive lens enabled by the regional focus of this volume. It opens questions of the meanings of humanitarianism not only in the absence of political rights and freedom of speech but also in a political regime which emphasized social rights and aspired to resolve social problems and inequalities. This form of care could build on the history of highly politicized aid provided to communists and their families who were imagined as heroic freedom fighters. In the interwar period, the Red Aid and the Solidarity Aid movements provided transnational support to communist refugee activists.[53] The contributions in this volume offer very different analytical angles, from top-down politics of aid driven by ideological solidarity with comrades in arms, to neighbourhood assistance, to private cross-border material help or social networks in one location.

Tohma and Reinke show extensive engagement and, especially in the case of Czechoslovak Red Cross, control by the party and state apparatus. The ideological centrality of the support for comrades in arms and the agenda of educating socialist citizens restricted the space for humanitarian initiative from below. Capotescu's research indicates such a possibility for personal engagement, aside from state structures, but not necessarily in conflict. Hachmeister focuses on a different aspect of the Peoples Solidarity in former East Germany. Her study demonstrates not only a recoding of the notion of solidarity, from ideological to neighbourhood aid, but also a bridge – in practices and solidarities – from late state socialism and the period of post-communist transformation. Humanitarian action was thus not only a bone of contention in the contest between the West and the East but it also presented an opportunity for examining connections and continuities across the chronological borders of political regimes. It also offers a still unexploited perspective on post-communist transformation, which itself attracted much attention among historians and social scientists.

The decentring of humanitarianism requires a critical rethinking of the epistemology and a new inventory of sources. Archives of large transnational organizations are more likely to survive and remain more accessible, with the documents held there mostly written in Western languages. Researching these corpuses is often highly enriching and effective as it resembles visiting a global observatory, providing a transnational overview of the many sites and actors. Local and national actors, their ideas and practices, are, however, only present through a filter of transnational aid. To change this perspective, the authors of this volume adopt different strategies. Some, for instance Brade and Egry, attempt to read the central archives of transnational organizations *against the grain* and to expose silences, contradictions

and hierarchies. Others make extensive use of sources from local archives. Through the choice of his sources, Zakrzewski challenges research on aid to needy Jews in Poland which has often been written based on the rich collections of the JDC Archives. To advance the personal biographic and personal perspectives, Nattermann reads letter collections, recovering the immediate ideas, perceptions or emotions of her actors, and both Capotescu and Hachmeister interview local humanitarian actors, creating a grassroots, deeply personal archive which contrasts with the technocratic language of large humanitarian organizations.

We hope that these perspectives centred around a region will contribute to research about other sites of humanitarian mobilization and enrich a discussion about the history and nature of humanitarianism globally. In different and mutually reinforcing ways, the authors of this volume propose a rethinking of humanitarian arenas in Central and Eastern Europe across different historical junctures in the twentieth century. The eras of post-First World War reconstruction, the Nazi occupations of the late 1930s, and the socialist and post-socialist periods all saw the formation and development of relief for sufferers of war or of repressive conditions and regimes. Humanitarianism as a socially produced system of knowledge and practices was internationally driven and transnationally implemented. At the same time, it was community-based and a part of state building and reconstruction projects. Collectively, we make the point that the scales of humanitarianism, from a single person taking care of the elderly to transnational organizations with thousands of employees and activists, cannot be understood in isolation. By making observations from seemingly peripheral spaces of relief transfer, mobilization and implementation in Central and Eastern European locales, this volume contributes to broader histories of humanitarianism by highlighting multiplicities of actors, their interactions, their intersections, their networks or their fractures. In this context, we hope that the case studies contribute to expanding the still prevalent narratives of humanitarianism as merely Western, great power-driven, international and largely non-governmental.

The inclusive notion of humanitarianism applied here, beyond aid conceptualized and delivered only across state borders, helps to open significant questions. Local and national scales of humanitarianism are important not only because they add more actors and shed light on other facets of solidarity and help. Reaching beyond transnational organizations and actors touches upon key issues in critical readings of the history, presence and future of humanitarianism. It adds to the examination of how aid activities intersect with and change facets and implications of state sovereignty (or its absence). Putting local and national aid on an equal and interconnected footing is essential for any debate about the durable impact and exit

strategies of transnational humanitarian action. Significantly, migration and refugee experience – tackled in many but not all contributions here – cuts across the different scales of humanitarianism. This is not only a result of transnational trajectories of refugees but of the connections established. Refugees, or the 'distant strangers', shifted from being the object of aid of humanitarianism across borders; they are now local actors, and thus aid merges or competes with domestic forms of welfare and assistance schemes. Highlighting local and state-driven constructions of aid also makes the case for integrating humanitarianism into the master narratives of national histories rather than excluding it as a separate framework of transnational or international history. In doing so, it opens broader questions of 'transnationalizing' national histories.

Finally, the perspectives proposed here contribute to thinking about *humanitarianism in plural* and considering different forms and alternatives, such as the 'socialist humanitarian' or human actions and ideas embedded in local understandings of community, solidarity and justice. These different, and partially contradictory, constructions of humanitarian social ties and aid actions were at play in the Main Rail Station in Prague in 2022, as they were in the broader region over the twentieth century.

Notes

This research is part of the Unlikely Refuge? project, which has received funding from the European Research Council under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation program (grant agreement No 819461).

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2 Yet another memorial to the *Kindertransport* erected at the train station remembers the decisions and despair of parents sending their children away.

3 'Pomoc pod dohledem sira Wintona. Lidé z Ukrajiny jezdí zničení, říkají dobrovolníci' *Aktuálně.cz*, 4 March 2022, https://zpravy.aktualne.cz/domaci/foto-pomoc-uprchlikum-na-hlavnim-nadrazi-v-praze/r~6fd3b9ac9afa11eca89f0cc47ab5f122/

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Part I

Local humanitarianism

1

Save the (workers') children: humanitarian kindergartens in Budapest's slums after the First World War

Friederike Kind-Kovács

Introduction

In the social melting pot of postimperial and postwar transformation in Hungary's capital city, children suffered from hunger, displacement, unstable housing and precarious living conditions. Children's suffering in most East Central European countries that were affected by the First World War and its challenging aftermath, rendered visible that something had to be urgently done if the wasting away of the next generations was to be prevented. Starting in 1921 and happening throughout the 1920s, the Save the Children International Union (SCIU), which became known in Hungary as the Nemzetközi Gyermekmentő Szövetség, got involved in offering relief to Budapest's children. Its activities ranged from the management and maintenance of day care centres for pre-school children, to the provision of food parcels and the delivery and provision of milk to malnourished children, to more general family care.[1] The SCIU also opened homes in Budapest's slums for the most deprived children of the working class, who were judged to suffer from neglect during their mothers' working hours.[2] These homes served as day nurseries and kindergartens to provide care for the youngest children, ranging from the ages of two-and-a-half to six years.[3] The dire situation of many families rendered the urgent need for day care for the youngest children visible. The homes were created to accommodate the most physically and mentally vulnerable children during the day, pursuing the vision of 'enabling mothers to work all day and earn a living' and in that way 'to help them cope with the difficult living conditions'.[4] While the cities' emergency colonies represented a hub of individuals that suffered from the harmful social consequences of industrialization and the war and its aftermath, the childrens' homes represented a microcosm of humanitarian child relief.

Against this backdrop, this chapter centres its attention on Budapest's children's homes – children's day nurseries – as a case study of international humanitarian child relief in the aftermath of the First World War.

Through the lens of this microstudy of the discourses and practices related to these emergency nurseries, this chapter investigates larger questions of the international – particularly transnational – dimension of humanitarian child relief in postwar East Central Europe. These children's homes, so the argument goes, served as a local experiment of transnational humanitarianism. While humanitarianism at the time turned into an international endeavour, which resulted in many international organizations, in the case of child relief in Budapest its strength lay in its transnational and reciprocal dimensions. Humanitarianism is, in this chapter, understood as a transnational attempt to provide relief to the most vulnerable segments of postwar society. I share Michael Barnett's rejection of both a widespread, 'overly romantic and an overly cynical reading of humanitarianism', and his understanding of 'humanitarianism as a morally complicated creature', which is both driven by politics and inequalities, while also seeking to implement a new ethics of care and relief.[5] Due to the realities of our imperfect world, 'humanitarianism can never be practiced as preached', and thus it never reaches the moral quality it originally envisioned.[6] This inherent ambiguity of transnational humanitarian intervention also surfaces in the following case study. Through a close analysis of this transnational humanitarian encounter between the SCIU as an international organization and Budapest's children's homes as its local implementation, the chapter sheds light on the 'glocal' dimension of humanitarian relief, uncovering the connections between the local and global. Engaging with international reports and visuals of the SCIU, as well as the Hungarian contemporaneous discourse about Budapest's SCIU homes, the chapter seeks to uncover how international and humanitarian notions of children's relief were put into practice through the joint effort of international and local child welfare workers.

The making of (Hungarian) humanitarian child relief

In the years after the end of the First World War and the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Budapest went through a massive political, economic and social transformation. The economic crisis in postwar Budapest had a severe impact on children, which became particularly visible in the poverty dwellings. The unemployment rate had exploded in Kispest, a disadvantaged worker's district of Budapest, due to the economic and export crisis in the postwar years. The Hungarian humanitarian relief worker Rózsi Vajkai argued that 'the slums of Budapest with thousands of penniless refugees present graver problems than similar districts in Western Europe'.[7] An undated SCIU report from the late 1920s observed that 'in Hungary, as

in all the defeated states, the consequences of the war are felt most strongly by children of the youngest age'.[8] Vajkai denounced in a contemporaneous report that 'the children of Kispest are puny, sickly, ragged and cannot resist the tuberculosis infection'.[9] Therefore, she concluded, 'the number of children who have gone astray is very large'.[10] Rózsi and her sister Julia observed that the Hungarian postwar state 'realize[d] … its responsibility more than it did before the war', but due to the massive social and economic problems, it only attempted to get 'back to pre-war conditions'.[11]

Responding to the housing crisis during and after the war and the imperial dissolution, the government had started to build refugee barracks and emergency colonies on the outskirts of the city, hoping to provide mass housing to the city's most impoverished families, many of which had been displaced due to the country's territorial losses. Several barracks were built in various districts on the outskirts of the city, including the Mária Valéria barrack colony and the Wekerle Colony, to provide mass housing, especially for incoming refugees from the territories that were lost. A contemporaneous observer described the barracks in 1925 as a place where 'there is no paving, no lighting, just a lingering mud and a frightening darkness, of which we get a taste even before noon on foggy days'.[12] The barracks, which consisted of 'this shabby, poor shack of wood and crumbling brick walls', were called, according to folk humour, 'the raging', because fights were common in the inhabitants' everyday life and because they 'live in such a state that they always have a reason to rage'.[13]

Triggered by the visibly dramatic condition of children in the postwar period, individual relief workers responded in various European and non-European countries and laid the basis for the foundation of transnational humanitarian child relief.[14] An important outcome was the foundation of the SCIU by Eglantyne Jebb and her sister Dorothy Buxton in Geneva in 1920.[15] The SCIU served as 'an umbrella body that drew together child welfare agencies across Europe', and was established in Geneva due to the city's long symbolic relationship to humanitarianism.[16] Jebb had successfully petitioned at the 1924 assembly of the League of Nations to adopt the newly formulated SCIU's 1924 Declaration on the Rights of the Child. While Jebb's petition is judged to be 'the most remarkable example of the League's openness to transnational […] petitions', and the declaration was a 'forerunner to the wider international human rights regimes of the later twentieth century', the proposed protection of children's rights had to be put into practice among children that were to be rescued.[17] The SCIU proposed an alternative approach towards the children of the former enemy, thereby challenging the logic of the war. By offering children's emergency relief in the immediate aftermath of the Great War, the SCIU

and other emerging international humanitarian organizations aimed at advocating neutrality and peace.

Budapest's suffering children were an ideal target to implement the third demand formulated in the declaration, according to which 'the child must be the first to receive relief in times of distress'.[18] Yet in 1926, Percy Alden, a British social worker, observed that the 'difficulty of putting the Clause into practice is of course far greater under conditions of economic distress'.[19] For that reason, Alden was in awe when he became aware of the scale and the quality of Hungarian child relief work after the First World War. He expressed his belief in and appreciation for Hungary's contribution to contemporaneous international (child) humanitarianism in general. He argued that the child-saving movement in Hungary, which he felt was driven by 'the spirit of devotion and self-sacrifice', was not just 'saving the bodies and souls of many little waifs to-day'. In a broader sense, he believed, the Hungarian case was 'adding something of great and permanent value to the story of humanity'. In that way the Hungarian example could inspire future generations and 'shine with peculiar brightness in contrast with the suffering, degradation and misery into which the War and its consequences have plunged mankind'.[20]

One of the key persons to implement much of the SCIU's humanitarian relief work in Budapest was the humanitarian relief worker Rózsi Vajkai, who served as the commissioner of the SCIU in Hungary. She also served in 1920–1 as the secretary of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), and was the sister of the even more widely known Julia Vajkai, who was the Hungarian delegate to the British Save the Children Fund (SCF) in Hungary. Julia and Rózsi, born in 1879 and 1886 to a Jewish family, were crucial for mediating their local knowledge of the condition and needs of Budapest's children to the incoming international relief organizations and doing the work on the ground. They belonged to a newly emerging group of women from the middle and upper classes who became increasingly involved in the cause of children's public welfare. Prior to the twentieth century, child philanthropy had enabled women to engage in the emerging field of social work.[21] But this burgeoned after the First World War, which drastically increased women's active contribution to public and philanthropic life. During the war, women as nurses were needed at the front, in prisoners of war camps and in hospitals.[22] But women's active role did not halt with the end of the war. Many women continued to be indispensable in offering organized relief to vulnerable civilians in postwar Europe. As the children were among the most vulnerable civilians, their relief required an institutionalization and professionalization of the field of child protection, which the trained female nurses used to push for modern childrearing practices. At the same time,

the transnationalization of child relief also left an imprint on the local personnel that did the work on the ground. The Vajkai sisters perfectly capture how the local and the global dimension of relief became closely interconnected. Their activism illustrates not just women's emancipation but also their active role in enabling and shaping the transnationalization of children's relief.

Creating kindergartens for Budapest's slum children

The way the SCIU provided relief to Budapest's youngest children coincided with a reorientation of the relief work of the organization itself.[23] Driven by the conviction that 'man does not live by bread alone', the SCIU wished to 'offer moral support for the development of the child', instead of just feeding the children.[24] It became obvious that the 'pre-war pre-school system did not meet the requirements of the changed circumstances', as 'the war and its unfortunate consequences forced the Hungarian mother out of the family home and into the struggle for bread outside the home'.[25] To secure the families' and their children's survival, many women had to seek outside employment. In that way, the male breadwinners' absence caused a shift in gender dynamics and relations, requiring women to become their families' economic 'mater familias'.

As mothers were increasingly more absent from the home, children's care, especially of infants and toddlers, became an everyday challenge. Yet ideas and initiatives to care for children outside the family home had been developing for some time. Already in the early nineteenth century, on 1 June 1828, the capital city of Budapest had witnessed the establishment of its first kindergarten, named 'Angel Garden' (*angyalkert*). Inspired by philanthropic pedagogy, the countess Teréz Brunszvik had welcomed only the children of those who could not properly educate their own offspring.[26] In contrast to these early educative kindergartens, those prior to the First World War had developed much in terms of pedagogy and availability. Yet their opening hours (8–11 am and 2–4 pm) still did not cover the new working hours of mothers who were required to seek full employment beyond home. The result was that many working mothers, who were considered main caregivers at the time, left their infants at home, 'exposing them to a thousand dangers'.[27] Often elder siblings had to take full care of infants and toddlers in damp, overcrowded barracks and cope with the precarious housing conditions.[28] Thus there emerged the urgent need for nurseries and kindergartens that would care for this disadvantaged and neglected section of Hungary's child population during mothers' working hours. But as neither the city of Budapest nor the Hungarian state found

themselves in a position to construct new kindergartens, Rózsi Vajkai and other local relief workers sought financial and institutional help abroad.

Between 1921 and 1922, the SCIU was able to open five children's nurseries in the centre of Budapest's 'slums', which were to provide relief 'where the need was the greatest'.[29] The SCIU wished to take over the responsibility for children that suffered from neglect, as the neglect of young children could even cause their death. The SCIU homes were inspired by reform pedagogy of the early twentieth century, which did not halt before the capital city's most impoverished neighbourhoods.[30] In various poverty dwellings and its newly established barracks, the SCIU set up its children's homes. The homes included the so-called Kispesti Home in the Wekerle Colony, which was the first nursery Vajkai opened in 1921 for children between the ages of three and six years old,[31] the 'MacKenzie Home' in the overcrowded and miserable lodging of the Mária Valéria Colony, which was compared to a 'desolate wasteland',[32] the 'X. Pius home' in the Lenke Colony, the 'St Stephen's Home' in the seventh district and the 'Apostolic Nuncio Home' in the Anyalföldi Colony.[33] These homes were set up right on the poverty front line, where the children lived, as it was feared that children who could not afford shoes and winter cloths would not be able to come to the care institutions.[34] It was believed that the closer the homes were to the children's familial homes, the easier and thus the more likely it would be that the children could be brought or come to their childcare facilities.

The 'MacKenzie home' (Figure 1.1) was named after the Catholic priest William Andrew MacKenzie, treasurer of the SCIU and commissioner of the International Red Cross Association. MacKenzie worked tirelessly to support the SCIU's activities in Budapest. Through this institution, his name was now inscribed into Budapest's cityscape and its newly emerging childcare infrastructure. While this home initially accommodated sixty kindergarteners, its nursery just accommodated ten children. This nursery for the youngest children of workers' families came to be known for its apparently well-organized, clean and modern childcare provisions. While the three permanent children's homes, the Kispesti Home, the MacKenzie home and the X. Pius Home, were financed by the SCIU, hosting 220 children in 1922 while also caring for eighty children through care packages,[35] the Catholic Church financed the St Stephen's Home and the Apostolic Nuncio Home.[36] By 1923, 400 children below the age of six were cared for in these children's homes.[37]

As the postwar situation was judged to have impaired family life in Hungary's capital city, Vajkai considered it the nurseries' task to 'fill the crying gaps in the child's own family home'.[38] The nursery system in the homes was set up in a way that it could be 'a complete substitute for the

Figure 1.1 Budapest 'Home Mac Kenzie/Baraque Marie Valérie', Hongrie/ Budapest, Home Mackenzie de L'UISE: 4 photos de pavillons Marie-Valérie

Source: AEG, A.P. 92.105.84 (1) Archive of the Save the Children International Union (SCIU), Geneva.

family home'.[39] These institutes were explicitly called homes, although they were actually nurseries and kindergartens, as it was envisioned that these places should 'have a family atmosphere where both parent and child can see and feel at home'.[40] The SCIU stressed the fact that 'often the parents posed a serious danger to the child, either because of the ignorance or negligence'.[41] For that reason, as Vajkai stated in 1932, the focus on the children's parents was a core aim. She remembered that back then she already knew that the dissemination of knowledge on children's proper physical care was essential if the SCIU wished 'to educate the parents and raise their standard of living through the day care centre'. Only then could the day nurseries 'really serve its purpose' if they succeeded 'in becoming a centre for the education of parents'.[42] The nurses were aware that the parents were to remain the 'prime educators, the first to be responsible for their children's happiness'.[43]

Nevertheless, by means of the homes the SCIU as well as local Hungarian child protection institutions aimed at educating mothers about children's proper care. For that purpose, local welfare workers organized monthly parent–teacher conferences, where they introduced parents to the necessary

standards for children's proper hygiene and education.[44] During these monthly reunions, the personnel demonstrated to the parents children's physical and developmental progress and offered advice on children's education.[45] After the SCIU had managed to care for the children in their nurseries for a few years, they observed that not only did the children regaine their normal (physical and mental) development but also the parents reassumed their 'sacred [educational] duty towards their children'.[46]

Vajkai recalled in 1938 that the children were recruited 'without exception from the most destitute families of the Capital and its outskirts', especially in districts 'where consequently physical and moral distress are overwhelming'.[47] To be admitted to a children's home, the SCIU set up three criteria. In contemporaneous sources, the first criterion was the so-called welfare perspective, which accepted children into the homes whose mothers had to work outside the home and were thus forced to leave their children unattended at home or strolling the streets like vagabonds. It was made a rule that child relief workers had to conduct detailed research about the situation of the family and the children, including a medical examination of the children and their social surrounding. The second criterion was the state of 'children's undernourishment and unhygienic living conditions'. In these cases, the children were accepted into the home, independent of the state of mother's employment. The third criterion was the SCIU's fight against tuberculosis. In this case, the SCIU was seeking families that suffered from tuberculosis but whose children were not yet 'contaminated' – meaning infected – by the disease and were thus extracted from the infected environment. In the Nuncio Home, out of 100 children, fifty children belonged to category 1, ten children to category 2, and forty children to category 3.[48] This meant that mothers' employment was the prime cause and the attempt to prevent children's contamination with tuberculosis the secondary cause of children's acceptance.

Everyday life at the homes

Despite the financial and administrative difficulties children's relief and care faced in the postwar period, the children's homes were set up and could be filled with life. Vajkai recalled in 1932 that it was in the 'Kispesti' children's nursery where she had learned from Anna Antal, its director, and her enthusiastic kindergarten teachers, 'that there is nothing impossible in social work, because it took only days, even hours, to find a warm home and careful care for the starving, unfortunate babies who were neglected, worm-infested, starving and without any care'.[49] Vajkai remembered how the mother of a little boy, called Rudi, had been so exhausted by the 'inhuman

struggle' to support her own and her son's life that, due to the ongoing lack of firewood or soap, she had been lying her son down in a freezing room which she was unable to warm up with a fire. Rudi's little body, suffering from neglect, lacking hygiene and warmth, was covered with a nasty rash when he was brought to the Kispesti Home.[50] The case of little Rudi led Vajkai and other relief workers to the conclusion that the 'correct physical care of the baby' was essential in the everyday life of the day care centre.[51] The public discourse over children's physical suffering and neglect reflected underlying fears over children's degeneration and also, in a broader sense, over the irreversible degeneration of the young Hungarian nation. At the same time, children's individual experiences – as captured in the story of Rudi – paved the way towards the professionalization of the Hungarian childcare system. The humanitarian strategy of using stories of children's individual experiences was instrumental in individualizing the massive scale of children's suffering, which helped readers to feel and show compassion.

The fact that many of such child stories were recounted in the major print media at the time served not only the public call for children's relief and welfare but also the dissemination of knowledge on children's necessary hygiene and care. Festivities were also regularly organized to publicly exhibit the physical transformation of the children in care and thank the philanthropic institutions for their relief efforts. One afternoon in June 1922 a celebration was organized to praise the transformative power of the 'Kispesti' kindergarten (*gyermekkert*), where 'fifty pale-faced, skinny little human children' had been 'cared for physically and mentally for nearly seven months'.[52] By 1923 it was observed that one and a half years of 'care, supervision, love and interest in them, good air and plenty of food have paid off'.[53] The source claims that childcare in the nursery had contributed to the children's physical transformation. Its author observes that the children's 'pale faces are hunched and flushed, the crooked, angular legs are straightened', and the formerly 'dirty children, who otherwise would have been scavenging in the streets', have come to be 'well-behaved, clean, well cared for', and have learned to read poems and songs, do handicrafts, and 'all traces of their misery had been wiped off them'.[54] The very close and overtly positive descriptions of children's physical rescue and recovery perfectly mirrors the way in which the emerging Hungarian welfare state wanted to present itself. While the war and its aftermath were judged to have brought great misery to Hungary's children, the notion of the child's radical physical and moral transformation was presented as the immediate success of this international relief endeavour.

Sources about the relief facilities also pursued the very same strategy as reports about the physical transformation of the rescued children. Highly celebratory, contemporaneous media describe in close detail how

international relief was implemented and how it altered the bodies and souls of the respective children. In some of the shacks of huts, as the author described it in 1925, an 'oasis' for children was set up with the aim of 'nestling in them human kindness, tender care and clever charity'.[55] An eyewitness report from 1922 nostalgically describes how the 'large, long, outwardly bleak building of the Mária Valéria barrack' had come to host 'a magnificent, flourishing, smiling, singing, beautiful children's colony'.[56] It was here, where 'two major international charities', namely the SCF and the SCIU, were 'fighting child poverty and exploitation at the same time'.[57]

During a visit to the MacKenzie home by Hungary's right-wing Regent Miklós Horthy, his wife Magdolna Purgly, the papal nuncio Lörinc Schioppa and representatives of the international relief mission in Budapest on 7 May 1922, many efforts were made to exhibit the institution's professional childcare system. One photograph of the visit (Figure 1.2) captures the scene, showing how ten toddlers pose for the photographer in their wicker beds, which had been donated by the SCIU and bore its emblem.

The cradles had been manufactured by older children in so-called workrooms that were set up with the support of the British SCF in the very

Figure 1.2 Budapest 'Home Mac Kenzie'-Baraque Marie Valérie, Hongrie/ Budapest, Home Mackenzie de l'UISE: 4 photos de pavillons Marie-Valérie

Source: A.P. 92.105.84 (1). Archive of the SCIU, Geneva.

same poverty dwellings, to teach children between twelve and fourteen a handicraft.[58] These cradles were lent to poor young mothers right after birth.[59]

As many impoverished and working parents were reported to leave their home in the early morning and only return late in the evening, 'locking their children in the winter into their housing and letting them vagabond throughout the summer', SCIU wished to offer substitute care for the neglected children of the working class.[60] In 1922, 'poor working women of the outermost factory in [the district of] Ferencváros' were seen 'bring[ing] their babies here [to the MacKenzie home] in the mornings and take them home in the evenings, after work'.[61] In 1923, it was reported that in particular female workers who had been displaced from the ceded Hungarian territories and were living in the Mária Valéria Colony, brought their children to the nursery.[62] While leaving children on their own was one problem, unemployment and the resulting poverty also affected the children in these districts. Hence, caring for the workers' children fulfilled two purposes: first, it prevented the neglect of children by those parents who were already working; and second, it enabled mothers in particular to take up employment and earn a living for their families.

Beyond the mere supervision, everyday life at the homes was well thought through. In the MacKenzie home the babies received 'a bath, then a cocoa breakfast, a mid-morning snack, a proper lunch at noon, all completely free'.[63] The home offered play and education, while the nurses also aimed to teach the children cleanliness and hygiene. Vajkai observed that 'cleanliness is something very difficult to reach'; yet great efforts were made to teach the children, and in that way also the parents, to regularly wash themselves, clean their dresses and take care of their daily hygiene.[64] Photographs were taken to document the daily cleaning, dressing and feeding of the children. The caption of one image (Figure 1.3) states in French that, 'Every morning, when the child arrives to the nursery, it is washed'. It shows a baby's reluctance towards and unhappiness about this daily routine, exercised by a Catholic nurse who served as key personnel in many childcare facilities at the time. Yet, as the image suggests, cleanliness was to be presented as a daily necessity, even if it entailed forcing it upon the children. Daily routines that ensured children's regular feeding, their proper hygiene and their involvement in play and education were seen as the right path towards securing children's proper upbringing. Once implemented in the homes, these routines, it was hoped, would be increasingly implemented at the children's private homes. Thus, capturing these moments of children's professional handling were meant to prove and pave the way towards the professionalization of children's public care and the making of public welfare.

Figure 1.3 Hongrie, 'Chaque matin, en arrivant au home l'enfant est lavé', Homes de L'UISE á Budapest

Source: AEG, A.P. 92.105.82 Archive of the SCIU, Geneva.

Vajkai, however, knew how fragile the children's and parents' receptiveness to hygiene and cleanliness was. She stated in 1928 that 'all our efforts are in vain if, as soon as they go back to the care of their mother, the children fall into filthiness'.[65] She thus considered the state homes more professional and appropriate in handling the children than the children's private homes, which were in her opinion rather backward when it came to hygienic and pedagogic standards. Even in times of crisis, the professional approach to children's health was valued. The particular focus on children's hygiene in the homes, including their regular bath as well as medical examinations, were judged to have prevented the closure of these facilities during epidemic outbreaks such as the Spanish flu in 1918. Vajkai recalled in a report from 1927 that 'their [the babies'] health is strengthened, and during the influenza epidemic, the homes could continue their work without interruption, whereas the schools had to close'.[66] Apart from children's cleanliness, their health and their development were controlled by a physician once a month.[67] Every three months, examinations recorded children's weight and height, as well as chronic and hereditary illnesses, which were to prove the

efficiency of the homes when it came to the children's physical and mental development as well as to the proper functioning of the home itself.[68]

After a walk through the childcare facilities in the Mária Valéria barracks, the correspondent of *The National Newspaper* (*A Nemzeti Újság*) described his personal impression of the babies, stating that 'you can see the satisfaction in their chubby faces, their bright, smiling eyes, their quiet, calm demeanour'.[69] In the kindergarten part, he inquired with a teacher regarding how these 'worker babies' were, and she responded that they were great and that there existed 'a difference like heaven and earth between these children and the village children', whom she had previously taught as a village teacher.[70] While SCIU had financed the nursery for four full years, in August 1924 the municipality was able to take over the financial responsibility. By 1925 the MacKenzie home accommodated 110 children between the age of two-and-a-half and twelve.[71]

Children's homes: a humanitarian, political and/or pedagogical experiment?

With his child welfare work, William MacKenzie had been a close collaborator of Julia and Rózsi Vajkai. All three represented key figures of international humanitarianism that were on the one hand bringing about a system of international child relief, while on the other hand implementing this kind of relief on the ground in Hungary. Beyond the international arena, MacKenzie was much invested in the cause of Hungary's children and regularly visited Hungary to report about the country's economic situation and its evolving charity and child welfare system. In October 1921, he observed that the economic situation had not improved much, but he appreciated the fact that, in contrast to many other deserving countries, 'there are many wealthy people in Hungary who could fill the gaps of international aid'.[72] In 1922, he was officially thanked during a celebration in his nursery. Such public gestures of thankfulness towards the representatives of relief were important to further secure incoming relief donations from abroad. A rhetoric of deep gratitude, and often rituals of public appreciation, were used to express thankfulness towards the humanitarian donors. The nursery thanked MacKenzie for having 'put his heart and soul into helping this great institution to flourish'.[73]

During an international children's congress that took place in Vienna and Budapest in 1924, institutions such as the MacKenzie home were shown to the international guests, as they prototypically materialized the success of the international relief donations and the professionalization of childcare, even in far-away Budapest. In the form of these institutions, international

humanitarian relief inscribed itself into the cityscape of Budapest. Apart from exhibiting during these visits humanitarian institutions in Budapest's poverty dwellings, much emphasis was also placed on showing Budapest's glamorous and imperial sites and the representatives of Hungary's aristocratic elite. The international guests not only attended a lecture at the Royal Opera House but they were also driven to the Royal Castle, where they were honoured by a tea party hosted by archduchess Isabella and attended by princess Gabriella and prince Albrecht, as well as many better-off members of society.[74] Such encounters with Budapest's glamorous sites and its imperial elite shifted the visitors' attention to Hungary's glorious past and its national importance – within the international community – which was, so the message went, worth rescuing.

Not just during such festivities, international humanitarian child relief in postwar Hungary was closely cooperating with representatives of the country's aristocratic and political elite. As the war, as well as the imperial dissolution and Hungary's Bolshevist revolution, were seen as having had a 'disastrous toll not only of the lives of thousands of children in Central Europe through starvation', and also on 'the potential strength of the nations through the effects of malnutrition', the new postwar government of Miklós Horthy, established on 1 March 1920, was considered as the remedy of children's postwar suffering.[75] Rózsi Vajkai stated in 1932 that creating day nurseries for Budapest's poor children and ensuring the children's 'healthy development in body and soul' was of the uttermost importance, because she considered 'the child' as 'the only treasure of the future' and feared that 'the greatness, culture and strength of a nation can be lost because of the unsolved problems of raising children'.[76] Especially due to the massive loss of lives during the war and the subsequent turmoil, the child became the symbol of hope for the regeneration of the weakened nation.

As in 1919, Hungary had lived through a short Bolshevist revolution under Béla Kun, and international relief organizations feared the possible spread of Bolshevism and were thus much in favour of Horthy's counter-revolutionary politics and government. In that way, international relief gained an unequivocal political objective: to restore post-revolutionary order and stabilize Horthy's regime. An American article from 1939 recalled in an admiring tone how 'Admiral Horthy led his army into Budapest and the counterrevolutionaries began to restore order in the impoverished land'.[77] Although a costly and great task, Horthy shared the approach of the international and local humanitarian organizations to Hungary's suffering children. Children's rehabilitation was seen as *the* precondition for the regeneration of the Hungarian nation and state. Based on this notion, processes of postwar state building went hand in hand

with the expansion and professionalization of children's welfare. Horthy also saw great symbolic meaning in the support and rescue of Hungary's children.[78] Similar to the imperial backing of child protection up to 1920, child protection in the postwar period continued to be heavily politicized. Yet the close connection between child relief and politics was well received by the international relief organizations. Hungarian nationalist sentiments were not seen as detrimental to the idea of internationalism but were rather considered a natural component and supplement of humanitarianism. In so far as Horthy and the SCIU shared a belief in the importance of children's rescue and recovery, children's relief functioned as a cornerstone for the making of Horthy's political and social postwar order.

Yet the idea of the children's homes broke with the conservative notion of the women's place being at home. Instead, the homes enabled a further emancipation of women in terms of their increased participation in the labour market. As the children to be placed in the homes mostly belonged to the impoverished classes, their placement outside their – often precarious – private homes was considered a possible means to secure their better and safer upbringing. Thus, while these homes broke with Horthy's conservative notion of the family and the understanding of the mother as the best caretaker, they helped vulnerable families to step out of poverty and to prevent children's further neglect in these – economically and socially – difficult times. Yet in contrast, the place of the youngest children of the better-off classes – as well as of their mothers – remained in the private home. They were to be shielded at home from outside harm, whereas children of the impoverished working classes were to be placed in outside homes to be shielded from parental neglect. Class played heavily into childcare provisions at the time.

Apart from the political agenda of relief, the Catholic Church also played a central role in the ongoing support of the nurseries. It financed the St Stephen's Home and the Apostolic Nuncio Home, even with direct support from 'the Holy Father', while the premises, the heating and the lighting was provided by the capital.[79] When the St Stephen's Home was inaugurated in May 1923,[80] Lörinc Schioppa, the papal nuncio, explained that it was the duty of the wealthy and capable people 'to do their utmost to ensure that Hungary's future generation of children can develop as strongly as possible, otherwise the belief that the new generation will bring about Hungary's rebirth will remain a mere phrase'.[81] At the end of the inauguration, Schioppa distributed shoes and food to the children and the poor who had gathered.[82] The pope even donated money from his private funds to support the lending of hundreds of travelling infant cradles, fully furnished with baby equipment, to impoverished mothers. The institution's religious character also found its way into children's everyday life and education.

Figure 1.4 Homes de L'UISE á Budapest (n. d.)
Source: A.P. 92.105.82, Archive of the SCIU, Geneva.

Before every breakfast and dinner, the children were obliged to pray, as depicted in Figure 1.4.

As the religious backing of the children's nurseries was essential, much importance was given to the celebration of Christmas, as shown in Figure 1.5. One Christmas in 1927, 160 'poor little babies' were given 'warm winter clothes, toys and sweets' and had to 'perform their little plays under the glow of a beautiful big Christmas tree'.[83] In 1930, one 'Christmas tree celebration' was organized in the S. Stephen's Home, where Rózsi Vajkai was surrounded by the institution's children. She was the key figure of this celebration, as she had helped to provide foreign aid to the impoverished children whose parents were busy at work with a daily warm meal and constant care.[84]

Another children's home, which cared for refugee children, and which was supported not by the SCIU but by the British SCF, was opened in the Auguszta Colony in February 1921. Frederick Hankinson, a British Unitarian pastor, had opened a 'primitive [simple] nursery' in the very same facility he visited regularly.[85] He came to be known in Hungary as the 'friend of the poor'.[86] He arrived in 1920 with the Quakers' Society

Figure 1.5 Home Mac Kenzie/Baraque Mac Kenzie, Noël 1927 Budapest, Hongrie/Budapest, Home Mackenzie de l'UISE: 5 photos du Noël de 1927 et 1928

Source: A.P. 92.105.84 (3), Archive of the SCIU, Geneva.

of Friends to Budapest to distribute £10,000 from the British SCF to Hungary's impoverished and suffering children. He invested much of his effort in the support of families and children that had been displaced from the ceded territories and who had found shelter in the various barracks in the city.[87] He explained in 1922 how the idea for a nursery had come into existence. It had been inspired by the tragedy of a poor child whose mother had gone to work. When the child was playing by the stove, it fell into the fire and was burned. Out of this experience, his conviction was born that 'mothers should be relieved of all worries, so that they can put all their energy into the work they are doing'.[88] While such a story could have been used to denounce the possible negative impact of poverty and exhaustion on women's ability to properly care for their children, the perspective is here shifted to call for women's exemption from childcare obligations.

This emancipatory move was motivated by Hankinson's strong belief that the increasing involvement of Hungary's population (and also increasingly of its female section) in the labour market was Hungary's only way out of its postwar economic misery.[89] Childcare during working hours was thus at its core not merely a humanitarian move but it originated – to a

large extent – from clear economic considerations. Welcoming twenty-two children into the day care centre meant that twenty-two workers were 'freed for work'.[90] Furthermore, he was much invested in preparing the local population to take over the childcare work once the international humanitarian organizations left Hungary. 'I have set up all the actions so that they can easily be continued. You do not need great financial investments, just decent, honest work.'[91] He was convinced that 'charity is possible without Carrara marble and Persian carpets'.[92] Once the mission of all the foreign charities would be discontinued, he argued, it would be 'the duty of the Hungarian public to replace them with its own resources'.[93]

In the various homes, much emphasis was put on the pedagogical approach to the children. Progressive pedagogical ideas and concepts were widely implemented. At the St Stephen's Home, the reform pedagogy of the Italian physician and educator Maria Montessori was implemented, and was in 1926 judged by Rózsi Vajkai to have had great results in preparing the children for school.[94] The main principle of the pedagogy proposed by Montessori was the trust in children's inherent ability to teach themselves and children's intrinsic interest in discovering their surrounding environment by themselves. Montessori's core purpose was to turn children, from a very young age onwards, into independent and confident human beings. As the Hungarian labour market at the time demanded women's increasing involvement, the Montessori pedagogy fed perfectly into this new perspective on and approach towards children. The more independent and confident a child became, the more available his/her mother would be for the labour market. Beyond this, the pedagogical and educational benefits were also appreciated in Hungary. Montessori's pedagogy resonated strongly among child relief and welfare workers at the time, among them child relief personnel in Hungary and especially in Budapest. Vajkai remembered in 1932 how in the nurseries the teachers had relied on the 'child's instinctive activity', when they playfully taught the little ones all the household chores which the mother usually does at home. They taught the children how 'to wash their hands and mouths, comb their hair; lace their shoes: dress themselves, set the table, pour water into a glass, tend the flowers and garden'. This kind of Montessori-like teaching through doing was based on the knowledge of 'how receptive the child's mind is at this age and how the impressions and habits acquired at this age have a lifelong impact'.[95] At the same time, the child's active participation in the household relieved working mothers of a substantial part of the work at home.

Vajkai stated in 1927 that she considered the Montessori method the most valuable attempt abroad that could also be implemented in Hungary; but she warned that although international ideas could be adopted, 'any development can only be truly good if it is adapted to local and specific

conditions'.[96] Despite this slight hesitation, Vajkai felt that she had made 'a small attempt to implement the idea of Montessori', by 'entrusting the most disadvantaged children to the most advanced'; the results were beyond her expectations.[97] This approach to the children in the homes was based on democratic, if not socialist, principles of self-government and mutual learning. The children were taught to care for themselves and for each other.

In all the homes, much time was also spent involving children in play and in music. The childcare facilities did not serve the sole purpose of providing custody during working hours but rather as institutions that invested in the proper education and personal development of the children. The modernization of children's relief and welfare focused much on children's education and play, which relied on the implementation of internationally shared pedagogic notions and practices. Humanitarian photography that documented relief in Hungary shared the moral iconography of transatlantic humanitarianism. We can speak of a visual language of humanitarianism that emerged with the dissemination of common humanitarian values at the time. The need to secure funding for children's relief resulted in a particular visual language that was able to appeal to both local and distant audiences. As Heide Fehrenbach and Davide Rodogno put it, 'humanitarian imagery gave form and meaning to human suffering, rendering it comprehensible, urgent, and actionable for European and American audiences'.[98]

When it comes to identifying common elements to the children's education in the homes, some daily occupations were developed that were intended to shape the children in various ways. Six main educative aims were formulated that should be reached through children's occupation: (1) developing a sense of duty in the child, (2) accustoming the child to cleanliness, (3) raising in the child the sense of satisfaction that comes from a job well done, (4) giving the child a moral foundation which guides his/her conduct in the future, (5) developing in the child the sense of family and the love of helping others and (6) awakening his/her religious feeling.[99] These educational aims were envisioned to bring about promising future generations. The homes also sought to reach measurable results: from a medical point of view, a 1927 report claimed that 'the systematic and normal life, the healthy air and the cleanliness, the health nutrition' had an 'excellent result' on the respective children.[100] Within 8–10 months in the homes, the children were reported to have gained 3–4 kilos, that their anaemia was reduced and that the pale and sick children had been turned into a 'happy and healthy children's group'.[101] Children's physical and emotional suffering, so said the celebratory tone of the contemporaneous sources, had been ended and the children could finally live a happy childhood.

Conclusion

The humanitarian discourse over Budapest's slum children and the everyday practices employed for their rescue and care demonstrated how children were instrumentalized for the – imagined and attempted – recovery of Hungary's postwar society. Herein, we can detect how the story of Budapest's slum kindergartens was closely intertwined with the country's larger postwar economic and social reconfiguration. Thus, zooming in on one of East Central Europe's humanitarian laboratories can serve as a magnifying glass to better understand the postwar transformation of the affected societies. Relieving Budapest's slum children through their daily care in humanitarian day nurseries was seen as a small yet important step by the international humanitarian community to bring about social change in this European capital city. First, it allowed mothers to seek labour outside the home and contribute to the family income. In that way, women could work towards stepping out of poverty, possibly enabling them to leave the barracks of Budapest's slums behind them. Second, contemporaneous thinkers were convinced of the fact that the more women could pursue a work, the more they could actively contribute to Hungary's economic restoration, which was seen as the sole remedy for Hungary's disastrous postwar condition. Besides this, children's suffering had made it obvious how important it was to invest in their relief and care, not just for their own sake but also for the state's own future. While children's relief in Budapest's slums was initially born out of local emergency, these rather improvised facilities slowly developed into more pedagogic institutions that became essential elements in the emerging Hungarian public welfare state. The homes mirrored how childcare came to be increasingly modern and professional.

At the same time, the destiny of these former enemy children also triggered compassion among international humanitarian organizations, which were willing to help Hungary 'to help itself', even if this country had been an enemy state until very recently. It was in these homes where global international relief intervention and the local infrastructures and personnel came to be jointly active on behalf of children's rescue and recovery. Supporting the implementation of childcare infrastructures in Budapest's most impoverished neighbourhoods was believed to bring about long-term social change. The knowledge and the experiences that were gained 'on the ground' could furthermore be internationally disseminated and applied. International relief workers were not the only ones to gain knowledge when working in the homes in Budapest; Hungarian child relief workers travelled to other European states to share the knowledge they had gained in their own country. Herein we can see how the transnational encounter between

international relief agencies and humanitarian testing grounds had reciprocal and long-term repercussions that went far beyond children's relief in Budapest's slums. In that way, these humanitarian homes in Budapest mirror well how East Central Europe came to serve as a testing ground of humanitarian postwar intervention. Although just a piece in the mosaic of the many transnational humanitarian encounters in postwar Europe, the case of child relief in Budapest exemplifies how essential the region was for the expansion and professionalization of humanitarianism in the aftermath of the First World War.

Notes

1 Dezső Schuler, *Hatósági És Társadalmi Embervédelem Budapesten* (Budapest: Székesfőváros Házinyomdája, 1936), 201.
2 Rózsi Vajkai, 'A Nemzetközi Gyermekmentő Szövetség Budapesti Missziójának Tevékenysége', *A Jövő Útjain*, 1:1 (1926), 33–4, 33.
3 Rózsi Vajkai, 'A Nemzetközi Gyermekmentő Szövetség Budapesti Missziójának Tevékenysége', 33.
4 Rózsi Vajkai, 'A Nemzetközi Gyermekmentő Szövetség Budapesti Missziójának Tevékenysége', 33.
5 Michael Barnett, *Empire of Humanity: A History of Humanitarianism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2011), 7.
6 Barnett, *Empire of Humanity*, 6 and 8.
7 Rózsi Vajkai and Gulia [sic] Eva Vajkai, 'Case Work in Hungary', *Families in Society: The Journal of Contemporary Social Services* 9:4 (6 January 1928), 119–22, 119.
8 Archives d'État de Genève (hereafter AEG), Archives Privées (hereafter A.P.) 92.21.5 (3), Missions en Hongrie. Homes d'enfants à Budapest (1925–1931), 'Rapport sur l'installation et l'activité des homes de L'UISE à Budapest'.
9 AEG, A.P. 92.21.5, Missions on Hongrie. Homes d'enfants á Budapest (1925–1931), Rózsi Vajkai, 'Home de Kispest', *Bulletin de l'Union internationale de secours aux enfants*, 8 (1928), 185.
10 Rózsi Vajkai, 'Home de Kispest'.
11 Vajkai and Vajkai, 'Case Work in Hungary', 119.
12 'Gyermeklelkeket Mentenek a Dühöngőn', *Friss Ujság*, 30:14 (18 January 1925), 3.
13 'Gyermeklelkeket Mentenek a Dühöngőn', 3.
14 See for instance, Doina Anca Cretu, *Foreign Aid and State Building in Interwar Romania: In Quest of an Ideal* (Standord: Stanford University Press, 2024); Emily Baughan, *Saving the Children: Humanitarianism, Internationalism, and Empire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2021); Joy Damousi, *The Humanitarians: Child War Refugees and Australian Humanitarianism in a Transnational World, 1919–1975* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022); Bruno Cabanes,

The Great War and the Origins of Humanitarianism, 1918–1924 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

15 The original French name was Union Internationale de Secours aux Enfants.

16 Already in the nineteenth century, Geneva had witnessed the founding of the Red Cross, while in the twentieth century, due to its neutrality, it became the headquarters of many international organizations. Baughan, *Saving the Children*, 12.

17 Thomas Richard Davies, 'The Roles of Transnational Associations in the World Order in the 1919 Paris Peace Settlement: A Comparative Assessment of Proposals and Their Influence', *Contemporary European History*, 31 (2022), 353–67, 365.

18 'Geneva Declaration of the Rights of the Child of 1924 – UN Documents: Gathering a Body of Global Agreements', www.un-documents.net/gdrc1924.htm

19 Percy Alden, 'Foreword', in Julie Eve Vajkai (ed.), *Child Saving and Child Training: The Budapest Scheme* (London: The World's Children, 1926), 1–2, 1.

20 Alden, 'Foreword', 2.

21 For a longer debate on women's increasing visibility in the field of child protection, see chapters 4 and 5 in Friederike Kind-Kovács, *Budapest's Children: Humanitarians Relief in the Aftermath of the Great War* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2022).

22 See for this the article by Alon Rachamimov, '"Female Generals" and "Siberian Angels": Aristocratic Nurses and the Austro-Hungarian POW Relief', in Nancy M. Wingfield and Maria Bucur (eds), *Gender and War in Twentieth-Century Eastern Europe* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2006), 23–46.

23 'Rapport sur l'installation et l'activité des homes de L'UISE à Budapest'.

24 'Rapport sur l'installation et l'activité des homes de L'UISE à Budapest'.

25 Rózsi Vajkai, 'A Napközi Otthon Fontossága', *Kisdednevelés* 57: 11 (1 November 1932), 338–41, 339.

26 'Brunszvik Teréz', *Pedagógiai Lexikon* (Budapest: Révai Irodalmi Intézet Kiadása 1936), 258–63, 261.

27 Vajkai, 'A Napközi Otthon Fontossága', 339.

28 'Rapport sur l'installation et l'activité des homes de L'UISE à Budapest'.

29 Vajkai, 'A Nemzetközi Gyermekmentő Szövetség Budapesti Missziójának Tevékenysége', 33.

30 The pedagogy of Friedrich Fröbel and Maria Montessori was influential in shaping kindergartens in Budapest in the 1920s. See 'A kisdednevelés elméletének fejlődése', *Néptanítók lapja* 55:4–7 (1922), 13–15.

31 AEG, A.P. 92.21.2. Secours à la Hongrie. Correspondence et rapport de Mme J. E. Vajkai (1919–1923). Letter from Julia Vajkai to Eglantyne Jebb, Budapest, 2 September 1921, 1–2, 1.

32 It was located on Ecseri út 4 in the 9th district and is captured in Figure 1.2; 'Gyermeklelkeket Mentenek a Dühöngőn'.

33 (1) The 'Kispesti otthona' was established on 9 December 1921; (2) the 'MacKenzie otthona' was set up in 1921 in the Mária Valéria colony in Budafoki út/Ecseri ut in the VIIIth district; (3) the 'X. Pius otthona' was opened in the 'Lenke uti barraklakó' telep in the 1st district; (4) the 'Szent István otthona' in Uzsoki utca 19 (before Jókai utca) in the 7th district; (5) the 'Apostoli Nuncius otthona' was set up in Lőportár utca 29 in the Anyalföldi Colony in Anyalföldi ut 3 in 1922.
34 'Rapport sur l'installation et l'activité des homes de L'UISE à Budapest'.
35 Anna Szinrecsányi, 'Karácsonyra Egy Hajórakománnyal Akar Visszajönni Pedlow Kapitány', *Az Est*, 1:163 (21 July 1922), 4.
36 'Látogatás Báro Redding-Bibereggnél', *Pesti Napló*, 72:253 (11 November 1921), 2.
37 'Gyermekotthonok', *Magyar Lanyok*, 29:22 (1 August 1923), 341–2.
38 Rózsi Vajkai, 'A Kisded Társadalmi Problémái', *A Jövő Útjáin*, 2:1 (1927), 11–13, 12.
39 Vajkai, 'A Kisded Társadalmi Problémái', 12.
40 Vajkai, 'A Kisded Társadalmi Problémái', 12.
41 AEG, A.P. 92.21.5, Rózsi Vajkai, 'Home St. Etienne', Homes d'enfants á Budapest (1925–1931).
42 Vajkai, 'A Napközi Otthon Fontosság', 338.
43 Vajkai, 'Home St. Etienne'.
44 Vajkai, 'A Nemzetközi Gyermekmentő Szövetség Budapesti Missziójának Tevékenysége', 34.
45 AEG, A.P. 92.21.5 (3), Missions en Hongrie. Homes d'enfant à Budapest (1925–1931), 'Rapport sur l'installation et l'activité des homes de L'UISE à Budapest', 8.
46 Vajkai, 'Home St. Etienne'.
47 AEG, A.P. 92.21.11 (1), 'Report on the Activity of the Save the Children International Union in Budapest in 1938', Budapest, 21 March 1939', Mlle Rose Vajkai: Lettres envoyées (Janvier 1938–Aout 1939).
48 'Rapport sur l'installation et l'activité des homes de L'UISE à Budapest', 3.
49 Vajkai, 'A Napközi Otthon Fontossága', 338.
50 Vajkai, 'A Napközi Otthon Fontossága', 338.
51 Vajkai, 'A Napközi Otthon Fontossága', 338.
52 'Gyermekkert Kispesten', *Az Újság*, 20:142 (25 June 1922), 10.
53 'Gyermekotthonok', *Magyar Lányok*, 29:22 (8 January 1923), 341–468, 341.
54 'Gyermekotthonok', 341.
55 'Gyermeklelkeket Mentenek a Dühöngőn', 3.
56 Péter Por, 'Ahol a Munkásgyermekek Pirosak…', *Nemzeti Ujság*, 4:102 (5 June 1922), 5.
57 'Gyermeklelkeket Mentenek a Dühöngőn'.
58 See chapter 9 on the workrooms in Kind-Kovács, *Budapest's Children*.
59 Szinrecsányi, 'Karácsonyra Egy Hajórakománnyal Akar Visszajönni Pedlow Kapitány'.
60 Vajkai, 'Home St. Etienne'.

61 Por, 'Ahol a Munkasgyermekek Pirosak…', 5.
62 'Gyermekotthonok'.
63 Por, 'Ahol a Munkasgyermekek Pirosak…'.
64 AEG, A.P. 92.21.5, Missions on Hongrie. Homes d'enfants á Budapest (1925–1931), Rózsi Vajkai, 'Home Mac Kenzie', *Bulletin de l'Union internationale de secours aux enfants* 8, (1928), 185.
65 Vajkai and Vajkai, 'Case Work in Hungary', 119.
66 Vajkai, 'Home Mac Kenzie'.
67 Vajkai, 'Home Mac Kenzie', 5.
68 'Rapport sur l'installation et l'activité des homes de L'UISE à Budapest', 5.
69 Por, 'Ahol a Munkasgyermekek Pirosak…'.
70 Por, 'Ahol a Munkasgyermekek Pirosak…'.
71 'Gyermeklelkeket Mentenek a Dühöngőn'.
72 'A Nemzetközi Vöröskereszt Megbízottja a Magyarországi Jótékonyság Feladatairól', *Nemzeti Ujság*, 3:243 (30 October 1921), 8.
73 'Gyermekkert Kispesten'.
74 'A Magyar Gyermekvédő Intézmények Angol Vendége', *Pécsi Lapok*, 3:248 (10 December 1924), 2.
75 Averil Mackenzie-Grieve, 'City Children on a Hungarian Estate', *The Hungarian Quarterly*, 5:4 (1939), 701–6, 701.
76 Rózsi Vajkai, 'A Napközi Otthon Fontossága', 340.
77 Mackenzie-Grieve, 'City Children on a Hungarian Estate', 701.
78 Mackenzie-Grieve, 'City Children on a Hungarian Estate'.
79 It was located in Jókai utca 19. 'A Nuncius Felavatta a Szent István Gyermekotthont', *Uj Nemzedék*, 5:106 (5 December 1923).
80 At times it is spelled Uzsoki utca. I assume that the street was either renamed at some point or that it is the different writing in different languages.
81 'A Nuncius Felavatta a Szent István Gyermekotthont', 2.
82 'A Nuncius Felavatta a Szent István Gyermekotthont'.
83 'Karácsony', *Budapesti Hírlap*, 47:292 (24 December 1927), 6–7, 6.
84 Ágnes Simó, 'Karácsonyfa-Ünnepély', *Kisdednevelés*, 55:1 (1 January 1930), 30–1.
85 'Lehet-e Enyhiteni a Nyomoron?', *Az Újság*, 20:23 (28 January 1922), 3.
86 'Hivatalos Közlemények', *Segélykiáltás*, 10:11 (1 November 1933), 3.
87 'Freundschaft Mit England', *Pester Lloyd*, 77:149 (7 April 1930), 7.
88 'Lehet-e Enyhiteni a Nyomoron?', 3.
89 'Lehet-e Enyhiteni a Nyomoron?'.
90 'Lehet-e Enyhiteni a Nyomoron?'.
91 'Lehet-e Enyhiteni a Nyomoron?'.
92 'Lehet-e Enyhiteni a Nyomoron?'.
93 'Lehet-e Enyhiteni a Nyomoron?'.
94 Vajkai, 'A Nemzetközi Gyermekmentő Szövetség Budapesti Missziójának Tevékenysége', 34.
95 Vajkai, 'A Napközi Otthon Fontossága', 340.
96 Vajkai, 'A Kisded Társadalmi Problémái', 13.

97 AEG, A.P. 92.21.5, Missions on Hongrie. Homes d'enfants á Budapest (1925–1931), Rózsi Vajkai, 'Home Mac Kenzie', *Bulletin de l'Union internationale de secours aux enfants*, 8 (1928), 185.
98 Heide Fehrenbach and Davide Rodogno, 'Introduction: The Morality of Sight', in Heide Fehrenbach and Davide Rodogno (eds), *Humanitarian Photography: A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 1–22, 4.
99 'Rapport sur l'installation et l'activité des homes de L'UISE à Budapest', 5.
100 'Rapport sur l'installation et l'activité des homes de L'UISE à Budapest', 9.
101 'Rapport sur l'installation et l'activité des homes de L'UISE à Budapest', 9.

2

Ethnicizing aid: Jews and Christians inside and outside the social care system in interwar Lubartów

Franciszek Zakrzewski

On 22 July 1939, the Lubartów Town Council held its penultimate meeting in interwar period. At the same time, it was the first meeting of new councillors following the local elections held a few months earlier. In the new sixteen-member council, Jews, who constituted 42 per cent of the town's population, were represented by only three members. The meeting was held to elect the Town Board and members of the municipal committees. Five candidates were recommended for the Social Care Commission and the Finance and Budget Commission, including no Jews, which provoked a reaction from Jewish councillors, supported by two Christian members of the council.[1] They all argued that Jews should be represented in both bodies. As a result of further discussions, Jews obtained a seat on the Social Care Commission. Two aspects are particularly noteworthy. The first is that the balance of power in the Town Council and local government in Lubartów was understood according to religious or ethnic criteria, at least in the late 1930s. And second, the participation of Jews in the Social Care Commission was apparently of fundamental importance to Jewish councillors and some non-Jews. As the municipal records show, social care remained a distinctive area of self-government in Lubartów, serving a significant number of Jews in need. I argue that religious and ethnic divisions played a particular role in the social care system in Lubartów, both in terms of direct financial and material support and in the subsidizing charities, the two main areas of social care covered in the chapter.[2]

My perspective on the social care in Lubartów is rooted in administrative and social history, with a tilt towards Jewish studies. Several works have recently been published on the legal foundations and functioning of the welfare system in interwar Poland, which provide a national perspective.[3] They see social care (*opieka społeczna*) as part of public welfare, while research on welfare states in East Central Europe focuses on the introduction and maintenance of social insurance systems.[4] None of these studies, however, analyses the religious or ethnic aspects of welfare policies. Research within Jewish studies focuses on the transnational

aspects of social care: roles that Jewish charities and the emigrant communities played in organizing aid for they compatriots in the Old Country,[5] and the efforts of the international Jewish organizations.[6] Jewish studies scholars portrayed the work of Jewish relief in Poland as a nationwide effort by Jews,[7] and as a part of Jewish communal life in small towns and cities.[8] When it comes to local studies of multiethnic communities, Hanna Kozińska-Witt studied the policies behind subsidizing public organizations, including charities.[9] My research, however, focuses on the everyday functioning of the social care system in the Second Polish Republic at the local level, as well as on humanitarian efforts for those excluded from the system.

The policies and actions examined in this chapter were seen by local and state institutions as a part of *opieka społeczna*, which I translate as a social care, in order to distinguish it from welfare that is commonly used in relation to social insurance. Nevertheless, the same practices carried out by different actors in different organizational frameworks could be understood and named differently. For instance, in interwar Lubartów, the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) provided aid to Jews, initially in the form of a palliative relief in cash and goods, very similar to local government social benefits, and later through interest-free loans to the poorest entrepreneurs. Despite their different forms, JDC actions were presented as humanitarian relief.[10] In fact, most of the aid activities described in this chapter could be considered humanitarian for at least two reasons: first, they were part of local, national or transnational efforts to recover from war and overcome economic crises; and second, they were designed to support people in desperate need and provide them with the resources they need to survive, such as food, basic healthcare or coal for the winter.

All the actions described are also characterized by the fact that they were undertaken at a particular time (the 1920s and 1930s) and place: Lubartów, a county town in the central Poland. They took place in a nationwide and transnational context but have their own local specificity, which cannot be explained simply by the socio-political and economic conditions of the time, or by the relief policies developed in Warsaw or New York. Bearing in mind that the relationship between the micro and the macro in history is two way, I argue that close observation can serve to challenge or reformulate established interpretive schemes; in this respect, I draw on microhistorical practice.[11] The microhistorical approach enables us to draw patterns in the functioning of the social care system in Lubartów, to observe the changes in local policies and relief practices and, most importantly, to highlight the moments that stand out, thus providing a different perspective on the whole. Therefore, while characterizing the social care system, this chapter pays particular attention to the implementation of the 1928 reform, which

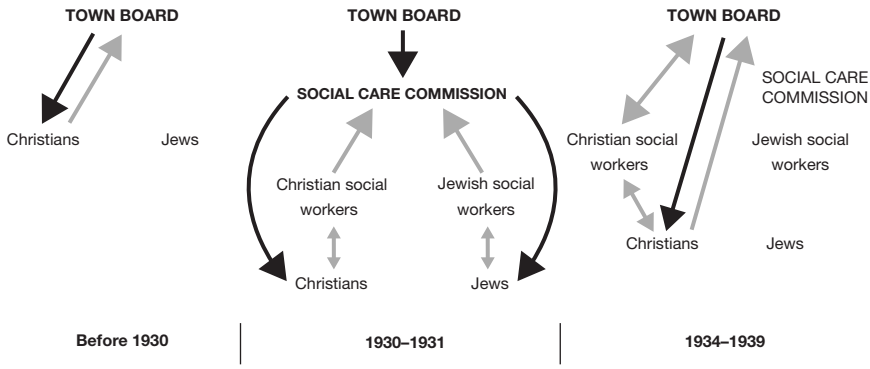

Figure 2.1 Models of social benefits distribution in interwar Lubartów

Notes: Grey– flow of information; black – flow of benefits.

for a short period revolutionized the logic of public benefits distribution in Lubartów (Figure 2.1).

My knowledge of the social care system in Lubartów comes primarily from the municipal records collected between 1924 and 1939.[12] Most of the records deal with the benefits distribution as well as the collaboration and subsidizing of charities. Both aspects provide a comprehensive perspective on the role of religious and ethnic divisions in the organization of the local social care system and, more generally, of the local government. Although the practices within the system are the focus of my attention, the picture would be incomplete without taking into account the support organized outside the system through grassroots humanitarian mobilization, or the foreign aid given to the Jews by the global humanitarian organization JDC, as seen through the Yiddish Scientific Institute (Yidisher Visnshaftlekher Institut, YIVO) Archives and by *landsmanshaft* in the US, who were receiving letters from compatriots in Lubartów.

The aid institutions and initiatives in Lubartów created a system of interconnected vessels that must be viewed cross-sectionally. Assistance to the poorest in Lubartów was provided on three levels: on the basis of the state social care system, paid for and organized by the town; by local aid organizations, integrated into the public system but also operated largely outside it; and by transnational support from humanitarian organizations and compatriots abroad. Since the public welfare system did not fulfil its basic obligation to provide assistance to all those who needed it – because it lacked adequate resources, discriminated against certain groups or did not respond quickly enough in an emergency situation – those in need had to rely on humanitarian mobilization driven by charities that mobilized local communities and organized support from abroad.

The entire aid system in interwar Lubartów could therefore be described as hybrid communal humanitarianism: a system of complex interrelationships between different forms of aid, through which local actors sought various ways of improving the situation of those most in need within the group they identified with. The communal nature of aid was thus largely based on the common identification of aid organizers, aid providers and the needy in Lubartów, and on the relatively small size of the groups. Relief practices, like most social and political initiatives in interwar Lubartów, served to produce, mobilize and sustain these group identifications: ethnic, religious or national.[13] The state and local government, organizing the state social care system, was by no means neutral in this arrangement; social care was overwhelmingly subordinated to the needs of 'the core nation',[14] understood in the case of Lubartów as ethno-religious categories such as Christians or Poles. Interwar Poland, like other newly formed and modern East Central European states, provided fertile ground for this kind of communal humanitarianism, due to its already existing but underdeveloped state social care system and the fundamental importance of ethno-religious and national distinctions for institutional forms, organizational routines and cultural practices.

The two-track social care system in Lubartów

The interwar system of social care, although created on the basis of new rules of universal and compulsory assistance, showed many similarities with earlier models. Before the outbreak of the First World War, in the Congress Kingdom, to which Lubartów belonged, care for the poor was the domain of local political communes, albeit on a voluntary basis.[15] As public social care was highly underdeveloped, assistance was provided by charities.[16] The law, from 1841, made Jewish *kehillas* responsible for caring for Jews.[17] In practice, the main form of social care provided by the Jewish community in Lubartów was to pay for the medical costs for the poor; the *kehilla* could not afford other expenses.[18] Therefore, the poor were supported by private philanthropists.[19]

The First World War led to a humanitarian mobilization in the territories of the former Kingdom of Poland.[20] Under Austro-Hungarian rule, which included Lubartów, the Main Rescue Committee (Główny Komitet Ratunkowy) was established in Lublin in November 1915.[21] Its activities were largely financed by the occupation authorities and also by Polish emigrant communities. In Lubartów, one of twenty-seven local committees set up by the Main Rescue Committee operated 'to regulate the organization of self-help for the population suffering as a result of the

war, to enable them to survive the war and to maintain the proper course of private and public life'.[22] An eatery was set up in Lubartów, and the committee also led the fight against epidemics as well as provided food ration cards, and monitored the prices of products. Nonetheless, it was controlled by Christians, which threatened the interests of Jewish merchants and customers – Jews in Lubartów could not obtain sugar.[23] It seems that in Lubartów, as in other towns of the Lublin region, the distribution of resources to the needy increased social tensions, and it was the Jews who were discriminated against.[24]

In parallel, the Vienna-based Israelite Alliance (Israelitische Allianz zu Wien) and the German Jewish Relief Association (Hilfsverein der deutschen Juden) operated in the territories occupied by the Central Powers, as did the JDC, founded in 1914 as an alliance of German and Eastern European Jews in the US to aid Jews in the war zones.[25] The JDC provided palliative relief to hundreds of Jews in Lubartów, supporting them with money, food and clothing.[26] In practice, a two-track system of care was maintained in Lubartów, with aid organized by public institutions partially excluding Jews, who received support from international Jewish aid organizations. In between, there were charities, Jewish and non-Jewish, often of pre-war origin, with varying degrees of links to the main two tracks.[27] This historical model of providing assistance to the poorest persisted in the reborn Polish state.

In the Second Republic of Poland, the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare took charge of public social policy, which, in addition to social care, included labour protection, social insurance, employment and healthcare. The legal and organizational framework for the social care system, which has so far operated under three different legal regimes, was set by the 1923 Act.[28] Responsibility for the financial maintenance and running of social care rested predominantly with local administrative units (*gminy*), such as the Lubartów municipality. Under the 1923 Act, social care was to operate on the basis of universal access, while social insurance or unemployment benefits were available only to selected categories of citizens,[29] and Jews, like Ukrainians or Ruthenians, were deprived of these rights, mainly due to their employment structure.[30] Social care was intended to fill the gaps in the social security system, as it was believed that the universal social security system would keep social services to a minimum.[31]

Until 1930, before the implementation of the 1928 reform, a person seeking assistance from the municipality applied personally to the Town Board. Records show that between 1925 and 1929 the board considered only a few requests, and only Christians were among the recipients. Certainly the scale of aid was inadequate, since on 18 February 1929 the district governor addressed the Lubartów magistrate with an order

to prepare a list of 'families that are in such critical conditions that it is necessary to provide immediate assistance'.[32] On the same day, the mayor sent a list of forty-two families represented by heads of household (both men and women), Jewish and Christian. Eight of them received financial assistance, while three others were given food. The majority on the list were Christians, while the recipients were all Christian families. In the town's records, I did not find a single case of benefits being given to Jews in the period up to 1929.

Local government cooperation with and support for charities was motivated by their organizational expertise and community embeddedness. In Lubartów, they operated along ethno-religious lines, as evidenced by the recipients of aid and the compositions of the organizations' boards.[33] Ethnicity and religion were also the main criteria for subsidizing charities and involving them in local government aid activities. The Women's Civic Labour Union (Związek Pracy Obywatelskiej Kobiet) and the of St Vincent Christian Mercy Society (Towarzystwo Miłosierdzia Chrześcijańskiego im. Św. Wincentego) were considered by magistrates to represent the interests of the Christian poor in the town, while the interests of the Jews were represented to the town by the Achi Ezer and the Ezra, and not by the *kehilla*,[34] which provided emergency aid and covered medical expenses for Jews on its own.

By the mid-1920s, the Jews of Lubartów, having been plunged into poverty, were completely deprived of support from the town. At the same time, support from the JDC ceased in the early 1920s, when it began to shift from palliative aid to reconstruction aid, finally closing its relief office in Poland in 1924 and establishing the American Jewish Reconstruction Fund. The crises of the mid-1920s thus left the Jewish community without external institutional support for the poorest. Until 1927, the responsibility of caring for the Jews lay solely with the *kehilla*, which allocated funds to support the poorest: 1,500 zlotys in 1926, 4 per cent of the annual budget, and three times more than in the town's budget.[35] As this support did not meet their needs, the Jews of Lubartów repeatedly appealed to their compatriots in the US for help. Between July 1925 and mid-1926, the *kehilla* board and the rabbi, then the members of the newly established Achi Ezer, sent letters to Julius Peretz, leader of the Lubartowian community in New York, and after its registration in 1938 the financial secretary of the Lubartów *landmanschaft*:

> 'Mr Peretz! Please pass all of this on to our brothers … and tell them that their brothers and sisters, relatives and friends in Lubartów are suffering from hunger and that Achi Ezer is helping them as much as it can. Tell them, Mr Peretz, that Jewish Lubartów has never seen such hard times and that if you don't hurry up and help us, many of our brothers will literally starve to death'.[36]

According to the letter, Achi Ezer began its grassroots activities by providing food and money to poor Jewish families on Passover 1926. However, the organization's relief efforts resulted in a large deficit, while 'the crisis is unprecedented and money is nowhere to be found'.[37] It is likely that requests went unanswered. The letters sent to the US show the strategies adopted by the Lubartów Jews when they were deprived of public and international support. Their humanitarian mobilization took the form of self-organization within the community of Lubartów residents and attempts to involve in relief efforts Lubartów residents who had left for the US.

In May 1927 a new Town Council was elected, with the highest representation of Jews in the entire interwar period (Table 2.1). From then on, subsidies of 300 zlotys were included in the budget for Achi Ezer. The magistrate also maintained the amount of 500 zlotys per year for emergency aid for the poorest residents, just for Christians. This may indicate that the magistrate was handing over the care of poor Jews to a Jewish organization, while providing care only for Christians. Moreover, after the election of the new council, the *kehilla* reduced its funds for the poor (400 zlotys, 1 per cent of the annual budget, in 1927, and less than 2 per cents the following year),[38] which again may have been due to the establishment of Achi Ezer and the subsidy by the town.

The first period of public social care in interwar Lubartów already showed that, despite its declared universalism, it functioned on the basis of ethno-religious divisions. In the period up to 1927, this meant the total exclusion of Jews, who had to seek support within their own community, locally and abroad. The inclusion of Jews in the system of public support, made possible by representation in the municipal government, was done by channelling funds to a Jewish charity. The integration of local charities into the social care framework, although it served to widen the circle of people supported, de facto reinforced an aid logic based on religious and ethnic divisions.

Table 2.1 Distribution of seats in Town Council, Town Board and Social Care Commission in interwar Lubartów

Term	Town Council	Town Board	Social Care Commission
1927–34	13 Catholics/11 Jews	3 Catholics/2 Jews	3 Catholics/2 Jews
1934–9	11 Catholics/5 Jews	4 Catholics/1 Jew	4 Catholics/1 Jew
1939	13 Catholics/3 Jews	5 Catholics	4 Catholics/1 Jew

Source: Town Board and Town Council Protocols, 1927–39, 43/0/3.1/105-43/0/3.1/117, AML, APL.

The rise and decline of the new system of social care distribution

A real revolution in the distribution of the benefits to the poorest in Lubartów came with appointment of the Social Care Commission (Komisja Opieki Społecznej) and social workers (*opiekunowie społeczni*) on the basis of the 1928 reform, which was intended to involve the local communities in the work of social care.[39] The commission's duty was to organize a social care system, plan expenses, supervise the work of the social workers and coordinate aid with local charities. It was elected by the Town Council four times between 1929 and 1939. The ethno-religious composition of the commission largely depended on the distribution of power in the government between Christians and Jews (Table 2.1). The commission of the first term was composed entirely of men: the mayor, who chaired the commission, the vice-mayor and three councillors. Of the two Jews on the commission, both were members of the board of Gemiłas Chesed and one was also active in the Achi Ezer. The Christian members of the commission had no direct links with aid organizations in Lubartów, which is consistent with the fact that aid activities among Christians at the time were mostly led by women, who, with one exception, did not sit on the Town Council.

The social workers of a first turn were selected by the Town Council from among residents proposed by the Town Board. As the district governor's circular explained, they should be 'independent people', 'for whom caring duties would not be too much of a burden, and that, above all, the candidates should have as much passion as possible for social work'.[40] Among those selected were five Christians and four Jews, including seven women and two men.[41] The only two men among the social workers stood out because of their age. Dawid Lustman, a 54-year-old Jewish feldsher, and Franciszek Chareziński, a 45-year-old Catholic shoemaker and town councillor, were the social workers' representatives on the Social Care Commission. Thus, although women were more involved than men in relief efforts, they had no say in the final decisions about the distribution of social care.

The town was divided into two districts, along the Lubartów's main street. Within the districts, nine circuits were created that were divided along ethno-religious lines. As most of the streets of Lubartów were inhabited by a mixed population, the same areas were often assigned to two different districts. The task of social workers was to ensure that people in need were provided with care and to investigate the material and personal situation of those being cared for and those who were to be looked after. In practice, social workers also acted as intermediaries between the needy and the town administration, which provided aid. Social workers were

not trained and were not paid for their work. They were therefore not administrative workers but volunteers. The way in which social workers carried out their duties was partly determined by a decree from the minister of labour and social welfare, and more specifically by instructions that aimed to 'facilitate the work of social workers' and to 'unify the principles of social care actions throughout the State'.[42] Although the instructions indicated certain practices that social workers were required to perform, they could not be seen as an instrument for professionalization, and social workers in Poland lacked the training provided in Western European countries.[43]

In the town's records, the work of the social workers in the first period after their appointment, 1930–3, is mainly reflected in the documents they prepared – applications for material aid and reports on the material status of the applicants. In February 1930, on the basis of applications prepared by the social workers, the Social Care Commission decided to provide food, hygiene products and coal to thirty-six residents in Lubartów and their families.[44] The social workers advocated on behalf of the poor residents from the districts under their jurisdiction. Applications had to be submitted by 4 February 1930, when they were considered by the Social Care Commission. The decision regarding support and its amount, as well as the suspension for further examination, was recorded on the application by Adam Lipski, the mayor and chairman of the commission.

The application form was written in Polish, the only administrative language in the Second Republic. Its structure clearly indicates the role of the social worker, who received the request, made a survey on the life situation of the applicants and then asked the magistrate for assistance. This meant that people in need did not have to apply themselves, as it had been before. The new system of providing aid thus removed a significant barrier, which may had been caused by a lack of knowledge of written Polish but also by a sense of distance from the town authority and a fear of contact with municipal bureaucracy. These factors affected Jews more than Christians, the former because of the poorer knowledge of Polish, especially among the older inhabitants, and the latter because of the lower or no representation of Jews in the town authorities and among the magistrate's officials.[45] Regardless of the applicants' language skills, it was the social worker who completed the entire form, as the handwriting shows. The difficulty in contacting the administration to ask for help was also no longer a problem. People in need could visit the social workers at home during their weekly duty hours to ask for help. Visiting a neighbour, who was also an active member of the same community and was willing to support the cause of those in need, certainly made it easier to ask for help. Thus, the system of social workers, which was based on the segregation of

the 'Jewish population' and the 'Polish population',[46] in practice served to integrate the people in need into the social care system and to equalize the chances of receiving benefits.

Of the thirty-six applications examined before 4 February, only five concerned Christians, covering just nine people, including three single Lubartowians aged around sixty. Among Jews seeking support, 31 applications covered 126 persons, an average of more than four persons per application with only three applications involved individuals. Families therefore predominate among the applying Jews, the largest being the Wajnsztajn family, with eight members. The applications also differ in terms of the gender of applicants – among the Christians only women applied, while among the Jews more men applied: sixteen compared to fifteen women. Although up to 4 February all applications were accepted, there were some differences in the way they were processed. Those prepared by Christian social workers were accepted without objection, while sixteen prepared by Jewish social workers were corrected by the person approving the applications, the chairman of the commission. Most of the corrections involved a reduction in the amount of products allocated to the people in need, such as Gierszon Kapota and his family, the 'destitute poor', who received one kilogram instead of two kilograms of sugar, two decagrams of tea instead of three, and quarter of a metre of coal instead of half.

In order to compare the amount of aid intended for Jews and Christians on 4 February, we can calculate the average amount of goods distributed per capita (see Table 2.2). The comparison, however, does not demonstrate significant differences between the groups, and it does not make it possible to draw any far-reaching conclusions; this is also due to the different needs of applicants and the different composition of the groups.

In the case of applications submitted after 4 February, the primary measure of the difference in the way applications were handled was their acceptance or rejection. As Table 2.3 shows, applications submitted by Jewish social workers were much more likely to be refused then those submitted by Christians.

Table 2.2 Aid intended for Lubartowians according to the products by kilograms per capita

	Flour	Potatoes	Bread	Sugar
Jews	0.6	9.3	0.7	0.3
Christians	0.6	5.5	1	0.4

Source: Applications forms for the material aid, January-February 1930, 43/0/0/3.3/362, AML, APL.

Table 2.3 Decisions regarding applications issued by the Social Care Commission after 4 February 1930

	Accepted	Rejected	Suspended	Total
Jews	22 (44%)	26 (52%)	2 (4%)	50 (100%)
Christians	20 (59%)	12 (35%)	2 (6%)	34 (100%)
Total	42 (50%)	38 (45%)	4 (5%)	84 (100%)

Source: Applications forms for the material aid, February-March 1930, 43/0/0/3.3/362, AML, APL.

Table 2.4 Number of people included in applications according to the decisions issued by the Social Care Commission after 4 February 1930

	Accepted	Rejected	Suspended	Total
Jews	75 (36%)	130 (63%)	2 (1%)	207 (100%)
Christians	36 (50%)	34 (47%)	2 (3%)	72 (100%)
Total	111 (40%)	164 (59%)	4 (1%)	279 (100%)

Source: Applications forms for the material aid, February-March 1930, 43/0/0/3.3/362, AML, APL.

The imbalance in approval between the two groups hardly changes when the number of people included in the applications is taken into account (Table 2.4).

The data provided indicate that those who were most successful in applying for aid after 4 February had certain characteristics. First, as the percentage of applications accepted was higher for both groups than that of people who were granted assistance, on average applications involving fewer people were more likely to be successful. And indeed, proportionally, the highest number of positive decisions concerned people applying individually: fourteen out of eighteen for Christians, with four out of five accepted for Jews. Another characteristic relates to the gender of applicants, 58 per cent of women's applications were accepted, compared to 37 per cent of men's. At the same time, there were far more women among Christians applicants (thirty-two out of thirty-four) than among Jews (twenty-seven out of fifty). Men's applications were more frequently rejected in both groups, which correlates with the fact that men applied on behalf of more family members: for Jewish men more than 4.5 persons per application, compared to 3.3 for women.

After 4 February 1930, Christians submitted more applications that matched the profile of those likely to be successful, namely single people and women. Even if we regard this correlation as non-coincidental, and remember that many more poor Jews than Christians were left without support from the town, it must be acknowledged that twice as many

Jews were helped. Moreover, if we look at all the applications from 1930, a total of 201 Jews and 45 Christians received benefits at a time when there were 4,352 Catholics and 3,369 Jews living in Lubartów.[47] The next year, when the Social Care Commission and the Town Board distributed coal to the poorest Lubartowians, the proportions were even more in favour of Jews.[48] The higher numbers of Jews applying for and receiving relief in 1930 and 1931 may indicate both the worse living conditions of Jews compared to Christians and the greater effectiveness of Jewish social workers in reaching those in need. Overall, the social care system, in the model form in which it had begun to exist, took into account the needs of Jews to a greater extent than before. As never before or since in interwar Lubartów, people in need were helped regardless of their affiliation.

In the following years, 1932 and 1933, social workers reported on the material and financial status of Lubartów residents in need of medical care.[49] This time, it was the Town Board, not the Social Care Commission, that received the reports and decided on aid distribution. In contrast to previous years, the vast majority of forms were completed by Christian social workers. Of the ninety-one forms, sixty-one (67 per cent) were from Catholics. In 1932, all by one application was accepted – 43–year-old Józef Brzozowski was refused help because he was already receiving a pension. In 1933, however, aid was granted to selected residents, and significantly more Catholics applied for and received aid in 1933 (see Table 2.5).

Two years after the new social care system was established in Lubartów, its erosion began, as the Town Board marginalized the Social Care Commission and limited support to selected groups. Even before that, in January 1931, the Christian social workers, led by Marian Strzyżewski, the secretary of the Town Board, organized a charity event.[50] The proceeds, a total of 344 zlotys, were donated to the Municipal Cashier's Office 'for the expenses of social care for the poorest from the Christian population'.[51] In this case, both the social workers and the secretary, Strzyżewski, used public functions and public resources for a private initiative. A new format for the actions, which excluded Jewish social workers and the Jewish poor, was constituted and later used. All this means that ethnic and religious

Table 2.5 Decisions regarding applications for medical assistance in 1933

	Accepted	Rejected	Suspended	Total
Jews	12 (52%)	7 (30%)	4 (17%)	23 (100%)
Christians	36 (84%)	3 (7%)	4 (9%)	43 (100%)
Total	48 (74%)	10 (15%)	8 (12%)	66 (100%)

Source: Reports about financial and familial status 1933, 43/0/3.3/365, AML, APL.

distinctions regained their place in the distribution of aid in Lubartów, and that after two years of significant support for poor Jews, their position in the town's social welfare system began to weaken.

Another way of directing public funds to selected groups of residents was through subsidies. Appeals for subsidies from aid organizations, which were particularly active in the early 1930s, together with reports of high unemployment,[52] requests for assistance from unemployed workers to the Town Council,[53] or requests for tax or debt cancellation,[54] clearly reflected the worsening situation of Lubartów inhabitants in the face of the economic crisis. On 29 September 1931, the newly established Provisional Committee for the Relief of the Unemployed (Tymczasowy Komitet Pomocy Bezrobotnym) submitted a request for a subsidy to help the poor.[55] It was signed by the committee's board of seven well-established Catholics, including a mayor, a priest, councillors and leaders of the Women's Civic Labour Union.[56] The request was favourably considered the next day at the meeting of the Town Council, led by the mayor.[57] 'Despite the town's financial difficulties', 150 zlotys per month were granted for five months, after which another tranche of 356 zlotys was allocated.[58] The donations, which exceeded the annual municipal funds for benefits, were raised by adjusting the already approved municipal budgets. In doing so, the Town Board demonstrated a lack of confidence in the public social care institutions that had already succeeded in reaching and helping the needy. In this case, public funds were directed to organizations that only supported Christians.

At the same time, the Jews of Lubartów found themselves in a dramatic situation. 'The majority of the Jewish population of our town is suffering from hunger and misery, crying out for rescue, begging for a slice of bread for small and tiny children',[59] the newly formed Committee for the Emergency Aid to the Poor Jews (Komitet Niesienia Pomocy Doraźnej Biednej Ludności Żydowskiej) wrote to the Town Board in early 1933. It had been formed within Achi Ezer, a Jewish relief organization active since 1927. In November 1933, Achi Ezer reported on the still alarming situation of the Jews in another appeal for help. The charity pointed out that it had already provided around 1,000 zlotys worth of aid and that the financial resources had run out, while the needs of the poor begging for help were increasing day by day, to the extent 'that the poor [Jewish] population was starving to death in the full meaning of the word'.[60] In response to the requests, the Town Board allocated funds: 250 zloty for the first request and 100 zloty for the second.[61] The very same resolutions granted the 'Christian' committee with the subsidies of the same amount.

Linking the subsidies of both committees was in line with the common practice of the 1927–34 magistrate to maintain a balance between the funds

Table 2.6 Budget subsidies for organisations in Lubartów between 1927 and 1939

Organisation	Average annual subsidy, 1927–34	Average annual subsidy, 1934–9
Achi-Ezer	230 (1932–4)	
Ezra	300 (1927–9)	100 (1935)
Gemiłas-Chesed	240 (1927–34)	200 (1935)
'Jewish kindergarten'*	425 (1929–34)	
'Christian kindergarten'	440 (1925–34)	300 (1935, 1936, 1939)

Source: Minutes of the Town Council and Town Board meetings 1927–39.

*Note: * Names of kindergartens used by the magistrate.*

allocated to Christian and Jewish institutions. The same principle applied to the distribution of funds for orphanages or libraries operating in the town. Nevertheless, during the same period, the magistrate gave the largest subsidies from the annual town budgets to Jewish charities (see Table 2.6). In 1932, Ezra began to receive subsidies at the very time when the town's benefits to poor Jews were being reduced. This was a return to the practice from before the introduction of social workers system and the Social Care Committee, when between 1927 and 1929 the municipality had subsidized another Jewish charity, Achi Ezer, while covered only Christians with benefits.

At the height of the crisis, in November 1932, the chairman of Gemiłas Chesed Gdala Perec asked for 1,000 zlotys to be included in the town's budget for the next financial year, as the organization had 'turned into a resource from which almost the entire town benefits'.[62] The appeal was not successful, and the subsidy was kept at the same level of 300 zlotys, a sum which was a drop in the ocean given the scale of support provided by the Gemiłas Chesed. In a fifteen–month period, between 1931 and 1932, the charity issued 852 loans with a total value of 61,168 zlotys, with the support of the JDC, which provided less than one-fifth of this sum.[63]

It is not by chance that Jewish organizations received the most funds between 1927 and 1934. Just as the reform, which introduced social workers, shortened the distance between poor Jews and the social care system and, for a short time, made them the beneficiaries of the public aid, so the significant presence of Jews in the town's government (Table 2.1) shortened the distance between Jewish charities and the magistrate.[64] At the same time, it should be noted that despite the municipal and JDC subsidies, support for needy Jews relied heavily on the humanitarian mobilization of the local Jews.

Towards the total exclusion of Jews from the social care

Significant changes in the organization of social care and the distribution of benefits in Lubartów were brought about by the August 1934 local elections, which led to a reduction of the Jewish representation on the Town Council and Town Board as well on the Social Care Commission (see Table 2.1). Social care management was also influenced by the 1933 Integration Act, which limited the competences of the local legislative bodies, in the case of Lubartów the Town Council, while strengthening the Town Board and, in particular, the mayor.[65] In the second half of the 1930s, after an initial cut in the grants for Jewish organizations and aid initiatives, their funding was completely stopped, and, after a time, funding for non-Jewish charities was also reduced.

The second half of the 1930s saw the spread of the aid campaigns, which provided a large portion of short-term assistance to the needy in Lubartów. In most cases, they were initiated from the top down, by the central or district authorities, and the magistrate shared the responsibility for carrying them out. In 1937 alone, three actions were organized in Lubartów. The Easter relief campaign aimed at providing food to poor inhabitants who had not previously received winter relief.[66] The list of recipients prepared by the Christian social workers comprised sixty-seven residents, all Christians. In November 1937, at a meeting of Christian social workers with the headmasters of the public schools in Lubartów and the vice-mayor, a list of sixty-nine children from poor families was compiled.[67] The list did not include Jewish children, even though at the time they made up about 40 per cent of all pupils.[68] Shoes, stockings and socks were delivered for Christmas. On the same occasion, the Town Board organized yet another aid campaign, 'Christmas for the Poorest'. As in the case of the previous campaigns, only Christian social workers organized aid and identified those to be assisted, which resulted in a list of thirty-two Christian families; a total of ninety-two people received food products.[69] Thus, in three campaigns organized in 1937, by the magistrate or with its participation, 228 Christian residents were helped and not a single Jew. In fact, all actions from the late 1930s were organized exclusively or almost exclusively by Catholics and, although the list of recipients of aid is missing in some cases, there is not a single record of Jewish aid recipients. The relief campaigns were thus tailored to exclude Jews, and the Catholic holidays on which they were often organized only underlines this fact.

In the second half of the 1930s, as before the 1928 reform, benefits for the poorest were granted directly by the Town Board at the request of those in need (Figure 2.1). This also applied to the newly introduced permanent

benefits. Between 1935 and 1939, 600–900 zlotys from the town's budget were allocated annually for permanent benefits, and 200–380 for emergency ones. They amounted to 15 zlotys a month (compared to 5 zlotys, which was usually granted as emergency benefit), and were intended for only a few people; from December 1936 to May 1939 they were all Christians.[70] Yet according to report prepared at the request of the district authorities, in January 1937 more than forty town residents needed the same support, both Christians and Jews.[71] The role of the social workers in granting benefits was limited to preparing reports requested by the Town Board. Even more marginalized became the Social Care Commission, which was completely excluded from the process. According to the annual reports on the state of social care in Lubartów, from 1934 to 1939 the Commission 'did not manifest any activity'. All social care matters were decided by the magistrate.[72] This was a complete dismantling of the social care system of the early 1930s.

As has been already shown, in interwar Lubartów, municipal support for Jewish organizations correlated with their political power (Tables 2.1 and 2.5). In the second half of the 1930s, the marginalization of Jews in positions of authority led to a reduction in funding for Jewish organizations, which was completely stopped in 1936.[73] In the years that followed, the town also cut funding to non-Jewish organizations, partly as a result of the reduction of the social care budget, and partly because the municipality took on new responsibilities, such as running a dormitory[74] and the feeding of poor children.[75] The lack of, or marginal, support for the organizations from the municipality did not change the fact that they provided vital help to a significant number of citizens, especially in the late 1930s when the economy began to decline again. In 1938, Gemiłas Chesesd activists highlighted in a letter to the JDC the worsening situation of local Jews, warning that those who had previously supported the fund were now in need of help.[76] The situation of inhabitants was similarly portrayed by the leaders of the St Vincent Society, which explained that their activities had increased greatly because 'the number of poor people, for whom the community aid is almost the only means of subsistence, has increased significantly'.[77] Between April 1937 and March 1938, the St Vincent Society provided assistance to eighty-seven Lubartów residents, mainly through permanent and occasional benefits totalling more than 1,500 zlotys, more than benefits offered by the magistrate.[78] Most of the funds came from membership fees from 155 donors. Gemiłas Chesed, on the other hand, granted 375 free loans in 1938, for a total of 40,227 zlotys, mainly from the funds of 322 members, but also from the JDC donation (10,643 in 1938).[79]

Between 1936 and 1939, after a decade, Jews in Lubartów had again started to send letters to their compatriots in the US. In a letter from June 1938, the Gemiłas Chesed strongly reproached the *landsmanshaft* for the lack

of support.[80] In addition, Ezra and the Jewish Craftsmen's Union, which had never asked for help before, sent out letters asking for donations. Requests from the late 1930s blamed antisemitism and boycotts, as well as legal and administrative discrimination, for the worsening situation of Lubartowian Jews.[81] Excluding Jews from social care was yet another form of discrimination that Lubartowian Jews faced in the late 1930s.[82] In this situation, the Jews saved themselves on the basis of solidarity: intra-group solidarity within Lubartów and by appealing for solidarity support from compatriots abroad.

Conclusions

Historian Joseph Marcus estimated that in 1929 about 10 per cent of the income of Jews in Poland was redistributed from the wealthier half to the poorer half, and that over time, more and more funds were channelled in this way.[83] The data on the funding of Jewish organizations in Lubartów confirm that solidarity within ethnic and religious groups, not only Jews, was the basic principle for organizing aid. A large proportion of the aid given to the poor in Lubartów, with the exception of hospital fees, was provided by intra-ethnic or intra-religious social organizations, which operated primarily on the basis of donations. Aid organizations and assistance for those in need were a means for engaging and integrating ethnic and religious groups in Lubartów and from Lubartów, which is particularly evident for Jews,[84] who relied on humanitarian mobilization as a remedy for exclusion from the social care system.

All of the aid strategies within the public social care system – the subsidizing of Jewish organizations while reducing support for Jews within the framework of municipal benefits (at the beginning and end of the 1927–34 Town Council term), the equal subsidizing of Jewish and non-Jewish organizations and initiatives (relief committees in the 1933, subsidies for kindergartens), the targeting of aid primarily or exclusively to Christians (in the period up to 1927 and in the second half of the 1930s) – were based on a logic of division between Jews and Christians.

The most significant break in this logic came with the establishment of the social workers and the Social Care Commission at the end of 1929. Although in the period 1930–1 the method of reaching the poorest was based on an openly emphasized ethno-national divisions, the distribution of funds was primarily determined by need. The institution of social workers removed structural obstacles to applying for benefits, such as not knowing written Polish or being afraid of or unfamiliar with the municipal administration. All these factors meant that in 1930 and 1931 Jews were supported to an unprecedented extent compared to both before and after.

The decomposition of the new system began shortly after its introduction. Already at the end of 1931, Christian social workers, by organizing a charity party with the support of the town administration, created a separate circuit of aid for Christians only. The omission of Jewish social workers from the town's aid activities became common practice in the second half of the 1930s. Also at the end of 1931, the authorities decided to derive a significant sum for the Municipal Committee for Aid to Poor, resigning from independent disposal of these funds. In parallel, the Social Care Committee, whose functions were taken over by the Town Council, lost its importance. The result of all this was a return to the system of distribution of benefits that existed before the 1929 reform and the disparity in access to aid, reinforced by the introduction of permanent benefits and the spread of aid campaigns in the second half of the 1930s.

The functioning of social care in Lubartów shows how the political power of ethnic and religious groups, expressed in the number of representatives in the Town Council, Board and the Social Care Committees, directly influenced the support received from the town. The 1927–34 term of office, with the largest Jewish representation in the town authorities, is in fact the only episode when social care was in any way balanced. In this context, the benefits distribution in 1930 and 1931, in which the vast majority of funds were directed to Jews, is a peculiar phenomenon. After all, this was taking place at a time when the town authorities were still predominantly Christian. Therefore, the decomposition of the social workers and the Social Care Commission system can be seen as a correction: a return to a model in which support for the poorest within the public welfare system depended on the political power of religious and ethnic groups only.

Notes

This chapter is part of the Lubartworld Project, funded by the European Research Council (ERC) in connection with the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Program (grant agreement no. 818843). For more details visit: lubartworld.cnrs.fr/en/.

I would like to thank Lubartworld team members, volume editors, as well as Morgane Labbé, for their comments and suggestions on the various versions of this text.

1 Archiwum Państwowe w Lublinie (State Archives in Lublin, hereafter APL), Akta Miasta Lubartowa (Records of the town Lubartów, hereafter AML), 43/0/3.1/109, minutes of the Town Council meeting no. 8, 22 July 1939, translated from Polish by author. All translations from Polish in the chapter by author.

2 In the chapter both ethic and religious distinctions are used. The use of categories reflects the understanding of how they were mobilized in the sources. To identify individuals, additional sources were used that categorized Lubartowians by denomination, such as the population register.
3 Paweł Grata, *Polityka społeczna Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej. Uwarunkowania – instytucje – działania* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Rzeszowskiego, 2013); Dariusz Zalewski, *Opieka i pomoc społeczna. Dynamika instytucji* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2005); Rafał Pląsek, 'Konstrukcja: Opieka społeczna w latach 1918–1939', in Mikołaj Brenk, Krzysztof Chaczko and Rafał Pląsek (eds), *Organizacja pomocy społecznej w Polsce 1918–2018* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar, 2018), 17–62.
4 Tomasz Inglot, *Welfare States in East Central Europe, 1919–2004* (Minneapolis: Minnesota State University, 2008), 78–96; Dorottya Szikra and Béla Tomka, 'Social Policy in East Central Europe: Major Trends in the 20th Century', in Alfio Cerami and Peter Vanhuysee (eds), *Post-Communist Welfare Pathways: Theorizing Social Policy Transformations in Central and Eastern Europe* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 17–34.
5 Rebecca Kobrin, *Jewish Bialystok and Its Diaspora* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010).
6 Jaclyn Granick, *International Jewish Humanitarianism in the Age of the Great War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021); Jonathan Dekel-Chen, 'Transnational Intervention and Its Limits: The Case of Interwar Poland', *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies*, 17:3 (2018), 265–86; Zoşa Szajkowski, 'Private and Organized American Jewish Overseas Relief, 1914–1938', *American Jewish Historical Quarterly*, 57 (1967), 52–106; Yehuda Bauer, *My Brother's Keeper: A History of the AJJDC, 1929–1939* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1974); Nahum Karlinsky, 'Jewish Philanthropy and Jewish Credit Cooperatives in Eastern Europe and Palestine up to 1939: A Transnational Phenomenon?', *The Journal of Israeli History*, 27:2 (2008), 149–70.
7 Joseph Marcus, *Social and Political History of the Jews in Poland, 1919–1939* (Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter Mouton, 1983), 139–44.
8 Samuel Kassow, 'The Shtetl in Interwar Poland', in Katz Steven T (ed.), *The Shtetl: New Evaluations* (New York: New York University Press, 2007), 121–40; Aleksander Pakentreger, *Żydzi w Kaliszu w latach 1918–1939* (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1988), 237–53; Wacław Wierzbieniec, *Społeczność żydowska Przemyśla w latach 1918–1939* (Rzeszów: Wydawnictwo Wyższej Szkoły Pedagogicznej, 1996), 220–8.
9 Hanna Kozińska-Witt, 'Samorządowa polityka przyznawania subwencji wobec potrzeb żydowskich mieszkańców Krakowa (1918–1939): proza budżetów samorządowych a dyskurs publicystyczny', *Kwartalnik Historii Żydów*, 255:3 (2015), 413–45; Hanna Kozińska-Witt, 'Polityka społeczna samorządu m. st. Warszawy względem żydowskich mieszkańców stolicy (1919–1939) – według relacji prasowych', *Kwartalnik Historii Żydów*, 267:3 (2018), 35–88.
10 Granick, *International Jewish Humanitarianism*, 18 and 19. Nahum Karlinsky stated that the Gemiłas Chesed functioned as charity: 'Both the leaders of the

JDC and the recipients of the loans knew that no one would demand from the borrowers to repay these loans if they would not be able to do so. Hence, for the Foundation and for the JDC, the funds for the Gemiloth Chessed Kassas were considered as charity. They were regarded on a totally different ideological and financial level than the funds allocated for reconstruction'. Karlinsky, 'Jewish Philanthropy', 160.

11 Giovanni Levi, 'On Microhistory', in Peter Burke (ed.), *New Perspectives on Historical Writing* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993), 110–1; Carlo Ginzburg, 'Microhistory: Two or Three Things That I Know about It', *Critical Inquiry*, 20:1 (1993), 32–3.

12 APL, AML, 43/0/3.3/358-343/0/3.3/365, 1924–33, Akta dotyczące spraw dobroczynności publicznej i opieki społecznej; APL, AML, 43/0/3.3/366-371, 1934–9, Opieka społeczna, koszty leczenia, sprawy inwalidzkie, bezrobocia, emigracyjne i ubezpieczeń społecznych.

13 Rogers Brubacker, 'Ethnicity without Groups', *European Journal of Sociology*, 43:2 (2002), 163–89.

14 Rogers Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 79–106.

15 Grata, *Polityka społeczna*, 21.

16 Zalewski, *Opieka i pomoc społeczna*, 52.

17 Ludwik Krzywicki, *Służba Społeczna w Polsce* (Warszawa: skł. gł. w Dziale Wydawnictw Związku Spółdzielni Spożywców R.P., 1928), 12–13.

18 Robert Kuwałek and Paweł Sygowski, 'Z dziejów społeczności żydowskiej w Lubartowie', *Lubartów i ziemia lubartowska*, 12:1 (2000), 65–6.

19 Baruch Tshubinski (ed.), *Hurbn Levertov: A matseyve Levertov un Levertover kdoyshim* (Paris: Aroysgegebn fun di fraynt fun Leyertoy, 1947), 94–6.

20 Marek Przeniosło, 'Organizacje samopomocy społecznej w Królestwie Polskim w latach I wojny światowej', *Niepodległość i Pamięć*, 33:1 (2011), 57–72.

21 Przeniosło, 'Organizacje samopomocy społecznej', 59–60.

22 Przeniosło, 'Organizacje samopomocy społecznej', 60.

23 Krzysztof Latawiec, 'Lubartów w latach 1865–1918', in Ryszard Szczygieł (ed.), *Lubartów w dziejach* (Lubartów: Urząd Miasta Lubartowa, 2018), 390–1; Kondrat Zieliński, *Stosunki polsko-żydowskie na ziemiach Królestwa Polskiego w czasie pierwszej wojny światowej* (Lublin: Wydawnictwo UMCS, 2005), 241.

24 Zieliński, *Stosunki polsko-żydowskie*, 240–4.

25 David Engel, 'World War I', in *The YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*. https://yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/world_war_i; Bauer, *My Brother's Keeper*, 7–8.

26 JDC Archives, New York Office Collection 1919–21, 4/34/1/193.3, Congress Poland - Lublin State reports.

27 Przeniosło, 'Organizacje samopomocy społecznej', 71.

28 Ustawa z dnia 16 sierpnia 1923 r. o opiece społecznej, Dz.U. 1923 nr 92 poz. 726. https://isap.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/DocDetails.xsp?id=wdu19230920726

29 Grata, *Polityka społeczna*, 199–202 and 280–1.

30 Bina Garncarska-Kadary, *Żydowska ludność pracująca w Polsce 1918–1939* (Warszawa: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny, 2001), 158–63; Marcus, *Social and Political History*, 231; Grata, *Polityka społeczna*, 297.
31 Melania Bornstein-Łychowska, *Polityka społeczna państwa polskiego w latach 1918–1935* (Warszawa: MPiOS, 1935), 292. In fact, in the 1930s, no more than one-sixth of the country's population was protected. Zalewski, *Opieka i pomoc społeczna*, 94–5. Precise estimations according by types of social insurance: Inglot, *Welfare states*, 80–1.
32 APL, AML, 43/0/3.3/361, district governor's letter, 18 February 1929.
33 APL, Starostwo Powiatowe Lubartowskie (hereafter SPL), 409/0/12/90–409/0/12/92, registers of political parties, organizations and unions operating in Lubartów district, circa 1925–circa 1933.
34 There are examples of the Jewish community collaborating with the local government on social care for Jews. Kozińska-Witt, 'Samorządowa polityka', 414.
35 Budgets of the Jewish *kehilla* in Lubartów, 1926–30, 403/0/2/795, Urząd Wojewódzki Lubelski, APL.
36 The Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People, Jules Peretz collection, file PL-486, letter from the Achi Ezer to the Jules Peretz, 1926.
37 Ibid., translated by Yitskhok Niborski and Franciszek Zakrzewski.
38 APL, Urząd Wojewódzki Lubelski, 403/0/2/795, budgets of the Jewish *kehilla* in Lubartów, 1926–30.
39 Rozporządzenie Prezydenta Rzeczypospolitej z dnia 6 marca 1928 r. o opiekunach społecznych i o komisjach opieki społecznej, Dz.U. 1928 nr 29 poz. 267. https://isap.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/download.xsp/WDU19280290267/O/D19280267.pdf
40 APL, AML, 43/0/3.3/360, circular by the district governor in Lubartów in regard to social workers and social care commissions elections, 1 May 1928.
41 APL, AML, 43/0/3.3/361, list of the social workers, 19 September 1929.
42 *Instrukcja dla opiekunów społecznych* (Warszawa: Ministerstwo Pracy i Opieki Społecznej, 1931), 3.
43 For example in France. Lola Zappi, 'Commentêtre "l'amie" des familles populaires: la relation de care chez les assistantes sociales del'entre-deux-guerres, entre vocation et formation', *Clio. Femmes, Genre, Histoire*, 49:1 (2019), 93–114; Lola Zappi, 'Une approche morale de la précarité: Les enquêtes des services sociaux dans l'entre-deux-guerres', *Les Études sociales*, 169:1 (2019), 21–44.
44 APL, AML, 43/0/3.3/361, applications for material aid and coal with accompanying records, January and February 1930.
45 APL, AML, 43/0/3.1/187, list of the Lubartów magistrate employees, 24 August 1933. There was only one Jewish clerk in the magistrate office employed in 1928.
46 APL, AML, 43/0/3.3/361, list of the social workers, 31 December 1930. The same phrase is repeated in 1933 on the list of social workers. Those are the only two cases of using a non-religious distinction in regard to the town's social care.

47 APL, AML, 43/0/3.1/187, a monographic description of the town of Lubartów, 24 August 1933. Magistrate used the data from the 1931 national census.
48 Out of the 118 applications submitted by the Jewish social workers, 115 were to be granted, compering to forty eight out of fifty seven Christians. APL, AML, 43/0/3.3/363, records concerning 1931 coal action, January 1931.
49 APL, AML, 43/0/3.3/364 and 43/0/3.3/365, reports about financial and familial status form 1932 and 1933.
50 APL, AML, 43/0/3.3/363, records concerning 'Wielka Zabawa Taneczna', January–February 1931.
51 APL, AML, 43/0/3.3/363, minutes from the Christian social workers meeting, 3 February 1931.
52 APL, AML, 43/0/3.1/187, a monographic description of the town of Lubartów, 24 August 1933.
53 APL, AML, 43/0/3.3/376, records regarding the unemployment, 1933; APL, AML, 43/0/3.1/187, a monographic description of the town of Lubartów, 24 August 1933.
54 APL, AML, 43/0/3.1/114, minutes from the Town Board meetings, 1931–3.
55 APL, AML, 43/0/3.1/114, minutes from the Town Board meeting no. 24, 30 September 1931.
56 APL, AML, 43/0/3.3/376, appeal of the Municipal Committee for Aid to the Poor, 29 December 1932.
57 APL, AML, 43/0/3.1/114, minutes from the Town Board meeting no. 24, 30 September 1931.
58 APL, AML, 43/0/3.1/114, minutes from the Town Board meeting no. 5, 24 February 1932.
59 APL, AML, 43/0/3.3/365, letter from Achi Ezer, 20 January 1933.
60 APL, AML, 43/0/3.3/365, letter from Achi Ezer, 10 November 1933.
61 APL, AML, minutes from Town Board meeting no. 4, 4 January 1933; minutes from Town Board meeting no. 27, 13 December 1933.
62 APL, AML, 43/0/3.3/364, letter from Gemiłas Chesed, 24 November 1932.
63 APL, AML, 43/0/3.3/364, Gemiłas Chesed financial report for 1931–2.
64 This was reflected in the number of board members on the Town Council: three from Achi Ezer and four from Gemiłas Chesed in the late 1920s. APL, SPL, 409/0/12/92, register for organizations operating in the Lubartów district, 1928–33.
65 Hubert Izdebski, *Samorząd terytorialny: Podstawy ustroju i działalności* (Warszawa: Wolters Kluwer Polska, 2014), 72.
66 APL, AML, 43/0/3.3/369, documentation concerning the 1937 Eastern campaign, May 1937.
67 APL, AML, 43/0/3.3/369, documentation concerning the 1937 Christmas campaign, November–December 1937.
68 The most precise data come from the chronicle of school no. 2, 194. On 5 September 1937 there were 398 'Poles' and 258 'Jews' in the school.
69 APL, AML, 43/0/3.3/369, 'Christmas for the poorest' campaign documentation, December 1937.

70 APL, AML, 43/0/3.3/368, report on the Lubartów social care, 19 December 1936; APL, AML, 43/0/3.3/371, report on the Lubartów social care, 31 May 1939.
71 APL, AML, 43/0/3.3/369, lists of the poor inhabitants of Lubartów, January 1937. List were compiled by all the social workers. The cross-outs on the lists made by the vice-mayor show that the Town Board qualified forty one residents as requiring permanent benefits, including nine Jews.
72 APL, AML, 43/0/3.3/368–70, annual reports about the Social Care Commission, 1936–8.
73 The limiting or cutting of subsidies to Jewish organizations was a nationwide tendency. Pakentreger, *Żydzi w Kaliszu*, 253; Kozińska-Witt, 'Samorządowa polityka', 422; Jerzy Tomaszewski, *Żydzi w II Rzeczypospolitej* (Warszawa: Instytut Historyczny Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2016), 69.
74 APL, AML, 43/0/3.1/116, minutes of the Town Board meeting nr. 35, 14 December 1936.
75 APL, AML, 43/0/3.1/116, mayor Jastrzębski letter about feeding school children, 22 August 1936. In the late 1930s, feeding school children became a high priority of the Social Care Ministry. Grata, *Polityka społeczna*, 231–3.
76 Yiddish Scientific Institute (Yidisher Visnshaftlekher Institut, YIVO) Archives, JDC Landsmanshaft Department, box 7, folder 242, letter to the JDC from the charity Gemiłus Chesed in Lubartów, 24 January 1939.
77 'Z życia organizacji', *Lubartowiak* (1 May 1938), 10–12.
78 'Sprawozdanie Kasowe', *Lubartowiak* (1 May 1938), 12.
79 YIVO Archives, JDC Landsmanshaft Department, box 7, folder 242, letter to JDC from Gemiłas Chesed in Lubartów, undated.
80 The Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People, Jules Peretz collection, file PL-486, letter from the Gemiłas Chesed to the *landsmanshaft* in New York, 21 June 1938, translated by Yitskhok Niborski and Franciszek Zakrzewski.
81 On state regulations that hit small manufacturers and on the situation of Jewish small businesses in the late 1930s, see Gancarska-Kadary, *Żydowska ludność*, 68–9, 99–102, 146. About government moratorium on agricultural debts that deprived entrepreneurs of working capital, see L. Szlamowicz, 'Oddłużenie rolnictwa a handel żydowski', *Zagadnienia* Gospodarcze, 1–2 (1935), 52–7.
82 Tomaszewski, *Żydzi w II Rzeczypospolitej*, 199–219; Marcus, *Social and Political History*, 352–67.
83 Marcus, *Social and Political History*, 144.
84 This role is demonstrated not only through the scale of the assistance provided but also through the number of members. In 1933, the Town Board estimated Achi Ezer's membership at 250 and Ezra's at 500, with fifty members of the Women's Civic Labour Union and eighty-six of the St Vincent's Society. APL, AML, 43/0/3.1/187, a monographic description of the town of Lubartów, 24 August 1933. About the role free loan *kasses* played in unifying the local Jewish groups, see Kenneth B. Moss, *An Unchosen People* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2021), 118–19.

3

When the 'socialist good life' met its match: austerity and humanitarian crisis in 1980s Romania

Cristian Capotescu

Introduction

This chapter revisits the final decade of late socialism in Eastern Europe in the 1980s, and the deleterious social effects of austerity, to explore how socialist citizens developed humanitarian routines and forged a socialist ethics of care for others in need. What emerges from this discussion are moments and relationships where deep socio-economic crisis prompted moral action, not by the state, but by socialist citizens. The aim is to re-evaluate who and what defined and shaped welfare regimes in the socialist period. Was this only a domain of state planning and experts, bureaucrats and politicians, as is often assumed? Or might a more nuanced narrative surface if new attention is paid to how ordinary citizens themselves succeed in recuperating notions of what it meant to live a dignified life under socialism? The waning years of the Ceaușescu regime are a particularly instructive case in examining these questions, as it spurred the rise of a transnational movement of socialist aid workers who found a meeting place in Romania and discovered private humanitarian work as a moral vocation.

This chapter focuses on a subset of private humanitarian networks from East Germany (GDR) to Romania in the mid-to-late 1980s. Citizens in the GDR were at the forefront of private humanitarian in the socialist bloc during the period. This has several reasons: the relative abundance of consumer goods and more prosperous conditions of life in East Germany, as well as the distinct linguistic advantages of East Germans travelling to Romania who found community with the Germans of the East, facilitated this work. For citizens of the GDR, the Romanian Germans of the Banat and Transylvania offered an intriguing window into German life in the East. A thriving socialist tourism industry provided East Germans with a well-organized system to traverse borders and partake in cultural exploration across the bloc. Many East Germans opted to forgo state-sanctioned leisure travel and found their way as backpack tourists to the Carpathian

Mountains, as flâneurs at the Black Sea or as visitors in Transylvania's historic regions where German culture was conserved in the rituals, habits and folklore of the Saxons, Swabians and other ethnic groups. Tourism and cultural exchange forged cultural ties between two otherwise distant cousins across East Central Europe. Through these trans-bloc connections, relationships emerged that became vehicles for the humanitarian work of citizens from the GDR, particularly in the terminal years of the socialist regime of Nicolae Ceaușescu. The stories of these 'citizen aid workers' or 'private humanitarians' offer a window into how ordinary people from across the bloc inserted themselves into the socialist state's mandate of welfare provisioning and humanitarian care, and how they contested and shaped the notion of the 'socialist good life' at the sunset of the socialist project.

What sustained this work was neighbourly help via familial and community-based networks, as well as provisioning relationships that were forged across long distances between friends and friends of friends, and across ethnic, national and religious communities. While social ties across borders were crucial to these activities, private humanitarians adopted peculiar strategies of 'greying' their activities, which allowed them to navigate state control and regime surveillance in the socialist bloc and build a distinct infrastructure of parallel provisioning vis-à-vis the state in the 1980s.[1] This chapter pays particular attention to the ways that East Germans organized private aid across the bloc and also to the ethical sensibilities that emerged through these provisioning relationships. It addresses the question of what motivated citizens of the GDR to do good in a system where the state held a monopoly on welfare provisioning and social services. How did their sense as members of a shared political project forge a new notion of self-determined individuals vis-à-vis the state that discouraged social action from below? Finally, what does this lesser-known history of socialist humanitarianism reveal about state socialism and the humanitarian order?

This chapter explores these questions and examines how humanitarian relationships birthed peculiar ethical sensibilities and moral quandaries, some of which were similar to what humanitarian practitioners faced in other parts of the world, while others were distinctly *socialist* in nature. By doing so, the discussion underscores the importance of exploring how this period and region fit into the wider global history of humanitarianism and explaining how one of the most distinct and transformative political projects of the twentieth century brought into existence a rarely considered humanitarian space. This subterranean sphere extended far outside the purview of the socialist state into the shadow spaces of society, where need and poverty were manifest conditions of daily life and the ethical work of ordinary citizens. At the broadest (and most ambitious), this chapter

argues that reading humanitarianism and socialism side by side can help reappraise what counts as humanitarian action outside the framework of Western international non-governmental organizations and humanitarian agencies, all of which experienced considerable obstacles in operating in the socialist bloc after 1945.[2] This chapter outlines how East German citizens, in particular, organized private humanitarian work, and how this practice furnished a sense of purpose and shaped their self-perceptions as individuals with a moral obligation to act.

From socialist pleasures to the displeasures of austerity

This examination of humanitarian practices during the late socialist period coincides with the demise of an older paradigm that, for most of the Cold War, promoted a particular view centred on backwardness and totalitarianism in the socialist bloc. This older school of thought tended to portray the socialist system as poor, underdeveloped, environmentally destructive and wasteful, and overall as devoid of human autonomy under conditions of ubiquitous state control. This view has received considerable pushback in the last two decades.[3] Based on the re-examination of economic data, the developmental gains made by the socialist bloc since 1945 prompted area studies scholars to mount a credible challenge to the older views of divergence between East and West. The common view today is that the socialist bloc's economic development was not so much an aberration but that it followed a similar trajectory as the 'economic miracle' in many Western states in the second half of the twentieth century.[4] What followed from this historical reappraisal were new ways of conceptualizing life under socialism. This reorientation led to the study of what scholars now referred to as the 'socialist good life', such as leisure, tourism, do-it-yourself practices, consumer pleasures and relative affluence – notwithstanding the absence of political rights that were enjoyed in the West.[5] A recent contribution by Zsuzsa Gille, Diana Mincyte and Cristofer Scarboro, for instance, asserts that 'late socialism was centrally animated by discussions about the relationship between social needs, desires, and the question of pleasure'.[6] In this alternative modernity, daily life for the emerging socialist middle class bore a striking resemblance to life in the West, where consumption and a depoliticized citizenry were the result of a similar turn towards lifestyles oriented around the consumption of goods and their enjoyment. Gille, Mincyte and Scarboro thus note that 'often, these visions coincided with the material pleasures of consumption under state socialism – a reduction of working hours, the increased emphasis on private life, and the gratifications of the domestic sphere'.[7]

Though the period appears much less 'dark' and 'grey' in hindsight through this post-totalitarian lens, what sits less comfortably with this new-found narrative of the 'socialist good life' was the continuous return of humanitarian crises during the period. Natural disasters were among the chief causes that punctured attempts of the state and its citizens to normalize the political system and find common ground for accommodation in the 1960s and 1970s. In Romania, this period, as well as its dimming in the late 1970s, was not only a time of economic boom and liberalization. It was also a period of disasters that remade conditions of life under socialism. In 1970 and 1975, the country was devastated by flood disasters sweeping across large swaths of the Romanian territory, wreaking havoc on industry and local agriculture and displacing hundreds of thousands of citizens. In 1977, an earthquake of 7.5 magnitude on the Richter scale left behind a trail of urban destruction in the Romanian capital and killed over 10,000 inhabitants. These events were globally televised and led to international humanitarian campaigns by governments, intergovernmental bodies and private citizens.[8]

What followed in the 1980s was no less dramatic. In 1981, a new era of socially engineered erosion of living standards began to nip away at the idea of the 'socialist good life'. In the wake of two oil shocks and a global financial crisis in the late 1970s, the Ceaușescu regime introduced a draconian austerity programme to repay the nation's ballooning foreign debt, taking its cues from the shock therapies in Latin America and elsewhere. A regime without neoliberals but almost as equally invested in this economic doctrine as its capitalist proponents, the communist leadership began to embrace the idea that Romanian society had lived beyond its means and required a reset. What followed were drastic belt-tightening measures that began to restructure and ration virtually all aspects of daily life.[9] Within a few years, austerity diminished the general food supply, cut social and medical services to a minimum and reduced access to energy supplies for the population. As observers at the time attested with dismay, apartments in Romania remained dark and cold in the winter, and shop floors often greeted scavenging consumers with little more than empty shelves. With these measures, the Ceaușescu regime became the fiercest enforcer of mass deprivation in the socialist bloc, sacrificing many of the economic gains of the previous decades and diminishing the standard of living of the population to the lowest level in the region.[10]

It is crucial not to conflate this social immiseration with the intermittent shortages in other socialist states at the time. What is remarkable about austerity in Romania is that the widespread and prolonged shortages were not an unintended consequence of economic mismanagement and inefficiencies in production and supply but the deliberate effects of a new economic

doctrine. For many Romanians, the aggressive welfare retrenchment, institutional underinvestment and social abandonment increased their reliance on an ever-expanding shadow economy where hard-to-find goods (in essence, everything besides bread and salami) were traded, exchanged or procured through private networks and black market transactions. For many citizens, however, the benevolence of the thinning socialist welfare state was not sufficient to sustain a middle-class existence, and nor was it always sufficient or possible to obtain bare necessities through informal networks where citizens bartered and exchanged all that was unavailable on state-run shop floors.

Austerity as a humanitarian crisis

What sustained access to basic consumer supply under these conditions of extreme shortage were often external networks that brought donations and aid into the country. Among the recipients of such cross-border aid networks were families lacking adequate access to baby milk or contraceptives; ordinary people unable to procure basic foodstuffs; elderly citizens without access to medicine and remedies to treat chronic ailments; and citizens in destitute social conditions at the margins of Romanian society without housing, employment or proper nutrition. Recipients also included citizens whose small pensions and incomes did not allow them to participate in the country's growing shadow economy.

Unlike in the West, where homelessness, unemployment, malnutrition and the social inadequacies of medical systems have garnered decades of research, the uneven track record of socialist welfare states on this issue has received surprisingly little attention in the post-Cold War literature.[11] It is not the scope of this discussion to offer a systematic account of social precarity under socialism and how socialist welfare states tackled the issue of social need (or failed to do so). It is rather to pry open cracks in the narrative of the 'socialist good life' and situate it in the wider global context of humanitarian crises in the late second half of the twentieth century. For all intents and purposes, it should be noted that austerity is not commonly understood as a state of humanitarian emergency vis-à-vis famines, droughts, natural disasters, military conflicts, forced displacements and civil wars. But this is a misconception. Austerity should be considered alongside traditional disasters, although (or precisely because) its insidious effects are difficult to pinpoint and may remain generally more subterranean. Austerity often does not create the same amount and intensity of media outrage and public consternation as a natural disaster, and only over time do its punitive effects accumulate as deeply corrosive, visceral

conditions in daily life. These can overlap with and intensify other social ills and lead to prolonged social misery. This reorientation towards austerity suggests that such systemic humanitarian crises are not external to states of emergency but emergencies of a different kind, often occurring in less visible ways side by side with the humanitarian crises that are commonly recognized.

A case study for austerity turning into a humanitarian episode is Ceaușescu's Romania in the 1980s. Amid this plunge into austerity, Romania turned into a meeting place for socialist citizens from across the bloc who transported daily essentials, clothes, contraceptives, medicine, hygiene articles and other goods that had started to quietly disappear from shop floors, pharmacies and hospitals across the country. Among the most active groups in this emergent transnational web of socialist humanitarians were groups and individuals who privately organized aid campaigns across the socialist bloc. Especially in East Germany and Hungary, new groups eager to organize aid to Romania began to form.

Sending Aid from the GDR to Romania

In response to reports and rumours about malnutrition, food shortages and the lack of basic consumer goods in Romania, numerous groups in the GDR's burgeoning civil rights movement and the Protestant church in East Berlin, Potsdam, Leipzig Zwickau and Karl-Marx-Stadt began to discuss what could be done to help. In several of these communities, a consensus formed that more than critical discussions about the precarious conditions in Romania was needed. Some voices, as in the case of several members affiliated with an aid-giving group in Zwickau, championed an openly critical stance towards the Ceaușescu regime to raise awareness about the untenable situation in the socialist brother nation. Supporters of this view argued that citizens of the GDR should step out of the shadow of conformity and blame and shame the Romanian regime in *samizdat* articles for its dereliction of duties towards its citizens. Part of this strategy, they argued, should also include new pressure tactics through open letters to demand diplomatic intervention by the leadership of the GDR. Others within the Zwickau group were more cautious and argued that open dissent against the Ceaușescu regime would do little to improve the plight of the Romanian people. In their view, direct action that remained restrained and apolitical would more effectively translate into immediate and tangible improvements in the daily lives of those who needed help.[12]

In many cases, the latter tactic won out, and similar volunteer groups in East Berlin or Leipzig adopted a principle of direct action without demands

for political reforms in Romania. But direct action required sustained grassroots efforts on the ground and relied on community donations and local support. Organizers found in local churches and cultural centres meeting places to plan their aid giving, build communities and secure local donations for their work. These activities grew out of and coincided with the rise of the East German civil rights movement in the mid-to-late 1980s. They drew in a growing movement of politically engaged citizens who met in these subterranean public spaces to discuss politics and participate in wide-ranging causes, from environmental protection, international peace and nuclear non-proliferation to interfaith dialogue and women's rights. Efforts to organize assistance across the socialist bloc included a class of non-political citizens and groups who shared a common concern for the situation in Romania and were ready to donate foodstuffs, consumer goods and what they could spare from their meagre salaries or organize through their own assistance campaigns.

It should be noted that an organized aid delivery system to Romania did not exist at the time and had to be often improvised locally. This prompted many donors to send aid through the GDR's postal services, which offered citizens the possibility to send gift packages across the bloc. Gift packages were an established practice between socialist states and legally sanctioned by the authorities to foster cultural exchange and strengthen ties of socialist brotherhood.[13] What was not sanctioned, however, was the appropriation of packages to organize systematic aid campaigns coordinated by groups of volunteers across borders. Nor were attempts sanctioned to scale up the number of donors and recipients and organize them into private networks in cases where no direct familial connections existed. These restrictions were in place because in the GDR, as in other socialist countries, citizens were prohibited from self-organizing into private associations. Gift packages were thus to be sent strictly based on a person-to-person principle and not to be misappropriated in support of organized private campaigns that eluded oversight by the state.

Despite these prohibitions, citizens in the various East German aid groups found ways to bypass them. This was often done by collecting lists of Romanian recipients and pairing them with donors in the GDR who could 'adopt' one or several individuals or entire families and send, under the pretence of supporting family and friends, packages on a regular basis. These relationships often prevailed over months and years and built the foundation for continuous, if restricted, support across borders. In some cases, they created friendships that outlasted the socialist period. Donors who sought to manoeuvre the state's postal infrastructure had to do this in full knowledge that package traffic was monitored and inspected by the authorities at the point of shipment and delivery. This required that donors

adhered to the legally permitted amounts and types of goods and consumer items for package delivery, making it difficult to tailor aid to the individual needs of recipients and provide extensive support to those who needed it. Deviating from the official rules could jeopardize a delivery and result in a returned package.

For many donors, however, this official system, and its many limitations, offered limited utility to organize assistance in meaningful ways across borders. As a result, they opted to deliver aid directly to Romania. Those willing to embark on days-long trips across the bloc had to disguise their journeys as tourism and family visits. Some donors preferred this strategy because they were familiar with the country from previous travels or had private contacts who could help organize and distribute goods in their local networks. Donors such as Lothar Amft from Postdam visited Romania several times with his family and friends on hiking trips in the Carpathian Mountains. Against the backdrop of intensifying need in the mid-1980s, Amft decided to create a local support group in his hometown of Potsdam and deliver aid to Romania himself. Several times annually, his Potsdam group would embark on aid trips, transporting large quantities of aid in their Trabants and Wartburgs to local churches in Romania, where goods were distributed to the community. Their vehicle's suspensions were, on many occasions, riding low from carrying assorted daily essentials, including salt, pepper, baby milk, canned food, coffee, candy, medicine, contraceptives, hygiene articles and clothing. This often prompted Amft and colleagues to worry that Romanian border patrols would become suspicious of their border crossings and confiscate their donations, but through luck and wit in negotiating passage, Amft and his group of volunteers were never turned away.[14]

Other East German groups organized aid transports via train rides, using bags, backpacks and handbags to move aid across borders. Members of a local group in Zwickau routinely hid scarce supplies such as contraceptives and medicine in train compartments or placed them on their bodies to elude control by border authorities. Once the group arrived at their destination in Romania in the city of Brașov, locals assisted as guides and middlemen and helped with the distribution of the supplies. Susanne Hartzsch-Trauer, one of the organizers of the Zwickau group, recalled the often difficult circumstances under which such aid activities occurred: 'We preferred to exchange supplies in person to avoid risking people's safety.' Rainer Pohl, another group member, highlighted that it was strictly prohibited, particularly for locals, to fraternize with foreigners and assist them in bringing supplies into the country. This not only increased the need for local middlemen with local contacts and the ability to get aid into the hands of those who needed it most but it also raised the stakes for those

who got involved as point persons. Pohl put it: 'Our contact person in Brașov, Tünde, took incredible risks since it was prohibited for locals to house foreigners. For a group of four to five people, it wasn't easy to visit Romania.'[15]

Reconstructing a subterranean social practice

Producing a comprehensive picture of just how widespread private aid to Romania was during the late socialist period remains a perennially challenging task. This has several reasons. While comprehensive statistics of socialist border crossings in state archives do indeed exist (and this research draws on these reports), the official record does not reveal specific details about the circulation of private aid across socialist state borders. This is because border controls never produced a granular surveillance picture of goods and people traversing state lines – unless they fell into the classificatory categories of illicit smuggling, espionage, diplomatic or cultural exchange, or tourism. Private aid, by nature, remained underreported. Its practitioners strategically avoided classification as 'aid workers' or participants in organized humanitarian campaigns. The latter were categories for foreign agents who were not permitted to visit Romania. Many also traded favours with border guards and engaged in other tactics of deception to escape closer scrutiny. With all of this, the vast majority of East German volunteers and donors became a statistical number in the records of the state and were commonly misclassified as tourists, not to their chagrin but by choice.

In this light, how are historians to delineate the scope and scale of a social practice that hid in plain sight without triggering the state's punitive surveillance apparatus and leaving behind a systematic track record? A viable method must necessarily draw on several sources and proxies. This chapter builds on existing state records related to border crossings and incidents in the period, as well as media reports in Western outlets. The archival record also includes East German archives. These provide important glimpses into conversations on this topic within the GDR's civil rights movement and sporadic official reports in other countries where similar initiatives emerged, such as West Germany and Hungary. It should be reiterated that none of the information gathered from any single archive offers a complete story. Instead, different archival fragments gradually begin to paint a bigger picture. As a result, working up from the local East German case to the transnational and back allows for cross-reference between groups across the Cold War divide and within the socialist bloc. This method of archival triangulation and piecemeal reconstruction shows that the East German

case was not a singularity within the Eastern Bloc but rather part and parcel of a broader transnational movement of private humanitarians spanning Cold War Europe.

This archival scaffold is complemented by a convenience sample of more than fifty interviews conducted with individuals and groups in former East Germany and elsewhere. Interviews with participants were conducted primarily in a semi-structured format and collected via a snowball system. The sample includes conversations with groups that sprung up in Austria and West Germany in the 1970s, and it draws related insights from burgeoning Hungarian networks that surfaced around the same time as the GDR campaigns in the mid to late 1980s. This cross-national sample of interviews, in concert with archival sources, makes it possible to situate the personal accounts of East German donors and volunteers translocally. It also allows it to compare and contrast tactics, practices and discourses with groups across the region.[16]

Finally, this chapter makes a case for proxies as a viable historical method. Proxies can act as correlates for historical phenomena that are difficult to trace directly. For this reconstructive effort, proxies can be found in historical records that live in 'adjacent' archival collections such as the GDR's postal statistics. Indeed, the East German state's postal records between 1964 to 1989 provide a near complete statistical picture of postal traffic into Romania in the period. These aggregates can serve as correlates of how East German citizens responded to humanitarian events in Romania (alas, Romanian archives themselves do not contain a track record for postal traffic).[17] As previously noted, the GDR's postal service had no method for differentiating between officially sanctioned 'gift packages' and illicit 'aid packages' – parcels only became subject to scrutiny if they were intercepted by the Stasi when they contained illicit goods or raised suspicion of illegal trafficking for other reasons. How many packages failed the test, as it were, and were confiscated or returned to sender is unknown. Notwithstanding these limitations, the total annual export volume offers a rough but statistically grounded approximation of the cyclicality of humanitarian events in Romania over time – and most importantly, it reveals that the East German population was highly responsive to humanitarian states of emergency.

What do these aggregate numbers show? As previously noted, during the 1970s, Romania experienced three natural disasters: two floods in 1970 and 1975, as well as an earthquake in 1977. In each case, East German postal statistics register a significant corresponding increase in export volumes from a baseline of roughly 10,000 packages per year to 16,000–18,000 packages during each of the three events. The sudden spikes in package numbers in each case were followed by sharp drops to

the baseline of around 10,000 packages after one to two years. After the 1977 earthquake, package numbers from East Germany declined below the pre-disaster levels of 1970. However, this trend only lasted for four years. In 1981, accompanying the introduction of austerity by the state, East German export volumes began to rise again. Throughout the 1980s, annual numbers grew gradually but steadily, reaching a historical high point in 1988. Remarkably, 1988 and not the year of the revolution in 1989 was the benchmark. This was because in 1989, the Romanian government grew increasingly weary of 'external' political threats and imposed entry and import bans on foreign goods. These prompted a marked decline in package numbers, including from East Germany and other socialist states.

What Figure 3.1 omits is that the real outlier year was not, in fact, 1988 but 1990, when the East German postal service registered a tenfold increase in package deliveries. This sleight of hand is a deliberate choice for this analysis to preserve proportionality and retain the visibility of the cyclical ebbs and flows of package traffic across the two decades under state socialism. Adding 1990 back into the picture, then, does little to diminish the validity of the argument about the power of proxies. It adds,

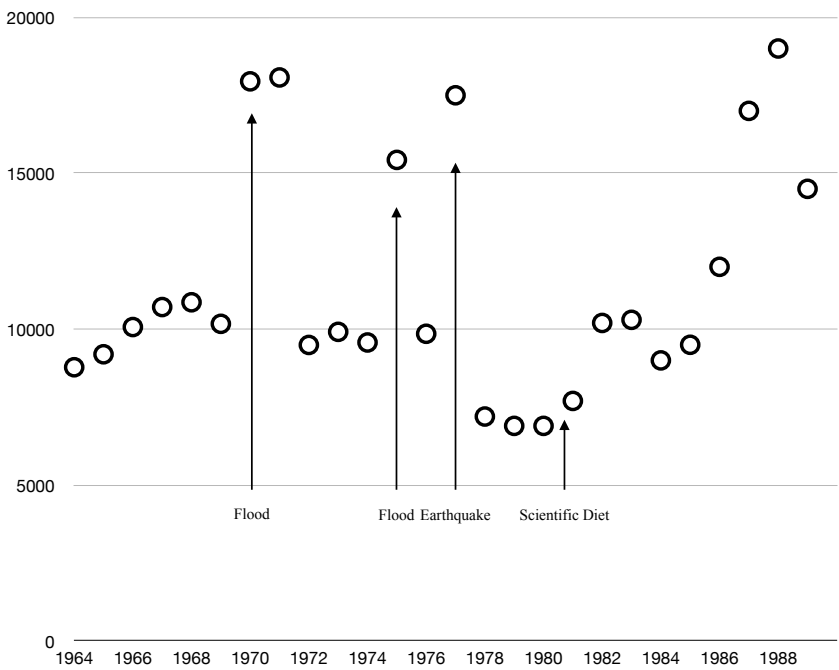

Figure 3.1 Annual volume of packages sent from the GDR to Romania, 1964–89

Source: Bundesarchiv Berlin-Lichterfelde.

in fact, further evidence to it. The massive wave of aid in 1990 confirms what many donors and volunteers in East Germany readily corroborated in interviews and what Western media reports covered at the time. The fall of the Ceaușescu regime opened, virtually overnight, the floodgates for private citizens in East Germany to send aid to the battered Romanian population, ushering in a new era of humanitarian aid into the former socialist bloc.

Sameness and shared poverty

Finally, turning from the macro to the micro perspective, what do the stories of East German donors and volunteers reveal about their humanitarian sensibilities? This part of the discussion revisits the question of ethics and interrogates not only what motivated East Germans to help but also how they experienced humanitarian relationships vis-à-vis their recipients. Experiences naturally differed, but witnessing the depth of scarcity in both public and private spheres provided a unifying frame for many East Germans, evoking both shock and a sense of familiarity. This is because life in the late GDR was, by most accounts, more comfortable and plentiful than in Romania. But the experience of living in the same political system also offered a reminder of the constraints and scarcity in the GDR. Socialization in socialism brought East Germans and Romanians closer together through a notion of shared poverty. A donor from Leipzig captured this sense of commonality by noting: 'We all grew up in the social order of communism and were, therefore, able to relate to the suffering of others through a kind of silent solidarity. Whether Czechs, Hungarians, Poles, [or Romanians], we all belonged to one community.'[18]

Despite their ability to participate in acts of giving as donors, it was this sense of sameness that enabled East Germans to feel proximity rather than distance towards recipients in Romania. In this moral landscape, East Germans' own neediness fuelled a sense of solidarity with their fellow citizens across the socialist bloc. What is remarkable about the notion of shared poverty is that it eschewed the uneven power relations common in humanitarian encounters elsewhere in the world. Socialism, instead, cultivated a sense of perceived mutual dependency where donors and recipients met each other not from opposite ends of the socio-economic spectrum (as in market economies) but from a place of relative (if certainly not untroubled) equality. This notion of sameness was further solidified by the continuous attempts by the state to proffer ideals of equality in the public sphere. Slogans extolling the virtues of modesty, the rejection of wealth accumulation and antipathy towards unbridled Western consumerism were

ubiquitous in both the GDR and Romania and found resonance in the habitus of donors and recipients.

These peculiar class relations differed from what is commonly the case in capitalist countries, where vertical class divides between donors and recipients are a characteristic trait of humanitarian encounters that resemble a dyad: at the top are the donors, who generally spring from the upper-middle and upper classes of society. At the bottom of the hierarchy are usually the recipients, bereft of social clout and having exceedingly little in common with the wealthy donors and corporate boardrooms donating money and resources to social programmes. A fitting example of such alienation can be found in the recurring Western charity campaigns for the Global South, where recipients are geographically worlds removed from their distant benefactors, just as they are alienated in virtually any other respect from each other.[19] Even among middle-class domestic charity workers, as studies on Evangelical charity in the US have shown, the social distinctions perpetuated by profound class differences become a pervasive mechanism of alienation and paternalism.[20]

There was another reason for this sense of social proximity under socialism. East Germans were intimately familiar with the trope of the 'rich uncle from the West', through gift exchanges with acquaintances and family members in West Germany. These holiday encounters were often fraught with shame and resentment towards the Western cousins when they became staging grounds to showcase material differences.[21] These moral sensibilities helped to flatten perceived hierarchies between 'inferior and superior', 'rich and poor', and 'powerful and powerless' in socialist encounters. A donor from Leipzig who visited Romania on many occasions recalled that this anti-paternalist ethos became a moral imperative in his work: 'In East Germany, we didn't have much ourselves. It was, therefore, completely inappropriate to behave as if I was a patron.'[22] In some cases, such ethical sensitivities disrupted donorship altogether. Achim Barth, a member of the Zwickau group, admitted that he was plagued by a sense of embarrassment, guilt and shame when he realized that he was perceived as a rich donor by Romanians who received his aid. The shame was particularly visceral when people 'broke out in effusive gestures of gratitude upon receiving goods from me', as he recalled.[23]

This is not to suggest that socialist societies succeeded in fully erasing class, ethnic, gender, religious, racial and other forms of difference. It should be noted that such entrenched categories not only persisted in socialist societies, as in the case of the triple burden female workers routinely faced between the domestic sphere and the workplace. But they also opened the door for exclusionary categories to creep back into private humanitarian work under socialism. Language barriers between East Germans and

Romanians were a common issue, and they expressed themselves in biases towards shared cultural frames such as German identity. The German Romanian community of Romania was more culturally proximate to donors from the GDR than Romanians and the country's other ethnic minorities.

Moral guides and their breakdown

Although many aspects of contemporary fundraising were not yet conceivable in the late GDR, opportunities to mobilize local communities to donate to humanitarian efforts in Romania existed nonetheless. Socialist fundraising occurred in intimate settings such as local parishes, community centres, libraries and private homes. Members of the Zwickau group regularly organized small gatherings in such venues, which were attended by an average of fifty community members. At local donor gatherings, oral documentation played a critical role in conveying the urgency for delivery assistance in Romania. Attendees learned about the catastrophic conditions alongside unsettling accounts of how Romanian women resorted to using vitamin C for self-induced abortions due to the lack of contraceptives in the country. These testimonials were instrumental in conveying the urgency of this cause about a socialist brother country that many East Germans were unfamiliar with. Susanne, a member of the group, recalled: 'Many East Germans didn't know anything about Romania. The GDR propaganda drew a rosy picture of the country, and our leadership even awarded Ceauşescu the Karl Marx Medal. That was a scandal. We had to open people's eyes for the truth of what happened there.' At the conclusion of such local convenings, the audience was encouraged to contribute gifts and donations. Group members provided those willing to give money, food, consumer goods or wholesale gift packages with lists of names of Romanian families that had been compiled by the group's local middleman, Tünde.

To facilitate cross-border deliveries, members of the Zwickau group created detailed guides and brochures instructing newcomers about shipping and transport regulations to Romania. This consolidation of knowledge bore several advantages. It provided important guidelines for donors to navigate the GDR's cumbersome postal regime and other bureaucratic roadblocks, from the paperwork and customs regulations across the socialist bloc to the all-but-expected exchanges with disgruntled postal clerks. Package guides also offered recommendations about the most needed consumer goods in Romania at any given time and provided detailed quantities of goods permitted for import by Romanian customs. Lists also included all that

was strictly prohibited from being donated: from bibles, political material and valuta to used clothes and shoes. Similarly, donors were reminded about the peculiar social norms governing Romania's black market, where Kenton cigarettes and coffee were treated as a universal currency to obtain scarce goods or pay for medical services. Package guides also mingled material needs with moral imperatives. The recommendations emphasized that giving required adherence to a particular social etiquette. Seemingly innocuous aspects, such as the quality of packaging, was to be treated as important clues and handled sensibly, with all measures taken to achieve proper modesty. Expensive-looking wrapping paper, for instance, was to be avoided because it could be perceived as inappropriately decorous. In general, donors were advised to refrain from any 'rich uncle attitudes'. This reference, of course, echoed East Germans' own feelings of inadequacy in gift exchanges with West German family members.

Where the aforementioned unifying tropes of sameness and shared poverty found their limits was in direct encounters between private humanitarians and the destitute. Here, it might be useful to think of a more bounded concept of socialist equality that pushed the ethics of giving beyond its discursive social imaginary. An example from an encounter in the city of Brașov highlights some of the ethical cleavages that opened up. In the late 1980s, members of the Zwickau group travelled on several occasions to Brașov, where two organizers of the group, Hans and Susanne, worked closely with their local middlemen, Tünde, on coordinating recipients and distributing supplies to the local recipients. During a trip to Brașov, Hans befriended Mariana and Tibi, two young Romanians. Susanne, who recalled the encounter between the two couples, noted about the episode:

> During my stay at the hospital, Hans was timidly approached by Marianna and Tibi. They told him that they knew someone who had emigrated to Yugoslavia and that someone could help them leave if we smuggled a letter out of the country on their behalf. Compared to Marianna and Tibi, Tünde belonged to *gehobenes Bürgertum* [upper-middle class]. Hans stayed with them and an older man in a basement for two weeks. They lived in a real slum in Brașov. The Hungarians were well-educated and had a sense of pride. But these people were at the bottom. Day in and day out, they ate cabbage and potatoes. They were genuinely destitute. Hans didn't stay with them again because of the lice, but we brought them food a few more times. The education gap between us was a problem. Our conversations always revolved around the same issues. Their horizon was limited, and they couldn't compete with the kind of knowledge, cultural framework, and perspective Tünde could offer. They weren't able to get out of that misery. It was painful that we engaged in this kind of social selection. In the end, people of the same class

> background end up helping each other. Christians help Christians because of a sense of familiarity. And the well-educated end up helping their own. Because we had befriended Marianna and Tibi and felt a sense of duty, we continued helping them. However, we never took it upon ourselves to stay with them again.[24]

What this encounter between Hans and his hosts brought to light was not a sense of sameness but difference, and it was indicative of deeper dilemmas in East Germans' vision of 'shared poverty'. The experience of abject poverty that Hans experienced was not only unfamiliar but also became grounds for profound alienation. At the margins of Romanian society, people like Tibi and Mariana lingered in conditions of material deprivation, malnutrition and monotony, abandoned by the state and distanced from the aspirational vision of the good socialist life that private humanitarians like Hans and Susanne attempted to rescue. Despite their well-intended effort to help rectify Tibi and Mariana's plight, Susanne and Hans ultimately recoiled from this state of destitution. Their conditions seemed too entrenched and inescapable, and even in the ostensibly more egalitarian social order of socialism, the proximity to poverty unsettled people's empathy towards those deemed irredeemable rather than create a universal impulse towards social uplift. This episode serves to demonstrate what might be obvious: that private humanitarianism in the socialist period was not a form of unbridled altruism, and the gaping differences between Hans and Susanne and Tibi and Marianne were no exception but rather what inspired socialist donorhood to begin with.

Conclusion

When Susanne recounted this story almost four decades later, it was evident that she was deeply affected by this encounter. This story raises questions about how attainable a universalist ideal of humanitarianism was under socialism, just as anywhere else. Tony Vaux, a former director of Oxfam, offered decades ago a key insight into this matter by emphasizing that altruism is not merely a deliberate choice to abstain from selfishness; rather, it is an ongoing aspiration, a project that can never reach a definite endpoint.[25] This perspective proves valuable as it frames the humanitarian work of the Zwickau group and other private humanitarians from East Germany as a morally precarious endeavour, constantly susceptible to hierarchies, differences and forms of inequality that have the potential to distort, undermine, marginalize or complicate the moral aspirations to help others in need. The historical context of socialism in which donors and volunteers operated illustrates that despite a commitment to

an ethos of shared poverty and sameness, socialist citizens, too, navigated a fraught moral terrain. Giving to the needy was an ongoing process of moral labour that made private aid giving not a static or straightforward ethical project but a recursive struggle to maintain moral clarity amid deep ethical quandaries.

What remains from these stories of private aid giving in the socialist period is that rectifying the promise of the 'good socialist life' against the backdrop of what often seemed as insurmountable systemic crises was an exceedingly difficult, if not impossible, challenge. It is perhaps here where the stopgap metaphor for humanitarianism so frequently invoked in the literature is most useful: Romania – where the corrosive effects of austerity caused a humanitarian crisis for many of its citizens, but where the communist leadership also maintained an iron grip on political power – could not be rescued by humanitarian practitioners. What the work of East German donors reveals is rather that socialist citizens actively tried to stem the breakdown of the Marxist utopia through their humanitarian work. Rather than giving up on socialism, their attempts to alleviate the human suffering of distant strangers in moments of state failure was a way of reframing what it meant to act morally as a socialist citizen. When the system ended, so did the notion that to be a socialist required empathy with those who reminded one of one's own poverty.

Notes

1 Among the most notable examples was the Vienna-based Barbara Schöfnagel; see Cristian Capotescu, 'Quiet Aid: Barbara Schöfnagel's Private Humanitarianism in the Socialist Gray Area and What Else the Global East Can Teach Us', in Arzoo Osanloo and Cabeiri deBergh Robinson (eds), *Care in a Time of Humanitarianism: Stories of Refuge, Aid, and Repair in the Global South* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2024).

2 In Ceaușescu's Romania, Western humanitarian organizations were prohibited from entering the country. Exceptions were the natural disasters of the 1970s, see Cristian Capotescu, 'Migrants into Humanitarians: Ethnic Solidarity and Private Aid-Giving during Romania's Historic Flood of 1970', *East European Politics and Societies*, 35:2 (2021), 293–312; Luminita Gatejel, 'Bargaining for Humanitarian Aid across the Iron Curtain: Western Relief Workers in Romania in the Late 1970s', *Cold War History*, 22:1 (2022), 41–57.

3 Critiques of this perspective also include a scholarship critical of the Third World concept; see Arturo Escobar, *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995); Vijay Prashad, *The Darker Nations. A People's History of the Third World* (New York: The New Press, 2008).

4 Paulina Bren and Mary Neuburger (eds), *Communism Unwrapped: Consumption in Cold War Eastern Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); Patrick Patterson, *Bought and Sold: Living and Losing the Good Life in Socialist Yugoslavia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2011); Paulina Bren, *The Greengrocer and His TV: The Culture of Communism after the 1968 Prague Spring* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2010).

5 See, among others, Bren and Neuburger, *Communism Unwrapped*; David Crowley and Susan Reid (eds), *Pleasures in Socialism: Leisure and Luxury in the Eastern Bloc* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2010); Patterson, *Bought and Sold*; Bren, *The Greengrocer and His TV*; David Crowley and Susan Reid (eds), *Socialist Spaces: Sites of Everyday Life in the Eastern Bloc* (Oxford: Berg, 2002); Cathleen M. Giustino, Catherine J. Plum and Alexander Vari, *Socialist Escapes: Breaking Away from Ideology and Everyday Routine in Eastern Europe, 1945–1989* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2013); Anne Gorusch and Diane Koenker (eds), *Turizm. The Russian and Eastern European Tourist under Capitalism and Socialism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006).

6 Cristofer Scarboro, Diana Mincyte and Zsuza Gille (eds), *The Socialist Good Life: Desire, Development, and Standards of Living in Eastern Europe* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2020), 6.

7 Scarboro et al., *Socialist Good Life*, 6.

8 Cristian Capotescu, 'Migrants into Humanitarians: Ethnic Solidarity and Private Aid-Giving during Romania's Historic Flood of 1970', *East European Politics and Societies*, 35:2 (2020), 293–312 and Capotescu, 'Quiet Aid'.

9 Cristian Capotescu, Oscar Sanchez-Sibony and Melissa Teixeira, 'Austerity without Neoliberals: Reappraising the Sinuous History of a Powerful State Technology', *Capitalism: A Journal of History and Economics*, 3:2 (2022), 379–420.

10 It should be noted that Romania's generation of orphans – tens of thousands of children given into the custody of the state by their biological parents as a result of the criminalization of abortion in 1966 – were left languishing in subhuman conditions in state institutions in the 1980s. While little was known about the orphan crisis inside and outside Romania before their emergence on the international news in the early 1990s, it is reasonable to assume that Romania's orphans were among the most underserved social groups in the Ceaușescu regime. A similar situation affected elderly citizens, particularly individuals who qualified for small retirement pensions and were unable to pay for expensive medication and care. Institutions for the elderly, in particular, suffered from significant underinvestment by the state in the 1980s. See Beatrice Scutaru, 'Local Practices of Humanitarian Aid: Pharmaciens Sans Frontières Anjou in Romania during the 1990s', *Eastern Journal of European Studies*, 5:2 (2014), 61–75.

11 A bevy of scholarship has tackled this problem in post-socialism. Notable exceptions for the socialist period include Ivan Szelenyi's extensive scholarship on housing and urban inequalities in Hungary, see (among others) *Urban Inequalities under State Socialism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983)

and more recently Lynne Haney's seminal work on the late socialist Hungarian welfare state, *Inventing the Needy: Gender and the Politics of Welfare in Hungary* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

12 These views were the subject of several interviews with Béla Nóvé, Budapest, 16 January 2015; interview with Achim Barth, Hans Hartzsch, Susanne Hartzsch-Trauer and Rainer Pohl, Zwickau, 13 July 2014; and interview with Dennis Dressel, 15 November 2015.

13 For package assistance dating back to the First and Second World Wars, see also Jan Láníček and Jan Lambertz (eds), *More than Parcels: Wartime Aid for Jews in Nazi-Era Camps and Ghettos* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2022); Farré Sébastien, *Colis de guerre: Secours alimentaire et organisations humanitaires, 1914–1947* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2014).

14 Interview by the author with Achim Barth, Hans Hartzsch, Susanne Hartzsch-Trauer and Rainer Pohl, Zwickau, 13 July 2014.

15 Interview by the author with Achim Barth, Hans Hartzsch, Susanne Hartzsch-Trauer and Rainer Pohl, Zwickau, 13 July 2014.

16 Archives include: Archiv der Bürgerbewegung Leipzig e.V., Archiv der DDR-Opposition, Robert-Havemann-Gesellschaft Berlin e.V., Bundesarchiv (Berlin-Lichterfelde), Romanian National Archives, National Council for the Study of the Securitate Archives, National Council for the Study of the Securitate Archives, Open Society Archives Budapest, Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amts der Bundesrepublik Deutschland.

17 Figure 3.1: The numbers are based on archival statistics retrieved from the Bundesarchiv Berlin-Lichterfelde, BArch DM 3/26078, DM 3/26077.

18 Anonymous interview by the author.

19 Luc Boltanski, *Distant Suffering: Morality, Media, and Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Lilie Chouliaraki, 'Post-Humanitarianism. Humanitarian Communication beyond a Politics of Pity', *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 13:2 (2010), 107–26; William Easterly, *The White Man's Burden: Why the West's Efforts to Aid the Rest Have Done So Much Ill and So Little Good* (New York: Penguin Press, 2006).

20 Omri Elisha, *Moral Ambition: Mobilization and Social Outreach in Evangelical Megachurches* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011); Rebecca Anne Allahyari, *Visions of Charity: Volunteer Workers and Moral Community* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).

21 Christian Härtel and Petra Kabus, *Das Westpaket: Geschenksendung – keine Handelsware* (Berlin: Ch. Links Verlag, 2000).

22 Interview with Achim Barth.

23 Interview with Achim Barth.

24 Interview with Susanne Hartzsch-Trauer, Hans Hartzsch, Achim Barth and Rainer Pohl.

25 Tony Vaux, *The Selfish Altruist: Relief Work in Famine and War* (London: Routledge, 2001), 2.

4

Self-organized care for older people in East Germany: local humanitarianism and post-1989 transformations

Maren Hachmeister

Introduction

This chapter presents the case of the People's Solidarity (PS, Volkssolidarität), a former socialist mass organization in East Germany (GDR) that gathered neighbourhood volunteers to provide care for older people. Driven by shared ideas of good care, PS members built up local networks that addressed needs for care on the ground. The main idea of this chapter is that although not comparable to the work of large-scale international humanitarian aid, the self-organized home help services, meals-on-wheels and neighbourhood volunteering of PS can be considered a form of humanitarianism on the ground. Moreover, treating the activities of this organization as local humanitarianism offers an explanation for the fact that its members did not abandon it (or the values it stood for) even after the political upheaval of 1989, after which care for older people began to take on largely new (marketized) forms. Local humanitarianism even aptly describes the continuous efforts of organizations and individuals at that time who sought to improve living conditions and reduce human suffering in their communities. To support this assumption, the chapter draws on three concepts – vernacular humanitarianism, everyday humanitarianism and care – which show how humanitarian principles and values of good care correlated for people who, as older adults, experienced the transition from a socialist to a post-socialist society in East Germany.

My period of interest is thus the 'long history' of 1989, which occurred simultaneously in East Germany and East Central Europe,[1] that is, the before, during and after of a period characterized by the 'simultaneity of rapid political and social change as well as the longer process of […] transformation of political systems and social practices'.[2] I took this moment of abrupt change and extreme uncertainty as a starting point to look at the care values of neighbourhood volunteers. My research focused on their motivations and experiences in order to approach the question why, of all things, they chose to engage in the field of care, despite the fact that

this presented major challenges in both socialist and neoliberal systems. In this chapter I pursue the following questions: can we describe local care practices as humanitarian? What makes humanitarianism local as seen in this case study? How does local humanitarianism manifest in individual life stories?

Recent scholarship has already explored various local or grassroots forms of helping others that could be labelled humanitarian, since they assumed that every human being deserved assistance.[3] PS is another example that confirms this assumption. Its most important slogan was 'to leave no one alone and to give everyone the opportunity to participate in social life until old age'.[4] This slogan contained several conventional humanitarian principles: every individual was granted the right to participate and to be involved in social life; everyone should be given an opportunity to do so, irrespective of (advanced) age or life circumstances. The first part of the slogan, 'to leave no one alone', even entailed an explicit call to action, based on the opinion that everyone can actively include those in need of help instead of leaving them alone.

On the one hand, the helpers of PS sought to implement this slogan in their neighbourhoods, and may thus be seen as (so far unseen) key actors of local humanitarianism in East Germany. On the other hand, ideas about older people and the organization of care for them in this slogan must be read in the context of socialist society.

The chapter focuses on the case of a local PS group in one of the major cities in Saxony (East Germany) that, throughout the twentieth century, was considered an important industrial hub for electronics industries. Older adults in these industries were particularly affected by the various transformation processes. Within the first couple of years after German unity in October 1990, about one million East Germans between fifty-five and sixty-five became permanently unemployed and were forced into early retirement.[5] Concepts of old age and good care were consequently coming under scrutiny at the time.

This chapter explores the case of PS through the narratives of the now eighty-two-year-old interviewee Ingrid (name changed). She is one of altogether forty interview partners with whom focused narrative interviews were conducted in the years 2020 to 2022 as part of a case study on PS. Ingrid experienced the regime change as an older adult and touched upon care ethics and humanitarian principles vividly in her account, which is why she is showcased in this chapter. Using the method of biographical case analysis pioneered by Gabriele Rosenthal, it was possible to extract sequences from Ingrid's interview in which everyday care practices and (local) humanitarian practices overlapped.[6] In this method, commonly used in interpretative social research, interview texts are sequenced

chronologically and then analysed in depth, distinguishing between experienced and narrated life stories.

What makes humanitarianism local?

The chapter starts from the observation that humanitarian action involves people at the scene of the emergency, face to face with the ones in need, and helping hands on. In that sense, humanitarianism (like caregiving) is always local. Several analytical terms have already been introduced, attempting to capture that such humanitarian enactments are not only initiated from a large-scale international level but can also be organized by local actors. Social anthropologist Čarna Brković proposed the term 'vernacular humanitarianism', referring to 'aid provided by various local actors in tune with their socio-historically specific ideas of humanness, as a response to an emerging need that cannot be adequately addressed through conventional channels of help'.[7] With her case study on Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brković demonstrated that vernacular humanitarianism promoted ideas of 'a shared responsibility for lives and the well-being of other people and a desire to help them'.[8]

At the same time, Lisa Ann Richey put forward 'everyday humanitarianism' as a term that considers both practices inside the international humanitarian system and the everyday lives and practices of actors 'outside the formal structures of humanitarian actions'.[9] Though Richey held on to understanding humanitarianism as 'the "good-doing" response to distant suffering',[10] which she then discussed with regard to its professionalization, marketization or mediatization, she directed attention more to the day-to-day actions of individuals. Following this approach, everyday practices of neighbourhood volunteers in PS can be well accentuated. On the one hand, the people involved in PS were acting as individuals who contributed their respective skills, connections and resources to collective human welfare (which is close to the definition of 'humanitarian' given by Maureen McNeil[11]). They were integrated into various local structures, such as their workplaces or their families. On the other hand, they set up new structures and new local routines when they began taking care of older people in their neighbourhoods. These were of an everyday nature, since individual care often required daily attention.

The everyday lives of neighbourhood volunteers thus reflect not only 'the "good-doing" response to distant suffering',[12] as suggested by Richey, but also attempt to overcome the distance between themselves and their older neighbours. Although this distance was not a geographical one (as often with international humanitarian action), but rooted in differing social

situations and age-related experiences, I suggest regarding this as 'local humanitarianism'.

In fact, the relationships between those providing and those receiving the home help of PS were much more characterized by (social) closeness than distance. Adriana Zaharijević, Bojana Radovanović and Ljiljana Pantović recently spotlighted closeness and care with regard to older people during the Covid-19 pandemic who were 'by far the most affected by pandemic-imposed restrictions while at the same time often needing close care'.[13] To care for someone and to establish a caring relationship, they argued, required proximity, that is, 'apprehending another's reality, understanding their nature, way of living, needs and desires [and] hearing the voice of the cared for'.[14] Neighbourhood volunteering for older people is one form of a wider phenomenon which can be studied in the past as well as in the present.

The approach I pursue in this chapter is informed by all three concepts (vernacular and everyday humanitarianisms and care) and embraces their intersections of the local and the everyday realms. With the example of local care of PS, I argue that local humanitarianism is a form of caring that reacts to local needs for help and that emerges in addition to (or on the margins of) the care systems already in place. PS provided care outside formal structures, while being formally organized to some extent (e.g. by having a name and legal status, by creating local groups and registering their members). PS was thus not acting merely spontaneously, or ad hoc, but was well organized on the ground. Social anthropologist Katerina Rozakou argued that there is 'a disparate humanitarian field that apart from large-scale humanitarian organizations [includes] grassroots groups and independent humanitarian volunteers'.[15] In that sense, PS care for older people could also be related to terms that emerged in the more recent past in the context of the European migration and refugee crises: solidarity humanitarianism,[16] volunteer humanitarianism[17] and grassroots humanitarianism.[18] Another example of humanitarian care work in East Germany (not for older people but for children) can be found in Julia Reinke's work on Greek refugee children in Chapter 6. Chapters 5 and 1, by Nikola Tohma on the Czechoslovak Red Cross (who like Reinke addresses the group of child refugees) and Friederike Kind-Kovács on humanitarian kindergartens in the slums of Budapest, likewise describe a close interaction between care work and humanitarian mobilization.

Following up on ethnologist Heike Drotbohm, I also encourage thinking 'outside the aid box',[19] by including care workers and volunteers into my study who were not trained as humanitarian workers but were laypersons who shared ideas of humanity and impartiality. This chapter thus aims to substantiate that 'care is central to the humanitarian endeavour'.[20]

I interpret 'care' in the broadest possible sense, following Joan Tronto, as 'everything that we do to maintain, continue, and repair our "world" so that we can live in it as well as possible'.[21] The life story of my interviewee Ingrid, who I introduce below, supports my definition of care.

The concept of 'care' is less prevalent in the context of humanitarian action. Humanitarianism is frequently used to describe crises and emergencies, that is, moments of extreme and urgent need, while care is rather seen as a practice that addresses the mundane challenges of life. 'CARE International', an aid organization dedicated to humanitarian relief (and well known for the delivery of so-called care packages to postwar Europe), is probably the most prominent exception from this linguistic usage, although the name CARE is, of course, also an acronym, the meaning of which has changed over time.[22] I do not intend to deconstruct the distinction of the two terms, or to classify in any way which of the many serious and urgent needs deserves their attribution. But I want to point out that practices of both care and humanitarian aid may be motivated by the same values. Both require the readiness of individuals to actively engage in providing, coordinating, delivering and not least giving care.

Before turning to my research findings, I discuss the role of humanitarian mobilization under state socialism, as it was crucial in shaping practices of caring in East Germany before, during and after 1989.

Local care as a part of socialist mass mobilization

Some organizations advocated humanitarian principles under socialist rule. This means that they operated with principles of neutrality and universality under the seemingly incompatible precondition of political loyalty to the Eastern Bloc. In the following, I refer to them as 'socialist humanitarian', to capture how they selectively combined socialist ideology with values such as humanity, voluntariness or impartiality. The process of adapting to both the socialist and humanitarian systems of the time required a great deal of flexibility and constant renegotiation of the involved actors. As the examples of the socialist Red Cross societies in Poland and Czechoslovakia (1945–1989) have shown in earlier studies, socialist humanitarianism worked out well on the ground, where local networks and local decision-makers had a lot more agency than in the centres of the then governing communist parties.[23] The Red Cross societies, however, were an exceptional case, since they were related to the international humanitarian Red Cross movement.[24]

Following up on historians Neville Wylie, Melanie Oppenheimer and James Crossland, who spoke of an 'alternative humanitarianism propagated by communist regimes',[25] I suggest thinking of socialist humanitarianism as

its own interpretation of humanitarian action and not only as a variant in which international humanitarianism continued to exist under socialist rule. Referring to socialism in nineteenth-century France, historian Naomi J. Andrews argued that the term humanitarian 'evoked comprehensive fellow-feeling, a sense of collective engagement for the benefit of all through the efforts of all'.[26] For socialist approaches, she found, 'the suffering body was a collective body whose health could only be restored through comprehensive societal reconstruction, while for liberals it was the individualized body of the suffering and distant "other"'.[27] Proceeding from this definition, socialist humanitarianism seems more focused on the life of the community to which its proponents belong, and can be applied to socialist mass organizations without international affiliations, such as PS in East Germany.

PS emerged from an initiative 'against the winter hardship'[28] in 1945, for which the parties of the Democratic Bloc (Christian Democratic Union of Germany, Communist Party of Germany, Liberal Democratic Party of Germany, Social Democratic Party of Germany), the two Christian churches, the trade unions and women's organizations mobilized the population in the Soviet Occupation Zone (of Germany). Indeed, a variety of mutual aid activities could be set up, such as the collection of food, clothing and furniture and the distribution of heating fuels, as well as the establishment of orphanages or nursing homes for older people. PS was formed as a continuation of this initiative and was in fact the only East German organization that arose from such a joint appeal at that time. While it addressed various groups of the needy in the beginning (e.g. people in the bombed-out cities, the homeless, orphans, refugees, war returnees), it later concentrated on caring for older people.[29] From a conversation with a PS helper which the Saxon Regional Committee (Landesausschuss Sachsen) of PS recorded for public relations purposes in the year 1950, an official instruction to mobilize the masses could be read already quite clearly. She stated: 'We need people who consciously and with conviction win over those who are still on the side-lines and hesitant, and make them realize that they too, like all of us, must make their contribution to the path to a better life. We must work to achieve that life.'[30]

A decision of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany (*Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands*, SED) in 1956 formally mandated the transformation of PS into a mass organization with this focus.[31] Humanitarianism was a concept explicitly evoked by the Central Committee of PS in 1954, proclaiming that '[p]ensioners and welfare recipients […] are in greater need of systematic, continuous care. The People's Solidarity would not fulfil its great humanitarian objective if it were to ignore this task.'[32] From this statement an expectation can be read that PS would be most suited to provide humanitarianism and care for older people. In 1969, this

expectation was confirmed with a decision of the Council of Ministers, in which PS was legally established as the 'sole responsible [body] for the care of the elderly'.[33]

Like other organizations in the GDR, PS blended into the system of socialist mass mobilization. Unlike the Communist Party or other organizations, however, it was organized predominantly at the regional level. Former PS President Gunnar Winkler remembered that 'this organizational and structural set-up was a prerequisite for many older people to find an appropriate social environment, after having lost or abandoned their attachments to their previous workplace'.[34] He even believed in the transformation of PS into a mass organization to strengthen the local groups, as 'they were able to prepare their work programmes largely independently, defined their contents and, on this basis, used their often limited material and financial resources in the interests of the older inhabitants'.[35] Eventually, the SED began to count on these local forms of care when the capacities of state facilities were limited.

In contrast to the conception of vernacular humanitarianism that Čarna Brković proposed, the care practices of PS volunteers thus did not remain ad hoc, non-professional and non-bureaucratized but turned into care work (though largely unpaid) that was central to the system of care provision.[36] As I mentioned above, this particular from of voluntary action involved thousands of people and reinforced socialist and humanitarian ideologies 'from below'. Indeed, until May 1990, about two million of the approximately sixteen million inhabitants of the GDR had become members of PS.[37] Home help services, home visits and meals-on-wheels (i.e. meals delivered on foot or with non-motorized vehicles), as well as local clubs for older people, were the key services they provided (or made use of, respectively).

In May 1989, the chair of the Central Committee of PS, Alois Bräutigam, once more brought together strategies of local humanitarian mobilization and neighbourhood care, summarizing:

> We have become better and better at caring as much as necessary and as well as possible for every elderly citizen who needs our help, thanks to a wide variety of initiatives and activities of our helpers. The firm basis of our work in the field of social care is the local groups. [They] make sure that the contacts of the helpers with the elderly citizens are established very carefully and cautiously, in order to always have an overview of which elderly citizens need care.[38]

One of my interviewees gave me an idea of how this was implemented on the ground. In his retrospective narration of the late socialist period, care giving and recruitment for PS went hand in hand: 'What do we do with

very old single people when they no longer get by? It was different back then, they were taken care of. […] I had a complete list of all pensioners and I knew who was retiring during the year. We went to see them with a bouquet of flowers and invited them to join us.'[39] When describing how his experience of caring was 'different back then', the interviewee implied that the most substantial changes happened only after 1989, when socialist humanitarianism came to an end for PS.

Local care and post-1989 transformations

After the system change of 1989, PS was the only former mass organization to survive the post-socialist transformation. To this day, it is in place as one of the largest welfare organizations in East Germany. The history of PS has been viewed quite ambivalently since then. At the end of the 1990s, PS was commonly (but incorrectly[40]) believed to be founded by the SED. Today its history is told as one of a longer tradition, highlighting the postwar initiative at its beginning and the transformation into today's professional welfare organization after the fall of communism as its most important achievement. Its past as a socialist mass organization is exceptionally well integrated into the organizational history (in contrast, for instance, to the socialist past of some Red Cross societies[41]), in part because the central values and role models of PS (e.g. solidarity, care) were consolidated during this period. Historian Philipp Springer concluded that in the GDR, solidarity was a keyword that stimulated mobilization of the population for PS, because it 'masked social, political, and cultural differences and conflicts by appealing to "community" and "togetherness" without being so contoured that anyone felt excluded'.[42]

In the interviews I conducted with members of PS more than thirty years after the system change, this understanding of solidarity was often echoed. It was explained to me repeatedly that not only does everyone deserve help in old age but also everyone should contribute to providing it. To a certain extent, then, the home help services, the neighbourhood help and the meal deliveries of PS were seen as sacrifices to a (not anymore socialist) community based on humanitarian principles, of which the neighbourhood volunteers remained convinced of to this day. In 2010, Gunnar Winkler, president of PS during the first decade of the 2000s, particularly emphasized this normative aspect of PS, stating that '[u]ntil the final phase of the GDR, local groups formed the basis of the People's Solidarity. These refuges of regional self-administration could be preserved despite centralized forms of government […] and could be effective in providing social care in the best sense of humanistic values.'[43]

After German unity in October 1990, PS had to adapt to newly emerging care economies, and tried to assert its position in East Germany against structures then transplanted from the West. In the memory of one interviewee, the year 1989 therefore represented a strong disruption. He described the time 'before' as follows: 'We lived in such houses where at least one person [from PS] always lived so we did not have to worry. He [an older neighbour] was well looked after, everything was taken care of. At that time, it also played a role that one still knew where help was needed.'[44] The time 'afterwards' was associated with troublesome experiences for him. He explained that,

> In our neighbourhood, one woman could no longer be taken care of and no one paid attention to her, not on purpose, but because other problems were at play. And one thought, if I will not go [see for her], maybe someone else will come. You cannot offend those people, for what reason they did not return [to her]. But obviously, the structure, the order was disrupted [with the fall of communism].[45]

The rest of this chapter presents the example of my interviewee Ingrid in more detail, in order to illustrate how local socialist humanitarianism and post-socialist transformations manifested themselves in individual life stories.

Care and ageing as local experiences

The eighty-two–year-old Ingrid has led a local PS group for almost two decades. As a neighbourhood volunteer, she was already associated with PS during her youth and was therefore proposed as a successor when the previous leader of her local group passed away in the early 2000s. She called the district of her group the 'bird's vicinity' (*Vogelsiedlung*), because all the streets there were named after birds (which is not uncommon in Germany). Ingrid herself has lived there since childhood.

We had arranged to meet for an interview in her apartment, but when I arrived, she welcomed me at the front door. She led me around the building, where she showed me a small garden she tended to. While she commented on the various plants in her garden, now and then passers-by would approach us and Ingrid would greet all of them warmly. She informed them that she was having me for a visit first today, but that they would certainly be able to talk longer later on their evening rounds. After the people had moved on, Ingrid explained to me in which of the neighbouring houses they each lived. Pointing to the surrounding properties, she added where members from her PS group resided. She knew them all by heart with their

names and ages, and knew who lived on which floor or who had physical limitations and therefore could only manage the stairs leading outdoors on what she called 'good days'.

She took some nuts out of her jacket pocket and put them on a small plate. These were for the birds, which were surely waiting for her to bring them something, she explained. Ingrid then made a vague gesture that encircled the surroundings and asked whether I knew that the entire settlement had once been destroyed by fire in 1945. Whether the fire broke out in connection with the last acts of war, she did not specify. 'At that time', she said, 'there were only wooden huts'.[46] In order to build new houses and plan the gardens, the residents came together for the first 'solidarity action'. Later, they even created a playground for their children together. This initiative eventually led to the formation of a local PS group, to which many residents of the 'bird's vicinity' still belong today. Ingrid did not mention that the founding of PS as an organization at that time might also have encouraged the founding of her local group. She was perhaps too young (seven years old) to have any memories of her own, and only recounted the founding story as told to her by the earlier group leader. And this founding story unfolded in their neighbourhood.

'As a member of the PS', Ingrid continued, 'you helped when someone got sick. You would bring a bowl of soup. That was how a social togetherness developed among everyone who lived here'.[47] According to Ingrid, there were always people living there 'who took care of older people a bit'.[48] They arranged to share car rides, organized a 'chat round' or birthday parties in their own gardens, and helped each other paint the fences. For the older members of their group, PS volunteers also took on many everyday tasks, such as hanging out the laundry, or planned regular events (in Ingrid's words) 'to bring joy to them'. While walking me up the stairs to her apartment, Ingrid added: 'As it happens, the older people who laid the foundation for the PS work here, were active until the end of their lives.'[49]

We spent the next two hours in Ingrid's living room, she on the sofa, I on an armchair opposite. I learned what close contact she maintained with all the oldest members of her PS group, who (she kept emphasizing) had been members of the group much longer than herself. This apparently gave her a deep sense of connectedness with the 'bird's vicinity'. From all of the oldest members she remembered what they liked (e.g. Mozart balls) and enjoyed doing (e.g. painting), so that she could continue to treat them even when they had long since had to move out of their homes in the 'bird's vicinity' and into nursing homes.

At this point, Ingrid pointed out that the reasons for joining PS varied. For the members who (only) participated in the events of PS, it was the feeling that they were 'in good hands'. For the volunteers, it was to 'be

there for others' and 'that they experienced cordiality and were able to acquire knowledge'.[50] After Ingrid had taken over the leadership of her group, coordination and annual planning became her responsibility as well. She then proudly showed me one of the last annual reports she had written, which lay ready on a sideboard nearby. Other documents and photos that Ingrid had picked out for the meeting with me were spread out next to it.

One photo caught my eye: it showed a group of about fifteen older people standing on a lawn under a sunny, blue sky, some of them eating apples and smiling into the camera. When I asked Ingrid about the photo, she explained that this was taken on a joint walk in the mid-1990s. She began to name who was in the photo, paused briefly, and then pulled out a printed table from the pile of documents. Glancing back and forth between the photo and the table, she then proceeded to list the people by name, their birthdays and their addresses in the 'bird's vicinity'. I also looked at the table and was amazed to notice that even the dates of joining PS were noted. Some people joined in the early 1950s, others only a few years ago. Ingrid pointed to one woman in the photo and said, 'She lived in that house over there and used to make witty poems to praise the PS helpers. They were then read aloud during the chat round. Among us, for a very long time, it worked out well that people helped each other in the group.'[51] Continuing to look at the group photo, Ingrid then described that this applied to herself because she had to recover from two strokes in recent years. Suddenly looking up at me, she said, 'I think it is important to expand your circle of friends, not to shrink it in old age'. After a short pause, she added, 'Some people still say hello to me now. From the "bird's vicinity", some still have their gardens here. Here lay the origins of PS.'[52]

For the last part of our conversation, we went to Ingrid's kitchen, where she served us both small bowls of fruit salad as a snack. She told me about how important the PS group was for her right now, by which she meant her advanced age, not the time of the Covid 19 pandemic. She pointed to the kitchen walls. They were decorated with photos of her children and grandchildren, with whom she said she had good contact, but who were not always in the area. In parting half an hour later, I thanked Ingrid for her willingness to speak with me. She just waved me off saying that passing on her experiences with PS was 'her most important appointment of all'.[53]

When trying to trace forms of local humanitarianism, life stories such as Ingrid's are the most valuable sources. From her interview we get an insight into humanitarian principles in the realm of everyday life and can better understand how – so to speak, humanitarian – care practices were implemented from the ground.

Care giving and critical life events

The example of Ingrid reveals two important experiences in the lives of the neighbourhood volunteers. First, they took on numerous tasks in the daily lives of their older neighbours. Their care included not only the older persons but also their households, homes, families and gardens, and involved, for example, hanging out laundry, looking after children, helping the sick, feeding the birds or painting the fences. The willingness with which the volunteers took on such diverse tasks demonstrated a sense of universality in their volunteer commitment. From Ingrid's interview it must be concluded, though, that this sense of universality was confined to the close area of her neighbourhood.

Second, the neighbourhood volunteers presumed their help to be reciprocal at some point. Ingrid experienced how her roles in the neighbourhood changed over the course of her life, so that there were situations in which she not only offered help but also received help herself. Neighbourhood volunteering in PS was thus not just a service but a form of mutual help, provided out of the conviction that more can be achieved together. These two findings point to a close connection between care practices and age-specific needs in everyday life.

There were, however, life situations that differed from everyday routines in the 'bird's vicinity', be it (as mentioned by Ingrid) the fire that broke out in 1945, the post-1989 transformation that also affected PS as an organization or moments of individual crisis (e.g. Ingrid suffering from a stroke, or her neighbour losing the mobility to master the stairs). Despite her idea that everyone deserved help, Ingrid thus concluded that people in certain life situations were more urgently in need (i.e. temporarily more deserving of her help). The examples she gave in our interview were related to illness, old age or older people taken out of their homes (into nursing homes). For these cases she expressed a special attention and affectionate understanding. In our interview, Ingrid discussed life stages such as her childhood and adolescence, as well as her adult life, each of which has been associated with certain experiences (i.e. age related or experiences typical for the certain stages of life). The neighbourliness expressed in the 'bird's vicinity' was a central reference point for her in this. In her view, she and the other residents were only able to cope with critical moments in their lives because they had a supportive neighbourhood around them. She did not see herself in the role of a leader (as in the PS group) but as an equal part of the local community.

Neighbours in this community knew about each other's critical moments and supported each other accordingly. As a result, the care work of the neighbourhood volunteers in this local PS group went far beyond what PS

was officially assigned to do, namely care for older people. Rather, they contributed to an overall close contact in the neighbourhood. From this I conclude that the volunteers were mainly concerned with living together as a community, with empathy and solidarity. At the local level, they had agency and room for informal arrangements made 'at the garden fence', for self-organized action and decision-making. They were thus responding not (only) to the ideological prescriptions of the (socialist) system but to their shared values of caring. To some extent, even the organizational structures of PS receded into the background, because individuals kept close ties without them. I therefore suggest 'local humanitarianism' and 'self-organized care' as descriptions of this group. In my understanding, the term self-organization covers both 'formalized collective activities (e.g. within the framework of organizations) and self-organized actions of individual actors (so-called grassroots forms)',[54] and thus captures well how individuals and PS interacted on the ground.

I chose to present the story of Ingrid in this chapter because she stood out from most of my other interviewees. She never spoke of socialism explicitly and did not make any references to the GDR, even though her concept of humanity was shaped by an egalitarian rhetoric typical of the state socialist regime. From the absence of socialism in her narrative, I conclude that the socialist humanitarianism I described at the beginning had no practical function for Ingrid at the level of her neighbourhood. Social relations and attachments became more important than the politically desired egalitarian image of society (without contradicting it). In critical life situations, inhabitants of the 'bird's vicinity' accordingly did not turn to local authorities but to their neighbours and the local PS group. At the local level, members of PS thus established themselves as ideal problem solvers and caregivers.

At the same time, Ingrid's example even illuminates the special position neighbourhoods held in East German society. Ingrid spent her whole life in the same residential area and emphasized that 'the old people who laid the foundation for PS work here, were active until the end of their lives'.[55] At the time of our interview, everything looked as if she herself wanted to follow this path, that is, to grow old in the neighbourhood she had grown up in as a child, in which she had invested time and energy all her life, where she maintained her social contacts and imagined she would be well cared for in the coming years.

For those who experienced a system change as older adults, it is typical to stay in a place like this. After the fall of the Berlin Wall, about 1.4 million former GDR citizens migrated to West Germany, mainly in hope of significantly better employment prospects in the West German labour market. About 40 per cent of them were young adults between eighteen and thirty years old.[56] For older people, however, who had reached or were close to

retirement age at the time, this kind of migration did not make as much sense. Given her individual life story, it seems reasonable for Ingrid not to want to leave the place where she has spent her life, especially not in old age.

Philosopher Nel Noddings argued that in our caring relations, we draw on an 'ethical ideal',[57] namely on our memories of caring and being cared for: 'This is why […] childhood experience must be so closely guided in caring relations. Memories of being cared for and reflections on such care constitute the early material of the ideal.'[58] Accordingly, I tend to understand Ingrid's strong attachment to the 'bird's vicinity' partly in terms of her childhood experiences there.

Following the example of other local PS members, she decided to 'be active' in her neighbourhood (supposedly) until the end of her life. Being active is, of course, a narrative closely related to notions of productivity, usefulness and collectivity which Ingrid has been confronted with throughout her life in the GDR. However, ideas of active ageing and active participation in society continued to surround her in the post-socialist society of the 1990s that put particular emphasis on self-care and self-responsibility.[59] Her willingness to care for others developed along these lines over a long period of time. Following up on the philosopher Maurice Hamington, it should be noted, however, that (her) 'caring habits are not rote repetitions, but open-ended structures of responses to those encountered. Iterations of care help develop habits that can be applied in new circumstances, as no two opportunities to care present themselves in the same way.'[60]

This leads me back to the concept of 'vernacular humanitarianism' Čarna Brković proposed to describe responses 'to an emerging need that cannot be adequately addressed through conventional channels of help'.[61] Ingrid and her group always took action where existing care practices reached their limits, both in everyday life and during critical life events, assuming that they were only doing what was most humane. They did so regardless of political circumstances, but at the same time they absorbed the local effects of abrupt political or social changes through their care.

Conclusion

This chapter presented one local group of the East German PS as an example for local humanitarianism. Local groups of PS provided self-organized care for older people in their neighbourhoods, both in the GDR and in post-socialist East Germany. Shared values of solidarity, togetherness, community and not least humanness largely stimulated participation in PS

during the socialist period, which is why I first considered it as an example of what I called socialist humanitarianism (i.e. a combination of socialist ideology with humanitarian principles). Furthermore, I showed that care work provided by PS was based on neighbourhood volunteering. On the level of their neighbourhood, people knew each other and established various practices of mutual aid, in order to help each other in everyday life or during critical life events. The local PS group that I showcased partly initiated, and partly structured, these practices.

In contrast to existing concepts of vernacular humanitarianism, or grassroots humanitarianism, I found that the care giving of PS did not remain an ad hoc response (though, of course, arrangements were made 'over the garden fence') but was well organized on the ground. Since the care needs of older people were highly individual and often needed daily attention, it was initially assumed that caregivers were either motivated personally or (only) fulfilling expectations of the (socialist) system, and that they were even unwillingly on-site when tending to them. The case of one of my interviewees and her local group of PS in this chapter revealed that shared humanitarian ideals did indeed also play a role here. Notions of solidarity, togetherness and community motivated an often long-term commitment, even to such an extent that individuals devoted large parts of their lives to it. Experiences of caring and being cared for during childhood, as well as living in the same neighbourhood, turned out to strengthen the readiness to engage in care for older neighbours considerably.

Neighbourhood volunteering for older people is not an East German phenomenon but can be observed all over (East Central) Europe in the twentieth century.[62] PS, as introduced in this chapter, provides only a glimpse of care as a local humanitarian practice in the East German case. The needs of older people in late socialist East Germany were at the margins of institutional or family care. At the same time, their care was similarly precarious, affected the same mass of people and was similarly ideologically laden as were actions of international humanitarian relief at the time. Focusing on similar examples and their transformation over time will enrich our understanding of care for older people in different societies (e.g. those transforming from socialism to post-socialism) and shed light on the question of how broad 'universality' as a humanitarian principle was construed locally, to whom it extended and whether 'universal' translated to global.

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Part II

National humanitarianism

5

The Czechoslovak Red Cross and refugee children from Greece and North Korea

Nikola Tohma

The Red Cross calls children together,
small and bigger,
of all nations, of different complexions
and of all different languages.

With children from all over the world,
we want to cultivate the belief
that life can be lived in calm,
in joy and in peace.

With children from all over the world,
we want to take care of health
so that everyone can live in happiness –
and hold the nation dear.[1]

Introduction

Explaining the historical role of children as 'quintessential' victims of the war but also 'the biological and political future of national communities', American historian Tara Zahra conceived the upswing in humanitarian initiatives on behalf of orphaned and displaced children in Europe in the aftermath of the Second World War as directly linked to the 'reestablishment of peace and stability [… and] shap[ing] postwar ideas about the very nature of the family, democracy, and human rights in the shadows of Nazism and Communism'.[2] Disintegrated under the Nazi occupation (1938–45), Czechoslovakia as part of the wider region of East Central Europe was deeply affected by population displacement caused by the war and the Holocaust, and also instigated further mass transfers through the violent postwar expulsion of its domestic German population.[3] Yet, as Zahra affirms, '[t]he rise of humanitarian activism around children and of ethnic cleansing […] were ultimately flip sides of the same coin', where

children stood at the core of various nation-building projects.[4] Thus, the postwar reconstruction of Czechoslovakia principally relied on successful humanitarian assistance leading to the restoration of the Czechoslovak population through processes of repatriation, family reunification and provision of care for orphaned and abandoned children while following ethnic principles.

Central to this chapter, the Czechoslovak Red Cross (*Československý červený kříž*, ČSČK) assisted with these postwar national efforts through its search service, making use of its international ties and humanitarian know-how to provide medical and material aid to those in need. Founded in 1919, the ČSČK, similarly to other national Red Cross organizations, acted throughout the interwar period in close collaboration with the state and its domestic and international politics, often serving state-building purposes.[5] Reinstated after its years in exile (1940–5), the ČSČK retained its position as a prime humanitarian actor and a member organization of the League of Red Cross Societies (LRCS) even after the takeover of power by the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (*Komunistická strana Československa*, KSČ) in February 1948. Newly integrated into the National Front, a single body uniting all public associations and instrumentalized by the KSČ to solidify its power, the ČSČK became subordinated to the Czechoslovak government, thus limiting its freedom of operation.[6] Unlike other examples of independent activism that were forced underground under state socialism,[7] the ČSČK officially managed to preserve, in cooperation with the communist state, the continuity of its previous activities.

Moving away from the ČSČK's postwar assistance to displaced persons, this chapter investigates its role in the provision of care to the refugees from the Greek Civil War (1946–9) and Korean War (1950–3), to children and youth in particular, whose welcoming and support as an expression of internationalist solidarity complied with the political interests of the ruling KSČ. For most of the socialist era, from 1952 to 1989, the ČSČK's Social Department (Sociální odbor Československého červeného kříže, SO ČSČK) was responsible for maintaining the administrative and social welfare agenda for adult foreign nationals and stateless individuals with temporary residence in the Czechoslovak territory. Being mostly pro-communist refugees from war zones and political persecution, they qualified for a residency and a work permit as well as free education, healthcare and social support.[8] As an exception, the SO ČSČK as a top-level coordination body was in charge of refugee childcare between 1952 and 1954, organized in a dozen children's homes across the country. At that point, children from Greece and North Korea were the largest groups of child refugees (also representing the most significant refugee

communities), around whom the entire system of refugee care evolved.[9] Additionally, the ČSČK only took care of much less numerous Spanish and Italian children, whose parents sought refuge in Czechoslovakia for political reasons.[10] The solely temporal assignment of refugee childcare to the ČSČK's authority, contrasting with its long-term dealing with its adult charges, raises questions regarding the nature of the ČSČK's engagement within the state's institutional mechanisms. What were the specificities and challenges of the early Cold War Czechoslovak humanitarian aid for refugee children, concerning its aims, mobilization mechanisms, policy responses and choice of personnel, and how did the SO ČSČK contribute to these efforts? Moreover, what can the presented case study tell us about the political nature of humanitarian work and the relations between nation-states and humanitarian actors at that time?

The chapter sets off by framing this Czechoslovak endeavour as an example of *socialist humanitarianism*, which is a term previously employed by the American sociocultural anthropologist Christina Schwenkel in the context of the expert assistance provided by the GDR in Vietnam.[11] In this text, I use it to determine a type of aid by state socialist countries to third parties during the Cold War, which combined humanitarian values with socialist principles in the pursuit of social justice and equality of all humans. Their self-perception as *socialist humanitarians* was derived from their understanding of human rights, described by the Canadian historian Ned Richardson-Little as 'a higher kind of human rights that allowed for real participation in all forms of political and economic life and achieved true equality across the class, race and gender lines', promising liberation from capitalist exploitation, imperialism and war.[12] For that matter, Maren Hachmeister as an expert on the relationships between the national Red Cross societies and state socialist regimes in Czechoslovakia and Poland emphasized that, in many ways, their social agendas overlapped, finding common ground in terms of establishing even access to health and social care based on the principle of general solidarity.[13]

While the history of the Red Cross movement has so far been narrated from a predominantly West-centred perspective,[14] recent studies have gradually started delving into its (dis)connections across the Iron Curtain and transformations under the influence of communist regimes.[15] In particular, this chapter engages with Hachmeister's analysis, which characterized the position of the Polish and Czechoslovak Red Cross societies with regard to the authoritarian nation-states as a relationship of mutual interdependence rather than straightforward state interventionism. Pointing to their semi-official organizational structures, she further explained how their local, informal grassroots activities coexisted alongside their nationwide, highly institutionalized networks and sustained considerable autonomy.[16]

Despite the communist transformation, the ČSČK indeed preserved a partial continuity from its pre-1948 tradition, especially in terms of know-how, infrastructure and caring personnel, all of which represented a valuable resource at the hand of the socialist state, with its institutions and policies under construction. Yet, as I also argue, the politically closely controlled dealing of the SO ČSČK with the agenda of political refugees and their children further compromised the formally impartial character of the organization.

This chapter thus tracks the Czechoslovak humanitarian campaign from the early, outwardly 'grassroots', but very much state-initiated and state-driven, actions to its eventual centralization under the authority of the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education. During these developments, the ČSČK first assumed the position of a mere provider of a limited range of humanitarian services, only to overtake the aid administration once the previous state-sponsored design failed. Turned into an agency under the authority of the Ministry of Education, the ČSČK helped improve the quality of the provided care but, after a transitional period, lost these competencies in favour of growing state centralization. While responding to the refugees' day-by-day needs, the SO ČSČK actively contributed to the consolidation of Czechoslovak communism by discursively and practically seeking to duplicate communists' visions of togetherness between comrades. Raising children, in this sense, respected these official socialist principles, happening at the behest of the KSČ, the Communist Party of Greece (*Kommounistiko Komma Elladas*, KKE) and the Workers' Party of Korea, respectively. Their political agendas thus permeated with the humanitarian agenda of the SO ČSČK.

Finally, this case study adds to a broader discussion on the role of humanitarianism in East Central Europe, not limited to the early Cold War. It points to the strong institutional background of the Czechoslovak system of refugee aid, resulting in the fast restoration of humanitarian activities in the postwar years and their continuation under changed political conditions. Putting aside their ideological background, the initiatives to aid refugee children were characterized by an appeal to provide modern and highly professional care – an element common to the operation of the ČSČK but also the social and educational policies of the communist state. Furthermore, humanitarian workers joined these efforts with a great sense of commitment, manifesting in the deployment of substantial resources, including voluntary work. Rather than a mere example of politically biased (meaning pro-communist) humanitarian aid, it appears both as a corrective to the unambiguous image of the state socialist 'East' as anti-human(itarian), and thus failing to provide a secure shelter to those in need, and as an alternative to the no less prejudiced (meaning anti-communist)

humanitarianism of the 'West' of the 1950s.[17] Last but not least, Cold War humanitarianism also became a tool of international power competition, manifesting the geopolitical, imperialist and civilizing ambitions of state actors, thus inscribing itself into their state-building processes.

Refugee children from Greece and North Korea in the international Cold War context

The local help provided to pro-communist refugees in socialist Czechoslovakia was inherently informed by the international context of the early Cold War. The Greek Civil War and Korean War belonged to the major military clashes of the late 1940s and early 1950s, characterized by US and Soviet interventionism as the leaders of the mainly bipolar geopolitical system. The two civil conflicts had an extremely damaging effect on the local population, leaving behind an immense number of military and civilian casualties, causing great material destruction and forcing mass population displacement.[18] Both conflicts also led to the formation of large diasporas in the West and the East, which internalized these domestic political ruptures and transmitted them abroad. International humanitarian missions operated in both countries, addressing the dismal situation of the respective populations by providing immediate relief: the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) in Greece until 1947 and the United Nations Korean Reconstruction Agency in post-1953 South Korea.[19]

US political, economic and military support to post-civil war Greece and North Korea became less an instrument of politically impartial aid, and rather served to foster allegiances and deepen the ties between these countries and the West through economic development and political stability.[20] Analogically, the humanitarian endeavour of the Eastern Bloc happened in a highly polarized context, becoming a matter of political and ideological contest. This trend had been set already during the humanitarian campaign on behalf of children affected by the Spanish Civil War (1936–9), who found refuge both in communist and non-communist countries, raising mutual accusations of indoctrination and denationalization.[21] In the Greek case, the decision made by the KKE to evacuate children from the war-ridden areas, presented as an act of *rescue*, was interpreted by the US-backed Greek monarchy as a *kidnapping*, leading to an international outcry over an alleged plan by the Eastern Bloc to inculcate children with communist values. Yet the comparable move by Athens to isolate and indoctrinate them in children's homes known as the Queen's camps earned criticism in the East.[22]

Similarly controversial was the topic of international adoptions, which also concerned orphans from Greece and South Korea. Historian Gonda Van Steen investigated the cases of more than 3,000 Greek children whose adoption in the US was done for political, and later mainly economic and social, reasons. Inquiring whether they represented 'humanitarian rescue or *kid pro quo*', she pointed out the instrumentalization of adoptions in the complex Cold War political relations between the patronizing US and the willingly cooperating Greece.[23] The adoptions of South Korean children, interpreted in a polarized manner either as an anti-racist act of humanitarianism or as a symptom of Western neocolonialism, were happening on a much larger scale: approximately 150,000 orphans and abandoned children were adopted between 1953 and 2001, out of them about two-thirds in the US.[24]

In contrast, the Eastern Bloc countries prioritized state-controlled institutional care over foster care. Perceived as more suitable for socialist education, children's homes were also more convenient for the careful maintaining of the children's national identity, which would facilitate their easier repatriation.[25] North Koreans as orphans of fallen 'national heroes' were provided temporary residence for receiving medical treatment care and education as 'just another form of fraternal assistance' towards the reconstruction and industrialization of North Korea (Figure 5.1).[26] The Czechoslovak communist government of Antonín Zápotocký (1948–53) described the joint humanitarian response of the Eastern Bloc as 'urgent', 'natural' and 'requiring the solidarity of all peaceful and democratic nations',[27] in response to the 'American imperialism', 'a war of extermination', 'atrocity' and 'severe hardship […] of the brave Korean people'.[28] Analogically, the refugee children from Greece were earlier offered protection from the 'Greek monarcho-fascists' and 'Western imperialists'.[29] Foreign policy and relationships between communist states also dictated the duration of the provided support: while Greek refugees were often forced to stay in the Eastern Bloc countries for years and even decades, expecting the improvement of the hostile political climate in Greece, the stay of North Koreans was abruptly interrupted by the 1961 Sino-Soviet split.[30]

Refugee assistance in domestic conditions was complementary to the broader humanitarian and development aid that the Eastern Bloc countries provided, mostly in the 'Third World'. Similar to the West, 'Eastern' humanitarianism often entailed elements of geopolitical strategizing, imperialism and a civilizing mission, only in this case it was based on socialist internationalism and equal access to social rights rather than the Western concept of democracy and human rights.[31] Following Soviet-dominated bloc-wide policies, enforced through the countries' membership

Figure 5.1 The Czechoslovak Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Viliam Široký took part in the New Year's celebration at the children's home for Korean children in Lázně Houšťka near Stará Boleslav (1952)

Source: Photo © ČTK/Kocian František, all rights reserved.

in the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance,[32] individual communist countries also used humanitarianism as a tool for fulfilling the particularist foreign political ambitions of their national governments. Thus, Czechoslovakia dispatched financial, material and expert aid to Greek and North Korean communists during the military conflicts and in their aftermath,[33] and, especially in the 1970s and the 1980s, utilized humanitarianism and development support for deepening ties with countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America.[34]

The Czechoslovak Red Cross and the mass mobilization of refugee aid

Defined by the 1953 statutes as 'a voluntary people's health organization', the ČSČK was instrumental in these Czechoslovak endeavours, becoming the most visible humanitarian actor involved in the aid campaign on behalf of refugee children.[35] Despite the politicized context and its complete financial dependency on the state, the organization attempted to preserve, formally at least, its apolitical and self-governing character.[36] As a member organization of the LRCS, the ČSČK continued participating in its general assemblies as well as reporting, at least to a limited degree, on its activities. The character and extent of aid that the ČSČK provided to Greek children became the subject of a respectful, yet cautiously evasive meeting with the representative of the LRCS Secretariat Colonel Léo de Meyer in Prague in March 1949, concerning whether the ČSČK could continue acting impartially in the changed political conditions.[37] Appointed as a general delegate by the LRCS to inspect, apart from Czechoslovakia, the refugee situation in Yugoslavia, Romania, Hungary and Poland, de Meyer then supervised several operations for the repatriation of Greek children starting from 1950 onwards. For his contribution, he received a high honour from the Greek King Paul I, an adversary to the exiled Greek communists.[38] It needs to be said that the ČSČK's status – regulated by law no. 60/1952 – did not contravene the Czechoslovak obligations under the Geneva Conventions. Yet, now subordinated to the Ministry of Health and emerging as an agent of *socialist humanitarianism*, the ČSČK was forced to suppress its previous identity as a member of the Red Cross movement.[39] This tendency towards greater ideological connection with the communist state intensified in its 1960 statutes, specifically claiming allegiance to the official policies of the KSČ and determining the organization's task to educate its members towards socialism.[40]

Outside of these legal documents, the ČSČK adopted the language of the socialist regime much earlier, emphasizing its role in 'building our unified health service, but also in building a socialist society in our country and in the struggle to preserve peace, because without healthy and physically fit people you cannot build socialism and you cannot defend peace', to quote the chair of the Central Committee of the ČSČK, Eduard Tůma (1952–6).[41] In his 1955 speech, Tůma demonstrated the ČSČK's political alignment with the pro-Soviet orientation of Czechoslovakia and denounced imperialism and the US politics related to the divided Korea.[42] The ČSČK preserved its ties with other national branches of the Red Cross abroad; this was done most notably, however, with branches inside the Eastern Bloc. Their cooperation, for instance, greatly contributed to the reunification

of families of refugees dispersed in various communist countries.[43] Local Red Cross organizations also communicated with kindred organizations from behind the Iron Curtain, such as the London-based League for Democracy in Greece, negotiating supplies of humanitarian aid for Greek and Macedonian refugees.[44]

In the early stages (1948–50), the ČSČK had limited responsibilities concerning child refugee care. Its voluntary nurses provided initial medical checks and refreshments, boarding the trains that carried refugees from their home countries and escorting them from the Czechoslovak state border to reception facilities for further aid and quarantine. There, they helped with the arrangement of basic healthcare and hygiene. In Mikulov alone, as one of three reception centres for Greek refugees and dominantly used for children, 183 voluntary nurses were employed between April to June 1948 to take care of 1,936 transiting children (Figure 5.2).[45] Taking turns on a weekly basis,[46] these female caretakers occasionally received small financial rewards depending on their personal merits and were compensated for their travel and other necessary expenses related to their service.[47] Male medics formed a smaller share of the voluntary personnel in the reception centre: about one-tenth in June 1948.[48] Assuming the much-appreciated double role of head nurse and Czech–Greek interpreter, Marie Kasperová as an example of a humanitarian worker became indispensable in coordinating the ČSČK's care for so many refugee children on the ground. Educated in Vienna as a private educator and later employed by a wealthy family in Greece, Kasperová as the wife of a German citizen opted for employment at the ČSČK as she was seeking to restore her Czechoslovak citizenship in the postwar years.[49]

Another local voluntary nurse, Anna Kučerová, commented on the state of the arriving children for the English-language magazine *Czechoslovak Life*: 'They were starved and ragged and filthy. They were infected with every sort of disease […] their bodies were scaly and covered with sores, parasites were imbedded under their skin.'[50] Published for promotion purposes, the article was accompanied by photographs illustrating the new life of now clean and neatly dressed children, preoccupied with regular medical checks, joint eating, education and free-time activities.[51] Having endured wartime hardship and a particularly long journey,[52] many children were suffering from serious infectious diseases, such as malaria, mumps, measles, scarlet fever and sometimes even leprosy. They were malnourished and affected by rickets, and due to their frailty they were susceptible to other illnesses.[53] The ČSČK alone could not fully meet all their medical needs, especially in cases that demanded hospitalization. Both reception camps and children's homes were frequently attended by general practitioners. For a speedier recovery, children also tended to be temporarily placed in sanatoria, some of them run by the ČSČK.

Figure 5.2 Nurses of the Czechoslovak Red Cross photographed for a press article while distributing clothes to child refugees from Greece in the Mikulov reception center (1948)

Source: Photo © ČTK/Novák Rostislav, all rights reserved.

Apart from the voluntary nurses of the ČSČK, ordinary women responded to calls on the radio seeking additional caring personnel, especially within the same region. Having two years of experience as a private educator, Marie Panáčková from Stavěšice near Kyjov offered her service in a letter to the director of the Mikulov camp, stating that: 'I am very busy at home, but I can do anything for children.'[54] While such applicants were not directly affiliated with the ČSČK, they had often previously taken part in nursing courses that the ČSČK organized for the public, which further reasserts the significance of the organization's long-term social impact.[55] Furthermore, the boundary between voluntary service and permanent

employment was fluid, as the most appreciated caring personnel often accepted regular jobs in refugee children's homes as a continuation of their deployment in the reception centres. Such was the case for Kasperová, who agreed to be relocated to a home in Uničov. At the same time, hundreds of voluntary nurses of the ČSČK continued helping out in these facilities as well, depending on the current need, and stayed for an extended period of several weeks to a month.[56] The ČSČK further supported these homes logistically during the redistribution of children and supplied them with medical materials.[57]

Refugee aid had the highest priority not only for the ruling KSČ but also for the entire Eastern Bloc, characterized by the intensive engagement of both the main party organs and state ministries in its organization and administration. The International Department of the KSČ's Central Committee (CC KSČ) became the uppermost coordinating body that recognized the refugees as deserving of humanitarian aid and negotiated their stay bilaterally as well as transnationally with the involved national communist parties. The refugee aid permeated the agenda of multiple ministries as it concerned foreign and interior affairs, state finances, healthcare, education, labour and social welfare. Before the SO ČSČK took over the agenda of social integration and support of adult refugees in January 1952, this responsibility relied on a specialized department of the Ministry of Labour and Social Care called 'Greek Action'.[58] Often understood as a label for the entire aid campaign, the term was probably inspired by the interwar Czechoslovak 'Russian Aid Action' (Ruská pomocná akce), helping refugees from Soviet Russia and Ukraine. Moreover, it was once again replicated as 'Action K' (Akce K) on behalf of North Korean refugees.[59]

Characteristic of this early stage *socialist humanitarianism*, and despite the described effective distribution of tasks at the top level, the communist state attempted to outsource the aid to the earlier arriving child refugees from Greece to a formally non-governmental organization, the Czechoslovak-Greek Society (*Československo-řecká společnost*). The Ministry of Information, as an important instrument of state propaganda and dominated by the KSČ even before the 1948 takeover, created it in March 1946 at the incentive of Dr Miloslava Vieweghová, a former judge and a Greek speaker, who worked at the ministry as the head of the Greek Section. Formally passing responsibility for refugees on to the society enabled the KSČ to sustain firm control over the refugee aid and, at the same time, present their hosting in Czechoslovakia as an issue of public interest and a will of the people.[60] That was plentifully manifested through the mass mobilization of members of professional and interest organizations, united within the National Front and including the ČSČK, and celebrated in media demonstrations of political support.[61] Their aim was to build the legitimacy

of the emerging dictatorship as well as to counter the above-described Western criticism regarding the Moscow-sponsored evacuation of refugee children from their homeland, investigated in the Greek case by the United Nations Special Committee on the Balkans.[62]

The founding meeting of the Czechoslovak-Greek Society at the Ministry of Information was attended by state officials and representatives of mass organizations, such as the Central Council of Trade Unions, Council of Czechoslovak Women and the Czechoslovak Youth Union (Československý svaz mládeže, ČSM), with expertise in South-East Europe or culture, and Czechoslovak academia ranging from classical archaeology to Greek philology. Its steering committee, elected in October in the Municipal House in Prague, was predominantly composed of personalities with a communist background.[63] While the society's proclaimed aim was to organize public events on Greek culture and history, it mainly lobbied for Greek communists, mobilized the population against the Greek government and the US as its ally, and organized fundraising among citizens, in workplaces and among members of mass organizations, to provide for the financial and material resources that postwar Czechoslovakia lacked.[64] Specifically, the ČSČK was instrumental in gathering clothes, hygienic products and other necessities from the public and organizing their distribution.[65] It also engaged its Youth Organization (Dorost ČSČK) based in Czechoslovak schools, including the girls' secondary school in Šumperk, whose students accompanied their donation with a letter saying that '[w]e are happy that we can at least alleviate a little of the suffering of the innocent victims of war. May Greek children find a second home here!'[66]

Following the transformation of society in April 1948 from a communist interest organization to an agency directly taking care of refugees, the agenda was assigned to its newly established Social Committee, led by an employee of the Ministry of Labour and Social Care, Václav Klabík. The head of the Department of Health and Social Welfare of the ČSČK and future ČSČK's vice-president, Pavla Kopřivová (later responsible on behalf of the ČSČK for the overall agenda of refugee children, including those from North Korea), was at this point elected as a member of the steering committee.[67] Personal connections between the KSČ, the state institutions, the Czechoslovak-Greek Society and the ČSČK thus testify to the politicized character of the humanitarian efforts. Until its dissolution in December 1951, the society stood at the centre of all communication between the ministries, state agencies, local administration, mass organizations (including the ČSČK) and the individual facilities of institutional childcare, keeping track of the entire process from the arrival of children until their engagement in education.[68]

In contrast, the Society for Cultural and Economic Relations with the Orient, which in parallel emerged as an interest organization lobbying for North Korea, was never involved in the provision of refugee care. Organizing public meetings and information campaigns, it initiated in July 1950 the establishment of the Committee for Aid to Korean Women and Children as part of the Central Council of Trade Unions at the request of the Ministry of Information, aiming to collect funds for medicine.[69] Represented by a Koreanist, Alois Pultr, and a Sinologist and a Japanologist, Jaroslav Průšek, the organization also attempted to help the humanitarians overcome the language barrier between them and the Korean-speaking refugees. All they could do, however, was to provide several students with a meagre knowledge of the language to spend their summer break of 1952 in the children's homes. Thanks to these first ever encounters with native speakers, the students could paradoxically use them as an opportunity to improve their competencies.[70] The arrival of refugees from Greece and North Korea served as an incentive for the development of Koreanology and modern Greek philology.[71]

The Society for Cultural and Economic Relations with the Orient never adopted the functions of its 'Greek' counterpart, possibly because the Czechoslovak-Greek Society was heavily criticized by the state authorities for having failed to ensure sufficient accommodation, hygiene and care in the dozens of children's homes that it administered. Their discontent targeted the poor quality of education, low discipline and staff with unsatisfactory professional and political backgrounds.[72] Children were initially taught by untrained Greek tutors and, although in 1949 the Ministry of Education designed a special education programme and assigned Czech teachers, until April 1951 its officials did not consistently supervise the schooling.[73] Eventually, children from Greece were integrated into primary schools as of 1 September 1951 and, from the school year 1952–3, into schools of all levels.[74] Korean children began to study in Czechoslovak schools as soon as they learned basic Czech, with the North Korean embassy pressuring their speedy education to 'technical cadres for the reconstruction of Korea'.[75]

The dissolution of the Czechoslovak-Greek Society was probably prompted by the realization that refugees from Greece might stay in Czechoslovakia longer than expected, if not permanently. This step opened the way for the SO ČSČK to assume responsibility for their upbringing as well as the care for North Korean newcomers, resulting from the different temporality of the latter humanitarian action. Entrusting child refugees to the SO ČSČK also meant underlining their 'special' status as the offspring of deserving political refugees and partisans and, therefore, a presumably greater need to educate them politically and create suitable conditions given their different cultural backgrounds and specific life situations.[76] The ČSČK

was perceived as competent for this task given the professional expertise and experience of its humanitarian workers and its institutional infrastructure.

The Czechoslovak Red Cross and the centralization of aid

For the next three years, the SO ČSČK operated twelve facilities with about 2,230 Greek and Macedonian children and seven facilities hosting 901 North Korean children.[77] The department supervised the entire process, from setting up their premises, construction amendments and procuring of necessary equipment to hiring managerial, nursing and maintenance personnel. Compared to the early stage, when aid relied on voluntary labour, the staff assigned to children's homes were not affiliated with the ČSČK but featured as employees of the individual facilities. As part of the recruitment procedure, they underwent a standard political background check. The employees of the SO ČSČK also looked after the foreign instructors who accompanied child refugees from their homeland and continued living with them in these facilities. During the first year, the SO ČSČK was responsible for providing full material support, such as clothes, teaching aids and pocket money, but the Ministry of Education took over the duty in 1953.[78] Parallel to refugee childcare, the SO ČSČK administered the agenda of adult refugees, consisting of keeping their register, providing medical care, arranging for their accommodation and employment, and supervising family agendas. The last of these intersected with the agendas of refugee children, including the reunification of divided families and the placement of children (even if with families) in institutional care.[79]

From the perspective of organizational structure, the ČSČK was a separate agency under the authority of the Ministry of Health that approved its budget, subsidized by the state and from public fundraising.[80] Represented by the ČSČK's Vice-President Kopřivová in joint meetings with ministerial representatives, the SO ČSČK conducted its work confidently and as an equal partner, rather than a subordinated body, was well informed and proposed independent solutions.[81] Fifty-two out of ninety employees organized specifically aid for child refugees.[82] The department also incorporated the Czechoslovak branch of the Committee for Child Aid (*Epitropi Voithia sto Pedi*, EVOP), an organization that emerged in 1948 within the KKE to ensure that, across the Eastern Bloc, refugee children would be raised in facilities of institutional care (and not adopted by families) and given suitable education to preserve their national identity and influence them politically. Translated into practice, the latter requirement mostly concerned the study of mother tongues and lectures on national history, compliant with the Marxist-Leninist interpretation. The EVOP

was thus mainly designing curricula and securing educational materials.[83] Its presence inside the SO ČSČK meant that Czechoslovak humanitarians worked together with Greek refugees as their colleagues, among them the head of EVOP and lifelong teacher Lysimachos Papadopoulos, who reflected on his experience in his two books, published bilingually in Greek and Czech.[84] The following excerpt from a meeting at the SO ČSČK, which evaluated their mutual cooperation from the rather patronizing and unempathetic Czechoslovak perspective, suggests that the position of Greeks in the department was not perceived as equally contributive:

> The Greek comrades are conscious and politically mature and have quite considerable knowledge. They work well in collectives and are good-hearted, and they try to carry out their tasks dutifully. Their weakness, however, is their little proficiency in Czech and […] their lack of study. It often takes too long to convince them of the correctness of our solution. They are overburdened with letters from the field and frequently get carried away by their emotions when dealing with a matter.[85]

The SO ČSČK was headed by Ladislav Morávek, who joined it from his previous position as the chief of the Section of Migration at the International Department of the CC KSČ. The International Department had been shattered by the dismissal of its head, Bedřich Geminder, in September 1951. Geminder, who played a central role in coordinating the arrival and settlement of refugees from Greece, received the death penalty in an anti-semitic show trial with the general secretary of the KSČ, Rudolf Slánský, and was executed in December 1952. The appointment of Morávek during this political upheaval as the Head of the SO ČSČK suggests that, being a loyal cadre, he was selected to ensure political stability. Furthermore, the Executive Committee of the SO ČSČK was headed by Anna Baramová, who in parallel, as Geminder's successor, headed the International Department of the CC KSČ.[86] The language of political purges was also evident from some of the internal documents of the SO ČSČK, accusing the previous organization of humanitarian aid of 'saboteur activities',[87] and labelling several unspecified caretakers as 'enemies of the regime of people's democracy'.[88]

To enforce their professional ambitions against the backdrop of the underlying political pressures, employees of the SO ČSČK also criticized the past administration of children's homes by the Czechoslovak-Greek Society, describing them as places that only offered food and a sleepover.[89] The ČSČK changed the local practice by retraining or exchanging a significant part of the personnel in children's homes to meet presumably stricter professional and political criteria.[90] Its workers also increased pressure on the ideological education of refugee children, mixed with the traditional education programmes of the Red Cross, involving them in

the socialist 'Pioneer' children's organization, organizing competitions in 'discipline, order, and cleanliness', and opening hobby clubs. Establishing patronage of children's homes by industrial plants, public institutions such as hospitals and security forces, and sustaining communication with homes of Czechoslovak children, the ČSČK aimed to minimize the existing isolation of these facilities from the public.[91] Refugee children were engaged in voluntary work, especially during harvesting, and joined the celebrations of socialist public holidays. Like children from Greece, who were earlier utilized by the regime to perform traditional dances during fundraising campaigns,[92] North Korean children toured Czechoslovak cities with a programme in support of the 'fighting Korea'.[93]

The Ministry of Education, however, soon subjected the SO ČSČK to a critique similar to that the Czechoslovak-Greek Society had faced before it, and initiated yet another reorganization of refugee childcare. As of 1 January 1955, the responsibility for education, schooling and material provision of children older than three years was in its entirety transferred to the Ministry of Education, while the Ministry of Health was authorized to care for infants below this age. The reorganization concerned all refugee children's facilities and their employees, as well as the now reduced SO ČSČK, whose employees merged with the new organizational structure.[94] The SO ČSČK was reproached for maintaining the refugee children in 'an exceptional regime' and keeping especially the Korean children in isolation from Czechoslovak children, as they were taught in separate classes.[95] The Ministry of Education framed the situation as a violation of socialist principles, warning against the risk of 'raising the children with a sense of their social exclusivity'.[96] Moreover, the ministry claimed that caretakers and instructors employed by the SO ČSČK were insufficiently pedagogically trained and found deficiencies in the social behaviour and hygiene of children. Finally, it criticized the fragmentation of the system of care and proposed the decentralization of material supplies by focusing on local resources and the unification of the personnel agenda.[97]

Refugee children's homes became part of a larger structure of the Administration of Special Children's Facilities, an agency incorporated into the structure of the Ministry of Education. While the Ministry of Education praised the increased quality of the pedagogical personnel and the reduced costs, it fell short of the promised decentralization of care and better integration of refugee children in the socialist society.[98] The new system reduced the cooperation between the children's homes and the local administration, including its education committees, and instead prioritized the role of the North Korean embassy and the Greek communist representatives, whom the Czechoslovak authorities addressed with various educational, behavioural and personal issues of children.[99] At this point, the care for 901

Korean children was ensured by 153 employees, out of whom forty-seven were instructors; while 345 employees (109 instructors) looked after 2,140 children from Greece. The number of facilities remained unchanged.[100]

Refugee children also continued to be treated as a separate group, especially given the existing language barriers. For that reason, the ratio of instructors was higher than in children's homes for Czechoslovak children: 15:1 in facilities for schoolchildren and 8:1 for preschoolers. This principle was, however, already being followed by the SO ČSČK.[101] The ministry also recognized some of the specific constraints in their education. Refugee children mostly studied in three languages – Czech, Russian, and either Greek or Korean – whereas Macedonian children had to learn both Greek and Macedonian, which resulted in them becoming overloaded. The Ministry of Health also acknowledged that child refugees needed special treatment, especially in healthcare, given the war trauma and diseases untypical for the Czechoslovak environment.[102] Thus, eventually, the state administration absorbed the system of aid to refugee children as previously outlined by the SO ČSČK, proving most of its criticism as unfounded and instrumental to the general tendency of the KSČ to increase the centralizing control over public matters of such political importance.

Conclusion

With children placed at the centre of public interest, the ČSČK assisted with the postwar Czechoslovak nation-building and state-building processes, contributing to the reconstruction of the national community and improving its well-being. The organization continued fulfilling its social role in post-1948 state socialism, although it modified its identity and general objectives to function as an agent of *socialist humanitarianism*. In doing so, it participated in the building of a socialist society, oriented at social justice and solidarity with those suffering from 'capitalist exploitation' and 'imperialist wars'. State-sponsored aid to pro-communist refugees and their children at best illustrated this new humanitarian orientation, creating new bonds within the emerging domestic political community and across the Eastern Bloc.

The presented analysis tracked the evolution of the system of aid to child refugees from Greece and North Korea from its improvised beginnings, characterized by the KSČ-instigated mass mobilization of support and voluntary work. At that point, the ČSČK acted as a fundraiser and a provider of medical and social care, with its vast humanitarian infrastructure, human and material resources, and previous experience in responding to similar crises on the ground. As the refugee children were

forced to stay over an extended period of time, and their needs were becoming more complex, the ČSČK as a separate agency of the Ministry of Education assumed responsibility for raising them in facilities of institutional care.

German historian Maren Hachmeister pointed out that the ČSČK – same as other national Red Cross societies in the Eastern Bloc – had to cope with state penetration as a necessary precondition for its functioning, being subject to firm political control.[103] Being involved in refugee childcare, with all the political significance this humanitarian endeavour was given by the ruling KSČ, further increased the pressure on the organization. In practice, it translated into the establishment of the SO ČSČK as the main coordination body, personally tied to the party organs, and into a greater emphasis on the political profiles of the caring personnel on the ground.

The following centralization of refugee childcare and education at the level of respective ministries was, after all, also a primary objective of the KSČ in the case of the Czechoslovak children, through the general institutionalization of care and the creation of a single association organizing youth and children: the ČSM and its Pioneer Organization. Even the widely popular Youth Organization of the ČSČK was dissolved as an independent body, being subordinated to the ČSM in 1951.[104] The decision on centralization of care also put an end to the debate about the presumed exclusivity and isolation of refugee children, which was frequently criticized from the institutional perspective by the authorities, putting the refugee children on a par with those Czechoslovak ones while partially acknowledging their special medical and educational needs.

Speaking to the broader history of Cold War humanitarianism in East Central Europe, this chapter displays many continuities from the previous period, blurring the envisioned discontinuity of the socialist transition. *Socialist humanitarianism* grew from interwar humanitarianism, characterized by successful state as well as non-state humanitarian interventions. Thus, before building up its own institutions, designing new procedures and acquiring loyal human resources, socialist Czechoslovakia could rely on several assets, among them highly developed institutional structures, functioning aid infrastructure, knowledge transfer and the ability of society to mobilize professional and voluntary humanitarian workers regardless of the politically polarizing background of the overall enterprise based on well-prepared information strategies. Provoking empathy and speaking to the traditionally gendered role of caring professions, the aid campaign on behalf of refugee children appealed to a great number of women, who in various ways connected with the humanitarian cause.

Notes

This research is part of the Unlikely Refuge? project, which has received funding from the European Research Council under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation program (grant agreement No 819461).

1 Translated by the author from the Czech original: 'Červený kříž volá děti, malé i ty větší, všech národů, různých pletí a všech různých řečí. Chceme s dětmi v celém světě pěstovati víru, že lze život prožít v klidu, v radosti a v míru. Chceme s dětmi v celém světě péči mít o zdraví, aby každý ve štěstí žil – národ mu byl drahý'. A poem by Anna Šlachtová, in *Červený kříž dětem* [Red Cross for Children] (Prague: ČSČK, 1958), 1.

2 Tara Zahra, *The Lost Children: Reconstructing Europe's Families after World War II* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2011), x, 20, 24.

3 Jana Kasíková, 'Poválečná repatriace jako mezinárodní problém, její východiska a participace Československa [The Post-war Repatriation as an International Problem, its Backgrounds and the Participation of Czechoslovakia]', *Centre. Journal for Interdisciplinary Studies of Central Europe in the 19th and 20th Centuries*, 2 (2016), 92–123; Jiří Friedl, 'Repatriace polských a československých občanů po druhé světové válce v polské a české historiografii [The Repatriation of Polish and Czechoslovak Citizens after World War II in Polish and Czech Historiographies]', *Český časopis historický*, 116:2 (2018), 426–650.

4 Zahra, *The Lost Children*, 20.

5 Victoria Shmidt, 'Public Health As an Agent of Internal Colonialism in Interwar Czechoslovakia: Shaping the Discourse about the Nation's Children', *Patterns of Prejudice*, 52:4 (2018), 355–87; Bruce R. Berglund, '"We Stand on the Threshold of a New Age": Alice Masaryková, the Czechoslovak Red Cross, and the Building of a New Europe', in Ingrid Sharp and Matthew Stibbe (eds), *Aftermaths of War* (Leiden: Brill, 2011); see also Friederike Kind-Kovács, 'The Great War, the Child's Body and the American Red Cross', *European Review of History: Revue européenne d'histoire*, 23:1–2 (201), 33–62.

6 Marek Jukl and Jana Majrichová, *Století s Červeným křížem: 100 let Československého a Českého červeného kříže* [A Century with the Red Cross: 100 Years of the Czechoslovak and Czech Red Cross] (Prague: ČČK, 2019), 64.

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6

Refugees in the 'better Germany': humanitarian aid to Greek refugee children in the early German Democratic Republic

Julia Reinke

The assistance provided to more than 1,000 refugee children from the Greek Civil War (1946–9), who were resettled to East Germany in 1949 and 1950, has hardly received attention in the research on humanitarianism. This may be due to the fact that the socialist regime favoured the term 'solidarity' for framing their relief efforts. In this, it clearly distinguished itself from other aid initiatives, for example from the paradigmatic humanitarian organizations represented by the International Committee of the Red Cross, known for their 'principles of impartiality, neutrality and independence',[1] and thus foregrounding quasi 'apolitical aid'. While historical research has established that, in fact, contrary to this ideal, aid often was or became politicized, and has opened up an ongoing discussion about different concepts and the relationship between politics and humanitarianism,[2] in the case of providing aid to the Greek refugee children, the claim to 'impartiality' was seemingly never even raised in the first place: this relief effort was a party project of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany (*Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands*, SED), to become a state project in the GDR.

Thus, it seems to fall within the scope of charitable activities in the GDR usually framed solely within the concept of *solidarity*: not only was this amply documented by the contemporary media coverage in *Neues Deutschland*, the mouthpiece of the SED,[3] but the narrative of international solidarity in aiding has found expression in self-representations of former protagonists,[4] and even largely shaped historiographic examinations.[5] Instead of responding to need (as humanitarianism is defined in the broad sense) by giving *humanitarian aid*, the socialist state propagated – in line with the tradition of working-class internationalism – a different, primarily politicized idea of philanthropy among 'comrades'.[6] As such, scholarship has also typically associated GDR relief efforts with attempts of the leading – and later state – party, the SED, to represent a new and, what is more, 'the better Germany', both in distinction from the former Third Reich as well as from the GDR's Western counterpart, which was constituted as the Federal Republic of Germany in May 1949. While in the party

doctrine and propaganda, the latter was equated with a quasi-continuation of fascism on German ground,[7] the 'workers' and peasants' state' promised more social equity for its own population,[8] and, by means of their anti-fascist founding myth and their international solidarity, to be the morally superior German state. Due to the strong nexus between these two principles, as for instance stated by Dietmar Süß and Cornelius Torp, the term 'better Germany' can even be read as a metaphor for comprising solidarity and antifascism: 'Solidarity, decreed by the state, ranked as a "driving force for the whole society", as modus of moral superiority versus the capitalist systems, and as … most visible break with fascism. Such solidarity would make the GDR the "better Germany".'[9]

In principle, the reception of resettled Greek Civil War refugees offers a case in point for this.[10] Joining in a wider action of the Eastern Bloc of providing refuge for fellow comrades, the German socialist regime indeed fundamentally displayed anti-Western solidarity.[11] The first transport with 342 Greek children arrived in East German Saxony on 4 August 1949, and a second followed in July 1950 with more than 700 children and teenagers, then to be accommodated in a centralized manner in the town Radebeul near Dresden.[12] With this, the first children did not actually arrive in the GDR, but in the Soviet Zone of Occupation (*Sowjetische Besatzungszone*, SBZ), as the state proper officially only came into existence with the adoption of the constitution on 7 October 1949. This chronology alone demonstrates that the refugee reception did not take place within the framework of the constitutional 'right to asylum', as codified in Article 10 of the GDR constitution.[13] This 'legal right' also needs to be questioned, and ultimately always remained arbitrary within the scope of decision-making by the SED. The fact that it did not even formally apply in this case, however, characterizes the reception of the refugee children – as approved by the SED[14] – as an act of goodwill on the part of the dominating party that was only in the process of consolidating its power (similar to contemporary programmes for resettlement on humanitarian grounds,[15] instead of based on asylum law).

In this narrow sense, the refugees' common labelling as 'political emigrants' having been 'granted asylum' in the GDR is slightly misleading.[16] Despite the fact that these terms came to be the most commonly used in sources of later years, it is worth detaching from this official terminology, especially as the refugees from Greece received in East Germany at the time of their arrival were nearly all children (between the age of eight and seventeen).[17] At the same time, it must be noted that they were not officially framed as 'refugees' – instead they were commonly referred to as 'Greek children', 'children of Greek freedom fighters (or patriots)'[18] or 'Greek friends',[19] which on the other hand again points to the political affiliation at work.

Taking these reflections on the master narrative in GDR aid as a point of departure, this chapter is primarily concerned with the terminology put to use and the ideological framing of the relief effort, rather than the actual aid provided. Terminology plays an important role in 'position[ing] humanitarian action within political contexts or … keep[ing] it out of politics',[20] as Johannes Paulmann has emphasized regarding the significance of discourse. And indeed, despite the strong state emphasis on solidarity, on closer examination we can find indications that complicate this state-propagated narrative and open up avenues to integrate this case into the discussion on the 'blurred boundaries of humanitarian aid'.[21] This becomes particularly visible when analysing one key element of any relief effort: the question of raising funds for the cause. For the reception of refugees outside of any constitutional procedure, the East German proto-state resorted to a 'solidarity campaign' organized by the newly founded Relief Committee for Democratic Greece (*Hilfskomitee für das demokratische Griechenland*) to mobilize sympathy and, most importantly, raise funds in order to provide the aid to the Greek children.

It is here that the concept of 'humanitarianism' becomes particularly fruitful. As a broader and more adaptable lens to counterbalance the narrative of 'solidarity', it allows for identifying ambivalences and different motivations in this relief effort beyond the traditional portrayal as a one-dimensional party-political endeavour. Archival documents from state to the local level offer important insights into the question of politicization and responses by people on the ground. Only few years after the end of the Second World War and its political repercussions, 'solidarity' or 'proletarian internationalism' had to be established first,[22] and faced obstacles resulting from the recent Nazi past as well as the situation with millions of co-ethnic 'refugees and expellees' from the East, or 'resettlers' (*Umsiedler*, in the official SED language regime). As these burdens posed important challenges for the solidarity campaign organized by the Relief Committee, a closer look at the mobilization and fundraising efforts thus helps to probe tensions and limits in the ideological framing of East German aid for Greek refugee children that otherwise remain neglected.

This chapter starts with a discussion of the founding of the Relief Committee, its actors and practices, to open the analysis of framing between universal humanitarianism and clearly politicized solidarity, before the next section situates the reception of refugee children against the definition of 'need' in socialism. The legacies of the Nazi past then provide the first problematic background that challenged both the ideological and the humanitarian aspects in the relief effort. Lastly, the competition for resources, particularly complicated by the issue of co-ethnic refugees and expellees, constitutes another field of analysis that sheds light on the

discursive practices surrounding the reception of refugees. Resulting in a more nuanced picture of the campaign, this chapter argues that the aid to Greek refugee children testifies to a 'strategic use of language',[23] oscillating between a more or less strong emphasis on solidarity or humanitarianism in attempts to cope with the tensions and facilitate the relief effort. Thus, it contributes both to illuminating the transitory phase of the late SBZ/early GDR as well as to enhancing the research on humanitarianism in the Eastern Bloc.

'All democratic forces'? The Relief Committee for Democratic Greece

Against the ongoing integration of the Western occupation zones towards the building of a West German state, the SED, too, increasingly worked towards consolidating their power and eventually establishing an East German state. Despite still promoting pan-German rhetoric, this entailed embracing socialist ideology as well as politics in the incipient Cold War. Accordingly, *Neues Deutschland*, in line with the common political orientation, had already been reporting with sympathy and in support of the 'Greek Democrats' in the Greek Civil War. The actual solidarity campaign then started with the founding of the Relief Committee for Democratic Greece in 1948. On the initiative of the Central Secretariat of the SED from mid-September, a proclamation was drafted first for establishing a 'German Antifascist Relief Committee for Greece' to support the struggle against the 'monarcho-fascist' regime in Athens, as the socialist official labelling of the Greek government read.[24] The SED, the Free Federation of German Trade Unions (*Freier Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund*, FDGB) and the Association of Persecutees of the Nazi Regime (*Vereinigung der Verfolgten des Naziregimes*, VVN) acted as signatories. This first draft version from 24 September 1948, however, differed considerably from the final proclamation issued later by the central Relief Committee after its establishment on 9 November that year. Apparently before it underwent a stronger ideological revision, 'humanitarian aid' was at the forefront in the first draft: reasoning that 'We German antifascists can manifest our sympathy for the fighters of antifascist resistance in Greece best by active humanitarian aid', the proclamation contained a paragraph that appeared almost identically as the second article in the drafted committee's statutes from the same date, declaring the purpose and demonstrating the important role refugee care was to take on: 'The relief committee wants to provide *humanitarian aid* to the victims of fascism in Greece by donations of money and items, specifically by providing medical care, medication, medical equipment and *care*

for parentless children'.[25] Precisely in this place, providing humanitarian aid was then replaced by 'express[ing] solidarity', just as all other mentions of 'humanitarian aid' had disappeared in the final version in favour of 'solidarity'.[26] Overall, the final proclamation contained a much more pointedly ideological wording: while not completely erased, the term 'antifascist' was used much less, in favour of 'heroic fight against national oppression', and 'resistance' gave way to a strong emphasis on 'struggle for freedom' against 'the monarcho-fascist minority government' and the 'rapacious American imperialism'.[27] Thus inscribing the relief effort from the very beginning into the socialist ideas to be further established in East Germany, the SED demonstrated its leading role here. These terminological changes also imply a narrowing of the spectrum of recipients, shifting the focus away from a more universal humanitarian agenda to an emphasis on political affiliation in the early Cold War.

However, despite the politicization of this aid early on, the SED as not yet the official state party also emphatically strove for a broad, all-encompassing public basis for the Relief Committee in order to give the impression of democratic participation while transitioning to becoming a one-party state. The proclamation called on 'all democratic forces and all antifascists in Germany [*sic*]' to take part in the relief effort. And indeed: the list of institutions declaring their willingness to contribute went well beyond the SED's ranks, comprising besides prominent 'antifascist' individuals important mass organizations such as the VVN, the Free German Youth (*Freie Deutsche Jugend,* FDJ), the Democratic Women's Union (*Demokratischer Frauenbund Deutschlands*, DFD), the above mentioned FDGB and also the People's Solidarity (*Volkssolidarität*, the GDR's main charity organization).[28] This reaching out to engage large parts of society was a measure to unite the population behind a cause to potentially strengthen the regime's legitimization, but it also had practical reasons: the Relief Committee (both on the central as well as on the regional and local levels) did not actually constitute an organization of its own. Apart from managing committees, it relied to a great extent on the institutional structures of the already established organizations, which were then responsible for carrying out the activities of collecting funds, organizing events and rallies and fulfilling the Relief Committee's tasks.[29]

The SED made sure to involve people who had fought alongside the Greek resistance during the Second World War, such as Falk Harnack and Hans Rudat, as 'experts of the Greececonditions [*Griechenlandverhältnisse*] and active participants in the partisan fight'.[30] More importantly though, the Relief Committee also made a point including the semi-independent bloc parties such as the Christian Democrats (*Christlich-Demokratische Union*, CDU) and the liberal party (*Liberal-Demokratische Partei*

(*Deutschlands*), LDP(D)).[31] Despite increasing attempts to bring the bloc parties into line, especially the CDU as a whole initially rejected to participate and was criticized for its 'very uncertain stand'.[32] Whereas individual Christian Democrats could be involved and quite active in aiding the Greek children (such as Saxon Minister of Trade and Supply Georg Knabe, who acted as second president of the regional Relief Committee[33]), the party's (lastly futile) opposition to this SED-directed aid project already points to the tensions that had to be navigated in this politicized relief effort.[34]

The first major activity to start off the solidarity campaign was hosting a delegation of Greek comrades for a tour across the SBZ from late January until late February 1949, holding rallies in public places as well as in factories.[35] While this campaign also served propagandistic purposes, at its forefront was fundraising for the cause of the Greek communists – following the proclaimed 'moral and material support'.[36] In general, the Relief Committee appeared satisfied with public participation in the rallies and the outreach beyond the SED's party ranks – in its account, roughly 75 per cent of the attendants were said to be non-party members.[37] The limit of just acceptable versus simply too much politicization was a fine line to walk, however. The first report of the central Relief Committee acknowledged this remarkably frankly when it identified 'the attitude towards the "Internationale" [the symbolic socialist anthem] as concluding song' as an important criterion for the attempted all-party support.[38] Incidents in local rallies had brought about criticism and hampered the intended cooperation, such as in the Saxon town of Plauen, where the CDU and LDP still held a majority in the local parliament.[39] Instead of accommodating this fact, the local SED functionary in his speech had used the term 'comrades', and cheered all communist parties in the world, particularly the one in Greece, which was said to have been 'downright provocative' to some Christian Democrats and Liberals.[40] And even worse: in his speech, he had quoted from the 'Internationale', thus instigating the attending local youth to start chanting it, which almost led to the LDP delegate withdrawing his participation.

The central authorities, instead of defending the socialist framing, reacted by reprimanding this biased approach, apparently neutrally placing more value on the success of the relief effort: 'We do not think this has served the Relief Committee well.'[41] However, the hypocrisy that this was only a matter of obviousness instead of sincere concern was revealed in the central report, which overtly admitted: 'our remark, that we cannot prevent the chanting of the Internationale if it is started spontaneously from among the congregation, they interpreted in a way that one could also organize this spontaneity. This, they often did very unskillfully [*ungeschickt*,

here meaning not very subtly].'[42] As if to test in the transitory period before actual statehood how far ideological topoi could be deployed, the SED in these events thus pursued a balancing act, navigating between clear party influence on the one hand and the claim to encompass all 'democratic parties' and a broader public in this undertaking on the other.

'Need' in socialism and refugee reception

It was in the course of this fundraising tour with the Greek delegation that a lot of donations were raised, or what had been collected was handed over with much publicity, and new local branches of the Relief Committee were constituted.[43] The central Relief Committee assumed that at least forty district committees were founded, and counted for all lands a total of fifty-seven rallies with nearly 90,000 participants, raising over one million marks in donations.[44] And this did not even include donated goods. Especially in the early phase of the campaign, not only money but also material donations were collected: mostly medical supplies and medicine; however, one list also reports the donation of twenty-nine musical instruments.[45]

Gregory Witkowski in his visual study on the 'imagery of solidarity in East Germany' has rightly identified that '[t]he GDR had a different narrative of need, namely, the need for masculine fighters to bring about socialist revolution'.[46] Thus, the motif of suffering children was not at the forefront in the campaign. Only rarely, newspaper articles featured emotive stories about individual fates, or pictures of needy children.[47] Instead, the major propaganda material conformed to the different approach, as clearly illustrated by the presumably main poster used in the solidarity campaign: it depicted an emaciated man wearing an ammunition belt and holding a gun in his one hand while with the other reaching out for help, showing the corresponding facial expression of crying the slogan, 'Help the democratic Greece' (Figure 6.1).[48] Despite deviating from the 'generally avoided reproduction […] of weapons in appeals', this poster gives a prime example for how socialist fundraising in general differed 'from norms of philanthropic representation in liberal capitalist contexts', which would instead feature '[i]mages of women and children in need' as inherent in 'long-established conventions of humanitarian appeal'.[49]

However, as demonstrated by the Relief Committee's proclamation and statutes, the reception of refugee children did figure prominently in this relief effort right from the start. While the Central Secretariat already at the end of December 1948 had ordered Paul Merker, its delegate in the Relief Committee and the SED 'expert for resettlers',[50] to 'arrange the accommodation of 100 Greek children by the *Volkssolidarität*',[51] in the course

Figure 6.1 'Help the democratic Greece – defend the peace', poster calling for donations used in the solidarity campaign, designed by H. Kruse, published by Printer Alfred Pedersen on behalf of the Relief Committee for Democratic Greece, Berlin 1949

Source: Sächsisches Staatsarchiv, Hauptstaatsarchiv Dresden, 11856 SED-Landesleitung Sachsen, Nr. A/0325, Bl. 019.

of the campaign, this endeavour gained a new quality: offers to host – initially rather small numbers – of Greek children were brought forward by different actors at a local or regional level, originally only intended for a limited time period as a recreational stay, similar to resettlement efforts such as previous *Kindertransporte*, which was also the name occasionally given to the reception of the children.[52] For example, the *Volkssolidarität* in Brandenburg pledged to host twenty-five Greek children, and city councils such as those in Senftenberg or Eberswalde each agreed to accommodate fifty children, for one or two months.[53]

In the end, these self-commitments were not decisive for the eventual resettlement of the Greek refugee children, as the details were negotiated on the highest party level between the SED and the Greek Communists.[54] In one case, even a more generous offer by the Democratic Peasants Party in the land of Saxony-Anhalt to host 3,000 children[55] – perhaps out of a special solidarity with the Greek refugees who for the most part came from rural strata – was not realized and instead rearranged as a less overzealous provision for 200 children.[56] However, these pledges and commitments demonstrate the integral part that the refugee reception played within the solidarity campaign. Especially when the impending defeat of the partisans became unmistakable in autumn 1949, the cause of providing for the children still constituted a lasting humanitarian task that yielded the need of further donations, even beyond immediate prospect of near-future political change in Greece.[57] The Saxon Relief Committee concluded in its annual report in December 1949:

> In view of the military and political development in Greece it has been decided in principle by the [Relief Committee's] central board that our upcoming tasks should pertain more to the relief work for the Greek children …. The resulting costs [for their accommodation in the GDR] clearly prove the need to still do our utmost to raise funds continuously.[58]

Legacies of the past: humanitarianism after National Socialism

At the time of this relief effort, the era of National Socialism and its inhumane ideology was still recent history. Although the official regime discourse in East Germany refused to critically face up to the fascist past, legacies of both personal involvement and nationalist, hostile thought still became visible in various ways that posed challenges, not least against the backdrop of the German occupation of Greece. What did this imply for the campaign, in terms of actors and local responses, not least with respect to the refugees themselves? Especially moments of tension shed light on complications of the 'solidarity' narrative, and also on the attempts of the

'better Germany' to counter these and promote the humanitarian endeavour as part of the new political identity.

In the first place, this meant a particular engagement of the VVN in organizing the campaign. As fellow 'victims of fascism', its members appeared most qualified to actively represent the 'better Germany'.[59] In practice, however, this entailed some difficulties for the work on the ground, as precisely those functionaries who would be the most dedicated often held multiple offices and thus were easily overwhelmed. As a result, the Saxon Relief Committee complained that some district committees only 'existed on paper', because the overworked functionaries could not handle the actual operative work.[60]

In another case, the excessive emphasis on antifascism led to the misuse of funds intended for the Greeks. The local VVN chapter in the district of Rochlitz had used the proceeds gained from selling special issue stamps – a prominent method deployed in the campaign[61] – for other 'VVN purposes', instead of passing them on to the central Relief Committee (Figure 6.2).[62] While the VVN representative claimed this to be a case of misunderstanding, this appropriation of the antifascist action may also point to a certain interchangeability in such campaigns. In line with the dominant goals of antifascism and communism, it seems a movement did not necessarily have to be supported in its own right but could be taken as *pars pro toto* for the bigger cause. In this sense, this would support the idea of a stereotypical ideological campaign, state-induced and -led as others were, potentially hollowed out from its original meaning, in this case supporting the Greeks. However, legacies of the recent past complicate this one-dimensional view of an ideologically streamlined endeavour.

Even in the SED's own ranks, the past did shine through. While some comrades were familiar with the fighting as partisans, as they had participated in the antifascist resistance during the Second World War or fought in the International Brigades in the Spanish Civil War,[63] others seemed to have less favourable associations. Again in Plauen, according to an internal SED letter, one 'comrade' reportedly responded to the fundraising for the relief effort: 'I am not giving a penny for these bandits',[64] with this terminology very likely alluding to Wehrmacht experiences during the German occupation in Greece and the Greek resistance's partisan warfare.[65]

The fact that the past ideology was by no means suddenly erased from (East) German mindsets simply by the change of the regime also posed a problem on a larger scale, especially when it came to the practice of workplace collections that often were conducted in conjunction with rallies in factories. While the regional VVN – and Relief Committee – secretary for Brandenburg could proudly list several workforce donations, often raised by working extra shifts,[66] in contrast to the well-received and

Figure 6.2 Special issue stamps from 1949, 'Defend the peace – help the democratic Greece', to the value of 50 and 10 pfennig, to be sold to work collectives or within mass organizations, for semi-public display in, for instance, membership booklets

Source: Stiftung Haus der Geschichte, Bonn. Copies can also be found in BArch, DY 55/398, Generalsekretariat VVN.

crowded public events, other cases proved more difficult. For the rally at the local porcelain workshop in Meissen, the Saxon Relief Committee had to report a 'reserved atmosphere, caused by the workforce'; the same was condemned in Chemnitz.[67] An even more critical case took place in the waggon factory in Görlitz. Again, as most problematic bone of contention, the chanting of the 'Internationale' was identified, as it marked the endeavour clearly as a party-political project instead of a more universal humanitarian matter:

> The chair of the meeting made the mistake to call on the workforce to chant the *Internationale* right at the start of the rally. A very few did sing it, and you could feel immediately that the majority of the workers was not in it with their heart. The further course of the rally was most distant and the workers by and large appeared very reserved.[68]

In search of an explanation for this unsuccessful event, the answer was found in the legacy of the recent past: 'In reply to our questions after the rally, we were told that in this factory, the workforce consists of 40% former party members ['Pgs', *Parteigenossen*, party members of the Nazi party]'.[69]

The possibility that this was a denunciatory move to disparage that workforce and make excuses for the failed propagandistic attempt cannot be ruled out completely – however, in view of the involvement, one way or another, of the vast majority of the German population in the Third Reich, cases like this are very likely to have occurred. The reports are not very forthright about incidents like these, since according to the official founding myth, fascists were said to be living only in the West.[70] Nevertheless, this idea not least caused considerable distress among most of the refugee children when they learned what their country of refuge was going to be. Their and their families' experiences with Germans during the Second World War easily explain the state of 'shock' that is often reported.[71] One of the refugees, in his autobiography, recalled this fearful moment, as well as attempts of being taught about the 'better Germany':

> The children had told each other many stories of the German *Wehrmacht* and the attack by the Germans on our homeland. Even he [the author's younger brother Michalis] could remember that very well. When he learned, that he, too, was to go along to Germany, he was very scared. … They [the caregivers] told us, we would go to a different, free and socialist Germany, but it already was quite difficult for us to understand the context and grasp it. He at his [young] age all the more did not understand.[72]

In view of this heavy burden of the past, the incipient GDR as a place to host these refugee children had to make quite some effort to alleviate the situation. This happened on different levels, including at a higher political level: during the solidarity campaign, this translated into a transgression of the otherwise officially publicized repudiation of any *German* liability for the Nazi cruelties, as notoriously characterized by the term 'Hitlerite fascism'.[73] While this wording still often appeared in press reports etc., the language regime was by no means followed to the letter in all instances. The call for donations issued by the Saxon Relief Committee right before hosting the Greek delegation on its tour gives a prime example: starting out with the familiar ideological reasoning and praising the Greek wartime resistance, it explicitly added another point to appeal to the public: '*We as Germans* though also have to fulfil our obligation to compensate [*Wiedergutmachungsverpflichtung*] towards the Greek nation, which for years has bled and suffered from the oppression by the German occupation.'[74]

However, given the above-cited fear of Germany that most children had, attempts to come to terms with the past were also needed on an interpersonal level on the ground: in communication with the children themselves. Thus, a draft script of a speech suggested greeting the refugee children upon their arrival in their quarantine camp in Bischofswerda with the

reassurance: 'You shall live in nice homes, and people shall look after you who are representatives of a new democratic Germany.'[75]

The Greek side dutifully played its part in reciprocating the conciliatory spirit, by their 'implicit forgiveness' encouraging a fresh start.[76] As the central Relief Committee reported: 'Again and again, the attendees of the rallies were most deeply impressed by the affirmation of the Greek speakers, that the wide gulf between the German and the Greek people, which was caused by Hitlerite fascism, has been closed.'[77] And even the children in a staged letter to the 'German government', published in *Neues Deutschland*, expressed their 'gratitude for all the love that your people is showing us', wishing good luck for the 'new endeavour' and giving cheers to 'the democratic government of the German Republic [*sic*], which contributes to peace between the nations'.[78]

Still, all these assertions did not completely prevent the children from having to feel the legacies of the past in some cases. One incident occurred when some children needed medical treatment after their arrival, and the first hospital in Dresden refused to admit them. The relief workers went on to seek treatment for the children at a hospital farther away, and almost would have gotten rejected again. The Saxon Relief Committee commented on this by criticizing how, in the healthcare system, there was still 'little progressive' personnel,[79] alluding to residues of former political attitudes. Despite the fact that the rejection may also have been influenced by the omnipresent postwar shortage in medical capacities – against the backdrop of personal continuities from the Third Reich, especially in this profession[80] – this cautiously allusive official wording may well signify a xenophobic reaction. What in the end helped this humanitarian effort of obtaining medical care for the refugee children to be effective was again bringing up the political significance of this endeavour: as reported, the doctor in charge only agreed to help upon being reminded that 'the reception of Greek children in Germany constituted a political action'.[81] Thus, while sometimes the ideological framing of the relief effort could appear problematic or even counterproductive, in other cases, it indeed required politically prescribed 'solidarity' to help implement this humanitarian action against the backdrop of the past.

Competition for resources and refugees versus refugees

The recent past not only complicated and challenged the humanitarian effort to care for the Greek children in the ways discussed above. Another important factor that came into play in the solidarity campaign and the reception of the children was the large number of so-called refugees and

expellees from the eastern territories that Germany had lost as a result of the Second World War. More than 4.3 million of these lived in the lands of the SBZ/GDR and in the common parlance of that time figured as 'the refugees',[82] whereas the official language euphemistically labelled them 'resettlers', so as not to offend the newly allied eastern neighbours.[83] At a time of severe postwar shortage of basic needs, such as food and housing, this led to competition for scarce resources, which also found its expression in the attempts to raise funds for the Greek children.[84]

In Chemnitz, a pastor and member of the CDU declined his participation in the Relief Committee, despite being a member in the VVN, 'based on the fact that our plight in Germany nowadays ranks first'.[85] This caused a small scandal at the local public rally, as 'the entire audience demanded the exclusion of Pastor … from the VVN, because … he does not want to participate in the relief for Greece'.[86] The regional CDU leadership made sure to affirm to the Saxon Relief Committee that it would not hinder individual members from 'supporting the charitable efforts of the Relief Committee' and pointed especially to those who already – by virtue of their other functions – seemed predestined to participate in humanitarian matters: 'This positive support was especially devolved onto those members of the CDU, who as part of their other duties felt particularly obliged', thereby explaining the active involvement in the relief effort, for example, of Minister of Trade and Supply Georg Knabe.[87]

Nevertheless, the difficult supply situation contributed to negative attitudes towards the Greek children. The relief effort thus required particular popular mobilization, especially in the local context where the rivalry was felt the most. This provided the background for an article published in the regional newspaper *Sächsische Zeitung* in July 1950, when Radebeul was preparing to host the 'children of Greek freedom fighters'. This article stands out, as the writer, in response to local criticism, explicitly resorted to praising the reception of the refugee children as the 'simplest imperative of *humanitarianism* [*Menschlichkeit*, here in the sense of active compassion]'.[88]

The author first answered the question, 'So in which shape is the sentiment of the general population?', by affirming the good intentions of 'the major part of Radebeul's inhabitants'. But then the article went on to address more problematic sentiments, indicating that these must have been too manifest and widespread to simply be ignored by propaganda: 'Yet, it does not go without notice that a part of the population still is sceptical about the reception of these children. They fear that "the children will eat up all our food" ["dass die Kinder uns alles wegessen"], they begrudge them the housing.'

In order to win over this hostile part of the local population, the author did not resort to obvious ideological reasoning along the lines of

international solidarity, though. Instead, the article responded in terms of moral condemnation, alluding to Nazi atrocities and implicitly equating the sceptical people with supporters, even insinuating they were beneficiaries of the Nazi regime:

> As absurd as the first objection is, as much the second testifies to sparse warm-heartedness. The people who hold this opinion are the same, who did not mind, on the contrary, who appreciated it, when during the Nazi war millions of people were ripped out from their home – among them also ten thousands of Greeks – for forced labor in Germany.

The article thus further tried to persuade the reluctant people, placing the competition in a moral context: 'And yet, there can be no talk of sacrifice here. It is … a pleasant obligation that we take upon ourselves. We at least look forward to the children. And with us all people honest and ready to help.'

Reluctance to share the little that was available in the postwar era also affected the 'co-ethnic' refugees and expellees from the East, who found themselves facing different discriminations in a 'cold homeland'.[89] Very similar are the accusations that refugees from Silesia, for example, had to endure in Saxony, being viewed as 'undesirable competition in the allocation of food'.[90] Andreas Kossert cites a notice at a yard gate that read: 'The refugees eat more than their fill, and rob us of the least we have' ('Die Flüchtlinge essen sich dick und fett, und stehlen uns noch das Letzte weg').[91]

Often, these 'co-ethnic' refugees and expellees in fact were denied the possibility of being truly, or even at all, German, instead being identified with the nations that now held the territories from which they came.[92] Notwithstanding, they were still closer to the receiving society in East Germany than the Greek children, which entailed an even greater challenge in mobilizing funds and support for the latter, as those efforts could not draw on solidarity based on common nationality.[93] While this was by no means a topic to be openly discussed – given the official language regime that silenced discussions of German refugeedom due to the implications regarding the new borders as well as German liability – the following incident indicates the existence of some competition between these two refugee groups.

In Saxony, Leon Löwenkopf, head of the regional state credit bank as well as of the Jewish Community in Dresden, belonged to the most pronounced antifascists and was prominently involved in the relief effort for the Greek children. As a pre-war Social Democrat as well as survivor of the Warsaw Ghetto and several concentration camps, he initially appreciated and supported the new regime, in particular regarding solidarity with victims of fascism.[94] At a meeting of the regional Relief Committee

in March 1949, he reported on his initiative to start a workplace collection. To this end, 'certificates of commitment [*Verpflichtungsscheine*]' for monthly donations were to be circulated. In his effort to engage employees to subscribe to these, he had met some objection, though: 'and I was confronted with a different matter. The question was raised why we do not give for the refugees and resettlers.'[95]

It was in this context that Löwenkopf, in response, specifically brought up the cause of the Greek children, thus implying that this was a more compelling reason to donate: 'I said, okay, we can collect for this [the refugees and resettlers] as well. Let us with our contribution take on sponsorships [*Patenschaften*] for Greek children.'[96] As the children were to be accommodated collectively in state children's homes, where they would get the 'appropriate' political supervision and education, actual adoptions into individual families were not in the SED's interest.[97] Against this background, these sponsorships are presumably not only to be understood as financial adoptions but could resemble godparenthood, involving 'visits to the children [in their homes] on special occasions and holidays', often connected with gifts for the children 'to give them a treat', as the first circular of the Saxon Relief Committee informed the district committees.[98] In this sense, bringing up the children to recruit more subscribers to the certificates suggests that Löwenkopf viewed these 'sponsorships/adoptions' as of greater humanitarian appeal, so that this could even win over the 'sceptical' ones who appeared more concerned about the co-ethnic refugees.

Against the immediate competition over basic needs, more universal and profound language – referring to humanitarianism or moral categories such as warm-heartedness, honesty and willingness to help – was apparently deemed essential to defend the relief effort. Also, especially when challenged by the competition with co-ethnic refugees, invoking the cause of the children could constitute a strategy that went beyond the official emphasis on 'solidarity', and potentially catered to more humanitarian motivations on a personal instead of a party-political level.

Conclusion

At a time of still visibly present postwar shortage, the mobilization for providing aid in the SBZ/GDR could hardly draw on arguments such as 'there is more food on our table',[99] or additional motivations such as the ability to give, taking pride in a certain (even if relative) level of prosperity.[100] Instead, a sense of German guilt and responsibility and – even though not foregrounded by the propaganda – the need of the refugee children were

ultimately deemed most effective in order to raise funds and facilitate the relief effort. As Andreas Stergiou has assumed, '[t]he children's suffering seems to have appealed extraordinarily strongly to the Germans; certainly much more than the cry for help by the partisan army'.[101]

By applying the concept of humanitarianism as a lens and including regional and local sources, we gain a more nuanced understanding of this SED-directed relief effort, which transcends the paradigm of solidarity. Integrating local perspectives into the 'national' scale allows us to take into account ambivalences and tensions, and highlights the severe challenges posed by the recent Nazi past as well as the competition for resources, especially with co-ethnic refugees and expellees. What is more, it also enables a consideration of responses when strictly ideological reasoning reached its limits or even proved counterproductive: drawing on broader humanitarian discourse. However, the converse also holds true: as demonstrated by the promotional poster for instance, or when it came to obtaining access to medical treatment for the refugee children, political solidarity offered a distinct – and sometimes decisive – approach to aid, foreshadowing the new political order of the 'better Germany'.

This national project of aiding Greek children around the time of East German state building became a core feature of the GDR joining the socialist world through this refugee assistance,[102] and this would entail a strong identification of the refugees with the GDR, regardless of citizenship, as the parallelization of the GDR's anniversary with their thirty-year 'political emigration' at a gathering of Greeks in Dresden in 1979 suggests.[103] Before it could come to this, however, this 'national' relief effort had to apply significant flexibility in the contemporary framing of this aid in the period prior to and during the establishment of the GDR. The strategic use of language, as shown for a variety of situations on the ground, testifies to the need to navigate political versus national solidarities and find ways to cope with the Nazi past. In this way, this case study is meant to contribute to the desideratum of a 'thorough investigation of historical usage [of corresponding terms]'[104] in the study on humanitarianism, explicating the transition process towards the established 'internationalist solidarity' that has dominated research on the GDR and socialist aid. Setting humanitarianism against the strongly proclaimed socialist solidarity can help identify specific challenges and accommodations in aid-giving within state socialist contexts, beyond the narrow ideological paradigm, and thus advance a broader discussion of humanitarianism across the East–West divide.

Notes

This research is part of the Unlikely Refuge? project, which has received funding from the European Research Council under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation program (grant agreement No 819461) as well as of the author's dissertation project at Friedrich Schiller University Jena.

1 Michael Barnett, *Empire of Humanity: A History of Humanitarianism* (Ithaca, NY and London: Cornell University Press, 2011), 5, cf. 2 and 10. For the 'Red Cross paradigm', see also Johannes Paulmann, 'The Dilemmas of Humanitarian Aid: Historical Perspectives', in Johannes Paulmann (ed.), *Dilemmas of Humanitarian Aid in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 1–31, 6.

2 Paulmann, 'The Dilemmas of Humanitarian Aid', 4–11, and more broadly Johannes Paulmann, 'Conjunctures in the History of International Humanitarian Aid in the Twentieth Century', *Humanity: An International Journal of Human Rights, Humanitarianism, and Development*, 4:2 (2013), 215–38, as well as Didier Fassin, *Humanitarian Reason: A Moral History of the Present* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 1–17.

3 'Solidarisch mit dem Freien Griechenland', *Neues Deutschland*, 1 February 1949, 2.

4 Most prominently, Achim Reichhardt, *Nie vergessen – Solidarität üben! Die Solidaritätsbewegung in der DDR* (Berlin: Homilius, 2006). Cf. also Elke Reuter and Detlef Hansel, *Das kurze Leben der VVN von 1947 bis 1953: Die Geschichte der Vereinigung der Verfolgten des Naziregimes in der sowjetischen Besatzungszone und in der DDR* (Berlin: edition ost, 1997), 16.

5 For instance, Patrice G. Poutrus, 'Die DDR als "Hort der internationalen Solidarität": Ausländer in der DDR', in Thomas Großbölting (ed.), *Friedensstaat, Leseland, Sportnation? DDR-Legenden auf dem Prüfstand* (Berlin: Ch. Links Verlag, 2009), 134–54.

6 For the tradition of workers' internationalist solidarity, see the chapter 'Die Arbeiterbewegung im "langen" 19. Jahrhundert und die Anfänge der Solidarität', in Dietmar Süß and Cornelius Torp, *Solidarität. Vom 19. Jahrhundert bis zur Corona-Krise* (Bonn: Dietz Verlag, 2021), 25–45. An important exception in the research is Gregory Witkowski, who under the umbrella term *philanthropy* integrates both state-affiliated as well as church initiatives in his study on donations in the GDR. While his work provides inspiring insights for bridging the gap between state- and differently motivated aid efforts, his focus is on foreign aid and only takes the late 1950s as starting point; Gregory Witkowski, 'Between Fighters and Beggars: Socialist Philanthropy and the Imagery of Solidarity in East Germany', in Quinn Slobodian (ed.), *Comrades of Color: East Germany in the Cold War World* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2015), 73–94.

7 Poutrus, 'Die DDR als "Hort der internationalen Solidarität"', 135.

8 See Jan Palmowski, *Die Erfindung der sozialistischen Nation: Heimat und Politik im DDR-Alltag* (Berlin: Ch. Links Verlag, 2016), 33.

9 Süß and Torp, *Solidarität*, 93–4.
10 For a detailed exploration of this solidarity, see Nikola Tohma and Julia Reinke, '"Like We Would Help Brothers or Sisters"? Practicing Solidarity with Greek Civil War Refugees in Socialist Czechoslovakia and the GDR in the Shadow of the Second World War', *International Review of Social History* (2024), 1–29, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020859024000063
11 From the extensive literature, see for an overview Stefan Troebst, '"Grieche ohne Heimat": Hellenische Bürgerkriegsflüchtlinge in der DDR 1949–1989', *Totalitarismus und Demokratie*, 2:2 (2005), 245–71, https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-309567, as well as Loring M. Danforth and Riki van Boeschoten, *Children of the Greek Civil War: Refugees and the Politics of Memory* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2012). The reception of approximately 28,000 children by Eastern Bloc countries has been controversially discussed as *Paidomazoma*, that is, child abduction, a communist 'blood tax', cf. for the most balanced analysis Lars Baerentzen, 'The "Paidomazoma" and the Queen's Camps', in Lars Baerentzen, John O. Iatrides and Ole L. Smith (eds), *Studies in the History of the Greek Civil War 1945–1949* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 1987), 127–58.
12 Stefan Troebst, 'Die 'Griechenlandkinder-Aktion' 1949/1950: Die SED und die Aufnahme minderjähriger Bürgerkriegsflüchtlinge aus Griechenland in der SBZ/DDR' [2004], republished in Stefan Troebst, *Zwischen Arktis, Adria und Armenien: Das östliche Europa und seine Ränder – Aufsätze, Essays und Vorträge 1983–2016*, Vol. 53 (Cologne, Weimar and Vienna: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht Verlage, 2017), 257–80, specifically 269–72.
13 Most pronouncedly, Patrice G. Poutrus has worked on political asylum in the GDR. From his numerous publications, see especially his seminal study 'Zuflucht im Ausreiseland: Zur Geschichte des politischen Asyls in der DDR', *Jahrbuch für Historische Kommunismusforschung*, 11 (2004), 355–78.
14 See Patrice G. Poutrus, 'Zwischen Internationalismus und Assimilation: Griechische "Polit. Emigranten"' in der DDR', in Marco Hillemann and Miltos Pechlivanos (eds), *Deutsch-griechische Beziehungen im ostdeutschen Staatssozialismus (1949–1989): Politische Migration, Realpolitik und interkulturelle Begegnung* (Berlin: Edition Romiosini, 2017), 61–75, 63.
15 See for instance the descriptions by the *Caritas*, https://resettlement.de/humanitaere-aufnahme-programme/
16 First and foremost for this approach see Patrice G. Poutrus, *Umkämpftes Asyl: Vom Nachkriegsdeutschland bis in die Gegenwart* (Berlin: Ch. Links Verlag, 2020), as well as Maria Panoussi, *Politisches Exil: Die griechischen politischen Immigranten in der SBZ/DDR (1949–1982) – Identität, Wahrnehmung und gesellschaftliche Partizipation* (Hamburg: Verlag Dr. Kovač, 2017).
17 Troebst, 'Griechenlandkinder-Aktion', 271, 274.
18 See for instance Sächsisches Staatsarchiv, Hauptstaatsarchiv Dresden (hereafter SächsHStA), 11401 Landesregierung Sachsen (hereafter LRS), Ministerium für Volksbildung (hereafter MfV), Nr. 494.

19 See various press reports in *Neues Deutschland* and *Sächsische Zeitung*. Cf. also Panoussi, *Politisches Exil*, 30, for a descriptive account on terminology.
20 Paulmann, 'Conjunctures in the History', 215.
21 Paulmann, 'Dilemmas of Humanitarian Aid', 4.
22 For a brief overview of 'international solidarity' and 'proletarian internationalism' in official SED rhetoric, see Detlev Brunner, 'DDR "transnational": Die "internationale Solidarität" der DDR', in Alexander Gallus, Axel Schildt and Detlef Siegfried (eds), *Deutsche Zeitgeschichte – transnational* (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2015), 64–80, especially 64 f.
23 Paulmann, 'Conjunctures in the History', 215.
24 Bundesarchiv Berlin-Lichterfelde (hereafter BArch), DY 30 IV 2/2.022/120, draft proclamation, 24 September 1948, fols. 1 f. For the first mention of initiating a relief committee for Greece see BArch, DY 30/ IV 2/2.1/230, protocol no. 109 (II), 14 September 1948.
25 BArch, DY 30 IV 2/2.022/120, draft statutes, 24 September 1948, fols. 4 f., emphasis added. Also cited by Andreas Stergiou, 'Der Griechische Bürgerkrieg, seine Nachwirkungen, und die Rolle der DDR', *Thetis*, 8 (2001), 239–56, 242, without mentioning the changes of this draft however.
26 BArch, DY 30 IV 2/2.022/120, proclamation of the Relief Committee for Democratic Greece, undated, 13 f.
27 BArch, DY 30 IV 2/2.022/120, proclamation of the Relief Committee for Democratic Greece, undated, 13 f. See also Tohma and Reinke, '"Like We Would Help Brothers or Sisters"', 16–18.
28 BArch, DY 30 IV 2/2.022/120, report about the Relief Committee's activities, undated (probably February 1949), fols. 19–28, here fol. 19.
29 BArch, DY 30 IV 2/2.022/120, report about the Relief Committee's activities, undated (probably February 1949), fol. 20, and BArch DY 30 IV 2/2.022/120, report about the meeting of secretaries, fol. 34.
30 BArch, DY 30/IV 2/2.1/236, Protocol no. 116 (II), 27 September 1948, annex no. 2.
31 For an overview on the East German party system and the bloc parties, see Siegfried Suckut, *Blockparteien und Blockpolitik in der SBZ/DDR, 1945–1990* (Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 2018).
32 BArch DY 30 IV 2/2.022/120, report on the work of the Relief Committees, fol. 1, quote fol. 7.
33 See for instance SächsHStA, 11393 LRS, Ministerium für Handel und Versorgung, no. 054, minutes of a meeting of the Saxon Relief Committee, 9 March 1949.
34 Cf. also Tohma and Reinke, '"Like We Would Help Brothers or Sisters"', 22 f.
35 For the delegation and the itinerary see BArch, DY 30 IV 2/2.022/120, fols. 16 f. For a detailed schedule of the entire tour, see BArch, DY 30 IV 2/2.022/120, fols. 29–31. Cf. also Stergiou, 'Der Griechische Bürgerkrieg', 243 f.
36 BArch, DY 30 IV 2/2.022/120, proclamation of the Relief Committee, fol. 13.

37 BArch, DY 30 IV 2/2.022/120, report about the Relief Committee's activities, fol. 23.
38 BArch, DY 30 IV 2/2.022/120, report about the Relief Committee's activities, fol. 25. For the 'Internationale', see Nicholas John Cull, '"The Internationale" (1871–1888)', in Nicholas John Cull, David Holbrook Culbert and David Welch (eds), *Propaganda and Mass Persuasion: A Historical Encyclopedia, 1500 to the Present* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2003), 181–2.
39 For this incident, see BArch, DY 30 IV 2/2.022/120, report about the Relief Committee's activities, fol. 25.
40 SächsHStA, SED-Landesleitung, Abteilung Agitation, IV/A/2/7, Hilfskomitee für das demokratische Griechenland, A/325, fol. 017.
41 BArch, DY 30 IV 2/2.022/120, report about the Relief Committee's activities, fol. 25.
42 BArch, DY 30 IV 2/2.022/120, report about the Relief Committee's activities, fol. 25.
43 For the founding process of the most relevant regional Relief Committee of the Land Saxony, see SächsHStA, SED-Landesleitung, Abteilung Agitation, IV/A/2/7, Hilfskomitee für das demokratische Griechenland, A/325, fols. 001–008.
44 BArch, DY 30 IV 2/2.022/120, report about the Relief Committee's activities, fol. 22. More than a dozen of the collection lists recording individual donations have survived in the file General Secretariat of the VVN, BArch DY 55/ 398.
45 SächsHStA, 11393 LRS, Ministerium für Handel und Versorgung, no. 023.
46 Witkowski, 'Between Fighters and Beggars', 79.
47 One of the closest examples, although still focusing on denouncing the enemy crimes, is Irma Nawrotzki and Peter Lefhold, 'Die faschistischen Mörder landen auf dem Schafott', *Neues Deutschland*, 30 September 1949, 4.
48 'Help the democratic Greece', poster, SächsHStA, SED-Landesleitung, Abteilung Agitation, IV/A/2/7, Hilfskomitee für das demokratische Griechenland, A/325, fol. 019.
49 Witkowski, 'Between Fighters and Beggars', 79.
50 Philipp Ther, *Deutsche und polnische Vertriebene: Gesellschaft und Vertriebenenpolitik in der SBZ/DDR und in Polen 1945–1956* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998), 211 and 265, cf. also 152.
51 BArch, DY 30/IV 2/2.1/257, Protocol no. 139 (II), 27 December 1948, 2.
52 For example by Helmut Lehmann as president of the *Volkssolidarität*, BArch DY 67/2 'Geschichte der Volkssolidarität, 1949–1950', 4. Cf. also Andrea Hammel, 'Child Refugees Forever? The History of the Kindertransport to Britain 1938/39', *Diskurs Kindheits- und Jugendforschung/Discourse: Journal of Childhood and Adolescence Research*, 5:2 (2010), 131–43; and Jennifer Craig-Norton, *The Kindertransport: Contesting Memory* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2019).
53 BArch DY 30 IV 2/2.022/120, report about the meeting of secretaries, fol. 37.

54 Cf. Stergiou, 'Der Griechische Bürgerkrieg', 249 f.
55 This number was actually published in a short note in *Neues Deutschland*, 3 February 1949.
56 BArch DY 30 IV 2/2.022/120, report about the meeting of secretaries, fol. 42.
57 SächsHStA, SED-Landesleitung, Abteilung Agitation, IV/A/2/7, Hilfskomitee für das demokratische Griechenland, A/325, fol. 030, minutes of a meeting, 25 January 1950.
58 SächsHStA, 11393 LRS, Ministerium für Handel und Versorgung, no. 54, Annual Report of the Relief Committee, Saxony, 9.
59 For context on the association, see Reuter and Hansel, *Das kurze Leben der VVN*.
60 SächsHStA, 11393 LRS, Ministerium für Handel und Versorgung, no. 54, Annual Report, 6.
61 See for instance BArch DY 30 IV 2/2.022/120, report about the meeting of secretaries, fol. 44, and the promotional poster 'Dein Sonderbeitrag verteidigt den Frieden', Hilfskomitee für das demokratische Griechenland, June 1949, BArch Plak 100-043-023. Some of these special issue stamps have survived in a file of the General Secretariat of the VVN, BArch DY 55/ 398. According to a list from 25 May 1950, the VVN reached the highest rate in selling their share – 98 per cent – while the SED with a rate of 18 per cent only ranked fourth behind VVN, FDGB and DFD.
62 Sächsisches Staatsarchiv, Staatsarchiv Leipzig (hereafter SächsStAL), 20236 Kreistag/Kreisrat Rochlitz, Nr. 0069, minutes of a meeting of the District Relief Committee, 8 December 1949.
63 For two such examples, see SächsHStA, SED-Landesleitung, Abteilung Agitation, IV/A/2/7, Hilfskomitee für das demokratische Griechenland, A/325, fols. 002–007, as well as Tohma and Reinke, '"Like We Would Help Brothers or Sisters"', 10.
64 SächsHStA, SED-Landesleitung, Abteilung Agitation, IV/A/2/7, Hilfskomitee für das demokratische Griechenland, A/325, fol. 022.
65 Hagen Fleischer [Chryssoula Kambas (ed.)], *Krieg und Nachkrieg. Das schwierige deutsch-griechische Jahrhundert* (Vienna, Cologne and Weimar: Böhlau Verlag, 2020), 109–14.
66 BArch DY 30 IV 2/2.022/120, report about the meeting of secretaries, fol. 37. Also cited in Stergiou, 'Der Griechische Bürgerkrieg', 244.
67 SächsHStA, SED-Landesleitung, Abteilung Agitation, IV/A/2/7, Hilfskomitee für das demokratische Griechenland, A/325, fols. 013–016, report about the rallies … in Saxony, 17 February 1949, fol. 014.
68 SächsHStA, SED-Landesleitung, Abteilung Agitation, IV/A/2/7, Hilfskomitee für das demokratische Griechenland, A/325, fols. 013–016, report about the rallies … in Saxony, 17 February 1949, fol. 014.
69 SächsHStA, SED-Landesleitung, Abteilung Agitation, IV/A/2/7, Hilfskomitee für das demokratische Griechenland, A/325, fols. 013–016, report about the rallies … in Saxony, 17 February 1949, fol. 014.

70 Jörg Echternkamp, 'Die Ahndung von NS- und Kriegsverbrechen in der SBZ/DDR', Bundeszentrale für Politische Bildung/bpb (ed.), *Dossier Zweiter Weltkrieg* (Bonn, 2015), www.bpb.de/themen/nationalsozialismus-zweiter-weltkrieg/der-zweite-weltkrieg/211771/die-ahndung-von-ns-und-kriegsverbrechen-in-der-sbz-ddr/

71 This is how Andreas Stergiou described the refugees' reaction, Stergiou, 'Der Griechische Bürgerkrieg', 250. See also Panoussi, *Politisches Exil*, 60 f.

72 Konstantinos Tsimoudis, *Eine neugriechische Odyssee: Autobiographie* (Alexandroupolis: self-published, 1998), 120. See also Danforth and van Boeschoten, *Children of the Greek Civil War*, 49.

73 Poutrus, 'Hort der internationalen Solidarität', 136, emphasis added.

74 SächsHStA, SED-Landesleitung, Abteilung Agitation, IV/A/2/7, Hilfskomitee für das demokratische Griechenland, A/325, fols. 028 f., call of the regional committee Saxony, quote on fol. 028. This argument was also used to close ranks with the CDU, see Tohma and Reinke, '"Like We Would Help Brothers or Sisters"', 22 f.

75 SächsHStA, 11401 LRS, MfV, Nr. 2784, script of a speech, 6 August 1949, 2.

76 Troebst, 'Griechenlandkinder-Aktion', 268, who has argued that this contributed significantly to the Germans' willingness to donate for the humanitarian aid. Cf. also Stergiou, 'Der Griechische Bürgerkrieg', 243 f.

77 BArch, DY 30 IV 2/2.022/120, report about the Relief Committee's activities, fol. 25.

78 'Griechische Kinder an die Deutsche Regierung', *Neues Deutschland*, 16 November 1949, 1.

79 SächsHStA, 11393 LRS, Ministerium für Handel und Versorgung, no. 54, Annual Report of the Relief Committee, Saxony, 4.

80 Mary Fulbrook, *Ein ganz normales Leben: Alltag und Gesellschaft in der DDR*, 2nd edition (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2011), 108, 219–23.

81 SächsHStA, 11393 LRS, Ministerium für Handel und Versorgung, Nr. 054, report … for August and September 1949, 10 October 1949, 1.

82 Volker Ackermann, *Der 'echte' Flüchtling: Deutsche Vertriebene und Flüchtlinge aus der DDR 1945–1961* (Osnabrück: Universitätsverlag Rasch, 1995), 13; Andreas Kossert, *Kalte Heimat: Die Geschichte der deutschen Vertriebenen nach 1945* (Munich: bpb, 2008), 196.

83 For a critical discussion of this terminology see Ther, *Deutsche und polnische Vertriebene*, 88–100, especially 91 f.

84 For other examples of competition between refugee groups see Tara Zahra, '"Prisoners of the Postwar": Expellees, Displaced Persons, and Jews in Austria after World War II', *Austrian History Yearbook* 41 (2010), 191–215.

85 SächsHStA, SED-Landesleitung, Abteilung Agitation, IV/A/2/7, Hilfskomitee für das demokratische Griechenland, A/325, fol. 021, internal letter, 17 March 1949.

86 SächsHStA, SED-Landesleitung, Abteilung Agitation, IV/A/2/7, Hilfskomitee für das demokratische Griechenland, A/325, fols. 013–016, report about the rallies … in Saxony, 17 February 1949, quote fol. 015.
87 SächsHStA, 11401 LRS, MfV, Nr. 2228, letter of the CDU, undated [March 1949].
88 'Griechische Kinderheimat Radebeul: Gastfreundschaft Gebot der Menschlichkeit', *Sächsische Zeitung*, 17 July 1950, 4, emphasis added.
89 Kossert, *Kalte Heimat*. For cases of discrimination and the 'competition for resources', see also Ther, *Deutsche und polnische Vertriebene*, especially 282–90.
90 Andreas Kossert, *Flucht: Eine Menschheitsgeschichte* (Munich: Siedler Verlag, 2020), 222.
91 Kossert, *Flucht*, 222. See also Christoph F. Königs, *Internalisierung der Esskultur zwischen Mangel, Überfluss, Diversität und Innovationen am Beispiel der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (Aachen: Shaker Verlag, 2014), 57–87, specifically 63, for the '[s]ignificance of food supply for the integration of the refugees and expellees'.
92 Most infamously, they were called 'Polacken', cf. Ther, *Deutsche und polnische Vertriebene*, 290–3.
93 Philipp Ther, *Die Außenseiter: Flucht, Flüchtlinge und Integration im modernen Europa* (Berlin: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2017), 14.
94 For his biography, see Nora Goldenbogen, 'Leon Löwenkopf, erster Vorsitzender der Jüdischen Gemeinde zu Dresden nach der Shoah. Versuch einer Annäherung', in Susanne Schönborn (ed.), *Zwischen Erinnerung und Neubeginn: Zur deutsch-jüdischen Geschichte nach 1945* (Munich: Martin Meidenbauer, 2006), 92–110.
95 SächsHStA, 11393 LRS, Ministerium für Handel und Versorgung, no. 54, minutes of the meeting, 9 March 1949, 4.
96 SächsHStA, 11393 LRS, Ministerium für Handel und Versorgung, no. 54, minutes of the meeting, 9 March 1949, 4.
97 Official evidence asking to adopt a Greek child is not known; however, the fact that the committee informed that 'in individual homes, no children are being accommodated', points to perhaps such requests, see SächsStAL, 20236 Kreistag/Kreisrat Rochlitz, Nr. 0069, Relief Committee Land Saxony, Circular No. 1, 23 May 1949, 2.
98 SächsStAL, 20236 Kreistag/Kreisrat Rochlitz, Nr. 0069, Relief Committee Land Saxony, Circular No. 1, 23 May 1949, 2.
99 Gregory R. Witkowski, '"Unser Tisch ist besser gedeckt": Ostdeutsche Philanthropie und Wohltätigkeit, 1959–1989', in Thomas Adam, Simone Lässig and Gabriele Lingelbach (eds), *Stifter, Spender und Mäzene: USA und Deutschland im historischen Vergleich* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2009), 313–33, 317.
100 Brunner, 'DDR 'transnational', 72.
101 Stergiou, 'Der griechische Bürgerkrieg', 249.

102 Cf. the section 'In Search of Internationalist Unity', in Tohma and Reinke, '"Like We Would Help Brothers or Sisters"', 24–7.

103 SächsHStA, 11857 SED-Bezirksleitung Dresden, IV/D/2.18 Nr. 791 (1973–1981), 'Official Speech at the Central Celebration by the Greek Political Emigrants in the GDR, Devoted to the 30th Anniversary of the GDR and the 30 Year Political Emigration', Dresden, 29 September 1979.

104 Paulmann, 'Conjunctures in the History', 215.

Part III

Transnational humanitarianism

7

How to leave Central Europe? Transnational, humanitarian state building and the post-Habsburg transition

Gábor Egry

The national languages of Central Europe, so cautiously defended before 1918 from the smallest iota of foreign interference that could allegedly turn them into the means of denationalization, were uniformly enriched by a new English term in 1919: American Relief Administration (ARA). These three words figured in official documents and newspaper articles, in magazines and on stationery and cheques, to begin with. In carefully crafted image campaigns, and not infrequently for the political gains of local politicians, festive orations and private letters exuded gratefulness to the ARA, telling how for millions of the inhabitants of war-torn Europe – including the successor states of Austria-Hungary – these three words meant basic nutrition, basic clothing and basic healthcare. Furthermore, local societies were mobilized by and for the ARA humanitarian mission, enhancing the positive reception of the organization and strengthening its image with publicity campaigns. As if its activities in East Central Europe were not enough, since the end of 1921, the ARA's Russian Mission helped to solidify the organization's image both to the American and the European public as an expression of American economic might and moral mission. This mission became a kind of ultimate proof after it was portrayed as dangerous because of the vile nature of the Bolsheviks, exotic because of the distant regions it reached and the unimaginable destitution and morally paramount as an example of lending aid to one's arch-enemy.[1]

Therefore, it is not surprising that the end of ARA activity in these countries, and the leaving of its personnel, whose faces were often familiar from the media, was not just widely covered but often presented as leaving a void. This was not just among the social circles devoted to making life better for the destitute but in material terms: as money, food and equipment. From the perspective of the organization, it was often rather the beginning, as the longer they stayed – despite initial ideas of getting in and getting out[2] – the more they turned from classic humanitarianism and momentary relief activities to development and state building.[3]

The historiography of post-First World War humanitarianism has long acknowledged this fact, while it also deconstructed and reconstructed the idyllic portrayal of the multiple relief efforts of the period. More recent literature is also explicitly critical of the politics of the ARA. Its political economy was based on disposing of surplus goods and leftover military provisions without depressing prices for American farmers, while several ARA actors pondered the possibility of gaining economic influence within the new states. Within the complex new international order, transnational but still mostly Western relief efforts raised questions of sovereignty, including the potential perpetuation of imperialism, including the use of humanitarian aid as a means of avoiding radical political changes. Finally, some recent works argue that humanitarian activities were not devoid of civilizational or even racial hierarchies when it came to imagining these societies and their capacities for self-relief.[4] (This turn is not without an ironic twist, as the arguments about economic considerations underlying humanitarian work often echo Soviet and socialist historiography from the 1950s and 1960s.[5])

In this chapter I weave some of these threads together to highlight the role of transnational humanitarianism, and specifically the ARA, in the state-building efforts of the post-Habsburg successor states. My starting point is the ARA's exit and what it wanted to leave behind in different countries. As it was from the beginning concerned with the state of welfare institutions, the exit became a serious problem. It was not the case that similar efforts were to automatically continue in countries under economic stress and even less that any continuation would abide by the norms of the ARA – considered to be a kind of gold standard with a highly efficient, scientific approach. Thus, the exit is an opportunity to grasp how the ARA perceived the perpetuation of its efforts as a modern welfare system but on a more solid institutional basis, under the management of states that were assessed individually according to their assumed efficiency and social capacity for welfare.

To understand the difference in exit strategies beyond the stereotypical but highly variegated images of backwardness and civilization within the region itself, I go back to the modus operandi of the ARA. I argue that its special status and extended economic and communication-managing role in the region made it a postimperial and transnational institution that was different from humanitarian organizations such as the Red Cross or Lady Muriel Paget's Anglo-Czech Relief Fund. Even though some of its leaders, most notably the Quaker Herbert Hoover, were driven by their Christian faith, a strong moral motive of classic humanitarianism, meaning rapid intervention in times of urgent need due to natural catastrophe or political developments, the ARA as an institution was part and a manifestation of

the changes in humanitarian intervention during and at the wake of the First World War. Most important were the transnationalization of action – unlike the state-centred aid from of the previous period – institutionalization and the professionalization within these institutions.[6] However, the ARA's activity went beyond even this new form of humanitarian intervention, not only in terms of its resources but with regard to its capacities and the extent to which its leaders envisioned a complex reorganization of Central and Eastern Europe, which reached well beyond the narrow sphere of humanitarian relief. Part of this vision was the stabilization of society, which was more than just simplistic anti-Bolshevism: it was inextricably entangled with state building and a reconstruction of Central Europe as a functioning economic space.

Throughout its efforts, the ARA dealt with several forms of social issues, and often with conflicts, but most importantly it gradually refocused its activities towards the middle classes.[7] In this way it was a precursor of the middle-class focused welfare policies typical for many of the interwar successor states, both as a means of social stabilization and as a result of the middle class's role in revolutions and radical reconfigurations.[8] But the differences do not suggest a uniform categorization of these states from the outside as backward. Based on local experiences, including the social affinities and personal relations of ARA actors, a dividing line was drawn between Austria, Czechoslovakia and Hungary (even though exits were different there too) and Romania.

This dividing line was mostly the result of the ARA's perception, and not necessarily of real differences in how these states, and more importantly how these societies, were organized and operated around charity, humanitarianism, social assistance and welfare. In this chapter I highlight what the region looked like from this specific perspective, although the views presented within the ARA were far from uniform. The organization was not only extensive in geographic terms, it was complex too, as it united under its umbrella organizations that were institutionally and financially separated from the general ARA, such as the European Children's Fund. Thus, there were offices in continental centres and national capitals, representatives in port cities and agents touring the country, reporting on conditions and drafting proposals for action. Naturally, they held variegated views on several issues, such as the efficiency of local organizations or the potential of state administration, and sometimes the differences were not only in the details. Still, the fact that everywhere the ARA exit was official business preceded by negotiations with national governments, it is not unjustified to conceive the existence of an institutional opinion: one that might have been changing over time too.

Entry to the scene

Wartime depredation in Europe generated relief efforts well before the end of the Great War. Not coincidentally, it was Herbert Hoover, later the head of the ARA, who managed the relief effort in German-occupied Belgium, an important source of experience in navigating the waters of diplomacy and managing local actors. While the Committee for Relief in Belgium was deliberately positioned as a private humanitarian action in a small geographic space, the situation of Europe at the end of 1918 called for a much larger and more concerted effort.[9]

Hoover convinced President Woodrow Wilson to establish the ARA, which was enshrined in a law passed by Congress on 24 February 1919.[10] The ARA received $100 million as congressional appropriation, but the same legislation barred it from providing relief to the defeated countries. Still, even with this initial restriction, the scope of its operation was practically all of Europe – to be expanded to defeated counries, the Near East and Soviet Russia subsequently.[11] In 1920 its activity entailed twenty-one countries in Europe, and already in the first nine months of its existence it delivered four million tons of food to Europe.[12] Moreover, the actual distribution of the food was just a small part of its activities. Hoover and his team took over the coordination of logistics that started with the acquisition of shipping tonnage, control of port facilities and upland river shipping routes, transportation from ports on land by train or freight vehicles and the management of storehouses. To tackle the energy crisis, it surveyed coal fields and coordinated efforts of exploitation. As the operation of the ARA extended to ever more countries, the initially appropriated subsidy was running out, and the ARA looked for alternative financial resources. It brokered agreements with the US Treasury for loans for individual countries, facilitated negotiations with the French and British governments for credit, established a money transfer scheme connecting US private banks with European private and central banks for sending remittances and started to draft plans for the revival of trade within Europe, especially as it located one of the problems of provisioning in the lack of foreign currency held by states that would have enabled them to import food from overseas.[13] Finally, with its means and presence all over Europe and the Near East, it coordinated other, private humanitarian efforts.[14] The stated goal of ARA activities was to reinstate trade, restart economies and enable the successor states to provision their own population as soon as possible: a return to an idealized liberal order.

It is thus not surprising that the ARA – which was originally a state institution – developed into a large conglomerate incorporating state, private, international (facilitating cooperation between states) and

transnational (managing flows and processes across borders and between societies) features. Not only did the branches of its main body cover all European capitals and regional hubs but also its representatives were touring the countryside. The railways of Central Europe (rolling stock, coal, tracks) were supervised by its Railway Mission, coal mines by its Coal Mission.[15] The ARA centre made arrangements with allied and neutral governments for dispatching freighter ships and coordinated their routes according to provisioning needs. It negotiated cooperation with other relief organizations, such as the Red Cross, the Young Men's and Young Women's Christian Associations, the Commonwealth Fund and the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC). These arrangements were not only about donations; often they included the sharing of responsibility for the provisioning of certain regions.[16]

On the ground the ARA was represented by directors of country offices that were staffed with a small number of American personnel, mostly from the army, but not professional soldiers. It was usual to send people with knowledge of the local languages, while some of the office staff was drawn from among the locals. The European actions were coordinated by a European director, Walter Lyman Brown, and his assistant director, William Fuller Jr. The American directorate in New York was managed by Edgar Rickard as long as Hoover was away. At the top of the organization was a board, with members of various expertise, such as Alonzo E. Taylor, a psychical chemist and nutrition expert, and Colonel James A. Logan, a career officer and logistics expert who had an outsized influence on the Central and Eastern European operations, for example in the negotiations with the Hungarian Republic of Soviets. Thus, the ARA tried to combine various fields of expertise at the higher levels, while relying on people with organizational skills and language capabilities at the lower ones.[17]

At the state level, the ARA was often joined by interallied relief commissions conceived by the representatives of the British, French and Italian governments. The ARA missions operated under an agreement with the respective governments that defined the mutual contributions and obligations, including how the government was to finance food purchases from the US beyond that distributed from the initial $100 million at the ARA's disposal or the child feeding that was managed by the ARA European Children's Fund (ECF), whose revenues were mostly charity based.[18] It rarely happened without conflicts with the government and among the other actors on the ground. To gain prominence and power, the ARA could rely on two indirectly interrelated factors: the economic might of the US and its position as an honest broker among European great powers, who often had more direct economic and political interests in the respective countries. Exemplary in this regard was the case of Romania, where initially French

General Henri Mathias Berthelot (an iconic hero for Romania as he was the commander of the Romanian front) claimed to have sole authority over public provisioning. Later, the French government set conditions for financial support for Romania that were felt by the Romanians to mean economic exploitation and subordination.[19] While not always innocent of planning to use the leverage of relief for American economic aims, the ARA was often the least involved or the most distant actor, whose prominence within relief was still the most convenient for governments fearful of external limitations on their newly acquired sovereignty.[20]

Finally, the ARA constituted a vast network of cooperation with individuals and agents who supplied the regional, European and US centres with information on a much larger scale than the diplomatic services were capable of. They reached remote and barely accessible regions, such as Subcarpathian Rus,[21] surveyed the nutrition situation in Moldavian villages or collected data on the copper and steel cable demands of mines in the Ostrava region. Not only did information collection happened on the ground but it was also a major policy of the ARA to cooperate with local organizations in arranging relief and provisioning.[22] It acted like a state, cooperated with states and managed relations between states. Not surprisingly, it had a vision for state and society too.

Imagining the world of Central and Eastern Europe

Humanitarianism – despite all the material interests at play – is a deeply moral phenomenon derived from firmly held convictions regarding good and bad, right and wrong, and mobilizing people in a very concrete sense, up to personal involvement in humanitarian action.[23] This kind of traditional humanitarianism was very much part of the ARA at its highest level. The head of the administration, Herbert Hoover, was well known for his Quaker faith and its imprint on his actions. Thus, his worldview defined the broader ideas of the organization's modus operandi, most importantly the notion that after initial help people and communities should find ways to help themselves and overcome their destitution on their own, instead of relying on external help permanently.

In a sense it created an almost irresolvable tension in the operation of the ARA in not only a practical but also a more principled sense. Not only was the huge post-First World War relief effort a manifestation of the development which Cabanes calls the 'assertion of humanitarian rights'.[24] The ARA was much more than a relief organization, and it appropriated and exercised functions that were associated with statehood and attaining sovereignty, making it almost self-evidently a state builder that was also

involved in how new welfare rights were negotiated. This aspect of its operations entailed the horizon of permanency even if its original idea was going in and getting out.[25] Moreover, local actors and more often than not its own local agents had a vested interest of extending its operation beyond the initially set short deadlines, leading to a series of conflicts about exit dates everywhere in Central and Eastern Europe. It was hardly surprising, given the ethical aspects of humanitarianism, that not only did local representatives of the ARA use moral arguments in favour of extension but local actors could mobilize the public too. As long as destitution was real and threatened groups generally identified as extremely vulnerable (e.g. children, war widows), it was always hard to promote an abrupt ending to relief and social assistance, even if the counterargument to this rather liberal concept of relief was moralistic (although in a conservative sense too). Namely, there was a need to create internal structures and allocate resources, because otherwise the permanent external assistance would degrade the will of individuals and societies to work for themselves, effectively making them rent-seekers.[26]

Thus, it was almost inevitable that the ARA would get involved in state building, even though there were also several practical reasons to do it. Its presence and vast resources (at least if contrasted to national resources), and its ability to act internationally and transnationally, were indispensable for the successor states that also faced public demand for extended welfare. Welfare policies were, on the one hand, reactions to wartime experiences and, on the other, also core elements of the political programmes of many of the newly dominant political parties (Social and Christian Democrats, Agrarians, Czech National Socialists, etc.) which gained prominence and power with the revolutionary sweeping away of Austria-Hungary.

Therefore, the question of how welfare should be organized was a matter of state building from the very beginning of the ARA's involvement, and its specifics directly spoke to the question of how societies should be organized and reorganized. Two important questions lingered in the background from the very beginning of the ARA's action: the role of non-state, mostly local civic actors and the place of welfare institutions within the state. As for the non-state actors, the ARA's insistence on cooperating with these organizations simultaneously empowered them and contributed to a reorganization of local societies institutionally and in terms of prestige and social position. For example, in Hungary and Austria, ARA representatives were usually satisfied with cooperating with existing associations, often speaking highly of their work,[27] whereas in certain areas of Czechoslovakia the ARA initiated a drive to establish local organizations for child feeding, giving its representatives a template of how to organize one. While the ARA explicitly encouraged them to find people with high prestige, it was still an

intervention into local society, providing resources for some groups over others. Sometimes such meddling happened very clearly to the detriment of local elite figures. When the ARA managed to unify child-feeding norms across Austria, it meant to change the feeding method in Graz, where university professor Franz Hamburger rejected Clemens von Pirquets so-called NEM (*Nahrungseinheit-Milch*) system for measuring nutrition value of food.[28] Unification meant first the implementation of NEM and later the withdrawal of Hamburger from child feeding.[29]

But the ARA's activity affected the state more broadly, leading to conflicts in this regard as well. While state building soon turned out to be a mutual aim of ARA and the governments, the scope, role and position of the newly built institutions remained contested. Some aspects of the ARA's activity and its plans were at odds with what governments thought regarding their own sovereignty. They saw the ARA's insistence on independence from the government, or its conditions for loans, as just as hurtful as liberation from influences they deemed even worse than the ARA or the US.[30] In federal states the case was further complicated by the tensions between federal units and the central government. The Austrian child-feeding system was first created with subunits at the level of federal units and was highly dependent on these provincial governments, which was later abolished as independent actors were unified within a centralized federal-level system. But unification, especially if it happened under a central organ that was connected to the central government, also meant curtailing the rights of the provinces. And the central government and the provinces still had to share the burden of the Austrian contribution to the relief programmes.[31]

One of the reasons the ARA remained entangled in tensions and conflicts was that its governing principle of self-help and self-sufficiency of social assistance remained ambiguous throughout its activity. While it was hard to imagine a return to the classic charitable model of social assistance, there were competing ideas and models of the emerging welfare paradigm. The role of international actors, the role of society and the role of the state were conceived differently by those who were involved in its planning, organization and distribution, making relief and its ultimate control contested.

Furthermore, the alternatives of social and moral order were hard to disentangle within the views the ARA promoted – even if its officials may have had different opinions. They considered relief a moral obligation but they also feared that receiving aid could cause moral problems among recipients, mostly through various forms of rent seeking and weaker interest in work that would finally hinder the regeneration of society that was supposed to take back the moral responsibility for the needy from the ARA. After the first, more inclusive phase of activity, focusing on children offered a consensual focal point that was easier to sell to everyone because of the image of

children as innocent victims who were in need of tutelage. But the perceived family of ARA officials and their local partners was again not uniform. Were parents just inherently lazy – as some ARA officials saw them – and would they sell the food their children got back home, and therefore it was necessary to keep feeding in public kitchens where the children consumed what was their due, while adult family members were cut out from relief? Or was it better to provide for adult family members, who would gain strength to find a job and cater for the family on their own?[32] These questions plagued the ARA's relief operation and revealed much deeper differences regarding visions of society among all involved.

Nominally, the ARA promoted equality in terms of access to its relief efforts, and the scope of its basic activities was certainly exceptionally broad, serving millions of meals per year in every country. But from the very beginning an implicit social hierarchy was created based on the perception of what was valuable work for society and what was not. Moreover, the ARA worked mostly with middle-class-dominated local organizations, again entrenching social differences in its work,[33] and such connections often helped to create images of the destitute and refugee populations that served the goals of national governments through a deliberate misconceptualization of them as predominantly middle class.[34]

Gradually, the ARA teamed up with private organizations – most importantly with the Commonwealth Fund and the JDC – to start an operation targeting the middle class, which became the so-called intelligentsia relief in Austria, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Hungary and the Baltic states. This arm of its operation provided separate feeding schemes (if possible, in separate spaces, in middle-class, professors' and students' kitchens and canteens), and adequate clothing for middle-class individuals whose social status has fallen relative to workers during the war and revolution.[35] The justification for this separate treatment was the threat of Bolshevism, the fear that the middle classes, if left alone with their poverty, would either remain weak to contain communism or itself get revolutionized.[36] As an undated report from 1922, formulated regarding the intelligentsia action's continuation, stated: 'The continuation of this work is necessary and the economic conditions of Austria should soon show a sufficient improvement to permit some form of continuation under Austrian auspices. If this improvement does not come, these classes will continue to endure untold sufferings and the world will be the loser.'[37]

One way to reconcile the conflicting views was to focus on the efficiency of the relief effort. Looking at the ARA's activity through this lens connected values with state capacity and allowed an evaluation of both the ARA and local actors. It proved to be a useful argument when it came to jurisdictional quarrels (e.g. in Austria between federal and provincial governments), as

a way of criticizing national governments (e.g. in Poland or in Romania) and as a means of comparing states across Central and Eastern Europe. It reconciled national and transnational efforts of state building as it offered a common ground for negotiating outcomes and institutions.[38]

There was another consequence of bringing efficiency to the fore: it emphasized the role of knowledge and expertise, that is, technocracy. Very much in line with developments in other spheres,[39] the ARA as an external, transnational and international actor preferred a technocratic approach, and often it explicitly made it its goal to disentangle relief and welfare from politics. This was part of their plan in Austria, where they saw welfare threatened by rivalries between provinces and federal government, and by party politics,[40] in Czechoslovakia, where they wanted to avoid the pitfalls of ethnic rivalry between Czech and German child relief associations,[41] or even in Romania, where ARA representatives saw party politics as the main reason of the incapacity of the state.

On a general level it was in line with developments that favoured the middle classes in the region. Relief was institutionally connected with wartime provisioning, an activity that was more and more based on science and that lent significant social capital to those involved with it, and visibly helped their post-First World War careers irrespective of the political regime.[42] Good organization skills, a career basis for local and provincial officials and politicians, were just as important as knowledge. In a sense the most divisive aspect was the ARA's intervention into knowledge creation with its embracement of the Pirquet system of feeding. While an improvement on the purely calorie-based systems, it was so focused on the child instead of the family and the social context that it remained quite contested, even in Pirquet's native Austria, where the Viennese social politician and public welfare senator Julius Tandler built an alternative system that focused on changing the social context of the family as a whole.[43] Still, the fact that the ARA deployed the Pirquet system almost everywhere changed the yardstick of state efficiency and enabled Pirquet to achieve institutional independence from the Austrian state besides the high prestige he enjoyed internationally. Similar developments happened within the field of public health, where erstwhile Habsburg health experts built an international network and integrated it into the League of Nations Health Organization,[44] while in Czechoslovakia President Masaryk's daughter and president of the Czechoslovak Red Cross, Alice Masaryková, played a crucial role as the key liaison for US-based foundations and the individual who could have brought together the rival civic associations too.[45]

What kind of state to leave behind?

The ARA's presence in Central and Eastern Europe – just like any adventure – came to an end despite efforts to extend it every year and practically indefinitely. As life seemed to return to a kind of normalcy – peace treaties signed, trade resumed, currencies stabilized and refugees redistributed and settled – the ARA offices started to close, from Bucharest to Vienna and Prague. However, as the ARA engaged in state building and managed a welfare system that was crucial for these societies, not only did it inevitably leave an imprint for years to come but it also intentionally contributed to the transformation of these states. The details of this change depended on several factors, but everywhere exit was anything but swift and certainly not just a series of emotional gestures and photo opportunities. Moreover, with efficiency – that of the relief and that of the state – as one of its key goals for attaining its broader vision of society (self-sufficiently operating a welfare system that reinforced social hierarchies with the middle class at the centre), the exit itself became a challenge for the organization and for its representatives, who often disagreed on its practical terms.

Most importantly, and in line with how temporary humanitarianism was replaced with new institutionalized rights, exit was in every case not seen as dismantling of the system built up but rather as a transition from ARA to national management, ensuring the stability and continuity of its operation.[46] Given the experience with operating institutions such as child feeding, student canteens, middle-class kitchens, warehouses and logistic centres within national contexts, stability not only meant the existence and financing of institutions but upholding the principles and keeping them out of political conflict, be it ethnic or social. What they needed were thus financing guarantees and legally binding obligations, not only for the sake of those who deserved aid further but also for the ARA to demonstrate positive changes. However, in light of the presumably different efficiency of the states and the capacity of their societies to sustain these institutions, exit could not be the same everywhere. Different exit strategies mirrored the perception of the individual states by the ARA.

It was probably the most palpable in Romania, where the ARA's mission was the shortest and where conflicts with the government abounded, mostly over issues of sovereignty and finance.[47] Nevertheless, ARA representatives for the early stages of the mission thought that Romania needed a permanent organization, mainly for child relief, that could be established together with other relief organizations, such as the American Red Cross.[48] Still, when the perpetuation of the operation based on a law was raised in 1919, at the first session of the Romanian Children's Relief Administration

by the Queen Marie, William Haskell (the ARA director for Romania) rejected the idea. His main motive was that according to his information, the plan was originally not the Queen's but came from the Southeast European representative of the American Red Cross, and its main purpose was to subordinate all other relief efforts to the Red Cross, while according to Haskell it was the ARA which created an efficient system of distribution and management with two months of hard work. Haskell had to ask for an audience to dissuade the Queen.[49]

Another reason for being cautious, with organizations operating under Romania's law and as quasi-state agencies, was probably the extremely negative view of Romania. It was regularly described as a hotbed of corruption, where everyone sought only their personal benefit and the state administration lacked any capacity. Even unloading ships had to be organized by the ARA representative in the port of Constanta, not to speak of delivering food from there on land to its destination. The ARA representative in the country, Joseph Green, prided himself with the idea that it was him who managed to establish an efficient state organization through his diplomatic prowess in handling acting Prime Minister Alexander Constantinescu,[50] who was otherwise a 'typical Romanian, slow in his movements, without very much initiative'.[51] Thus, it was not much to expect from the Romanian state, and the ARA finally settled on a solution for exit that demanded the creation of an umbrella organization, the Asociația Româna pentru Ajutor Copiilor (Romanian Child Relief Association, RCRA), for child assistance headed by Queen Marie.[52]

Haskell soon made a U-turn, and while some ARA personnel on the ground expressed enthusiasm about a law, the outcome was a compromise solution that meant the transfer of RCRA to a new organization, the Prince Mircea Society (Societate Principele Mircea), also headed by the Queen. It was a private association that was acknowledged by a decree-law as a juridical person, a status that entailed the right to enter into certain legal relationships reserved only for such organizations, but it was not a law about state social assistance and welfare. The society remained a private one, massively supported by state actors at all levels.[53] Despite the agreement on continuation, the relationship of the ARA and Romania remained tense, and state authorities occasionally harassed the ARA and ECF while its leaders at the central and local levels persistently criticized, often in a harsh tone, the inefficiency of Romanians, making, for example, comments about how all Romanians are crooked.[54] Finally, the exit meant abandoning the Pirquet system, which the ARA ECF considered the gold standard of child feeding, leaving the Prince Mircea Society working with a more holistic approach that considered moral issues within the family too.[55]

The opposite end of the spectrum was Austria and Czechoslovakia. As noted earlier, Austria certainly had a better reputation as a state, not least because of Clemens Pirquet. Thus, the state was presumed to be able to handle these issues because of its efficient organization down to the local schools, if it could rely on the necessary resources (much more than Poland, for example).[56] But internal divisions – among the parties and between experts – was an obstacle to overcome. It took a long series of negotiations with the federal president, Michael Hainisch, the leader of the Social Democrats, Karl Seitz, the chancellor and various ministers to find a compromise that was brought before the lower house of the federal parliament on 12 May 1922, only for it to be emptied because of the resistance of Vienna's Social Democratic government.[57]

The law required provinces to come up with one-third of the costs and hand over to a new, independent office, led by Pirquet, for the management of child feeding. The Vienna city leadership objected and rejected participation in the scheme. One reason for withdrawal was the alternative views of Julius Tandler, another the issue of control over Viennese city welfare institutions. Thus, for about a year after the ARA's exit in the summer of 1922, Austria was left without an operational state-wide child-feeding system, although they had a law and provinces and municipal governments continued to operate their own schemes.[58]

While the ARA initially considered the continuation of its programme in Czechoslovakia in cooperation with cities – they invited municipal administrations to take over their winter feeding programme for 1921–2 – at the beginning of 1922 they decided to press for national legislation that would make it clear that child feeding was the state's responsibility.[59] Achieving this outcome was hindered by conflicts here too.[60] The ethnic conflict between Czechs and Germans was overcome by pressure: the ARA practically conditioned further provision of resources on the establishing of an umbrella organization – headed by Alice Masaryková – that united German and Czech associations.[61] The dissolution of the Food Ministry was another problem, as hitherto it provided resources for the Péče o dítě (Child Care), the Czechoslovak child-feeding organization. It was also essential to convince associations irrespective of their nationality to join this new umbrella organization. Finally, the Péče o dítě, under the leadership of Alice Masaryková, was to merge with the Ochrana matek a kojenců (Protection of Mothers and Nurslings) and incorporate two ministerial officials among its leaders, before the parliament passed a law that enabled the ministry to provide resources for this new organization to continue the child feeding.[62] But the continued presence of the ARA – for assisting mostly Russian and Ukrainian refugees from collapsed and civil war-torn Russia – offered continued leverage too, making the transition swifter. What could have

been a more serious problem was the distance from the new provinces of Slovakia and Subcarpathian Rus, where the ARA previously had only a weak presence and where associational life was often Hungarian or German, with a leadership that was reluctant to cooperate with the new state because of fear of legitimizing it in these previously Hungarian territories. However, Czechoslovakia's swifter economic reconstruction made the problem much less pressing than in Austria or in Hungary.

The latter country became a third type of exit, somewhere in-between Romania and the Austrian/Czechoslovak case, as the ARA representatives on the ground were satisfied with the Hungarian institutions and associations and found in them likeminded actors. Furthermore, ARA activity very much concentrated on the capital Budapest;[63] there was no push for national legislation. Still, the ARA requested some form of guarantee of continuation (maybe it was the subject of the meeting between Walter Lyman Brown and Hungarian Minister of Public Welfare Nándor Bernolák on 2 July 1921),[64] which they received from the municipal government of Budapest. The city took over child feeding by 31 May 1922, after the parliament passed a law that allowed them to levy a so-called penury tax for the municipal budget and after the Ministry of Public Welfare promised support for the feeding kitchens.[65] While child feeding and intelligentsia relief remained a serious burden for the city, economic consolidation again pushed the issue in the background.

What do these different exit stories tell us about the ARA and state building in Central and Eastern Europe? The relationship between the ARA and the post-Habsburg states was always asymmetric, for several reasons. But this asymmetry was translated into the influence of the ARA on how these states organized their child feeding and broader welfare systems. How the ARA could or could not use its leverage to make these states comply with its expectations exemplifies not only their power relations but also how much the ARA was invested in its vision of society, which made it keen to conclude compromises with states that seemed to follow similar principles to that of the ARA's vision. Stability for the region was imagined through extended welfare and through strengthening the middle class, which could regain the visible signs of its former social status: fattier cheeks, softer bellies, quality shoes and overcoats. It was a counterrevolutionary effort, as long as it was juxtaposed with the Bolshevik Revolution, but in line with the social outcome of the revolutions in the Habsburg Monarchy, which involved and ultimately benefited the middle classes. A telling episode in this regard was that during a meeting discussing the continuation of intelligentsia relief in Austria, the Social Democratic speaker of the parliament, Karl Seitz, requested that the ARA finance separate hospital beds for the intelligentsia – a demand otherwise rejected because of the extreme costs of such a separation.[66]

State building in terms of expanding welfare was thus imagined asymmetrically, just as ARA officials envisioned their own operation: not least because state efficiency was connected with the capacity of this middle class too.

What did this mean for civilizational or even racial hierarchies? Recent historiography, as noted earlier, took a critical stance on post-First World War humanitarianism, arguing that it acted on assumptions of the inherent backwardness of the region, often even racializing the differences. As Tara Zahra wrote:

> Along with American values and anti-Communism, ARA workers brought unspoken prejudices to Eastern and Central Europe, depicting the region and its people as inherently backward, violent, and corrupt – in imagined opposition to American modernity and efficiency. These prejudices undercut their stated goals of facilitating self-help. ARA workers ultimately concluded that East Europeans did not have the capacity for self-government, that their backward culture, rather than war or material shortages, was the true source of hunger in Eastern Europe.[67]

This view is sometimes posited within the notion that the peace treaties were creating a situation in Central and Eastern Europe akin to that in the Ottoman Empire before the First World War.[68]

The lens offered by the ARA activity and its exit from the region proposes a different assessment, which reveals dividing lines of civilizational perception within the region, even though the actors within the ARA certainly held different views and sometimes offered opinions that were based on an essentialized understanding of the successor states and their titular nations. After years of experience, and after witnessing the threat of Bolshevism recede, ARA officials tended to think that at least some of these countries (e.g. Austria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary) were capable of establishing an efficient system of child welfare and temporarily tending to the middle class – a sign of being part of the West. Sometimes there was even a source of inspiration, as with the Pirquet system.

In doing so, they were aware of the issues that made these countries different from each other and presumably also from the West, which required special solutions to benefit state building – deep ethnic divisions in Czechoslovakia, social ones in Austria between Red Vienna and the federal government – but those seemed manageable. Occasionally this happened with a law, which was not seen necessary in Hungary. Romania, however, was seen by many ARA officials as being outside the group of such countries, and its assessment was defined by classic tropes of orientalist views of the Balkans. Here, restoring state efficiency was finally abandoned as a goal.

Curiously, in geographic terms the dividing lines run along the previous fault line separating the (post-)Ottoman Balkans and the more civilized

Habsburg realm. Thus, while the state efficiency criterion applied by the ARA acknowledged the more civilized nature of an important part of the region, in the end it still relapsed into an essentialized view of societies. It framed the region not as colonial or in need of being civilized but rather in a way that was closer to Maria Todorova's concept of the Balkans as a slope of perceived backwardness running from west to (south)east. After the ARA's exit, Central Europe was supposed to be composed of countries with welfare and social assistance as a new right of citizens, with others – most notably Romania – falling outside of its geographic scope due to deficiencies in state capacity that hindered the introduction of these rights. Transnational humanitarianism played the role of bridging state transformation towards a new regime of citizenship and welfare and to its new institutional set-up. The authority to measure and assess came from the ARA, with local agencies mostly left to implement the mobilization of local society. However, the ARA sources reveal at least one more important factor behind state assessment: personal affinities. This large organization moved around people in the whole area, and the personal impressions of those on the road, and their often conflictingly assumptions, almost naturally led to contradicting views. Moreover, having figures such as Pirquet on board and in a position of power easily led to the dismissal without proper scientific proof of alternative feeding and welfare methods which were ultimately scientifically superior. Despite being a huge transnational, international and quasi-state organization at the same time, the ARA remained a personal matter.

Notes

1 On the ARA portrayal see Friederike Kind-Kovács, *Budapest Children: Humanitarian Relief in the Aftermath of the Great War* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2022), 210–45; Bruno Cabanes, *The Great War and the Origins of Humanitarianism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 189–247; Michael Barnett, *Empire of Humanity: A History of Humanitarianism* (Ithaca, NY and London: Cornell University Press, 2011), 87.

2 Doina Anca Cretu, 'Humanitarian Aid in the "Bulwark against Bolshevism": The American Relief Administration and the Quest for Soveregnty in Post-World War I Romania', *Journal of Romanian Studies*, special issue, *Romania and the Paris Peace Conference (1919): Actors, Scenarios, Circulation of Knowledge*, 1:2 (2019), 65–88, 80.

3 Sara Silverstein, 'Reinventing International Health in East Central Europe: The League of Nations, State Sovereignty, and Universal Health', in Peter Becker and Natasha Wheatley (eds), *Remaking Central Europe: The League of Nations and the Former Habsburg Lands* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 71–98, 84–6.

4 Cretu, 'Humanitarian Aid', 70–1; Tara Zahra, *The Lost Children: Reconstructing Europe's Families after WWII* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), 38–42.
5 A. T. Kunyina, 'Az amerikai világuralmi tervek kudarca 1917–1920–ban', *Történettudományi Értesítő*, 2:7–9 (1951), 21–9; György Magos, 'Az amerikai imperialisták szerepe a Horthy-fasizmus stabilizálásában (1924–1929)', *Századok*, 86:1–4 (1952), 169–208.
6 Fabian Klose, *In the Cause of Humanity: A History of Humanitarian Intervention in the Long Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022), 4–6; Cabanes, *The Great War*, 3–7.
7 Franz Adlgasser, *American Individualism Abroad: Herbert Hoover, die American Relief Administration und Österreich, 1919–1923* (Vienna: VWGÖ, 1993).
8 Delcea, Sergiu, 'A Nation of Bureaucrats or a Nation of Workers? Welfare Benefits as Nation-Building Modernization Tools in Interwar Romania', *Journal of European Social Policy* 32:1 (2022), 70–95.
9 Cabanes, *The Great War*, 206–9.
10 Tibor Glant, Balázs Juhász and Balázs Ablonczy, 'Nemzetközi segély- és segítőakciók a volt Osztrák – Magyar Monarchia területén (1918–1923)', *Századok*, 152:6 (218), 1321–52, 1322.
11 Davide Rodogno, *Night on Earth: A History of Internationalism in the Near East 1918–1930* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022); Bertrand M. Patenaude, *The Big Show in Bololand: The American Relief Expedition to Soviet Russia in the Famine of 1921* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002).
12 Cabanes, *The Great War*, 211–14.
13 Doina Anca Cretu, 'Humanitarian Aid', 70; Adlgasser, *American Individualism*; Kind-Kovács, *Budapest's Children*, 168.
14 Silverstein, *Reinventing International Health*, 75.
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47 Cretu, 'Nationalizing International', 10–11.

48 ARAEO, box 375, folder 1, Haskell to Logan, 9 June 1919.

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8

Western perceptions of Czechoslovak humanitarian interactions under Nazi occupation, 1938–1939

Laura Brade

By October 1938, Czechoslovakia was experiencing a refugee crisis. The Munich Agreement ceded the Sudetenland border regions to Nazi Germany, sparking a mass movement of people from the territories under Nazi control. News of the refugees spread internationally. Prominent newspapers in both Great Britain and the US printed multiple reports per day about the Czechoslovak crisis, and within a few weeks groups in both countries had collected tens of thousands of dollars to support the refugees. New aid groups formed, notably the British Committee for Refugees in Czechoslovakia (BCRC) and the American Committee for Service in Czechoslovakia (ACSC), in part out of a desire to help but also driven by the belief that Czechoslovakia was 'obviously inadequately equipped to deal with the sudden flood of refugees'.[1]

These organizations and other transnational aid groups were crucial for facilitating emigration. However, transnational organizations sent only a handful of representatives and most only stayed in Prague and the immediate surroundings. If not for the crucial work of Czechoslovak organizations, transnational humanitarians would have had a limited impact. Yet these Czechoslovak actors play only a minor role in the documentation of American and British voluntary organizations. This chapter poses two questions. First, what was the relationship between Czechoslovak and transnational voluntary organizations? That is, which tasks did each group assume responsibility for in the effort to assist refugees? And second, how did transnational organizations perceive the humanitarian efforts of Czech-speaking, and especially Jewish, organizations?

In the period after the First World War, as Gábor Egry suggests, Western humanitarians such as the ARA perceived the Czechoslovakian nation-state as a competent partner in humanitarian aid. Western humanitarians frequently described Czechoslovak aid givers in this period as meeting humanitarian standards of efficiency, reliability and a 'point of view free from religious, political, and racial prejudice'.[2] After the Munich Agreement, Czechoslovakia's loss of (full) sovereignty changed

that perception. Western humanitarian organizations conflated the chaos of the environment – changing borders, regimes and policies – with the abilities and intentions of Czechoslovak Jewish humanitarians. The two main organizations – the BCRC and the ACSC – increasingly perceived Czechoslovak humanitarians, particularly Jews, as needy, demanding, disorganized and establishing ethnic hierarchies through a sectarian humanitarian structure.[3] The gap between Czechoslovak humanitarians' intentions and Western perceptions resulted in hierarchies of aid that were reinforced in the archival documentation.

This chapter primarily relies upon the records of Western humanitarian organizations: the BCRC and its successor organization, the Czech Refugee Trust Fund (CRTF), the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC), and the ACSC. The BCRC's and ACSC's perceptions of Czechoslovak humanitarians were quite similar, demonstrating an alignment with a Western sensibility of humanitarianism. The records of Czechoslovak organizations for this period are not as complete as the records for Western organizations, as many records were destroyed or vanished during the Nazi occupation. Thus, we need to read these Western sources *against the grain* to understand the full scope of activities of Czechoslovak humanitarians. I first looked for changes in perception over time. How did Western humanitarians describe their Czechoslovak counterparts when the country was a partner in distributing aid before the loss of (full sovereignty)? Second, I looked for documents written by Czechoslovak humanitarians within the records of the Western organizations, as well as in other collections. How did Czechoslovak humanitarians describe their own activities, and how were those actions represented (or not) in Western sources? Finally, I looked for Western humanitarians' characterizations of their Czechoslovak counterparts.

Current research on humanitarianism typically emphasizes the paternalistic mindset of Western humanitarians, who intervened with the expectation that their ideas and techniques should be taught to populations in parts of the world considered less developed.[4] More recently, scholars have turned their attention to East Central European humanitarians and their efforts to receive and distribute Western aid.[5] Recent work on refugees, the Holocaust and the Bohemian Lands have demonstrated that Czechoslovak initiatives were central to refugee support throughout the 1930s and during the period of the Nazi occupation of the Bohemian Lands.[6] Michal Frankl and Kateřina Čapková's important work on German and Austrian refugees in Czechoslovakia details how important Czechoslovak voluntary organizations were in supporting refugees fleeing to Czechoslovakia between 1933 and 1938.[7] Anna Hájková and Martin Šmok have led the effort to recognize the significant contributions of Czech Jewish social worker Marie Schmolka

to assist refugees fleeing Nazi persecution. Other historians – such as Tara Zahra, Jan Benda and Wolf Gruner – have discussed the interactions between refugees, the policies of the Czechoslovak state and transnational organizations between 1938 and 1939.

This chapter builds on this scholarship by exploring the relationship between Czechoslovak and transnational humanitarian groups to understand how the ethnic conflicts and nationalism that resulted in Czechoslovakia's loss of (full) sovereignty strengthened hierarchies of aid, as Czechoslovak humanitarians scrambled to distribute aid to meet both national priorities and Western expectations. Although they perceived themselves to be non-sectarian, Western humanitarians participated in 'the restructuring of citizenship along ethnonational lines', while criticizing Czechoslovak Jewish humanitarians for being too sectarian.[8] Yet local initiatives continued to function in fluid and collaborative ways as Czechoslovak humanitarians navigated these hierarchies and perceptions.[9] By critically evaluating the language American and British organizations used to describe Jewish humanitarians, this chapter reasserts the agency of Czechoslovak Jews in their own rescue by untangling the local, national and transnational humanitarian actors, priorities and practices contained within the archives of transnational humanitarian organizations.

Transnational aid in Czechoslovakia before 1938

Before Czechoslovakia became a country of flight, it was a country of refuge. As refugees from Nazi Germany fled in April and May 1933, Czechoslovak voluntary groups, largely based in Prague, formed to assist refugees in the absence of a coordinated state-sponsored response. By 1934, twenty-nine different refugee assistance organizations formed across Czechoslovakia, offering room and board to refugees, registering refugees with the police and ensuring that destitute refugees were not deported by the Czechoslovak state.[10] In some cases, refugees registered with multiple committees, resulting in several petitions on behalf of one refugee. This caused confusion and resulted in a great deal of overlapping work, which the organizations attempted to resolve by forming a coordinating body, the Comité National Tschéchoslovaque pour les réfugiés provenant d'Allemagne (National Committee for Refugees Coming from Germany or National Committee).[11] In this period before the Munich Agreement, Western humanitarian organizations partnered with Czechoslovak groups, praising them for their efficiency, dependability and ability to fairly distribute aid.

The American Jewish JDC, which had provided financial support to Jewish philanthropy since the founding of the First Czechoslovak Republic

in 1918, worked closely with the Czechoslovak National Committee. Since 1914, the JDC had supported 'coreligionists' around the world, providing temporary aid until communities could manage their own needs through local social work and philanthropy. After the First World War, JDC leaders believed that while East Europeans did not understand humanitarian principles, they could be taught through JDC supervision of local organizations.[12] In the Bohemian Lands, the transfer of responsibility happened rapidly, Czechoslovak organizations assuming primary responsibility of JDC relief programmes by 1921.[13] In the 1930s, the JDC provided financial support while recognizing that the labour and much of the funding for refugees from Germany and Austria came from Czechoslovak Jews.[14] By 1936, the JDC had sent over $1 million to Jewish organizations in Czechoslovakia, primarily funding programmes facilitating the further emigration of approximately 6,500 Germans Jewish refugees.[15] Following the advice of the JDC, Czech Jewish organizations centralized their activities for poor Czech Jews and refugees from Germany under a unified Social Institute.[16] The new organization was in many ways a model of JDC activities during this period: it received initial funding from the JDC and was subsequently supported primarily through local Jewish donations in its efforts to create social assistance programmes. While supportive of this new organization, the JDC also criticized the Social Institute for 'progressing slowly' due to 'little understanding of organized social work'.[17]

The JDC found partners in the Czech Jewish social workers Marie Schmolka and Hana Steiner, whose organized, efficient and internationally oriented vision of social work aligned well with the Western humanitarian standards.[18] Schmolka cautioned Czechoslovak Jews that they needed to be self-sufficient and selfless to solve Czechoslovakia's social issues and could not 'rely solely on the American uncle'.[19] Schmolka and Steiner served as the JDC's Czechoslovak coordinators and the leaders of the emigration organization, HICEM.[20] Schmolka's work was respected in Czechoslovakia, too, where she was elected president of the National Committee.

Other Czechoslovak social workers attained international recognition in the interwar period, including Alice Masaryková, Růžena Pelantová and Antonín Sum. All three had significant ties to the US. Masaryková and Pelantová both studied social work in the US and later became instrumental leaders in the modernization of Czechoslovak social work through their positions in the Czechoslovak Red Cross. Masaryková later wrote that it was during this time that she developed a 'firm conviction' that social work had three components: 'spiritual awareness, good education, and dedication to work'.[21] During the 1920s and 1930s, Masaryková worked closely with various American and British organizations, maintained friendships with American social workers, and in 1934 the International Red Cross

encouraged all national Red Cross societies to follow the model of the Czechoslovak Red Cross.[22]

In the period of the First Czechoslovak Republic, Czechoslovak humanitarians were quickly seen as capable, reliable partners in the distribution of aid. Key figures in Czechoslovak social work and humanitarianism were well connected to the US and Great Britain, receiving accolades from their Western counterparts for their organization, efficiency and fairness in distributing aid. However, after Czechoslovak territory was ceded to Nazi Germany after the Munich Agreement in late September 1938, those perceptions changed.

Humanitarian intervention in the Second Czechoslovak Republic

The Munich Agreement represented an acute crisis for the new Second Czechoslovak Republic. Deprived of its most economically productive territory, it also needed to absorb a large influx of refugees. The government provided relief and resettlement services – including employment and housing – to Czech-speaking refugees, hoping to prevent their further emigration out of the Bohemian Lands. For German-speaking and Jewish refugees, the government had two goals: first, accelerate their emigration; and second, avoid paying for it.[23] The government's prejudiced policies also meant that former Czechoslovak Jewish citizens were turned away at the border and denied access to state protections.[24] Michal Frankl has characterized these practices as part of 'the broader phenomenon of erosion of minority protection and citizenship in East-Central Europe in the second half of the 1930s'.[25] Because of this discrimination, the Czechoslovak government's policies did not meet Western standards for humanitarianism: organization, self-sufficiency and providing aid regardless of race, politics or religion. While aware of these practices, Western humanitarians continued to perceive the Czechoslovak government as the 'last bastion of democracy' in Central Europe, largely praising the government's efforts to assist refugees. Instead, Western humanitarians transferred criticisms of the government to the efforts of Czechoslovak social workers.

After the Munich Agreement, the Second Czechoslovak Republic government was led by a right-wing and antisemitic coalition. The new government deported non-Czech-speaking and Jewish refugees, interning them until they could find emigration opportunities, or simply expelled them.[26] At first, the Ministry of Social Welfare recommended that voluntary organizations continue providing refugee aid, but the ministry soon deemed the care provided by voluntary organizations too fractured and partisan to be adequate.[27] In response, the government created the

Institute for Refugee Welfare (or Refugee Institute), offering for the first time unified governmental care for refugees. Historian Tara Zahra argued that the Refugee Institute 'seamlessly blended a humanitarian mission with the pursuit of a nationally homogeneous state'.[28] While the Refugee Institute provided refugee relief and resettlement services for Czech- and Slovak-speaking refugees to dissuade them from leaving Czechoslovakia, it also enforced the further emigration of ethnic minorities, even those with Czechoslovak citizenship.[29]

The Czechoslovak government's prejudiced policies were well known in both America and Britain. The British government offered Czechoslovakia a £10 million loan advanced in two instalments in November and December 1938.[30] The loan agreement required the Second Republic to end ethnically based expulsions of German-speaking and Jewish refugees and provide aid to refugees without discrimination on religious, ethnic or political grounds.[31] Meanwhile, the American Unitarian Association sent an exploratory commission to Prague in November 1938 to suggest possible areas of involvement for the future ACSC. The representatives noted that 'the Jews have scarcely registered [with the Refugee Institute] at all, as they fear if they register they may be expelled from the country'.[32]

Rather than condemning the expulsions and differentiated care, British and American humanitarians largely excused the Czechoslovak government policies as the understandable by-product of a state grappling with a crisis. In doing so, Western humanitarians participated in the ethnonational redefinition of citizenship. They frequently noted that 'the Czech government is doing all that it humanly can and much more than it can afford' to care for refugees.[33] Both the BCRC and ACSC representatives worked hard to develop good relationships with the Refugee Institute. The BCRC's Prague representative, Doreen Warriner, was already well connected with Czechoslovak politicians, having travelled extensively in Central and Eastern Europe between 1935 and 1937.[34] By late February, British officials reported that there were now 'far better relations' with the Czechoslovak government, 'largely owing to their appreciation' of British officials such as Warriner and 'the fact … some refugees are really getting out'. The Czechoslovak government offered office space to both BCRC and ACSC representatives in the Refugee Institute. BCRC representatives generally viewed Refugee Institute officials as well meaning, if occasionally frustrating.[35] The representatives of the ACSC offered more praise. The commissioners, Waitstill and Martha Sharp, arrived in Prague in late February 1939, only a few weeks before the Nazi occupation. Upon arrival, they met with Czechoslovak government officials, including the heads of the Refuge Institute, whom they praised for providing 'personal direct assistance to refugees' of Czech ethnicity.[36] The Sharps admired

'every government official' they met for being 'loyal … to the ideals of the democracy', despite the pressures of the crisis.[37]

Influenced by the overwhelming nature of the refugee crisis and the Czechoslovak government's actions, the BCRC and ACSC both prioritized a subset of the refugee population that they felt was most in need. They described their own selectivity as non-sectarian and meeting humanitarian standards of efficiency – prioritizing individuals they perceived to be most in danger – even though their decisions often revealed their own ethnic, religious or political preferences. BCRC representatives determined that the most endangered refugees were politically active members of the German, Austrian and Sudeten Social Democrat and Communist parties and subsequently prioritized refugees in those categories. When ACSC representatives arrived in late February, they focused on students and intellectuals, particularly those with Unitarian ties or other 'non-Aryan' Christians.[38]

Warriner was emphatic that refugee selection 'ought not to be in the hands of [Czechoslovak] charitable organizations', which would be 'unjust' and '[lead] to abuses.[39] By December 1938, the BCRC believed in the necessity of having trusted British representatives outside of Prague 'to investigate cases' based on 'what kind of jobs are available'.[40] Yet Warriner granted more latitude to 'the [Social Democratic] Germans', calling them 'the best workers' and the 'elite of the working class from the most advanced industrial area of Central Europe'. They were not 'half-starved peasants of Europe's hinterland', who Warriner saw as the typical migrant from Eastern Europe.[41] Western humanitarians expected organizations to be selective in their casework, to ensure that their caseload was manageable. Warriner praised the Sudeten German Social Democratic organization as being 'the only reliable organization' because of their 'long history of cooperation', and for being 'responsible … very efficient and loyal to each other'.[42] Warriner relied on the counsel of Wenzel Jaksch, who she believed was 'the only person who has sufficient prestige to stand above party struggles'. Warriner had 'far more confidence in his judgement than in that of a committee' to select refugees for visas.[43]

The BCRC perceived any selectivity by Czech-speaking or Jewish organizations as sectarian, and therefore a backward form of humanitarianism. In January 1939, Warriner criticized the National Committee for delaying recognition of the newer and differently organized Brno Central Aid Office (Pomocné ústředí pro uprchlíky), which Warriner characterized as providing a tremendous service by assisting 'emigrants of all parties, including Jews not recognized by HICEM'. With this statement, Warriner criticized the National Committee for 'lack of organization' and inefficiency in recognizing all refugee groups operating in Czechoslovakia, singling HICEM out for only aiding a subset of the Jewish population. Warriner claimed that the

delay was 'unjustified' and that the 'lack of representation on the [National] Committee' meant that no refugees could leave Brno, and therefore resulted in the Brno police denying refugees entry into Moravia, creating refugee camps in the no man's land between Germany and Czechoslovakia.[44] Rather than criticizing the Czechoslovak government – or the local authorities – for their own policies, Warriner put the burden of responsibility on the National Committee and on Jewish organizations. Although Warriner insisted that 'no refugees could leave Brno', she also described how Jewish refugees from Brno were able to leave the Bohemian Lands because the Jewish Religious Community in Brno submitted lists of names to the Prague HICEM office. Warriner dismissed this coordination as evidence that Czechoslovak Jewish organizations operated with prejudice and exclusion, focusing solely on religiously active Jews.[45]

The National Committee, chaired by Marie Schmolka, served as a liaison between transnational humanitarian organizations, the Refugee Institute and the refugees. BCRC representatives allocated funds directly to the member organizations of the National Committee and relied on a 'small advisory committee' of National Committee representatives to check 'the credentials of supposed refugees' and '[prepare] emigration plans', and an additional four individuals to 'assist' the BCRC representatives.[46] However, the final selection of refugees was in the hands of the BCRC case workers to avoid any 'hidden personalities' or the refugee committees from driving the BCRC's priorities.[47]

The Czechoslovak government's redefinition of citizenship along ethnonational lines, combined with the priorities of Western humanitarians, reinforced the utility of sectarian classifications of refugees for local aid groups. Yet local humanitarians such as Marie Schmolka resisted ethnonational categorizations when possible. Although not a member of the BCRC advisory committee, Schmolka worked closely with the BCRC in her role as the chair of both the National Committee and the Prague HICEM, which functioned as a clearing house for Jewish emigration in this period. JDC officials praised Schmolka because she '[intervened] for almost all of the expelled people with the authorities' and was 'constantly asked … for advice by Jewish organizations, the Czech authorities, [and] diplomatic representatives'.[48] In Schmolka's own writings and actions, she strove to act as her Western counterparts hoped: reliable, non-sectarian in the distribution of visa opportunities and committed to HICEM's mission to serve as a central hub of Jewish emigration from the Bohemian Lands. As head of both HICEM and the National Committee, she understood the difficulties facing Jewish refugees while also recognizing the plight of other subsets of the refugee population. Schmolka refused to 'take any responsibility upon [herself] with regard to the individual cases', prioritizing instead 'the

harmonious and just distribution of the visas among the various committees according to the gravity of the situation of the individual'.[49] She described how she attempted to follow BCRC procedures by submitting refugee names and a justification of the danger they faced, along with a 'hope that our endeavours will succeed'.[50]

Schmolka and Hana Steiner communicated with a staggering number of organizations in dozens of countries about emigration opportunities, which often limited or outright banned admission for Jewish refugees, including Britain, China, Argentina, Bolivia, Cuba, Peru, Canada, Afghanistan, France, the US, New Zealand and Belgium. The surviving HICEM documents reveal that Schmolka and Steiner worked in numerous languages, including Czech, German, Slovak, French, Spanish and English, to coordinate with organizations within Czechoslovakia and abroad. HICEM's task was immense: they managed visa information about dozens of foreign countries, worked with transnational organizations assisting individual refugees, managed thousands of applications for individual refugees and served as advisors for Western humanitarians interacting with the Czechoslovak authorities.[51]

While German-speaking political organizations were praised for their loyalty and dedication to one another, American and British representatives repeatedly expressed suspicion of HICEM for 'only [dealing] with Jews'.[52] Schmolka and Steiner called on Warriner in December 1938, appealing for more visas for Jewish refugees. Warriner interpreted this request as an attempt to unfairly add more Jewish refugees to the BCRC rosters, arguing that 'a considerable number [of Jews] went in the Social Democrat list and in the other groups'. Warriner cautioned the BCRC London to only allow four or five Jewish refugees, and only 'if [Schmolka] could show reasons for thinking that the person is in danger not because a Jew but because of political activity'.[53] When Jewish organizations in London wrote to the BCRC 'to protest against the fact that no Jews were included in the original Sudeten lists – not as Jews, but as active political workers in the Jewish Party',[54] Warriner responded that this was because Schmolka had neglected to properly submit a list of names.[55]

Instead of understanding the immense burden carried by HICEM, due to the large number of Jewish refugees and the antisemitic Czechoslovak government policies, BCRC officials criticized the group for disorganization. BCRC officials frequently characterized Czech-speaking and Jewish organizations as causing disorganization and chaos, rather than responding to it. BCRC officials such as G. T. Garratt claimed that all Czech-speaking refugee organizations, 'especially the Jewish [ones]', did not report accurate numbers about refugees or 'properly' establish 'the lines of responsibility between the various organizations'.[56] The BCRC blamed the National Committee's lack of cooperation and disorganization for the difficulties

in obtaining reliable information about the refugee situation.[57] When the British Consulate in Prague was 'overwhelmed by work for the Palestine Office', slowing down Warriner's efforts to obtain British visas for politically active German-speaking refugees, Warriner blamed the Jewish organizations for submitting too many applications, rather than understand that the policies in Czechoslovakia created an environment which Jewish refugees felt compelled to flee.[58]

British voluntary workers also contributed to the chaos that was blamed on Czechoslovak Jewish aid workers. For over a month, BCRC London did not communicate directly with Marie Schmolka, despite her role as chair of the National Committee. Instead, they 'sent messages through British people in Prague', assuming that those individuals would notify Schmolka of their policies and procedures.[59] At the same time, individual Britons unaffiliated with the BCRC or other organization, constantly arrived in Prague with the intention of aiding refugees but without the authority of the British government.[60] As a result, refugees and Czechoslovak humanitarians were unsure which individuals had the resources and authority to assist refugees. At one point, Schmolka thought she had properly submitted lists of Jewish refugees in need of urgent assistance, but those refugees were never considered for visas to England because the BCRC had not received the lists. The BCRC expected the burden of clear communication to fall to Schmolka. Though BCRC officials had neglected to communicate directly with Schmolka, they admonished her for not notifying them of all HICEM's activities. Though the BCRC's lack of communication had caused problems, BCRC officials expected Schmolka to solve them. The secretary of the BCRC, Margaret Layton, instructed Schmolka to notify the BCRC through Warriner or the Sudeten organizations of any departures or negotiations with shipping companies because it was 'important that the different groups concerned should know exactly what the others are doing'.[61] Given the incredible amount of casework information and changing migration requirements, HICEM officials almost certainly made mistakes. Rather than understanding these mistakes as honest ones, however, BCRC officials accused HICEM of sending 'misleading' information about refugees. To meet Western standards, the BCRC requested that HICEM send *less* information about a potential refugee (name, age, affidavits, address) to the BCRC as this led to confusion. Of course, this also meant that HICEM had to maintain *more* information about these individuals, in case the BCRC later requested additional information.[62]

The chaos of the changing borders, new government and refugee crisis that resulted from the loss of full Czechoslovak sovereignty in late September 1938 created a difficult environment for all humanitarian organizations. The BCRC and ACSC praised the Czechoslovak

government for navigating this difficult situation and portrayed themselves as capable, modern humanitarians: organized, efficient and non-sectarian, despite the difficult situation. At the same time, they portrayed Czech-speaking and Jewish organizations as sectarian, disorganized and unable to cooperate. Even when offering praise of individual humanitarians, BCRC officials offered criticisms of the structure of Czechoslovak organizations. Doreen Warriner commented to BCRC leadership in London that '[Marie] Schmolka is a splendid person, with the highest ideals, but has not enough authority'. Despite the sectarian structure of Czechoslovak humanitarianism, Warriner believed that it was due to Schmolka that the organizations worked together at all.[63] Still, Warriner noted that the Czechoslovak aid organizations were locked in 'a tremendous struggle for visas' (created by countries of immigration such as the US and Great Britain), and that the organizations paid 'little attention … at first to the suitability of the refugee for emigration', despite Schmolka's efforts.[64] Over time, BCRC representatives came to trust Schmolka's intention for fairly distributing aid, doubting instead Schmolka's abilities to handle what they perceived to be the disorganized, sectarian system of voluntary work in the Bohemian Lands.

Perceptions in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia

The Nazi occupation of the Bohemian Lands on 15 March 1939 upended the previous methods of cooperation, making emigration increasingly difficult. The Nazis banned all emigration temporarily and arrested the major leaders of refugee organizations, including Marie Schmolka. BCRC and ACSC workers agreed to share information and resources whenever possible.[65] Determined to continue ACSC work in the Bohemian Lands, the Sharps called a meeting of 'all Czech, Jewish, and foreign refugee workers to co-ordinate the work and prevent overlapping'.[66] Under the guise of a social gathering, the various committees met – without the permission or oversight of either the Czech or Nazi government officials – to establish lines of cooperation between the various refugee assistance organizations.[67] Given the strict censorship in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, voluntary workers met with each other regularly, a 'time-consuming, but necessary' appointment to share news about the refugee situation and information about individual refugees.[68] Doreen Warriner left Prague in mid-April escorting a transport of political refugees, leaving Beatrice Wellington as the BCRC's Prague representative.

Under the new Nazi regime, the structure of humanitarian work as well as the practical assistance to refugees changed. The Refugee Institute became responsible for interviewing refugees and determining the status

of their emigration case, but 'since the Institute for diplomatic reasons prefers not to have its Czech officers interview some groups', they tasked Wellington with this duty, adding to her work with the BCRC. While at the Refugee Institute, Wellington claimed to interview 300 refugees daily, then completed 'the necessary correspondence and investigations for further aid in their cases'.[69] Wellington chafed under these enormous responsibilities, saying it was 'not possible'. These functions had been previously performed by the Czech-speaking and Jewish organizations. Ten days later, Wellington and her BCRC colleague Mary Dingman participated in the effort to release Marie Schmolka from prison, writing letters attesting 'to her fine character, her splendid work of unselfish service, her humanitarian point of view free from religious, political, and racial prejudice, etc'.[70]

In this period, both the BCRC and ACSC rarely mentioned specific Czech-speaking and Jewish voluntary workers or the specifics of their activities. Western humanitarians operating in Prague may have done so in part to protect Czechoslovak humanitarians from Nazi persecution. BCRC and ACSC representatives, as well as Czechoslovak humanitarians, all describe destroying refugee case files to prevent information about individual refugees from falling into Nazi hands.[71] They also mention a willingness to work around the Nazi administration, even if it meant breaking laws to support underground emigration attempts over the Polish border.[72] During this period, refugees who feared arrest by the Gestapo escaped over the border into Poland with the support of the BCRC, ACSC and Czechoslovak organizations. Although the BCRC and ACSC reports do not detail the specifics of any part of this operation, BCRC representative Tessa Rowntree noted that in this escape effort, she made decisions 'in conjunction with the representative of the [National] Committee'.[73]

Yet when BCRC or ACSC documents did mention Czech-speaking or Jewish organizations, the comments frequently expressed frustration. As in the Second Republic, actions taken by the government were construed as evidence of the disorganization and irresponsibility on the part of humanitarian organizations. After the arrest of the leadership of refugee organizations, BCRC representatives reported that 'the [refugee] organizations in Czechoslovakia broke down'.[74] Wellington believed that the Czech-speaking and Jewish organizations had therefore 'led many people up the garden path and left them there, with written notes of promise that their case will receive special attention or that they will receive financial support'. While noting that Nazi arrests of humanitarian leadership combined with an attempt to protect individuals by destroy records had led to lost information, Wellington criticized Czech-speaking and Jewish

organizations for 'stranding' refugees without an ability 'to have a check on how far their affairs had progressed, either with the local committee or with any London committee'.[75]

BCRC and ACSC committee officials continued to focus on a narrow subset of the refugee population, most of whom they had personally contacted. After helping the remaining politically active men to escape over the Polish border, the BCRC prioritized the emigration of their wives and children (an estimated forty-four women, plus children). BCRC representatives explained that they were 'besieged' by refugees who were 'in desperation' to escape but decided to focus on those who had registered with the BCRC before 15 March, because the BCRC 'could not feel directly responsible for people who happened to be registered with different committees in Prague'.[76]

Beatrice Wellington relied on Johanna Neumark (wife of honorary British vice-consul in Brno, Walter Neumark)[77] and a representative of the Czech Youth Welfare Association for Moravia for the 'very valuable work' of finding and interviewing the wives of politically active men who had already left for England. Neumark visited Prague weekly to deliver reports directly to Wellington, who 'entrusted' Neumark with distributing permit cards, collecting questionnaires and forwarding materials to London. Wellington also 'put 2 Czech Social workers on the job' of finding two pregnant women on BCRC rosters.[78]

While the BCRC's records do not include many specific references to Czechoslovak humanitarians, BCRC representatives did specifically praise Marie Schmolka, though only when their positions on refugee issues aligned. Before leaving Prague in April 1939, Doreen Warriner named Schmolka as the trustee for an account with 63,000 crowns for relief for Jewish refugees. After Schmolka was released from prison, she approached Beatrice Wellington and asked for the trusteeship to be transferred to the BCRC. British official Robert Stopford disagreed, arguing that the funds should be transferred to the Refugee Institute. Wellington sided with Schmolka, who felt that 'the [Refugee] Institute procrastinates daily and frightfully in administration of relief'. Ultimately, the funds were transferred to the BCRC, as Schmolka had advised. But rather than being used as relief for Jewish refugees, the BCRC used the funds to reunite politically active men already in England with their families. BCRC representatives relied on Schmolka's expertise to convince BCRC officials in London about how to transfer the funds, then dismissed her reliability when it came to spending the funds.

CRTF records demonstrate that many more refugees were able to escape in the summer of 1939 and eventually receive support from the CRTF once they arrived in Britain. Czech-speaking and Jewish organizations were

largely responsible for this coordination and supporting refugees domestically: Prague HICEM was still purchasing tickets for refugees and the Jewish Religious Community Aid Institute supported refugees domestically until their departure, and BCRC representatives expected these organizations to do that work for refugees on BCRC lists.[79]

By the end of August 1939, the BCRC – now the Czech Refugee Trust Fund (CRTF) – and the ACSC questioned their ability to continue their work in the Protectorate. The terms of their representatives in Prague were ending, the authorities forbade emigration except for Jewish emigration and Adolf Eichmann concentrated the work of Jewish emigration in the Central Office for Jewish Emigration, tasking the Prague Jewish Community with coordinating migration. The CRTF and ACSC largely concluded that much of the remaining work – the child migration project and group emigration schemes seeking financial support – could be conducted by partnering with Jewish organizations.[80]

Conclusion

Almost all transnational voluntary workers left Prague by the end of August 1939. With their departure and the outbreak of war, escape from the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia became much more difficult, though still possible. Jewish organizations carried on the work of emigration until October 1941, when the Nazis ultimately made all Jewish emigration illegal. Between September 1938 and October 1941 an estimated 39,000 to 44,000 Jews escaped from the Bohemian Lands.[81]

The loss of Czechoslovakia's (full) sovereignty revealed the inequalities and hierarchies in humanitarianism on the eve of the Second World War. Western humanitarians constructed hierarchies of aid that privileged politically active German-speaking refugees, while simultaneously disadvantaging Czech-speaking and Jewish ones. Although Czechoslovak humanitarianism was well aligned to – and indeed much praised by – American and British perceptions of modern humanitarianism before 1938, in post-Munich Czechoslovakia Western aid organizations perceived Czechoslovak aid organizations as failing to meet Western standards of aid: organization, efficiency and impartiality. Instead of understanding the challenges of operating under changing regimes with a growing refugee crisis, Western humanitarians perceived their Czechoslovak counterparts as disorganized, inefficient and sectarian, thereby limiting the agency of Czechoslovak aid organizations.

Western perceptions of Czechoslovak humanitarians, combined with limited sources produced by Czechoslovak organizations, resulted in the

long-term erasure of Czechoslovak Jewish contributions to their own relief and rescue. Czechoslovak Jewish organizations overcame significant hurdles to facilitate flight through sustained contact with transnational voluntary organizations such as the BCRC, JDC and ACSC. Although the records of these transnational organizations include sparse references to the activities of Czechoslovak Jewish groups, these organizations played a significant role registering refugees, identifying emigration opportunities and arranging flight. Transnational organizations relied on Czechoslovak groups to perform these key functions to facilitate their own efforts, while rarely recognizing these efforts as a significant contribution. Czechoslovaks, particularly Czechoslovak Jews, were forced to navigate multiple understandings of humanitarian need – their own, British and American – to successfully facilitate flight.

Notes

Disclaimer: The views expressed here are my own and not necessarily those of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum.

1 United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (hereafter USHMM), RG-67.017 Martha and Waitstill Sharp Collection, series 1, box 3, folder 18, discussion regarding refugee problem, meeting minutes of the Board of Directors, 5 October 1938, 6–7.

2 United Nations Archives (hereafter UNA), C1593/489/2, letter from Mary Dingman to Judge Michael Hansson, Geneva, 13 May 1939.

3 See Melissa Hibbard, 'Children of the Polish Republic: Child Health, Welfare, and the Shaping of Modern Poland, 1915–1939' (PhD dissertation, University of Illinois at Chicago, 2022), 86.

4 This is particularly true for American humanitarianism, see Davide Rodogno, 'American Red Cross and the International Committee of the Red Cross' Humanitarian Politics and Policies in Asia Minor and Greece', *First World War Studies*, 5:1 (2014), 83–99; Jaclyn Granick, 'Waging Relief: The Politics and Logistics of American Jewish War Relief in Europe and the Near East (1914–1918)', *First World War Studies*, 5:1 (2014), 55–68; Julia F. Irwin, *Making the World Safe: The American Red Cross and a Nation's Humanitarian Awakening* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017).

5 For recent literature on humanitarians from recipient countries, see for example Doina Anca Cretu, 'Nationalizing International Relief: Romanian Responses to American Aid for Children in the Great War Era', *European Review of History: Revue Européenne d'Histoire*, 27:4 (2020), 527–47; Elisabeth Piller, 'German Child Distress, US Humanitarian Aid and Revisionist Politics, 1918–24', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 51:3 (2016), 453–86; Michael E. McGuire, '"A Highly Successful Experiment in International Partnership?" The Limited

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8 Doina Anca Cretu and Michal Frankl, 'Humanitarian Mobilization in Central and Eastern Europe: Introduction', 5.

9 Yehuda Bauer, *My Brother's Keeper: The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee 1929–1939* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1974), 263.

10 Leo Baeck Institute (hereafter LBI), AR 7162/MF 895, High Commission for Refugees from Germany Collection, 1933–1935, series 2, box 2, folder 5, High Commission for Refugees (Jewish and other) Coming from Germany, Report on the Work of the Organisations Other than Those Dealing with the Intellectuals, 11 April 1934; Kateřina Čapková, 'Refugees from Nazi Germany in 1930s Czechoslovakia', in Wlodzimierz Borodziej and Joachim von Puttkamer (eds), *Immigrants and Foreigners in Central and Eastern Europe during the Twentieth Century* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2020), 73–86.

11 Kurt Grossmann, *Emigration: Die Geschichte der Hitler-Flüchtlinge 1933–1945* (Frankfurt: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1969), 42; Čapková and Frankl, *Nejisté útočiště*, 83.

12 Bauer, *My Brother's Keeper*, 23–6; Jaclyn Granick, *International Jewish Humanitarianism in the Age of the Great War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 112–14.

13 American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee Archive (hereafter AJDC), Records of the AJDC New York Office 1933–1944, subcollection 4, RG 4.15, series 1, file 536, Review of Pre-War Czechoslovakia, 12 January 1945, 222.

14 AJDC New York Office 1933–44, subcollection 4, RG. 4.15, series 3, file 541, Extract of the Report of Mr. Rudolf Katz on the Situation of the German and Austrian Emigration in Czechoslovakia, February 1939, 1035.

15 Čapková and Frankl, *Nejisté útočiště*, 131.

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42 NA Kew, HO 294/53, letter from Doreen Warriner to Margaret Layton, 2 January 1939, Prague.
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9

‘The same spirit that led me into war’: Italian and transnational humanitarian actors and post-revolutionary Russia

Ruth Nattermann

Introduction

In June 1922, four months before Mussolini came to power in Italy, the politician and philanthropist Umberto Zanotti Bianco (1889–1963) was on a journey for a humanitarian mission in Russia. To an Italian friend, the journalist and art critic Ugo Ojetti (1871–1946), he wrote from Prague: ‘The same spirit that led me into war, makes me leave today for Russia: in the immensity of the tragedy my help is but a drop of water: but I would truly feel that I was *deserting* if I were not offering it in the name of Italy’.[1] Zanotti Bianco had been among the supporters of a so-called democratic interventionism which had been nurtured by the illusion that an Italian intervention on the side of the Entente would eventually lead to a new democratic European order. Significantly, he had participated as a volunteer in the First World War; his almost militant attitude regarding humanitarian action in the interwar period is clearly reflected in this passionate statement.[2]

Unlike Zanotti Bianco, the internationally renowned Italian feminist Rosa Genoni (1867–1954), who was more than twenty years his senior, had not aligned with the ‘democratic interventionists’ during the war. She had firmly remained on the side of the pacifist minority, even when the Italian women’s movement as a whole had performed a turn towards an aggressive nationalism and supported Italy’s entry into the war.[3] During the interwar period, the socialist Genoni, too, became involved in relief work for post-revolutionary Russia. In contrast to the former interventionist Zanotti Bianco, however, her commitment was motivated by her pacifist outlook and the conviction that an escalation of the humanitarian crisis caused by the refugee problem and the famine in Russia would stir up new conflicts and hostilities in Europe.

Notably, the League of Nations’ Advisory Committee for the Assistance of Russian Refugees included a special section for Jewish affairs, the Jewish Colonization Association and Allied Societies, which was represented by

the British-Jewish journalist and diplomat Lucien Wolf (1857–1930).[4] War, revolution, imperial collapse and territorial changes had caused a wave of refugees in the vast area of the former Russian empire. One of the biggest groups among these displaced people were Jewish civilians.[5] Wolf associated humanitarian engagement above all with diplomacy and legal support for minorities. During his assignment at the League of Nations, the diplomat, who had Central European Jewish origins, collaborated closely with Jewish communities in Italy, given that the Italian peninsula developed into a central sphere for Jewish migration towards Palestine.

This chapter examines the social, political and diplomatic activities by these three individual actors which reflect different expressions of early postwar humanitarianism within the same geographical area and period. It considers the important role Italy assumed in the aftermath of the First World War within the overall context of Russian relief work, asking about the significance of the peninsula as a chief transit area for Jewish refugees from Eastern Europe, as the global centre of Catholic aid campaigns towards post-revolutionary Russia and as the place of origin of fascism which supported or hindered humanitarian actors and institutions based on ideological alignments. Thus, the protagonists of this study – a Jewish diplomat, a Catholic philanthropist and a secular socialist feminist – have been deliberately selected according to these diverse yet characteristic aspects of contemporary humanitarianism linked to the Italian context.

Interestingly, none of the protagonists in question provided aid in a merely material way, that is, exclusively in terms of food, clothing or medicine. Their understanding of humanitarianism went well beyond the idea of immediate assistance in the face of emergencies such as natural or man-made disasters. Instead, all of them associated aid with longer-term concepts and developments. In contrast to 'emergency humanitarianism',[6] with its characteristic emphasis on immediate (material) help, their notions of humanitarianism assumed diplomatic, political and ideological dimensions, aiming to remove the causes of people's suffering. At the same time, the protagonists employed rather different tools in order to translate their ideas and intentions into action. Wolf regarded the protection of minority rights as the major route towards integration and equality of religious and ethnic minorities in postwar societies, which became a key facet of modern humanitarian activity in general. His efforts expressed a notion of humanitarianism as diplomacy and law aiming at social justice. For Zanotti Bianco, on the other hand, his humanitarian mission in Russia represented a political and religious project which was supposed to counter Bolshevism and atheism in Europe, focusing both on emergency relief as well as long-term educational, economic and agricultural schemes which, however, proved to be unsuccessful. As to Rosa Genoni, humanitarianism was based

on the ideal of a universal community between people. Her actions were guided by the idea of an ethical duty to assist others in need as a central condition for peace among mankind. Humanitarianism, as embodied by Genoni, assumed both pacifist and intellectual meaning.

The study employs a biographical approach, which is particularly suitable for a differentiated assessment of actors' religious as well as political attitudes based on family backgrounds, intellectual formations and lived experiences. The biographies of Wolf, Zanotti Bianco and Genoni represent essentially 'parallel histories' within transnational, border-crossing contexts that were influenced by migration and/or refugeedom. At the same time, the protagonists' concern for Russian and Russian-Jewish refugees as well as children threatened by famine during the early 1920s formed an intersection of their humanitarian work. On an organizational level, all of them had links to Geneva, since Zanotti Bianco and Wolf acted within the context of the League of Nations, while Genoni participated in the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), which after the end of the hostilities had established its headquarters in Geneva, too, in order to be close to the League of Nations. Their activities are examined against the background of the striking convergence of Italian, European and US organizations and networks within Russian relief work in the 1920s.[7]

Compared to well-researched humanitarian actors such as Fridtjof Nansen, Herbert Hoover, Clara Barton or Eglantyne Jebb, the focus on these lesser-known protagonists points to complex formations of identities, mentalities and attitudes that have often been overlooked. Until only a short time ago, biographies of humanitarians tended to reproduce heroic tales of selfless and powerful individuals,[8] without taking into account influences such as nationalism, imperialism, racism, class and gender on supposedly philanthropic engagement. In contrast, this chapter uses the biographical method in a new and critical way, examining humanitarian actors within their social, political and cultural environments and networks, and explicitly asking about the increasingly questioned motives for humanitarian engagement and its inherent paternalistic elements. Concentrating on Wolf, Zanotti Bianco and Genoni, I argue that their different ideological self-concepts provide evidence not only for diverging political standpoints regarding Russian relief work but also for the continuing influence of religious affiliations on humanitarian action, which contests the traditional thesis of an international secular humanitarian regime during the interwar period.[9]

The protagonists' activities bear witness to the many and often ambivalent ways in which international humanitarianism worked during the aftermath of the First World War in Central and Eastern Europe, and in Russia specifically. The US, in the first place, developed an internationalist

policy aiming at reconstruction and a new stability in Europe as a vital precondition for transatlantic financial and commercial interdependence. The humanitarian mobilization of the American Relief Administration (ARA), in particular, assumed a dimension of state building, based on attempts to transfer welfare schemes from the rich American humanitarian environment into Central and Eastern European countries, as Gábor Egry shows in Chapter 7. At the same time, fighting misery and starvation was regarded both in the US and Western Europe as an efficient means to counter revolutionary tendencies and international consensus for Bolshevism. As to Italy, and especially against the background of the 'Red Biennium' in 1919 and 1920, a period of intense social conflicts and political polarization, Russian aid gained significant ideological connotations, both for right and left political currents. Seeing the geopolitical position of the Italian peninsula between West and East, and its significance as the global centre of the Catholic Church, the meaning of humanitarian aid from or via Italy towards Eastern Europe always went beyond mere material relief. Not coincidentally, Italy was the first European country to officially recognize Polish independence. A major part of the Italian middle and upper classes saw Poland as a bulwark of Roman Catholic civilization against 'Bolshevik barbarism' and Russian expansionism.[10] In December 1921, the Italian Red Cross signed an agreement with the Russian diplomat Vatslav Vorovsky, at that time the representative for Russia in Italy and head of the Russian trade delegation, declaring to offer its help to the Soviet government, 'moved by the humanitarian desire to help reduce those deprivations that have affected, due to famine and epidemics, some regions of Russia'.[11] The agreement emphasized the importance the Italian government attached to Russia as a site of humanitarian action in a time of profound inner crises and ideological contrasts, and also as a target of concrete economic interests regarding commercial exchange and the supply of raw materials in the long term.[12] However, the situation changed in summer 1922 when Italian–Russian relations came to a standstill as a result of the upheavals in Italian domestic politics, which were to lead to the March on Rome and Mussolini's coming to power on 31 October 1922.

The argumentation is based on largely unexplored ego-documents from Italian archives, including letters and diaries of the actors involved. The analysis of these private documents opens up new and different views on individual experiences that have often been silenced or ignored, in particular experiences and perceptions of plight and violence. The respective sources accentuate the actor-centred dimension; they shed light on relationships, spaces and environments in which the protagonists' humanitarian activities unfolded. In order to gain a critical, multi-perspective view, these private documents have been complemented with

organizational archives as well as reports from the police and authorities. Discussing the ambivalences and shortcomings of Russian relief work as reflected in the protagonists' actions, this contribution highlights the overall fragility of contemporary humanitarianism and its inability to impact war and peace. This powerlessness was to reveal itself first in view of the strengthening fascist movements in Europe, and definitely with the beginning of the Second World War.

Humanitarian diplomacy for refugees: the Jewish diplomat Lucien Wolf and his struggle for the rights of Russian Jewry

Lucien Wolf's interest in Russian Jewry had awakened as early as the end of the nineteenth century when he was in his mid-twenties. Appalled by the violent anti-Jewish pogroms which swept through south-western Imperial Russia from 1881, the journalist became a sharp critic of the Czarist regime, trying to draw public attention to the plight of Russian Jewry.[13] His family belonged to the educated middle class. Although Wolf was born and spent his working life in London, his Central European Jewish roots had a profound influence on his religious, social and political mentality. The experience of flight and migration had directly shaped Wolf's family history. His mother Céline, née Redlich, was originally from Vienna, his father, Edward Wolf, a pipe manufacturer, was Bohemian. He had participated in the Revolution of 1848 and come to England as a political refugee. Lucien, the elder son, was educated at the Athénée Royal in Brussels and in Paris. He developed an expertise in foreign affairs and, from an early age on, committed himself to journalism. Based on his father's political heritage, Wolf espoused the idea of economic and political liberalism combined with religious freedom and tolerance as essential elements for general progress. For Wolf, Britain, where his father had found asylum, was the model for 'European development'. Against this background, it is not surprising that he took on decidedly anti-Zionist positions. Wolf perceived Judaism as a religious community with a certain cultural distinctiveness and Zionism as a dangerous incentive for the radicalization of racial antisemitism.[14]

The beginning of the First World War marked the breakthrough of the now fifty-seven–year-old on the political and diplomatic stage. As secretary of the Anglo-Jewish Association, he participated in the Paris Peace Conference in 1919. Of central importance was Wolf's role in the formulation of the minority treaties.[15] His peace agenda proposed that Jews and other minorities in the newly envisaged postimperial states of Eastern Europe should be guaranteed rights of cultural autonomy as well as political citizenship. Wolf, who maintained himself as a British citizen as much as a

Jew, kept aloof from Jewish international alliances and connected as tightly to the British bureaucracy as possible.[16]

However, since the British Foreign Office was unwilling to intercede with its Russian ally in favour of Russian-Jewish emancipation, in 1916 the diplomat tried to employ a new tactic: the convinced anti-Zionist proposed that the British government declare in favour of the Jewish settlement and colonization in Palestine. It was supposed to be a 'clever subterfuge',[17] by which Wolf aimed to bring the British government back to the question of the rights of Eastern European Jewry. Yet the outcome proved to be rather different than the diplomat had planned; the British government did take up Wolf's suggestions, though now as advocated by leading Zionists such as Chaim Weizmann. In November 1917, the negotiations resulted in the Balfour Declaration, which Wolf, once again openly admitting to his anti-Zionist viewpoint, opposed strongly.[18]

The question of Palestine and Italian Zionists

It was in this context that his collaboration with the Italian-Jewish communities intensified, as Italy developed into a central geographical point of reference and transit area for Jewish migrants and refugees from Eastern Europe. In the immediate postwar years, when Jewish settlement in Palestine had become a concrete social and political option, waves of emigration of Jewish men, women and children boarded ships in Italian ports towards what they hoped to be their new 'homeland'.[19] As Italy became a significant place of transmigration, Wolf's diplomatic efforts began to focus on the Apennine peninsula and its Jewish communities in search of support and long-term existential prospects for Eastern European Jewish migrants. Precisely because of the fact that – unlike Zanotti Bianco and Genoni – the Jewish diplomat was not an Italian citizen, his decided turn towards the Italian context and Italian-Jewish protagonists stresses the political weight Italy gained during and after the First World War with regard to the question of Palestine and transnational humanitarian movements. Thus, Wolf's conscious involvement of Italian intermediators in his activities and negotiations in favour of Eastern European Jewry adds an important dimension to the history of humanitarian assistance provided by and via Italy during the Great War. For the British-Jewish protagonist, as for many of his contemporaries, Italy assumed both geopolitical and figurative meaning as a Mediterranean centre and bridge between Europe and Palestine. As the diplomat's humanistic education, mastery of the Italian language and familiarity with the Italian-Jewish leadership suggest, not only was he well acquainted with Italian culture because of travels, personal

connections and transfers of knowledge but he might have also based his trust in Italian-Jewish solidarity with Eastern European Jewry on the notion of Italy as the place of the oldest Jewish diaspora in the world.[20]

The unpublished correspondence between Wolf, the lawyer Leone Ravenna (1837–1920) and his son Felice Ravenna (1869–1937), one of the founders of the Zionist Federation in Italy and its president until 1920, started in 1916, precisely in the period when Wolf was preparing his tactical move regarding Jewish settlement in Palestine. The intention was to gain the support of the Italian government for Wolf's suggestions, which ultimately were supposed to draw political attention to the distressing situation of Eastern European Jewry. In a letter dated 30 August 1916, Wolf thanked Felice Ravenna and the Italian Zionist Federation for their 'cooperation in order to start the necessary practices with the Italian government regarding the Jewish questions that arose in consequence of the war … I must add that my Committee [the Foreign Conjoint Committee] is convinced about the necessity to act immediately.'[21]

However, even if the relationship between Wolf and Leone and Felice Ravenna was based on shared intellectual networks and friendships, the two committed Italian Zionists supported Weizmann's course. In the Balfour Declaration they saw a concrete possibility for a new existence from which the masses of Eastern European Jewish refugees could benefit in particular. After November 1917, Wolf, for his part, continued his commitment in favour of minority rights. Three months after the beginning of the Paris Peace Conference, in April 1919, Leone Ravenna, at that time vice-president of the Consortium of Jewish Communities in Italy, wrote to the diplomat:

> I think that the current point of divergence consists in the [decision] whether to ask for the numerous nuclei of Jews who are in the newly developing states of Eastern Europe, besides for the right to free teaching and the use of their own language within official relations, also for the [right] to have a representative in the Ministry. In our countries this would be an inconceivable claim, [as it would] stimulate the most relentless antisemites who would like to regard us as strangers.[22]

At the same time, Ravenna welcomed Wolf's idea of a conference in Rome with the participation of the board of the Committee of the Jewish Communities, and the Rabbinical and the Zionist Federations, in order to decide on the appropriate action in support of the Balfour programme. He emphasized that, 'in principle, I have always been convinced, and still am, of the need for Zionism to be religious as well as political in character'.[23] In contrast to Wolf, Ravenna feared that an intensified visibility of representatives of the Jewish minorities within ministries would nurture antisemitic

polemics against the alleged 'national outsiders'. The Italian-Jewish lawyer apparently applied his idea about (Jewish) minority protection to the Eastern European context; at the same time, his words reveal different imaginations of Jewish social and political conditions 'at home' (i.e. in Italy) and abroad, meaning here in the East. Most of all, his letter reflected the two conflicting tendencies within contemporary European Jewry: Wolf's acculturated attitude which aimed at integration through legal protection and equality, and Ravenna's Zionist viewpoint in which the emigration of Jews to Palestine and the establishment of a Jewish state were seen as concrete political options. Under this point of view, the Ravenna family represented a minority among members of the contemporary Italian-Jewish middle class, including those who supported the Zionist movement.[24] Besides this early commitment to political Zionism, as expressed in Ravenna's letter to Wolf, it is equally interesting to note that the lawyer explicitly insisted on the continuation of a religious Jewish identity. In fact, the diverse Italian Zionist currents, among them liberal and socialist tendencies, by no means always had a religious character.[25]

What is more, the correspondence between Ravenna and Wolf reveals the significance Italy assumed regarding the question of Palestine, triggered by its prominent new position in relation to Mediterranean Jews after the Libyan war in 1911 and the subsequent global conflict. As early as May 1917, Weizmann's collaborator, Nahum Sokolow, future president of the World Zionist Organization, had met in Rome with Pope Benedict XV, who had expressed cautious sympathy with the Zionist project (not least as a supposed 'solution', other than conversion, to the so-called Jewish question); the minister of foreign affairs, Sidney Sonnino, son of a converted Jewish father, had also been generally in favour of Jewish national claims. Italy officially sided with the Balfour Declaration in February 1918. By supporting the Zionist project, the Italian government and the Vatican aimed above all at an extension of their influence in the former Ottoman Empire.[26] On a personal level, Wolf's interest in an enduring collaboration with the Italian-Jewish leadership was clouded by the divergences between the Ravennas' and his own ideological standpoints. Leone Ravenna's death in March 1920 interrupted their discussions both on Palestine and the minority issues in Eastern Europe.

Political failures and 'the terrible problem of human suffering among the refugees'

Over the following years, the anti-Zionist Wolf remained critical towards the vision of a Jewish state, while continuing his fight for an improvement

of the legal and material conditions of Russian-Jewish refugees. Based to a large extent on Wolf's juridical efforts, the League of Nations made the protection of national minorities a cornerstone of its programme, but reality showed that the successor states regarded the minority treaties as an unjustified interference. The newly founded states in Central and Eastern Europe – Czechoslovakia, Poland, Hungary and Yugoslavia – did not hesitate to deter and expel those whose presence was deemed harmful. In some parts of the region, discrimination against Jews was particularly widespread: they were regarded as a threat to the alleged 'true' citizens, based on the chauvinistic assumption that the 'nation' was the exclusive property of the dominant ethnic group.[27] Wolf tried in vain to strengthen the juridical mechanisms by which the League of Nations might respond more effectively to the increasing number of infractions of the minority treaties. Even his efforts to gain for minorities a direct right of appeal to the League secretariat were bound to fail.[28]

The famine which had broken out in Russia in 1921 worsened further the situation of refugees. This was a consequence of the drought that had struck the grain-growing areas between the Volga and Don from May 1921. About twenty million people were directly threatened with starvation; two million of them died during the disaster.[29] Against this background, Wolf took on special responsibility for Russian-Jewish refugees. Given the ongoing relevance of Italy as a transit area, the diplomat again sought contact with the Italian-Jewish leadership. Acting in his capacity as a 'Delegate of the Jewish Colonization Association and Allied Societies' within the League's Advisory Committee of the High Commissioner for Russian Refugees, he got in touch with Felice Ravenna's friend, the lawyer Angelo Sullam (1881–1971), at that time secretary of the Italian Zionist Federation and president of the Jewish community in Venice. In 1921, Sullam had been elected chairman of the Italian Aid Committee for Jewish Emigrants, which assisted emigrants from Eastern Europe passing through Italy and heading mainly for Palestine and South America.[30]

One of the most serious problems for Jewish refugees was their uncertain legal status and related problems of identity cards and exit papers. Even the 'Nansen passport' offered no assurances about the right of abode or the right to work.[31] These problems became evident in a report on a meeting of the Advisory Committee of the High Commissioner for Russian Refugees in Geneva at the end of May 1922, which Wolf sent to Sullam. One of the main subjects of discussion was the forced return of Jewish men, women and children to Soviet Russia, a frequent practice in transit countries such as Poland and Romania. During the meeting, Wolf explicitly called attention to the existential danger of this situation, as the rejected people were knowingly exposed to pogroms, famine and death.[32] He also criticized

the restrictive conditions for accepting Russian-Jewish refugees in the major emigration countries, especially the US and Canada. In fact, besides reasons of postwar financial retrenchment, there was a general element of contempt for refugees and suspicion of their political orientation which translated into a highly restrictive immigration policy.[33] During the meeting in Geneva, the Englishman Harold Butler, who represented the International Labour Organization, stated that 'there was a common idea in America and in Canada that the refugees were all Bolshevists'.[34] In his final resolution, which was approved by the representatives of the Advisory Committee, Wolf found clear words for the failure of the League of Nations in the refugee question, the restrictive immigration policy overseas and the serious humanitarian problems resulting from it. He stated with unmistakable bitterness:

> The Advisory Committee of the High Commissioner for Russian Refugees … has noted with great disappointment the failure of the efforts that have been made to obtain for the refugees a greater access to the great immigration countries overseas. This failure threatens gravely to compromise the main work of the High Commissariat and to aggravate the terrible problem of human suffering among the refugees.[35]

Despite Wolf's efforts, no radical improvement regarding immigration policies occurred over the following years. These failures reflected also the general limits of an 'international route' to Jewish postwar rehabilitation.[36] Even the diplomat's attempt to develop a legal concept of statelessness in favour of Jewish refugees in Poland, Romania and Austria was eventually rejected; there was little Wolf could do seeing that the League's secretariat and council sided with these states.[37] Given his conspicuous engagement for refugees and experience in legal-humanitarian issues, Wolf was due to succeed Nansen as president of the Advisory Committee of the League's High Commission for Refugees. His death on 23 August 1930, however, made this plan impossible. At the same time, Wolf's attempt to specifically gain Italian support for Eastern European Jewry, which can be traced back to the early war years, contributed to a lasting awareness of the needs of refugees among the Italian-Jewish leadership, in particular regarding legal issues of migration and the protection of migrating women and children. Wolf's Italian interlocutor, Angelo Sullam, continued his commitment to the aid of Jewish refugees from Eastern Europe who passed through Italy. However, with the advent of fascism in October 1922, Italian humanitarianism underwent a significant change, developing both fascist and antifascist alignments.[38]

Catholic intermediator and humanitarian 'hero': Umberto Zanotti Bianco's mission in Russia

In May 1922, at the same time as Wolf met in Geneva with the Advisory Committee of the High Commissioner for Russian Refugees, Zanotti Bianco set out from Italy for Russia. The problems addressed by Wolf – refugee flows, famine and restrictions on departure and admission – formed the background to his humanitarian mission, which lasted until the end of August 1922. Zanotti Bianco, who was to become president of the Italian Red Cross in 1944, made the journey as plenipotentiary of the Italian Committee for the Relief of Russian Children, a section of the Comité International de Secours aux enfants affamés (International Committee for the Relief of Starving Children), an organ of the League of Nations. During the interwar period, international humanitarianism began to focus increasingly on children.[39]

Besides Zanotti Bianco's almost militant fervour towards humanitarian action, his mission to Russia was undoubtedly also motivated by a passionate interest in Russian culture. The appeal to the 'good-minded peoples' to aid Russia in July 1921 by the writer Maxim Gorki, a friend of Zanotti Bianco's, must have stimulated the latter's personal ambition to play a leading role as a humanitarian actor in a part of the world that fascinated him, now worn out by war and famine. As a committed Catholic with close relations to the Vatican, religious or rather missionary reasons notably contributed to Zanotti Bianco's intention to engage with Russian relief work in the overall battle of the Catholic Church against atheist Bolshevism.[40]

As in Wolf's case, migration had considerably influenced Zanotti Bianco's family's history, albeit for very different reasons. He was born in 1889 in Chania on the island of Crete, which then belonged to the Ottoman Empire. His father was the Piedmontese diplomat Gustavo Zanotti Bianco, at that time Italian consul in the Aegean island; his mother, the noblewoman Henriette-Marguerite Tulin, had English, Scottish and Swedish ancestry. Continuing his father's family tradition, Umberto received a Catholic-humanist education at the Reale Collegio Carlo Alberto di Moncalieri in Piedmont. Subsequently, he studied law at the university of Turin, where he graduated in 1911.[41]

The striking desire to act and demonstrate physical strength that characterize Zanotti Bianco's biography as a young man might have been a reaction against the religious rigour and focus on study he had been subjected to from an early age. Well-to-do, idealistic and adventurous, only a few weeks after the earthquake that had destroyed Messina in December 1908, the nineteen-year-old travelled to Sicily in order to participate in

the relief efforts.[42] Zanotti Bianco's experience in Messina proved to be decisive for his continuing interest in humanitarian action as well as for his lifelong affinity to the Italian south. In 1910, he co-founded the Associazione nazionale per gli interessi del Mezzogiorno d'Italia (ANIMI, National Association for the Interests of Southern Italy), aiming at the economic, educational and cultural development of the 'Mezzogiorno' (southern Italy), whose practices he later tried, in vain, to apply to the post-revolutionary Russian context. His participation in the First World War was undoubtedly inspired by his friend Salvemini's ideal of a 'democratic interventionism', which the diplomat's son, sixteen years younger, presumably also associated with masculinity and heroism.[43]

His militant idealism outlived the war. In June 1922, when Zanotti Bianco set out for Russia, Europe was far away from peace, with Italy's fascist course foreshadowing the development of new hostilities. Having just recovered from a serious war injury, he apparently felt the need to act again. Following Gorki's appeal, several non-governmental relief organizations, in particular the ARA led by Herbert Hoover, had decided to organize an extensive humanitarian mission in Russia. The fight against the 'red threat' in Europe fused with humanitarian, diplomatic and economic aims.[44] Hoover's programme formed part of the already mentioned internationalist policy by the US, intended to speed up European reconstruction. Apart from the ARA, the International Committee for Russian Relief, had been set up during a conference in Geneva in August 1921, naming as its high commissioner Fridtjof Nansen.[45]

The Italian Committee for the Relief of Russian Children acted within the context of these major organizational relief efforts. In a time of violent political polarization in Italy, anti-Bolshevism was at the base of its activities. As an aristocratic liberal Catholic with connections to the Vatican and diplomatic expertise, Zanotti Bianco was to represent the Italian relief efforts in Russia. His concrete task was to explore the possibilities of creating agricultural colonies, soup kitchens and kindergartens in the areas of the Crimea, Ukraine and Lower Volga that were hardest hit by the famine.[46]

Both Zanotti Bianco's detailed travel diary and letters that he wrote from Russia to his Italian friends and colleagues have survived.[47] There are two moments that stand out in these writings: first, the immediate proximity to starving and dying children, whose desolate condition reflected both the refugee problem and Russia's economic misery; and second, the description of the closely intertwined networks of representatives of European and US aid organizations, which point at the existence of an international humanitarian community during the first postwar period.

Zanotti Bianco specifically sought contacts with the local population. In his broken Russian and with the help of local interpreters, he spoke with

men, women and children he met at harbours, train stations, orphanages and hospitals. He recorded in his diary conversations and the individual fates of refugees, the politically persecuted and the homeless. In July 1922, on the journey from Moscow to the country's interior, Zanotti Bianco saw the first large group of refugees and wrote in his diary: 'We go down to the Volga. A few refugee families are camped on the sandy area. I see behind a boat a man who is so exhausted that he cannot even move. From the steamers that arrive every now and then other beggars descend with their cargo of misery.'[48] Illness and death are described rather plainly and without sentimentality, but often with palpable inner commitment. In August 1922, Zanotti Bianco visited a home for mothers and children in Yalta and wrote in his diary: 'On a table I see a small human form covered with a veil, which I lift. It is a little girl with blue eyes, who died a short time before, so alone, without flowers.'[49]

Moments of genuine involvement with the misery he witnessed alternate with descriptions that clearly show paternalistic elements, especially when he gives small handouts to children,[50] or when he writes that 'the shock which we Europeans experience is mostly of an aesthetic nature … The [refugee] women are all dressed miserably … Many of them have cut their hair [and] shaved [their heads] because of the typhus, or in order to maintain the cleanliness which is difficult here!'[51]

Despite his numerous encounters with locals, Zanotti Bianco stayed on the observing side. He did not create long-lasting relationships with the local population but ultimately remained within his own privileged sphere of middle- and upper-class humanitarians. His diary bears witness to lively contacts with representatives of humanitarian organizations, journalists, doctors, nurses and social workers. He communicated and spent leisure time with Italians, Swiss, French, English and Americans; there were meetings with representatives of the ICRC and the 'Nansen Mission', with whom Zanotti Bianco discussed the need for 'enduring' projects besides emergency relief.[52] Considering the relevance of the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) in Russian relief work, it is striking that the Italian Catholic apparently did not establish relationships with Quaker activists. Neither did he write about encounters with members of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) or smaller Jewish aid organizations. In fact, he participated most of all in international Catholic circles who were closely in touch with the ARA. This also explains his distance towards the AFSC, whose relationships with Hoover were often tense and conflictual.[53]

Interestingly, while the Jewish diplomat Wolf acted at the intersection of Jewish/non-Jewish expert networks between Geneva, Russia, Italy and Palestine, Zanotti Bianco assumed a significant function as mediator

between European and US Catholic groups. There were regular meetings with members of the ARA, collaborators of the 'missione cattolica' and individual American humanitarians who, according to Zanotti Bianco, collected funds for Russian relief among Catholics both in the US and in Europe.[54] In August 1922, he went to speak with the American section of the 'missione pontefica' in Moscow and met with representatives of the ARA.[55] Zanotti Bianco's connections to Catholic protagonists and Vatican circles were important prerequisites for his role as an unofficial mediator on the part of the Catholic Church, which supported Hoover's intention to 'stem the tide of bolshevism'.[56] At the same time, he was aware of the increasing tensions between ARA and Soviet circles. According to Zanotti Bianco, the American organization and its representatives became increasingly unpopular in Soviet circles, not least because of its close ties to Catholic groups and the Vatican, sealed by personal agreements between Pope Pius XI and Hoover in Washington.[57]

From summer 1922 onwards, the situation in the famine areas began to improve. The Soviet government increasingly distanced itself from foreign aid efforts and, beginning in 1923, rejected them outright as interference in the country's internal affairs. The last representatives of the ARA left Russia in September 1922. Almost at the same time, towards the end of August, Zanotti Bianco returned to Italy. By then, Italian–Russian relations had come to a standstill because of the unstoppable advance of fascism; only a few weeks later, Mussolini was to enact his march on Rome. Zanotti Bianco's intention to open an agricultural colony for migrating orphans in Crimea, based on projects of the ANIMI in southern Italy, failed due to the opposition of the Soviet government. His idealistic effort not to leave post-revolutionary Russia to its own devices was ultimately rejected by the recipients of the aid themselves.

Humanitarianism as a pacifist project: Rosa Genoni between transnational participation and fascist oppression

The Russian context became a central field of humanitarian action and experimentation not only for diplomats such as Wolf and philanthropists such as Zanotti Bianco. Women from Europe and the US – intellectuals, women's rights activists, social workers and doctors – played as a crucial role in Russian relief as in the development of transnational humanitarianism during the interwar period in general.[58] However, the relevance of women in the professionalization of humanitarian aid, the creation of transnational aid networks and the transfer of knowledge and practices have received increasing attention only within the last two decades.[59]

Women who participated as feminists in humanitarian networks and organizations consciously challenged stereotyped notions of male heroism and female care. The image of aid workers as 'loving angels' and 'caring mothers' differed considerably from the self-image of female actors such as Genoni, whose humanitarian commitment went hand in hand with the claim for political and social equality for women. This does not mean, however, that all women who were active in humanitarian organizations during the interwar period defined themselves as feminists.[60]

Genoni consciously combined feminist with pacifist and humanitarian goals in her activities. As in Wolf's and Zanotti Bianco's cases, the reasons for her social, political and cultural engagement can be traced in her transnational biography. Born in 1867 as the eldest of eighteen children in a working-class family in the Lombard province of Sondrio, she moved to Milan when she was only ten years old in order to work as a seamstress and financially support the family. At a young age, Genoni joined the Milanese workers' associations and came into contact with the socialist-influenced feminism around Anna Kuliscioff, a prominent pioneer of Russian-Jewish origin. Her networks also included Jewish members of the socialist-leaning women's organization Unione Femminile Nazionale, which had close connections to the Jewish community in Milan. In this way, Genoni became familiar with Jewish secular and religious identities that influenced humanitarian projects in the contemporary women's movement. It was the beginning of the young activist's political and social commitment that was inseparably linked to her interest in the contemporary peace movement. In 1884, she was sent as a representative of the Italian workers' party to an international congress in Paris; eventually, she remained in the French capital for several years, established political contacts and made a career as a fashion designer.[61] The Italian police observed Genoni as a supporter of so-called anarchist-socialist groups, due to her proximity to contemporary socialism and international political networks.[62]

Unlike many middle-class actors of the women's movement who, together with contemporaries such as Zanotti Bianco, followed the interventionist course, Genoni did not experience the beginning of the First World War with national euphoria and irredentist ambitions. The originally close connection of the Italian women's movement with European pacifism collapsed under the impact of the global conflict. In contrast, Genoni decidedly adhered to the remaining pacifist minority.[63]

The feminist's international breakthrough occurred in April 1915, when she represented Italian women at the Women's Peace Conference in The Hague, one month before Italy entered the war.[64] The WILPF emerged at the end of the conflict from the international contacts established in 1915. Its representatives, including Genoni for Italy, maintained close ties with

the League of Nations, moving its headquarters to Geneva. Even if the WILPF promoted itself as a secular institution, religious influences did play a role within its membership, given the high number of Quakers and Jewish collaborators. The WILPF shared interests with legal experts in the Swiss city such as Wolf, being concerned with minority rights and the problem of refugees. As Silvia Salvatici has pointed out, one important impulse for the emerging 'humanitarian system' in the first postwar period came from the building of international women's associations which shared the internationalist spirit of the League of Nations and wished to contribute to its programmes.[65]

Like many members of the WILPF, Genoni immediately committed herself to the humanitarian campaign for Russia when the famine broke out in 1921. Due to her extensive international network, she was well informed about the disaster. Unable to make the long journey to Russia in order to help in situ, the socialist dedicated herself especially to public relations and intellectual humanitarian work, seeking to draw the attention of Italian society to the problem of homeless Russian orphans and starving children.[66] Genoni became active in the context of the Committee for the Relief of Russian Children, albeit from an altogether different social and political viewpoint than one of its main representatives, Umberto Zanotti Bianco. In a time of violent political polarization in Italy, anti-Bolshevism formed the base of the committee's activities. Significantly, its secretary and treasurer was the noblewoman Maria Pignatelli di Cerchiara (1894–1968), who had close contacts in fascist circles.[67] Genoni was in fact politically and socially distant from the majority of the committee's membership, while at the same time she made conscious use of the public space offered by the internationally visible organization. Thus, she disseminated the visual and written material the committee produced in order to raise awareness of the emergency in Russia among her own kindred spirits. The period of the Russian famine was characterized by the systematic use of photographs and motion pictures for fundraising campaigns, in accordance with the overall increasing presence of imagery of the 'distant suffering' as well as technological innovations.[68] Genoni was among the distributors of a brochure with which the Italian aid committee for Russian children asked for donations. It included photographs of children who were emaciated to the bones and dead children 'found in the streets', whose bodies looked like skeletons. Another photograph showed a mountain of emaciated dead bodies near the cemetery of Buzuluk in the Volga region. The images were taken by volunteers of the Italian aid mission in the province of Saratov.[69]

Another document Genoni preserved and circulated was a leaflet which bore the title 'The intellectuals for the Russians'; it included parts of a speech dated September 1921 by Fridtjof Nansen, translated into Italian,

in which the high commissioner called for an 'international effort' and appealed to human solidarity.[70]

For the socialist Genoni, humanitarian aid was bound to the ideal of an all-inclusive community and equal relationships between human beings, alluding to concepts of the Enlightenment. Unlike Zanotti Bianco, whose connections to the Vatican enabled him to remain active in humanitarian work at least until 1925 when he signed the 'Manifesto of the antifascist intellectuals', Genoni's activities were immediately endangered by the strengthening fascist movement. Russian relief work was the last humanitarian project she was openly able to join. In a speech that she wrote for an intended conference of the WILPF in November 1922, only a few weeks after Mussolini's march on Rome, she emphasized with a warning undertone that the ideal of 'universal brotherhood', dating back to the French Revolution, had once again moved to an unreachable distance from Europe and the entire world.[71]

It was Genoni's last appearance before an international audience. A socialist and feminist with extensive international connections, she became the enemy par excellence of fascism. The contacts between the Italian section and the Geneva headquarters of the WILPF broke off around 1927. In November 1926, Mussolini not only dissolved all associations and parties of the opposition but also created a secret police to combat antifascist groups, which were no longer able to survive even underground. Instead of emigrating, Genoni chose internal exile. The political police's surveillance put a definite end to her humanitarian work that she had always combined with a strong feminist identity and pacifist commitment.

Conclusion: a history of conflicts, shortcomings and failures

The three case studies I have focused on clearly reflect the importance of the Italian postwar context regarding Jewish refugees, the Catholic Church and the implications of early fascism on humanitarian action. Within relief for post-revolutionary Russia, the activities of the Jewish diplomat Wolf, the Catholic philanthropist Zanotti Bianco and the secular socialist feminist Genoni met in different ways, and presumably there were also personal encounters that occurred in respective organizational frameworks. As also becomes evident in other chapters in this volume, Western (in this case Italian) humanitarian responses were developed, framed and tested in Eastern Europe, here postwar Russia, which turned into a disaster space struck by famine and characterized by weak sovereignty.

Transnational biographies and migration, albeit under very different social conditions, characterize the actors in question. The biographical

approach allows us to reveal and perceive their practical and intellectual mobility between countries, social groups, ideas and institutions. In a time when new nation-states emerged from the ruins of the old empires, crossing borders – real and imaginary ones – represented a central part of the protagonists' existence. Thus, the humanitarians' biographies examined here point to a crucial aspect of the developing contemporary humanitarian system: aid activities did not remain confined to national communities but transcended borders, continuing a process that had started long before the war and steadily increased in the course of the global conflict. As we have seen, the protagonists consciously tried to transfer relief projects, humanitarian ideas and practices from their home countries to distant places, here post-revolutionary Russia, albeit with varied outcomes.[72] Regarding Genoni's case, Russian relief took place beyond on-site activities, based on intellectual engagement and public relation activities carried out in and from Italy, but always within far-reaching and border-crossing networks. Significantly, the protagonists' work, their connections and intersections, showed a close interaction between transnational, national and local levels of aid.

Individual experiences became key motives for their humanitarian efforts based on diverse political and social ideas and practices that did not lack paternalistic elements and tendencies towards heroic self-constructions. The findings of this chapter challenge conventional interpretations of humanitarians as welfare workers and volunteers, and contest stereotyped reasons for humanitarian engagement by considering national interests, international complexities and personal ambitions, and also legal-humanitarian efforts as in Wolf's approach and egalitarian ideas as in Genoni's pacifist humanitarianism. What is more, the analysis points to the ongoing relevance of religious affiliations within postwar humanitarian actors and networks. Wolf's commitment to the rights of Jewish minorities was significantly influenced by his religious Jewish identity, and even the Zionists Leone and Felice Ravenna emphasized the need for religious belongings. Zanotti Bianco, on the other hand, due to his upper-class Catholic background and connections to the Vatican, acted at the centre of global Catholic networks whose missionary and political intentions towards Soviet Russia fused with the anti-Bolshevist interests of organizations such as Hoover's ARA. Hence, these religious-political motivations also reflected the role humanitarianism began to play between the developing political blocs in interwar Europe, leading to the enforced exit of the ARA from Russia just a few weeks before the foundation of the Soviet Union. As to non-Catholic religious influences, even Genoni's intellectual humanitarianism towards Russia did not take place in an entirely secular space but in the proximity of epistemic communities that were considerably shaped by Quakers and Jewish actors.

All three cases studied here are stories of conflicts, shortcomings and failures. Whereas Wolf did not succeed in his legal-humanitarian efforts to improve the situation of Russian-Jewish refugees due to juridical inefficiencies of the League of Nations, as well as restricted immigration policies in Europe and overseas, Zanotti Bianco had to cope with the rejection of his aid supply by the Soviet government. Genoni's humanitarian activities were increasingly restricted and eventually blocked by the fascist dictatorship. The emerging tensions between humanitarian intentions, political aims and legal frameworks that can be traced in Wolf's, Zanotti Bianco's and Genoni's different forms of engagement for post-revolutionary Russia reveal the fragmented character of humanitarian action during the interwar period. As a matter of fact, international humanitarian institutions depended on the decisions of governments, policymakers, diplomats and militaries. Pursuing political and religious self-interests, as became obvious in the relations between ARA and Vatican circles, the efforts of humanitarian agencies and actors remained short lived and temporary. There was no powerful secular international humanitarian regime that could prevent misery and hostilities. When, with the establishment of the first fascist dictatorship, disaster began to spread over Europe again, Rosa Genoni wrote that it was European societies on whom 'depended the possibility of peace and of war … The [Women's International] League [for Peace and Freedom] makes … a warm appeal [so that] people collaborate towards the creation of an international life according to human dignity.'[73]

Notes

1 Umberto Zanotti Bianco to Ugo Ojetti, 18 June 1922, in Valeria Carinci and Antonio Jannazzo (eds), *Umberto Zanotti Bianco, Carteggio 1919–1928* (Rome and Bari: Laterza, 1989), 254, emphasis in original. This statement as well as all the following quotations from contemporary Italian sources have been translated into English by Ruth Nattermann.

2 On Zanotti Bianco's biography, see Mirko Grasso, *Costruire la democrazia: Umberto Zanotti Bianco tra meridionalismo ed europeismo* (Rome: Donzelli editore, 2015); Alessandro Galante Garrone, *Zanotti-Bianco e Salvemini: Carteggio* (Naples: Guida Editori, 1983), 7–59. On 'democratic interventionism', see Andrea Frangioni, *Salvemini e la Grande Guerra: Interventismo democratico, wilsonismo, politica delle nazionalità* (Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 2011).

3 On Genoni's biography, see Fanny Podreider, Guida alla raccolta di stoffe di Rosa Genoni Podreider, Archivio Storico della Società Umanitaria, Milan, busta 33, fasc. 1, lettera G. On her relevance as a designer, see Eugenia Paulicelli, *Rosa Genoni: La Moda è una cosa seria, Milano Expo 1906 e la Grande Guerra*

(Milan: Deleyva editore, 2017); Manuela Soldi, *Rosa Genoni – Moda e Politica: Una prospettiva femminista fra 800 e 900* (Venice: Marsilio, 2019). On the nationalist course of the Italian women's movement, see Perry Willson, *Women in Twentieth-Century Italy* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 47–9; on the few remaining pacifists in Italy, see Bruna Bianchi, 'Towards a New Internationalism: Pacifist Journals Edited by Women, 1914–1919', in Christa Hämmerle, Oswald Überegger and Birgitta Bader Zaar (eds), *Gender and the First World War* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

4 On Wolf's biography and his diplomatic and juridical efforts, see Jaclyn Granick, *International Jewish Humanitarianism in the Age of the Great War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 142–7; Mark Levene, 'Wolf, Lucien (1857–1930), Journalist and Lobbyist', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/38145; Mark Levene, *Jews and the New Europe: The Diplomacy of Lucien Wolf, 1914–1919* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

5 Michal Frankl, 'Exhibiting Refugeedom: Orient in Bohemia? Jewish Refugees during the First World War', *Judaica Bohemia*, 50:1 (2015), 117–29; Peter Gatrell, *A Whole Empire Walking: Refugees in Russia during World War I* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999); Peter Gatrell, *The Making of the Modern Refugee* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), especially 29–31, 42–4, 55–8.

6 Michael Barnett, *Empire of Humanity: A History of Humanitarianism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2011), 37–9.

7 Gatrell, *Modern Refugee*, 55–8; Dzonivar Kévonian, *Réfugiés et diplomatie humanitaire: les acteurs européens et la scene proche-orientale pendant l'entre-deux-guerres* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 2003), 388–91. On the role of the American Friends Service Committee in Russia, see Daniel Maul, *The Politics of Service: US-amerikanische Quäker und internationale humanitäre Hilfe 1917–1945* (Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2022), 119–59.

8 Bertrand Taithe, 'The "Making" of the Origins of Humanitarianism?', *Contemporanea*, 18:3 (2015), 489–96.

9 On the 'myth' of a secular international humanitarian regime during the inter-war period, see Rodogno, *Night on Earth*, 14–15.

10 Andrzej Zieliński, *Presenza polacca nell'Italia dell'entre-deux-guerres* (Milan: Franco Angeli, 2018), 162–80.

11 Quoted in Maria Teresa Giusti, *Relazioni pericolose: Italia fascista e Russia comunista* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2023), 49.

12 Giusti, *Relazioni pericolose*, 50–1.

13 Lucien Wolf, 'Anti-Semitism', in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 11th ed. (New York: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1910), 134–46; Levene, 'Wolf', 2; Daniel R. Langton, 'Jewish Evolutionary Perspectives on Judaism, Anti-Semitism, and Race Science in Late 19th Century England: A Comparative Study of Lucien Wolf and Joseph Jacobs', *Jewish Historical Studies*, 46 (2014), 37–73.

14 Levene, 'Wolf', 1–2; Levene, *War, Jews, and the New Europe*, 110–12.

15 Carole Fink, *Defending the Rights of Others: The Great Powers, the Jews, and International Minority Protection, 1878–1938* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 148–69.
16 Jaclyn Granick describes Wolf appropriately as a 'shtadlan [Jewish intercessor] for a new, internationalist age'; see her masters thesis on 'Jewish International Associations at the League of Nations, 1919–1927: A Historical Study of an Uneven Relationship between Private Associations and an International Organization' (masters thesis, Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies Geneva, 2010), 17. On Wolf's ambition to present himself in Geneva as a representative of England and a true diplomat, see Granick, 'Jewish International Associations', 19–20, 31. I thank Jaclyn Granick for having shared with me the manuscript of her thesis.
17 Levene, 'Wolf', 3.
18 Levene, *War, Jews, and the New Europe*, 108–18.
19 Arturo Marzano, *Una terra per rinascere: Gli ebrei italiani e l'emigrazione in Palestina prima della guerra (1920–1940)* (Genoa and Milan: Marietti, 2003).
20 Stanislao G. Pugliese (ed.), *The Most Ancient of Minorities: The Jews of Italy* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2002).
21 Fondazione Centro di Documentazione Ebraica Contemporanea (CDEC) Milano, Fondo Leone e Felice Ravenna, Busta 4, fascicolo 35, Lucien Wolf to Felice Ravenna, 30 August 1916.
22 CDEC Milano, Fondo Leone e Felice Ravenna, Busta 3, fascicolo 29, Leone Ravenna to Lucien Wolf, 6 April 1919.
23 CDEC Milano, Fondo Leone e Felice Ravenna, Busta 3, fascicolo 29, Leone Ravenna to Lucien Wolf, 6 April 1919.
24 Ruth Nattermann, *Jewish Women in the Early Italian Women's Movement, 1861–1945: Biographies, Discourses, and Transnational Networks* (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2022), 257–9.
25 On contemporary Italian Zionism, see David Bidussa, 'Il sionismo italiano nel primo quarto del Novecento: Una "rivolta culturale?"', part 1, *Bailamme*, 5–6 (1989), 168–244; part 2, *Bailamme*, 7 (1990), 95–172.
26 Sergio I. Minerbi, *L'Italie et la Palestine: 1914–1920* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1970); on the attitude of Italian Catholicism towards the Palestine question, see Paolo Zanini, 'I cattolici italiani e la questione della Palestina, tra aspetti religiosi e proiezioni nazionali (1922–1948)', *Qualestoria*, 2 (2017), 83–99.
27 Gatrell, *Modern Refugee*, 53–8; Dan Diner, 'Geschichte der Juden: Paradigma einer europäischen Historie', in Gerald Stourzh (ed.), *Annäherungen an eine europäische Geschichtsschreibung* (Vienna: Verlag der österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2002), 86.
28 Levene, 'Wolf', 3.
29 N. Götz, G. Brewis and S. Werther, *Humanitarianism in the Modern World: The Moral Economy of Famine Relief* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 44–56; Maul, *The Politics of Service*, 119–20.

30 Nattermann, *Jewish Women*, 257–8. On Angelo Sullam's influence on contemporary Zionism, see Laura Brazzo, *Angelo Sullam e il Sionismo in Italia tra la Crisi di Fine Secolo e la Guerra di Libia* (Rome: Società Editrice Dante Alighieri, 2007).
31 Gatrell, *Modern Refugee*, 56.
32 CDEC Milano, Fondo Angelo Sullam, Busta 15, fascicolo 160, Lucien Wolf, 'Russo-Jewish Refugees in Eastern Europe: Report on the Third Meeting of the Advisory Committee of the High Commissioner for Russian Refugees of the League of Nations, held in Geneva on May 29–30, 1922', 12.
33 Claudena Skran, *Refugees in Inter-War Europe: The Emergence of a Regime* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 83–4.
34 Wolf, 'Russo-Jewish Refugees', 11.
35 Wolf, 'Russo-Jewish Refugees', 15–16.
36 Granick, *International Jewish Humanitarianism*, 147.
37 Granick, *International Jewish Humanitarianism*, 147; Granick, 'Jewish International Associations', 37.
38 There have been no comprehensive works on fascist or anti-fascist humanitarianisms in the Italian and transnational context. Among the few studies on anti-fascist refugee aid organizations, see Maddalena Tirabassi, 'Nazioni Unite (1942–1946): l'organo ufficiale della Mazzini Society', in Antonio Varsori (ed.), *L'antifascismo italiano negli Stati Uniti durante la Seconda guerra mondiale* (Rome: Archivio Trimestrale, 1984), 295–313; Sandro Antonini, *Delasem: Storia della più grande organizzazione ebraica italiana di soccorso durante la seconda guerra mondiale* (Genua: De Ferrari, 2000). An outstanding example for fascist alignments within actors of the Italian Red Cross is the war nurse Elisa Majer Rizzioli (1880–1930), founder of the first fascist women's organization; see Nattermann, *Jewish Women*, 220–6.
39 Heide Fehrenbach, 'From Aid to Intimacy: The Humanitarian Origins and Media Culture of International Adoption', in Paulmann (ed.), *Dilemmas of Humanitarian Aid*, 216; Dominique Marshall, 'The Rise of Coordinated Action for Children in War and Peace: Experts at the League of Nations, 1924–1945', in Davide Rodogno, Bernhard Struck and Jakob Vogel (eds), *Shaping the Transnational Sphere: Experts, Networks and Issues from the 1840s to the 1930s* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn, 2015), 82–107.
40 On Gorki's appeal, see Maul, *The Politics of Service*, 125; on the friendship between the Russian writer and Zanotti Bianco, see Grasso, *Costruire la Democrazia*, 135.
41 Grasso, *Costruire la Democrazia*, 11–15.
42 On constructions of humanitarian heroism from a long-term perspective, see Bertrand Taithe, 'Humanitarian Masculinity: Desire, Character, and Heroics, 1879–2018', in Esther Möller, Johannes Paulmann and Katharina Stornig (eds), *Gendering Global Humanitarianism in the Twentieth Century: Practice, Politics, and the Power of Representation* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), 35–60.
43 See Galante Garrone, *Zanotti-Bianco e Salvemini*, 7–14.

44 Bruno Cabanes, *The Great War and the Origins of Humanitarianism 1918–1924* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 189–247.
45 Salvatici, *A History of Humanitarianism*, 109–10.
46 Valeria Carinci and Antonio Jannazzo (eds), *Umberto Zanotti Bianco: Carteggio 1919–1928* (Rome and Bari: Laterza, 1989), Vol. 2, 248–9.
47 Parts of the original sources preserved in the ANIMI archives in Reggio Calabria have been edited, see Umberto Zanotti Bianco, 'Diario dall'Unione Sovietica 1922'; Umberto Zanotti Bianco, *Carteggio 1919–1928*; Galante Garrone, *Zanotti-Bianco e Salvemini*.
48 7 July 1922, Zanotti Bianco, *Diario*, 400.
49 20 August 1922, Zanotti Bianco, *Diario*, 465.
50 See, e.g., 31 July 1922, Zanotti Bianco, *Diario*, 439–40.
51 7 July 1922, Zanotti Bianco, *Diario*, 400.
52 See 30 June–6 July 1922, Zanotti Bianco, *Diario*, 393–7.
53 On the rather difficult relationship between the AFSC and ARA in Russia, see Maul, *The Politics of Service*, 125–41.
54 5 August 1922, Zanotti Bianco, *Diario*, 446.
55 31 August 1922, Zanotti Bianco, *Diario*, 487.
56 Quoted in Salvatici, *A History of Humanitarianism*, 107.
57 22 August 1922, Zanotti Bianco, *Diario*, 469.
58 Cabanes, *The Great War*, 3–4; Barnett interprets the developments during the First World War as part of an 'Age of Imperial Humanitarianism', see Barnett, *Empire of Humanity*, 83–8.
59 Rebecca Gill, *Calculating Compassion: Humanity and Relief in War, Britain 1870–1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013); Sybil Oldfield, *Doers of the Word. Women Humanitarians: A Biographical Dictionary of British Women Active between 1900 and 1950* (London and New York: Continuum, 2001); Katherine Storr, *Excluded from the Record: Women, Refugees and Relief, 1914–1929* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2009); on Jewish female humanitarians, see J. Granick and A. Green (eds) 'Gendering Jewish Inter/Nationalism', *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies*, 21:2 (2022), www.tandfonline.com/toc/cmjs20/21/2
60 A relevant example are the female collaborators of the American women hospitals, founded in 1917, who defined themselves mostly as feminists; see Rodogno, *Night on Earth*, 273–5; Francesca Piana, 'Maternalism and Feminism in Medical Aid: The American Women's Hospitals in the United States and in Greece 1917–1941', in Möller, Paulmann, Stornig (eds), *Gendering Global Humanitarianism*, 85–114. See also D. Martín-Moruno, B. L. Edgar and M. Leyder, 'Feminist Perspectives on the History of Humanitarian Relief (1870–1945)', *Medicine, Conflict and Survival*, 36:1 (2020), 2–18.
61 Podreider, *Guida alla raccolta di stoffe*.
62 Archivio Centrale dello Stato (ACS Roma), Ministero dell'Interno (MI), Casellario Politico Centrale (CPC), busta 2332, fasc. Genoni Rosa, Prefettura Milano a Ministero dell'Interno, 13 March 1916.
63 Stefania Bartoloni, *Donne di fronte alla guerra: Pace, diritti e democrazia* (Rome and Bari: Laterza, 2017), 203–8; Bruna Bianchi, '"L'ultimo rifugio dello spirito

di umanità": La Grande Guerra e la nascita di un nuovo pacifismo', *Annali della Fondazione Ugo La Malfa*, 28 (2013), 81–100; Angela Russo, '"Viva l'Italia tutta redenta!" Interventiste alla vigilia della Grande Guerra', in Laura Guidi (ed.), *Vivere la guerra: Percorsi biografici e ruoli di genere tra Risorgimento e primo conflitto mondiale* (Naples: Clio Press, 2007), 119–39.

64 On the peace conference in detail, see Annika Wilmers, *Pazifismus in der internationalen Frauenbewegung 1914–1920: Handlungsspielräume, politische Konzeptionen und gesellschaftliche Auseinandersetzungen* (Essen: Klartext, 2008), 35–55.

65 Salvatici, *A History of Humanitarianism*, 83.

66 See the related documents in Rosa Genoni's papers, Archivio Podreider, Milan.

67 On the noblewoman's role in the Committee, see Margherita Isnardi Parente, 'Nota Introduttiva', in Umberto Zanotti Bianco, 'Diario dall'Unione Sovietica 1922', *Nuova Antologia*, 112 (1977), 379–80.

68 See Luc Boltanski, *Distant Suffering: Morality, Media and Politics* (Cambrige: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Heide Fehrenbach and Davide Rodogno (eds), *Humanitarian Photography: A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015); Johannes Paulmann (ed.), *Humanitarianism and Media: 1900 to the Present* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn, 2018).

69 Archivio Podreider, Milan, Comitato italiano di soccorso ai bambini russi, Salvate i bambini, undated [1921].

70 Archivio Podreider, Milan, 'Gli Intellettuali per i russi'.

71 Archivio Podreider, Milan, speech by Rosa Genoni, Conferenza Internazionale per una Nuova Pace (1922). On the intended conference in The Hague and the WILPF's Italian section, see Ruth Nattermann, 'Internationaler Feminismus und Humanitarismus nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg: Akteurinnen der Women's International League for Peace and Freedom im Spannungsfeld von Internationalismus, Nationalismus und faschistischer Herrschaft in Europa', *Themenportal Europäische Geschichte* (2022), www.europa.clio-online.de/essay/id/fdae-112845

72 'What is given is often not what recipients need'; Michael Barnett (ed.), *Humanitarianism and Human Rights: A World of Differences?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 13.

73 Rosa Genoni, WILPF, Seminario Varese 1922, Archivio Podreider, Milan.

10

Religious humanitarianism: the World Council of Churches for refugees in Austria in 1956 and 1968

Sarah Knoll

'It is crucial that all aid is an expression of the brotherly love and responsibility that lives in the great wide world of Protestantism.' With these words, the Lutheran pastor Georg Traar, head of the Austrian Protestant relief organization Hilfswerk, praised the spirit of the relief operations of the Protestant churches for Hungarians who fled the Soviet invasion in 1956.[1] Traar especially highlighted international cooperation between churches and ecumenical associations as crucial for organizing the support mission. A central pillar of these joint relief efforts was the World Council of Churches (WCC), a global Christian federation founded in Amsterdam in 1948. Understood primarily as an organization to create and support Christian unity, its member churches and associations also cooperated in 'matters which require common statements and actions'.[2] One of these common actions was running international relief operations for people in need, for example refugees or victims of military conflicts. To support refugees, the WCC ran a separate department, the Division of Inter-Church Aid and Service of Refugees. In this sense, the WCC functioned not only as a spiritual community but also as a humanitarian actor.

As part of its humanitarian efforts for refugees, the WCC was active in Austria in aiding Hungarians who fled the Soviet suppression of the Hungarian Revolution in 1956 and Czechoslovaks who arrived after the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968. In the context of the Cold War, both events were highly politicized and international relief missions were carried out in Austria in support of the refugees.[3] As part of these international relief missions, the WCC coordinated emergency aid in cooperation with local partners, worked as a 'migration manager' to organize onward travel from Austria to the Western world and took care of the spiritual well-being of the refugees.[4] To analyse the WCC as a humanitarian actor, this chapter looks at the assistance provided by the WCC to Hungarian refugees in 1956–7 and Czechoslovak refugees in 1968–9. The main research questions are as follows. First, how did the work of the WCC fit into the international relief operations for Hungarians

and Czechoslovaks in Austria? Second, how did the political dichotomy of the Cold War and changes in the international refugee politics influence the relief operations of the WCC? And third, how did the WCC's relief mission relate to the interests of the Austrian state in helping refugees?

The chapter uses the approaches of Johannes Paulmann, Michael Barnett and Janice Gross Stein concerning the entanglement of humanitarian aid and religious missionary work. As they argue, religious discourses and organizations were crucial to establishing the concept of humanitarianism in the nineteenth century.[5] However, since then religious organizations have also tried to downplay their interest in spreading religious beliefs by focusing on 'improving the lives of people'. This became especially crucial, as Michael Barnett and Janice Gross Stein argue, after the Second World War, when Western governments became the key funders of humanitarian aid and started to prefer secular organizations such as CARE. To remain a part of the international relief system, faith-based organizations began to work together with secular organizations and used secularized international legal principles to achieve their goals.[6] Yet religion was still a major part of their humanitarian work, as it was for the WCC. As Jakob Schönhagen pointed out, Christian charity was an important aspect of the WCC's support for refugees. In the 1950s, the WCC argued that refugees lacked a physical and spiritual home, which was damaging to their Christian faith.[7] This argument gave refugee assistance a spiritual and missionary character, even though it was oriented towards the interests of a supposedly secularized international community. In this way, religious and non-religious approaches to humanitarian aid became intertwined, forming a religious humanitarianism that sought to promote religious beliefs through secularized humanitarian aid programmes. The WCC's aid programmes for Hungarian and Czechoslovakian refugees in Austria are representative of this approach. The support was part of international relief missions, and the WCC worked with secular partners such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration (ICEM) and the government of the United States of America. Nevertheless, religious support was seen as an important contribution to improving the lives of refugees.

Moreover, the WCC's relief missions were carried out in a highly political environment, influenced by the geopolitical dynamics of the Cold War, the focus of international refugee policy and the political interests of the Austrian government and the WCC's member churches. Therefore, this chapter understands the WCC's religious humanitarianism also as a political activity. The chapter thus sheds light on the inherent connection between political interests, religious beliefs and humanitarian assistance, and expands our understanding of how humanitarian assistance to refugees

in East Central Europe functioned at the intersection of international aid and political change. It follows the approach of Joël Glasman, who argues that helping people in need is always a political task that also has an impact on the region where the help is given, even if international organizations try to present themselves as 'floating institutions' that act neutrally, impartially and universally.[8] In the case studies analysed, the WCC's assistance strengthened, in particular, Austria's refugee policy, which during the Cold War primarily focused on the resettlement of refugees outside of Austria.[9]

In looking at the WCC as a religious humanitarian actor, the chapter expands the existing literature about the organization. While research on the WCC has long focused on the its fight for religious freedom and human rights,[10] its programmes against racism,[11] its relationship with socialism and ideas from the revolutionary left, the process of decolonization[12] and globalization during the 1960s and 1970s,[13] this chapter puts the WCC's work for refugees in the spotlight.[14]

The analysis is based primarily on files from the archive of the WCC located at the organization's headquarters in Geneva. Furthermore, the study includes files from the Austrian State Archive, the National Archives of the US and the archive of the UNHCR. This multi-perspective approach is necessary to connect the efforts of the WCC for Hungarian and Czechoslovak refugees with the global humanitarian refugee relief missions and Austrian refugee policy in the Cold War.

Taking care of Hungarian 'freedom fighters' in 1956

The Hungarian refugee crisis in 1956 was the first to reach Austria after the country had regained state sovereignty following ten years of Allied occupation at the end of the Second World War. On 15 May 1955, the Allied powers signed the State Treaty with Austria. One condition of the negotiations to reinstate an independent Austria was the acceptance of neutrality through the parliament on 26 October 1955.[15] Nevertheless, Austrian politicians perceived the country as part of the West. Hungary, like the eastern parts of Austria, had been occupied by the Soviet Union after the Second World War. But in contrast to Austria, Hungary was transformed into a people's republic under the repressive rule of the Communist Party. In autumn 1956, inspired by the workers' uprising in Poland of June that same year, demonstrations in Hungary called for an end to one-party rule and the introduction of democracy. On 23 October 1956, the protests culminated in a revolution against the Communist Party in nearly all parts of the country. However, starting on 4 November 1956, the Hungarian Revolution was bloodily crushed by the Soviet army.[16] What followed was

a refugee movement in which about 200,000 Hungarians left the country. Around 180,000 of them arrived in Austria, triggering a humanitarian crisis.[17]

As soon as news of the Soviet invasion reached the Austrian capital, Vienna, on 4 November 1956, the Austrian government under Julius Raab (Austrian People's Party) called on the assistance of the UNHCR and the ICEM to draw attention to the unfolding emergency in the country. The government requested financial assistance and support to organize the resettlement of the refugees outside of Austria.[18] From the outset, the Austrian government hoped for rapid and extensive international support so that the refugees would not remain in the country too long.[19] As the government hoped, support reached Austria quickly. Not only did the UNHCR and the ICEM get to work in Austria as soon as news of the emergency in Hungary and Austria spread around the world but other organizations with different religious, secular or humanitarian backgrounds – such as the Red Cross, the National Catholic Welfare Conference, the American Joint Distribution Committee and the WCC – got involved.[20]

Right from the beginning, Arthur Foster, a senior representative of the WCC's Service for Refugees in Austria, started to plan the WCC's involvement in Austria and assured the Austrian government of their full cooperation with all available resources in terms of transport, food and clothing.[21] Because the WCC had already been active in Austria supporting displaced persons and organizing their migration after the Second World War, it was able to draw on existing established working structures in the country.[22] Official approval from headquarters for the aid mission was given at a meeting in Geneva on 5 and 6 November 1956.[23] To allocate resources more efficiently, the WCC established a temporary joint office with the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), a worldwide association of Lutheran churches. They called this initiative the Hungarian Emergency Relief Program (HERP).[24] The main task of HERP was to coordinate both the emergency and long-term help for Hungarians provided by Protestant churches and Protestant relief organizations in Austria and Hungary. HERP established a division of labour between the international and local partners involved. The WCC and LWF were in charge of financing the relief efforts and supported the international resettlement operations for Hungarians.[25] The WCC especially saw resettlement services as its main task due to its 'long experience […] in the field of migration' and its worldwide church networks.[26] Helping Hungarians in Austria was the task of the local Protestant churches and the local relief organization Hilfswerk, which was chosen by the WCC as the main local partner organization to support Hungarian refugees.[27] Hilfswerk was a Protestant relief organization initially established in 1946 to support the Austrian population with

emergency aid and the reconstruction after the Second World War.[28] Like the WCC, Hilfswerk also drew on the experiences it had gained during relief operations following the Second World War, and it began to provide assistance to refugees at the Austrian–Hungarian border. Hilfswerk set up reception camps and distributed supplies, including clothing and welcome kits.[29] The welcome kits were sponsored by the United States Escape Program, a highly political programme launched in 1952 by then US President Harry S. Truman. It was designed to provide people who had escaped from Soviet-controlled countries with the basic requirements for getting started in the Western world.[30]

The substantial assistance made it necessary to establish overall coordination for managing the international emergency relief mission for Hungarian refugees. Since money and supplies mainly came in from abroad, their distribution became a matter of international importance. On 9 November 1956, the General Assembly of the United Nations instructed the UNHCR to function as the 'lead agency'. The UNHCR's task was to establish an efficient structure to link up the aid measures provided by the different relief agencies, the Austrian government and the international community.[31] To this end, the UNHCR set up a coordinating group and introduced the following division of labour: the UNHCR assumed overall coordination and was responsible for the legal protection of the rights of the refugees; the ICEM oversaw registration and the organization of resettlement; and the League of the Red Cross Societies, with whom the Austrian government reached agreements to operate in the country starting on 7 November 1956,[32] took care of the refugees on the ground in Austria and provided support such as food, first aid and accommodation. All the other organizations that wanted to support Hungarians were asked to provide as many resources – financial, material and staffing – as possible and to work together with the three main organizations: UNHCR, ICEM and Red Cross.[33] This request also applied to the WCC and its partners, Hilfswerk and the LWF. They accepted the conditions and became part of the extensive international mission in support of Hungarians, working side by side with different secular and religious organizations. And in fact, the WCC had already hoped the UNHCR would assume overall responsibility for coordinating the work of voluntary agencies. From the outset, the WCC wanted to cooperate with the different organizations involved and underlined the positive collaboration.[34]

That international aid was so extensive was due to the fact that the refugee movement, like the Hungarian upspring before it, was the subject of international media coverage and the focus of political interest, and therefore also the focus of support for relief organizations – an advantage the WCC too wanted to use to position itself as a trustworthy humanitarian

actor in the global refugee regime.[35] The Hungarians fleeing Communist rule were perceived as 'freedom fighters' and generated a high level of international attention. The pictures and reports of the Hungarians revolting were carried all over the world via newspapers, radio reports and television, rousing sympathy and triggering anti-Communist attitudes and solidarity in the West.[36] The Hungarian refugee crisis fitted almost perfectly into the political dichotomy of the Cold War. On the one hand, the enemy communism; on the other hand, the brave 'freedom fighters' who were fighting against the 'red' oppressor. Particularly in the 1940s and 1950s, people fleeing Communist-ruled countries were regarded as demonstrating the superiority of the West and as a sign of the failure of communism.[37] The relief mission was, therefore, a highly political task, with the goal of causing actual damage to Communist-ruled countries. The main strategy to fulfil this goal was resettlement. During the 1950s, the West perceived the relocation of workers as a means of destabilizing the Soviet Union and its allies through a shortage of skilled workers.[38] In the case of Hungary in 1956, this strategy was successful, since most of those who left Hungary after the Soviet invasion were young, skilled workers, thus contributing to a major brain drain.[39] The beneficiary of this strategy was the West itself; at a time of an economic boom after the Second World War, many countries were in need of skilled workers.[40]

The dominance of a Western perspective was also visible in the WCC's relief mission. From late November 1956 to late April 1957, Protestant churches donated a total of $556,416 in response to an appeal by the WCC in November 1956 for immediate relief and long-term welfare for the Hungarians affected, which especially covered resettlement measures, and the reconstruction of churches in Hungary. Most of this money came from churches in the West, especially from the US ($135,916), Canada ($145,755) and Great Britain ($142,823).[41]

Furthermore, the West – and especially the government of the US – feared a destabilizing effect on Austria and its newly established independence and democracy if the refugees stayed in the country too long.[42] These fears were encouraged by the Austrian government itself, which wanted to force the international community to offer more resettlement opportunities to send the refugees on their way to other destinations as quickly as possible.[43] The swift resettlement from Austria to other Western countries was seen by Austria and the US as a way to stabilize the region and as a solution to solve accommodation problems. Support for this argument came from relief organizations, first and foremost from the WCC. In an operation report compiled at the request of Richard Nixon, then vice-president of the US, the WCC argued that more than 60,000 refugees in Austria would 'quickly create security problems' and that Austria was 'incapable of

absorbing very many of the foreign speaking refugees seeking and receiving asylum here'. The WCC therefore called for a 'bold and large-scale' plan to provide immediate help to Austria. The preferred solution focused on the rapid movement of the refugees to countries in 'Western Europe' and overseas.[44] In this way, the WCC worked in the line with Austria interests and backed the countries' transit policies, which became established during the Hungarian refugee crisis.[45] Moreover, the organization promoted an approach to supporting refugees which was highly influenced by Cold War politics and US foreign policy interests.

However, the WCC was not the only relief organization calling for resettlement as the best solution to the Hungarian refugee crisis. Rather, the WCC again followed a global trend. From the beginning, the UNHCR, as the main coordinator of the international relief operation, promoted onward travel as the most effective measure for supporting both the Hungarians and Austria.[46] The relief organizations also acted in accordance with the wishes of the Hungarian refugees. According to the Austrian Ministry of the Interior, approximately 90 per cent of all Hungarian refugees registered in Austria did not want to stay there but wanted to emigrate, especially to the US.[47] Organizing overseas emigration became one of the main tasks of the WCC and the LWF, and the WCC and the US made arrangements for coordinated migration to the US as part of the US resettlement programme for Hungarian refugees.[48] The WCC's approach was holistic. Like other organizations in the field, it supported the refugees from their initial registration in refugee camps in Austria, through their necessary medical tests, and up to the start of their new lives, for example in American communities, in cooperation with local churches.[49] From November 1956 to the end of April 1957, the WCC and the LWF supported about 26,000 people through the emigration process as part of the large-scale resettlement mission,[50] an achievement of which the WCC was quite proud.[51] The WCC saw it as proof of the strength of the connections between the churches within the WCC that they were able to transit refugees to nearly every corner of the Western world, where they continued to receive aid from the local churches.[52] For those who did not find an opportunity to emigrate and stayed in Austria, the WCC – working on behalf of the UNHCR – also co-financed integration programmes such as housing initiatives, the establishment of schools, vocational training, language courses and scholarships for students.[53]

But working in the interests of the Austrian government did not stop at the organization of resettlement and integration opportunities. In November 1956, the Austrian government made an appeal to all relief organizations active in Austria to provide cultural and spiritual care to counter boredom in the refugee camps.[54] The WCC sprang into action, to show the Protestants and Orthodox refugees the 'love of God' and give them 'spiritual stability'.

Organizing pastoral care was, then, a highly important task.[55] Since the Protestant church in Austria was small and had insufficient staff, volunteers or pastors available – a situation explained by the fact that Austria is first and foremost a Catholic country – the Hilfswerk, WCC's local partner, had to be creative when it came to providing religious support. It started to rely on so-called flying teams, which travelled between the refugee camps and refugees' private accommodation. Up until 30 June 1957, a total of six flying teams were active in Austria and supervised around 20,000 refugees in fifteen camps and private accommodation locations.[56] To enter the refugee camps, it was necessary to acquire permission from the Austrian authorities or the Red Cross, which was responsible for most of the refugee camps in Austria on behalf of the Austrian government.[57] The teams, especially the Hungarian-speaking pastors and theological students, organized Bible classes, Sunday services and Christmas celebrations, as well as helping with small amounts of money, supplementary food for children and medical support. On behalf of the WCC, the flying teams, moreover, promoted opportunities to emigrate as a way of overcoming the frustration of living in a refugee camp, as the pastors involved pointed out.[58] The pastors emphasized that if the refugees had to wait too long in the camps, this would make them start to doubt Western help, and if they then decided they wanted to return to Hungary, this would cast that support in a bad light. These measures carried out on the ground by these Protestant organizations not only chimed with contemporary anti-Communist discourse but also became its multipliers. The anti-Communist attitude of the relief mission was therefore not just part of the resettlement programmes but also part of the daily work in the camps.[59]

During the Hungarian refugee crisis, the WCC integrated itself fully into a highly political, Western-dominated relief mission, whose goal was to stabilize Austria by organizing as many resettlement opportunities as possible and destabilizing a part of the 'Eastern Bloc' with a lack of skilled workers. The WCC supported this political task by organizing resettlement, especially to the US. In doing so, it worked in line with the Austrian government, who perceived the onward travel of the refugees as the best way to solve the Hungarian refugee crisis in the country and thereby strengthened Austria's newly established refugee politics of transit. Nevertheless, the WCC used its religious networks to support the rehabilitation of the refugees in their new homes and put pastoral care at the centre of their local support. Still, religion was seen by the WCC and its member churches as an important way to improve the lives of people. Yet the spread of religion worked in cooperation with secularized partners and as part of a global relief mission.

Supporting Czechoslovak citizens in 1968

In the summer of 1968, Austria was again confronted with a humanitarian challenge. This time, it was the invasion of Czechoslovakia by Warsaw Pact forces on 21 August 1968 to suppress the political reform project of the Prague Spring that caused hundreds of thousands of people to flee. As in the Hungarian case, the Austrian government under Josef Klaus (Austrian People's Party) again accepted refugees into the country, but again it did not want the Czechoslovaks to settle in Austria permanently and called for international support to organize their transit.[60] The challenges during the first days after the invasion revolved around questions of legal status. The first groups of refugees to arrive in Austria often did not apply for political asylum. Instead, many waited and observed the course of events at home, hoping to be able to return soon.[61] But as most of the Czechoslovaks 'just' waited in Austria, the government saw no possibilities for supporting them. Help by the state and by the UNHCR was only provided to people who officially applied for asylum. Therefore, aid organizations such as Caritas, Volkshilfe and the Austrian Red Cross, which were not obligated to adhere to the legal framework of asylum application, took over providing support for the waiting Czechoslovaks. Once the Protestant churches in Austria also became involved, they requested international backing through the WCC.[62] Compared to the Hungarian case, the reaction of the WCC was less enthusiastic, and it wanted to act 'responsibly and not acerbate an extremely delicate situation by precipitate, and perhaps premature, actions'.[63] Nevertheless, over the next few months the WCC supported the Austrian churches financially and again worked as a 'migration manager' to organize resettlement for those who wanted to leave Austria.

Again, the WCC's initial hesitation can be explained by the geopolitical situation. In light of attempts to defuse the East–West conflict through the policy of détente, the events in Czechoslovakia came at an unfortunate time. The West, including the US, had just started to open a fragile dialogue with the Soviet Union. The events in Czechoslovakia were therefore seen as a potential threat to the growing relationship with the Soviet Union. This was also reflected in the UNHCR's attitude towards the aid mission for Czechoslovaks. Like the WCC, the UNHCR wanted to 'offer as little political surface for attack as possible',[64] and did not want to 'dramatise' the situation.[65] Therefore, and because of the 'uncertain political situation', the WCC did not make a public appeal for support in the first days after the invasion.[66]

Moreover, the international setting had changed since the Hungarian case. By the early 1960s, as the refugee problems in Europe following the

Second World War and the Hungarian refugee crisis in 1956 had nearly been solved, the focus of the international community and aid organizations had already shifted to Africa and Asia, where decolonization movements, civil wars and proxy conflicts produced a series of severe humanitarian crises.[67] Europe, and especially Western countries, including Austria, were therefore no longer the central focus for humanitarian aid. The overall opinion was that international relief was more urgently needed elsewhere in the world than in Western Europe.[68] Rather, Europe, especially the Western part, evolved from a recipient of humanitarian aid to a financier of humanitarian programmes in the Global South, which also became evident in the focus of the WCC's relief missions.

Furthermore, the WCC had undergone a fundamental structural change since the 'Hungarian crisis'. As historian Katharina Kunter has pointed out, the 1960s and later the 1970s were periods of 'deep structural and political transformation of the WCC', which could be characterized as a 'globalization'.[69] Under the influence of the churches of the Global South, many of which joined the WCC after the plenary meeting in New Delhi in 1961,[70] the organization was marked by an ongoing 'de-Westernization-process', as Kunter has called it, and the anti-American position gained ground.[71] This shift was assisted by the accession of the Eastern European churches, in particular the Russian Orthodox Church, which also joined the WCC in 1961. Although the socialist regimes had a fundamentally hostile attitude towards religion, in the 1960s they saw domestic and foreign policy advantages in cooperation. In particular, supposed tolerance towards the church demonstrated liberality and religious freedom both internally and externally, thus helping to boost the international prestige and legitimacy of the socialist regimes.[72] However, since the Eastern European churches were only allowed to operate with the permission of the government, the churches remained loyal to Moscow and, even as part of the WCC, vehemently rejected any criticism of the socialist state leadership.[73]

The globalization of the WCC became visible in the way it responded to humanitarian aid projects during the 1960s. As the WCC's Division of Inter-Church Aid and Service to Refugees argued with regard to aid for Czechoslovaks, the 'ecumenical support must be seen in relation to the total of the world's refugee needs', which underlined the WCC's commitment to refugee crises in the Global South.[74] From the beginning of the 1960s, the WCC's aid projects focused in particular on Africa and Asia.[75] Again, the WCC followed a global trend in the secularized world of humanitarian aid. Also, the UNHCR put refugee crises in Africa and Asia at the centre of their relief programmes.[76]

Nevertheless, in September 1968 the WCC sent its Refugee Programme Officer, Louis van Ouwenaller, on a goodwill mission to Austria to consult

with local church leaders and representatives of the local Protestant organizations Innere Mission and Servitas,[77] which supported refugees on the ground in Austria on behalf of the Austrian Council of Churches, since 1958 the office of the WCC in the country.[78] In particular, Servitas and Innere Mission organized accommodation, food and medical care for arriving Czechoslovaks.[79] In the first days following the invasion, the WCC did not expect a large relief effort.[80] But as the numbers of refugees seeking asylum in Austria increased at the beginning of September 1968, and it became clear that international support was necessary because local aid organizations had reached their limit,[81] the WCC changed its mind and made an initial public appeal to its member churches. It asked for $20,000 to provide emergency services for refugees in Austria.[82] At the request of the Austrian Council of Churches, on 9 October 1968 the WCC sent out a renewed call for support and asked for winter clothes and $80,000 to finance an information centre, a family centre, a temporary hostel in Vienna, special food for babies and young children and medical care.[83]

Still, the WCC saw help for Czechoslovaks as a small operation, in spite of the warnings from WCC representatives in Austria pointing out as early as October 1968 that the situation would worsen over the next few months. As more and more Czechoslovaks needed support during the autumn of 1968, the head of the Division of Inter-Church Aid, Refugee and World Service, M. Christopher King, wondered whether they had made a mistake by not calling it a major refugee movement.[84] It was particularly difficult to provide accommodation for Czechoslovaks who wished to stay in Austria temporarily. To solve these accommodation problems, the WCC started to organize resettlement, especially for those who had already decided to move to an overseas country, for example to the US.[85] Once again, therefore, the WCC took on the responsibility of a 'migration manager', and once again this activity was completely in the line with the position of the Austrian government, which continued to view resettlement as the best way to ease the situation in Austria and asked the international community to help the country with this task. As in the Hungarian case, the WCC backed Austria's refugee politics of transit.[86]

But in contrast to the Hungarian case, in 1968 the WCC found it difficult to obtain the necessary support for its relief mission from its member churches. The main reason for this was diverging attitudes within the organization towards the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia. These discrepancies surfaced, for instance, when on 28 August 1968, in response to a plea from member churches, Chairman of the Central Committee Madathilparampil Mammen Thomas, General Secretary Eugene Carlson Blake and Vice-Chairman of the Central Committee Pauline M. Webb condemned the military intervention, calling for the removal of foreign troops from

Czechoslovakia and expressing their sympathy with the churches and the people of Czechoslovakia.[87] This statement was not welcomed by all member churches. Even before it was published, the churches in Poland and Russia had advised the headquarters in Geneva not to make any statement regarding the situation in Czechoslovakia. Almost all the member churches from Eastern Europe in the WCC condemned the statement made by the Central Committee and – in line with the Soviet position – justified the invasion as a necessary measure to protect socialism.[88] The Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia doubted that there were sufficient grounds for calling the events a 'military intervention' because 'Czechoslovakia is a constituent part of the socialist fellowship', who stand together in 'friendship, mutual assistance and co-operation both in ideological and practical issues'.[89] The Union of the Evangelical Christian Baptists in the USSR condemned the use of the word 'intervention' because the troops had 'just' entered the country 'temporarily' to 'bring peace' and would not be interfering in the country's internal affairs. For the Evangelical church in Estonia, no military intervention had happened at all because the Warsaw Pact had 'just followed a request for help'. The patriarch of Georgia referred to the strong relationship between the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia.[90] Only the Romanian Patriarchate explicitly expressed its solidarity with those calling for the right of free development and independence.[91] Like the Romanian government, the Orthodox church in Romania was against the invasion because it saw it as an intervention in a country's internal affairs.[92] But some Western churches that had condemned the invasion in Czechoslovakia, for example the British Council of Churches, also expressed criticism that the events in Czechoslovakia jeopardized 'the joint struggle against America's policy of violence' and 'the misuse of power by the West'.[93] Alongside liberation theologies and anti-imperialist rhetoric, anti-Americanization had dominated the WCC since the 1960s. The Czechoslovak crisis was therefore a difficult situation because it jeopardized cooperation within the WCC which, in turn, also limited the scope of its action towards Czechoslovak refugees. Yet it shows in a nutshell how humanitarian aid programmes are influenced by political opinions and geopolitical confrontations and how this complicates the implementation of relief missions.

This limited scope of possibility can be seen in the WCC's financial support for the Austrian Council of Churches and their local partners in 1969. That year, more refugees again entered Austria due to the 'normalization' process in Czechoslovakia, which meant the reversal of the Prague Spring reforms. Money was needed to help the refugees with emergency assistance and accommodation.[94] But as financial resources were limited, the WCC's Division of Inter-Church Aid, Refugee and World Service forced the Austrian Council of Churches to wind up the project for Czechoslovak refugees by the

end of March 1969, because no further financial resources could be made available.[95] The total costs of the WCC's Czechoslovak programme up to 31 March 1969 amounted to $90,305, but the total contribution following an emergency appeal by the WCC had been just $66,425. At the request of the Austrian Council of Churches, which sought to continue the project until the end of 1969 because it felt a 'Christian responsibility' to carry on,[96] the programme was extended by two weeks.[97] After the discontinuation of financial aid by the WCC, Servitas – with the blessing of the Austrian Council of Churches – continued the work on its own for as long as possible, and at least until the end of June 1969.[98] Given the lack of donations from the WCC, the programme for Czechoslovaks delivered by Servitas was mostly financed by the European Methodist Church, something that again underlines the different positions within the WCC towards a relief mission for Czechoslovaks in 1968.[99] The episode shows that religious associations were facing the same difficulties as international organizations in general: if the members were not willing to support the relief missions, the organizations basically had no means of providing extensive aid.

The Czechoslovak refugee crisis took place under circumstances completely different to those of the Hungarian case. In the 1960s, Europe was no longer at the centre of humanitarian relief projects, and the Cold War had reached a phase of détente. The globalization of the WCC resulted in a reorientation of the humanitarian aid programmes towards the Global South and the rise of an anti-American position within the organization. The resulting political challenges in the WCC became visible during the relief missions for Czechoslovak refugees, where the churches of the East almost completely refused to help for political reasons. In line with the Soviet Union, they justified the invasion in Czechoslovakia as necessary to re-establish political stability. Nevertheless, at the request of the Austrian Council of Churches and the Austrian government, the WCC again used their church networks and helped to find resettlement opportunities as long as financial resources allowed. Here, the WCC again worked in favour of the Austrian government, which lobbied for a quick resettlement of the refugees in 1968 too.

Conclusion

As a humanitarian actor, the WCC's support for Hungarian and Czechoslovak refugees focused on two main issues. First, the WCC gave financial support to local partners to provide emergency aid, which included pastoral care as a main task. Second, it acted as a 'migration manager' by organizing resettlement in cooperation with its worldwide church network.

Both activities were carried out as part of the international relief missions for Hungarian and Czechoslovakian citizens. As part of a globalized and secularized relief mission, the WCC saw the opportunity to fulfil its goal to save the spiritual souls of the refugees and to present itself as a trustworthy partner for international relief missions. Yet as the Hungarian and Czechoslovak refugee crises were highly political events in the Cold War, the WCC had to navigate the political interests of states, global refugee politics and its member churches. During the 1950s, the WCC's operations were predominantly influenced by Western interests such as the 'fight against Communism' and seen as a way to stabilize Europe after the Second World War, which was internationally perceived as highly important.

But when in the 1960s the refugee crises, especially those related to the Second World War, were finally solved, the focus of international aid operations, including those of the WCC, shifted towards humanitarian crises in Africa and Asia. Western Europe transformed from a recipient of humanitarian aid into a financier of relief missions in the Global South. Moreover, the globalization of the WCC strengthened member churches from the Global South and Eastern Europe and their political positions, which stood in contrast to the Western interests and were marked by anti-American stances. These tense relationships within the organization limited the possibilities of assistance for Czechoslovak refugees.

Examining the WCC activities in Austria for Hungarian and Czechoslovakian refugees highlights the inherent connection between humanitarian aid and political interests, which also influenced religious organizations. It shows how religious organizations used secularized and highly political relief missions for their own benefit and religious missions. Moreover, it points to the inherent impact of humanitarian aid on the recipient country. In the case of Austria, the WCC's relief mission stabilized the country and especially strengthened a refugee politics focusing on transit.

Notes

I thank Anca Cretu, Michal Frankl and Katharina Seibert for their helpful comments.

1 Original quotation: 'Das entscheidende ist, daß alle Hilfe Ausdruck der brüderlichen Liebe und Verantwortung ist, die im großen weiten Weltprotestantismus lebt.' In Georg Traar, 'Das evangelische Hilfswerk und die Ungarnhilfe', *Innere Mission*, 1/2 (1957), 3–4, 4.

2 Members of the WCC include the Orthodox, Anglican, Baptist, Lutheran, Methodist and Reformed churches. The common ground is the belief in Jesus

Christ as God and Saviour according to the scriptures. The Roman Catholic Church is not part of the WCC; 'WCC Self-understanding and Vision', www.oikoumene.org/about-the-wcc/self-understanding-and-vision

3 On international aid missions to Austria during the Cold War in support of refugees, see Sarah Knoll, 'Calling for Support: International Aid for Refugees in Austria during the Cold War', *Zeitgeschichte*, 48:3 (2021), 387–408; Sarah Knoll, *Zwischen Aufnahme und Transit: Österreichische Asyl- und Flüchtlingspolitik im Kalten Krieg* (Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2024), https://doi.org/10.1515/9783839468371

4 I use the terms 'the West' and 'the East' as well as 'Eastern Europe' and 'Eastern Bloc'. It is necessary to note, however, that these terms are political and historical constructs. Cf. also Anne Appelbaum, *Iron Curtain: The Crushing of Eastern Europe, 1944–1956* (New York: Penguin Books, 2012), xxvii.

5 Johannes Paulmann, 'Dilemmas of Humanitarian Aid: Historical Perspectives', in Johannes Paulmann (ed.), *Dilemmas of Humanitarian Aid in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 1–31, 14; Michael Barnett and Janice Gross Stein, 'Introduction: The Secularization and Sanctification of Humanitarianism', in Michael Barnett and Janice Gross Stein (eds), *Sacred Aid: Faith and Humanitarianism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 3–16, here 4–5; for the connection between religion and humanitarianism, see also David Bryda, *Franco's Internationalists, Spanish Experts and Spain's Search for Legitimacy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 159–69; Jonathan Benthall, 'Religion and Humanitarianism', in Roger Mac Ginty and Jenny H. Peterson (eds), *The Routledge Companion to Humanitarian Action* (London and New York: Routledge, 2015), 279–88.

6 Barnett and Stein, 'Introduction', 5.

7 Jakob Schönhagen, *Geschichte der internationalen Flüchtlingspolitik 1945–1975* (Göttingen: Wallenstein, 2023), 108–10.

8 Joël Glasman, 'Die Politik aus dem Nirgendwo: Humanitäre Hilfe und die Geschichte schwereloser Institutionen', in *Geschichte der Gegenwart*, 22 November 2022, https://geschichtedergegenwart.ch/die-politik-aus-dem-nirgendwo-humanitaere-hilfe-und-die-geschichte-schwereloser-institutionen/

9 Knoll, *Aufnahme und Transit*.

10 Bastiaan Bouwman, 'Between Dialogue and Denunciation: The World Council of Churches, Religious Freedom, and Human Rights during the Cold War', *Contemporary European History*, 31:1 (2022), 15–30; Christian Albers, 'Der ÖRK und die Menschenrechte im Kontext von Kaltem Krieg und Dekolonisierung', in Katharina Kunter and Annegreth Schilling (eds), *Globalisierung der Kirchen: Der Ökumenische Rat der Kirchen und die Entdeckung der Dritten Welt in den 1960er und 1970er Jahren* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2014), 189–216.

11 Kate Burlingham, 'Praying for Justice: The World Council of Churches and the Program to Combat Racism', *Journal of Cold War Studies*, 21:1 (2019), 66–96.

12 Hedwig Richter, 'Der Protestantismus und das linksrevolutionäre Pathos: Der Ökumenische Rat der Kirchen in Genf im Ost-West-Konflikt in den 1960er

und 1970er Jahren', *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 36:3 (2010), 408–36; Udi Greenberg, 'The Rise of the Global South and the Protestant Peace with Socialism', *Contemporary European History*, 29:2 (2020), 202–19.

13 Kathrin Kunter, 'Revolutionary Hopes and Global Transformations: The World Council of Churches in the 1960s', *Kirchliche Zeitgeschichte*, 30:2 (2017), 342–7.

14 For the WCC's work for refugees, see also Schönhagen, *Geschichte*, 108–10.

15 Bundesgesetzblatt (BGBI.) 211/1955, Bundesverfassungsgesetz: Neutralität Österreichs; Gerald Stourzh and Wolfgang Mueller, *Der Kampf um den Staatsvertrag 1945–1955: Ost-West-Besetzung, Staatsvertrag und Neutralität Österreichs* (Vienna, Cologne and Weimar: Böhlau, 2020).

16 György Dalos, *1956: Der Aufstand in Ungarn* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 2006).

17 Ibolya Murber, 'Ungarnflüchtlinge in Österreich 1956', in Ibolya Murber and Zoltán Fónagy (eds), *Die ungarische Revolution und Österreich 1956* (Vienna: Czernin, 2006), 335–85, 335.

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