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# International Adoption and Anglo-American Internationalism, *c.* 1918-1925

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**Abstract:** *The plight of children became symbolic of the disintegration of European society during the First World War and the conflagrations that bookended it: the Armenian Genocide and the Russian Civil War. Breaking free from the laws of war presumed to undergird conflict in 'civilised' European societies, the violence of the early twentieth century directly targeted civilians. In this context, children's suffering took on a broader symbolic meaning, and 'rescued' children became a powerful metaphor for European reconstruction and hopes for a peaceful, prosperous future. Children – the workers and citizens of tomorrow – were deemed essential for the future prosperity of their own nations, and, by extension, for the international order. This article examines the centrality of children to the 'new internationalism' of the years following the First World War, as expressed by a host of prominent British and American humanitarian organisations. While international adoption and child sponsorship programmes seem, on the surface, to exemplify the spirit of progressive internationalism, the 'new world order' that internationalist humanitarians sought to create was not new at all. Helping children was, most often, an attempt on the part of aid organizations to reinscribe ethnic and class-based hierarchies in a chaotic post-war world. Yet, positing the sponsorship and adoption of children as the prime means to alleviate their suffering, interwar humanitarians created the orphans they described. In the aftermath of the First World War child relief fundamentally disrupted the very communities and families that humanitarians sought to save.*

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In January 1920, Admiral Newton McCully landed in New York after a three-year diplomatic tour of Bolshevik Russia. He was greeted by cheering crowds waving silk handkerchiefs and women clamouring to kiss him on both cheeks. Reporters crowded around to catch a glimpse of the 'man of the hour' and the reason for his new heroic status: the four boys and three girls, ranging in age from two years to twelve, that he had plucked from impoverished orphanages in the Crimea and brought to America. Knowing only the English words 'bread', 'blanket' and (now) 'father', their emotive tale – in addition to McCully's considerable status in the US Navy – had achieved an exceptional breach of US immigration laws.[2] They were permitted to enter America as unaccompanied minors, subsequently legally adopted by Admiral McCully and became naturalised citizens shortly after.[3] The children grew up in McCully's family home in North Carolina.[4] The boys followed in the steps of their adopted father, graduating from the US Naval Academy in Annapolis before the outbreak of the Second World War, while the girls married 'society gentlemen'.[5]

The story of the 'McCully tots' captivated the American public. Reporters wrote breathlessly about their favourite toys, attire, attendance at church and summer camp and the meticulously planned activities at the McCully Mansion.[6] The children, whom McCully referred to by 'pet names' such as 'gardener', 'cook number two' and 'door maid number one' spent their days playing their part in the running of the McCully estate. For leisure, they performed Russian folk songs, clad in matching miniature sailor costumes. The upbringing

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[2] 'Portals open for McCully Wards', *The Lexington Herald,* 13 Jan. 1921; 'Newton McCully's Russian Orphans', *The Evening World*, 6 Jan. 1921.

[3] 'McCully Orphans live by Rules', *The Charlotte Observer*, 6 Aug. 1921.

[4] 'US Naval Nurse, Born in Russia', *The Evening Star*, 5 Apr. 1934; 'Private Orphanage', *Time* 10:11, 12 Sept. 1927.

[5] *The Evening Star,* 5 Apr. 1943; *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, 27 Apr. 1929.

[6] See, for example, 'McCully Wards Here for Mass', *The Baltimore American*, 10 Jan. 1921; 'McCully Orphans Grasp American Traditions', *The State,* 7 June 1921; 'Admiral and Seven Russian Waifs He Adopted and Took To US', *The Springfield Republican,* 7 Jan. 1921*;* 'Two Humped Camel Causes Uproar in McCully Family', *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 8 Jan. 1921; 'Four Admirals to Retire', *Sunday Star,* 14 June 1931.

devised by McCully, while designed to inculcate American values such as 'hard work and fair play', was also intended to preserve 'all that is good about Russia'.[7] At a time of fraught diplomatic relations between the US and USSR, the McCully children became junior ambassadors for their nation of birth.

The McCully children were just one example in a series of high profile international adoptions orchestrated by soldiers, diplomats, and philanthropists from the US and UK in the aftermath of the First World War. Though international adoptions were rare, they placed orphans at the centre of humanitarian culture and politics, as concerned publics in the US and UK imagined the 'rescue' of individual European children as a means to reconstruct an entire continent. Through an emerging network of Anglo-American aid organisations, the welfare of European children was intimately bound up with the 'new internationalism' posited as the pathway to lasting peace in the aftermath of war. Children, the citizens of the future, were central both to reconstructing their own nations and to advancing international understanding. If even Russian children could grow up to be good Americans, then surely divisions between nations were arbitrary rather than absolute, and international peace was possible.

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[7] 'Admiral Batchelor Who Adopted Seven Orphan Waifs Writes Rules to Govern Training', *The East Oregonian,* 23 June 1921.

Figure 1: Admiral McCully and 'his orphans' visit the Cabinet Offices.[8]


A recent wave of scholarship on twentieth-century internationalism has done much to reveal the antecedents of modern global order in the drive towards international co-operation that followed the First World War.[9] Much of this work has focused on state-led internationalism exemplified by the League of Nations, an intergovernmental organisation that sought to prevent war among nation states. Founded in 1919, the League of Nations embodied the liberal internationalist belief that relations between stable, prosperous nations would be the cornerstone of peace in Europe and the wider world. Beyond its formal apparatus, the League of Nations valorised public opinion

[8] 'William B. Wilson, Secretary of Labor, with Admiral Newton A. McCully and the seven Russian children who he was adopting', Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, D.C. Catalogue number 00652036.
[9] Susan Pedersen, 'Back to the League of Nations: Review Essay', *American Historical Review*, 112:4 (2007), 1091-117; Susan Pedersen, *The Guardians. The League of Nations and the Crisis of Empire* (Oxford 2015); Mark Mazower, *No Enchanted Palace: The End of Empire and the Ideological Origins of the United Nations* (Princeton, N.J., 2009), 39-46.

and mass participation. A host of civil society initiatives devoted to internationalist idealism sprang up as popular auxiliaries to the elitist internationalism of the League.[10] Humanitarian organisations in particular cast themselves as helpmeets to formal international diplomacy, and exemplars of the internationalist spirit of the 1920s. These organisations held that rapid relief and economic reconstruction were essential for the peace and security of Europe in the wake of the First World War. They also upheld international friendship as the necessary salve to the animosity and bitterness that conflict had created.[11]

Historians have only recently started to examine civil society groups, the organs through which vast sections of American and European publics experienced and enacted interwar internationalism.[12] Moreover, scholars have largely ignored the impact of internationalism on childhood and family life, even while comparable literatures on the impact of nationalist and imperial cultures upon the same subjects have flourished. This article examines not only the ideals underpinning internationalism after the First World War, but also the means of civic internationalist action. For self-proclaimed international humanitarian organisations, creating a 'new internationalism' was bound up with intervening in the lives of new internationalist citizens: the children of central and eastern Europe. In seeking to protect and rescue children (seen as the foremost victims of war and the best hope for future peace), aid organisations undermined communities and families. Separating children from their parents to allow adoption by Anglo-American humanitarians, these organisations created 'orphans'.

From 1918, the plight of children became symbolic of the disintegration of European

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[10] Stephen Wertheim, 'The League of Nations: a retreat from international law?' *Journal of Global History,* 7:2 (July 2012), 210-32.
[11] Keith David Watenpaugh, *Bread from Stone: The Middle East and the Making of Modern Humanitarianism* (Berkeley, C.A., 2016); Julia Irwin*, Making the World Safe: The American Red Cross and a Nation's Humanitarian Awakening* (New York, 2013).
[12] Helen McCarthy, *The British People and the League of Nations: Democracy, Citizenship and Internationalism, c.1918-1945* (Manchester, 2011); Daniel Gorman, *The Emergence of International Society in the 1920s* (Cambridge, 2012).

society during not only the First World War, but also the conflagrations that bookended it: the Armenian Genocide and the Russian Civil War. This triangulation of violence directly targeted civilians, breaking free from the laws of war presumed to underpin conflict in 'civilised' European societies. If children's suffering took on a broader symbolic meaning in the context of civilian-targeting conflicts, then 'rescued' children became a powerful metaphor for European reconstruction and hope for a peaceful, prosperous future.[13] Children (the workers and citizens of tomorrow) were essential to the prosperity and security of their own nations, and by extension, of the international order. However, for all that child rescue programmes appeared innovative and future-facing, they were enacted in the ways that reveal the essentially conservative basis of interwar internationalism.

The vogue for child rescue and international adoption spoke to Anglo-American desires to reimpose older forms of social hierarchy onto a continent in a state of post-war chaos. At a time of profound social and political upheaval, as the boundaries of nation states were redrawn and the spectre of Communism hung over Europe, humanitarians spot-lit the healthy offspring of the middle classes: ideal future citizens in a peaceful, prosperous Europe. Upholding 'stability', they designed relief programmes intended to ensure continuity between the old Europe and the new, and foregrounded the needs of populations whose politics did not conflict with the global ambitions of British and American statesmen. The McCully children were not simply 'Russians': they were 'white Russian' refugees, the offspring of those who had opposed and fled the Bolshevik regime. They were the perfect symbols of the pre-war order, which, despite being under threat, could survive and prosper via the benevolent intervention of concerned Anglo-Americans. Child-focused humanitarianism also reinforced pre-existing hierarchies between nations. Humanitarians engaged in a form of public diplomacy that sought recognition of British and American leadership within the new

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[13] D. Marshall, 'The Construction of the Child as an Object of International Relations: The Declaration of Child Rights and the Child Welfare Committee of the League of Nations, 1900-1924', *The International Journal of Child Rights,* 7 (1999), 103-47.

international order. Through the metaphor of adoption, British and American publics cast themselves as 'parents' to central and eastern European nations.

International adoption was more than a metaphor. After 1918, the separation of Eastern European children from their communities and families became of paramount concern to the humanitarian movements that proliferated across the continent. Recent work by Tara Zahra and Michal Shapira has revealed how psychoanalytic discourses of parent-child attachment intersected with debates about reconstruction after the Second World War. By 1945, the balance had shifted and the reunification of families was considered fundamental to the psychological health of children and, by extension, the stability of nations and the international order.[14]

The purposeful fragmentation of European families by Anglo-American humanitarians in the interwar period (just decades before the same organisations would place the postwar reunification of families as the cornerstone of individual wellbeing and international stability) is striking. In its focus on the centrality of parent-child relations, the burgeoning literature on post-1945 child psychology and the family has not dealt convincingly with earlier models of childrearing. Interwar international adoption exposes a paradox in which, even while children were of great value to Anglo-American philanthropists, the very same children were assumed to be of no value to their families and communities. At least four of McCully's 'orphans' had living mothers, persuaded to part with them by assurances that their lives in America would be better.[15] By bringing the experiences of adoptees and their families to the fore, this study goes beyond existing literature on twentieth-century humanitarian interventions. It examines

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[14] Tara Zahra, *The Lost Children: Reconstructing Europe's Families after World War II* (Cambridge, 2011); Tara Zahra, ''A Human Treasure': Europe's Displaced Children Between Nationalism and Internationalism in Post-war Reconstruction in Europe'*, Past and Present*, 210:S6 (2011), 332-350; Michal Shapira, *The War Inside: Psychoanalysis, Total War, and the Making of the Democratic Self in Postwar Britain* (Cambridge, 2013).

[15] This was also the case with many of the American children sent from east coast orphanages in the US to its western frontiers on 'orphan trains'. See, for example, Linda Gordon, *The Great Arizona Orphan Abduction*, (Cambridge, M.A., 1999).

not only the ideals and actions of humanitarians themselves, but also the implications for the inhabitants of central and eastern Europe.

This article proceeds in three sections. The first shows how high-profile cases of international adoption created a widespread demand for orphans. The second examines how this demand, which was difficult to meet, gave rise to a child sponsorship industry, in which Britons and Americans sent letters and donations to individual children. The final section reveals how sponsorship schemes increasingly led aid organisations to separate children from their siblings and parents. Although humanitarians attempted to promote and protect the pre-war ordering of European society, their work in fact served to further disrupt families and entire communities across the war-torn continent. Ultimately, interwar humanitarians created the very orphans that they claimed to save.

## I. *Alice in Hungerland* Goes Through the Looking Glass

In 1921, the American humanitarian organisation Near East Relief created an award-winning film titled *Alice in Hungerland*. In the film, young American Alice stowed away in a cargo ship to the 'hunger land' of the Near East, where she witnessed human suffering through 'a child's eyes'. The film created sympathy for Armenian children, not just through Alice's horror at their circumstances, but through the contrast between her, an American 'picture of health' with 'plump rosy cheeks', and the 'sunken, starving faces' of Armenian children.[16] *Alice in Hungerland* showed donors that they were divided only by circumstance, not by nature.

The Near East Relief Fund was one of a host of organisations through which American citizens exhibited their support for the 'new internationalism'. The existence and

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[16] 'Alice in Hungerland', Near East Relief Fund, Nov. 1921, 41; 'From Hungerland to Wonderland', *Prescott Evening Courier,* 22 Mar. 1922.

popularity of such organisations, and internationalist sentiment more broadly, have aided in the exposure of 'isolationism' as a myth by historians.[17] Although President Wilson failed to win over the two-thirds of the Senate needed to ratify the Treaty of Versailles, precluding American participation in the League, Americans widely supported a form of internationalism that rested less upon collective security than upon international friendship and shared humanity.[18] This vision of humanity and friendship was highly racialized, placing only white Europeans and Americans as the bearers of international civilisation.[19] However, its message seemed radical: *Alice in Hungerland* asked viewers to feel the same measure of responsibility for a far-off Armenian child as they would for an American.

The film's casting illustrated the similarities between American and Armenian children more than the film itself. The American Alice was not, in fact, American at all. Due to the difficulty of bringing an American child actor to Constantinople, Near East Relief cast an Armenian child in the role: brown-haired, blue-eyed eight-year-old, Ester Ranzon. Ester's health and carefree charm were intended to contrast starkly with the listless hunger of the children she would meet as Alice, and a relief worker named Florence Duryea fostered her for the duration of the production. When filming concluded, Duryea felt she could not send Ester back to a life of poverty, and petitioned for an exception to US immigration laws to bring Ester back to Gramercy Park, New York City.[20] On arrival, Duryea changed the name

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[17] William Appleman Williams, 'The Legend of Isolationism in the 1920s', *Science & Society*, 18:1 (Winter 1954), 1-20; Stephen Wertheim, 'Tomorrow, the World: The Birth of US Global Supremacy in World War II' (Columbia University Ph.D. thesis, 2015), 46-9.

[18] On progressive era humanitarian internationalism, see, Julia Irwin, *Making the World Safe: The American Red Cross and a Nation's Humanitarian Awakening* (New York, 2013), 105-165; Katherina Rietzler, 'Experts for Peace: Structures and Motivations of Philanthropic Internationalism in the Interwar Years', in Daniel Laqua (ed.), *Internationalism Reconfigured: Transnational Ideas and Movements Between the Wars* (London, 2011), 45-66; Ian Tyrrell, *Reforming the World: The Creation of America's Moral Empire*, (Princeton, N.J., 2010), 167-209

[19] Robert Vitalis, *White World Order, Black Power Politics: The Birth of American International Relations* (Ithaca, 2015).

[20] 'J. I. Kinney to Wed New York Girl', *The Kingston Daily Freeman*, 17 Jan. 1939.

of her new ward to Alice. Alice/Ester had, as the *Preston Daily Courier* stated, gone 'through

the looking glass from Hungerland to Wonderland'.[21]



Figure 2: Ester Ranzon and Florence Duryea, *c*. 1921.[22]

The adoption of Alice/Ester was symbolically charged. Near East Relief, which

orchestrated the adoption, believed that American responsibility for Armenians went beyond

'mere humanitarian assistance'. Instead, based on President Wilson's blueprint, it lobbied for

an American protectorate of the Armenian state that would guarantee the security of the

Armenian people in their historic homeland. This protectorate was described in the language

of adoption, casting the Armenian people as children who looked to paternal America for

protection and guidance.[23] In this way (and in spite of the self-determination agenda of

President Wilson and his supporters), the intellectual underpinnings of proposed US

intervention in interwar Europe mimicked the 'civilising missions' of colonial empires, both

[21] 'From Hungerland to Wonderland'*, Prescott Evening Courier*, 22 Mar. 1922.

[22] 'Alice Duryea, the orphan chosen to star in 'Alice in Hungerland', with her adoptive mother, relief worker Florence Spencer Duryea.' Collection of the Duryea family, Near East Foundation archives, Rockefeller Archives, New York.

[23] Charlie Laderman, 'Sharing the Burden? The American Solution to the Armenian Question, 1918-1920', *Diplomatic History,* published online 24 Aug. 2015 doi:10.1093/dh/dhv036

of which used the language of parent and child in which an 'older nation' helped 'childlike peoples' to 'develop'.[24] Alice became a metaphor for Armenia, a nation that the leaders of Near East Relief, like President Wilson, hoped would be 'adopted into the American family'.

Admiral McCully shared the progressive, internationalist vision of President Wilson and Near East Relief, believing that the US should not only take on a protectorate of Armenian refugees, but also offer asylum to Russian refugees fleeing Bolshevism. In the aftermath of the 1917 Russian revolution, the US and the Allies had provided financial and military aid to counter-revolutionary forces. As the Russian Civil War wore on, with the victory of counter-revolutionary forces looking unlikely, McCully argued that abandoning anti-Bolshevik 'white Russians' to their fate would be 'an indelible stain on every nation concerned.'[25] McCully proposed that Russian refugees live under American protection in Alaska, until Bolshevism failed and they could return to their homes. He argued that counter-revolutionary forces and their families represented 'the best part of the population of Northern Russia… simple, kindly, hardworking, lovable people'. If they could not return to Russia, they would make model American citizens.[26] McCully's impassioned pleas for asylum to be granted to Russian refugees were not heeded by the State Department. For McCully, as for Florence Duryea, adopting for himself represented an intimate, miniature rendering of his desired diplomatic solution for all exiled Russian refugees.[27] Writing in his dairy before he embarked on his 'greatest adventure yet [as a] old Batchelor with seven orphans', he characterised his adoption as a personal display of humanity and a means of 'atoning' for the inhumanity of his nation.[28] Much as philanthropic organisations sought to

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[24] *Ibid;* Julia Irwin, *Making the World Safe: The American Red Cross and a Nation's Humanitarian Awakening* (New York, 2013).
[25] McCully to Daniels, 9 Aug. 1919, WA-6, RG 45, National Archives and Records Administration (hereafter NARA).
[26] McCully to Daniels, 19 Aug. 1919, WA-6, RG 45, NARA.
[27] Charles Weeks and Jospeh Baylen 'Admiral Newton A. McCully's Mission in Russia, 1904-1921', *Russian Review,* 33:1 (1974), 63–79.
[28] McCully, Diary, 30 Apr. 1920; 30 Nov. 1920.

perform American internationalism in spite of American nonparticipation in the League of Nations, so McCully sought an exception to official US refugee policy to perform his concern for Russian refugees within his own family.

British humanitarians also constructed narratives of responsibility for Europe through metaphors of childhood, parenthood and adoption. British humanitarianism in Europe had developed from the traditional of imperial mission. Organisations such as the Save the Children Fund and the Friends Emergency and War Victims Relief Committee, though squarely focused on Europe, drew expertise from seasoned relief workers who had learned their profession in the British colonies. These relief workers drew practices from empire, but also narratives of imperial responsibility. Internationalist politicians and philanthropic fundraisers alike told the British public that, as the world's leading imperial power, they had a duty to lead the 'new internationalist order' in the wake of the First World War.[29] Accordingly, the discourse of parental care for the 'childlike' peoples of empire was transplanted into Europe, and Britons were urged to care for 'child-like' nations outside the imperial family.[30]

However, there was a subtle difference between American and British humanitarians. While pro-Armenian Americans saw it as America's duty to bring this state into their national family, Britons remained at arm's length from European nations and peoples, protected by the imperial family, but positioned outside the British Empire.[31] Just as British discourses of 'parental' responsibility to Europe differed from those of their American counterparts, so too did British adoptions. Americans adopters became 'parents' to their wards. In Britain, where adoption did not exist as a legal category until 1926, humanitarians

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[29] Emily Baughan, 'The Imperial War Relief Fund and the All British Appeal: Commonwealth, Conflict and Conservatism within the British Humanitarian Movement, 1920-1925', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 40:5 (2012), 845-61.

[30] Emily Baughan, ''Every Citizen of Empire Implored to Save the Children!' Empire, internationalism and the Save the Children Fund in inter-war Britain', *Historical Research*, 86:231 (2013), 116-37.

[31] *Ibid*.

raising foreign children imagined themselves as godparents or foster parents. British Quaker relief worker Francesca Wilson, like Admiral McCully and Florence Duryea, returned from stints in Europe with children whom she raised and educated in her own home. Unlike Duryea and McCully, however, she preferred the role of foster-parent, explaining that she 'was not brave enough to adopt a child from the egg', in case it later turned 'into something gross and alien'. Rather, her adoptions would be temporary arrangements, which would enable her to 'see how the child was turning out'.[32] From 1920, Wilson fostered and educated eight children, her 'favourite' of whom was a Russian refugee child named Mischa. The less intimate godparenting arrangement favoured by Wilson was broadly the same for other European children 'rescued' by relief workers and political activists in interwar Britain. One young Austrian 'ward', Marie, instead of having direct family relationships, became the collective charge of an entire group of activists (all at Kingsley Hall), for whom she was an emblem of duty to Europe.[33]

The humanitarians and diplomats that returned from central and eastern Europe with children were usually single and childless, their continuous international travel having complicated or prohibited family life. Francesca Wilson confessed that Russian wards would fill a gap in her empty, lonely home.[34] Duryea was in her forties when she adopted Ester/Alice, when she had resigned herself to remaining alone. Admiral McCully, a 42-year-old 'confirmed bachelor', also desired companionship, and children to 'train' in his habits and beliefs.[35] International adoption simultaneously fulfilled personal desires and political imperatives. In the imitate sphere of the family, elites could build families that their international mobility had previously precluded, while at the same time domesticating the

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[32] June Horder, *Francesca Wilson: A Life of Service and Adventure* (privately printed, 1993), 114-15.
[33] Doris Lester, '*Our First Refugee*', Lester/3/1, Lester Papers, Bishopsgate Institute; see also, Seth Koven, *The Matchgirl and the Heiress,* (Princeton, N.J., 2015), 205.
[34] Horder, *Francesca Wilson*, 113.
[35] 'Admiral Batchelor Who Adopted Seven Orphan Waifs Writes Rules to Govern Training', *The East Oregonian,* 23 June 1921.

internationalist convictions that had underscored their humanitarian or diplomatic travel. In the figures of children, war-torn Europe was adopted and assimilated into British and American society.

As well as political expediency, Eastern European children were attractive wards because many considered Europeans to be of a 'better class' than the proletarian children ordinarily available for adoption in the US and Britain. In September 1921, the American Relief Administration (ARA: the congressionally-funded body founded in 1918 that provided over $100 million of food aid to Europe) engaged in a long correspondence with workers at the Alice Chapin Adoption Nursery.[36] Alice Chapin, a well-known eugenicist, founded the Nursery in 1910 in order to meet the rising demand from elite couples for 'suitable' babies to adopt. The purpose of the agency was to guarantee <u>'advantageous' matches between</u> <u>'eugenically fit' couples, and illegitimate but 'promising' white children – children who were</u> <u>not (like the majority of white infants available for adoption on the East Coast of the US) the</u> <u>offspring of the lower classes or 'ethnically inferior' groups, such as the Irish.[37]</u> The workers at the Chapin Nursery believed that Eastern European children would be of 'superior stock'. Buying into popular conceptions of exiled Russian refugees as intellectuals and aristocrats, staff at the Chapin nursery claimed that 'some Russian babies would be an immense addition to our stock' and hoped the ARA would have some 'on tap' for the nursery. One nurse, however, was quick to note that if they were 'cripples, or diseased, or half-witted, I draw the line!'[38]

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[36] Various letters between Miss Hennemway and Christian Herter, June-Sept. 1923, Box 347, Folder 11, reel 572, American Relief Administration (hereafter ARA) papers, Hoover Institute Archives (hereafter HIA), Stanford California.

[37] The possibility of adoption black or Asian children by British or American adopters was not discussed in this period. 'Excerpts from the Archives of Spence-Chapin Adoption Service (Formerly Spence Alumni Society; Alice Chapin Nursery; Miss Spence School Society', Child Welfare League of America, Box 7, Folder: 'Adoption 1925-1966', Social Welfare History Archives, University of Minnesota. Accessed online at The Adoption Project, http://pages.uoregon.edu/adoption/topics/firstspecial.html

[38] Miss Hemmenway to Christian Herter, 17 June 1932, Box 347, Folder 11, reel 572, ARA papers, HIA.

The ARA, along with Near East Relief, the American Red Cross and the British Save the Children Fund, received repeated requests from individuals who wanted 'a little girl between one and three years old, the offspring of legitimate parents'; or 'a strong young boy, willing and capable of working on a farm'; or 'up to two orphans, between 2 and 5 – they could be either Russian or Armenian refugees.' Requests came from childless couples who saw the adoption of a European orphan as the solution to their 'lonesomeness, sadness' or 'anxiety'; parents of large families who reasoned that 'one extra mouth to feed can't change much'; bachelors and spinsters who (like McCully and Duryea) sought the companionship of a ward. Some requests came from individuals with penchants for various groups: Slavophiles desiring the children of Russian aristocrats, Armenophiles hoping to parent 'dark Christian children', and Jewish-American couples who saw it as their duty to protect Jewish children. In all cases, would-be adoptees noted that their personal desires seemed to meet the moral imperative to 'help Europe'.[39]

However, it quickly became apparent that the supply of war orphans could not meet the demand. Firstly, child welfare authorities in France and Poland, faced with requests to produce orphans for American organisations, noted that the vast majority of children they aided still had at least one living parent, or close relatives who did not wish to give them up.[40] Secondly, immigration restrictions were problematic, particularly in the US, which unaccompanied minors were not allowed to enter. Exceptions could be made for children with a relative in the US, but when humanitarian organisations faced the costs associated with repatriating children deemed unfit by medical authorities, or 'undesirable' by the relatives

[39] For example, Mr and Mrs Beasley Collington to the ARA), 15 Feb. 1923; Martha Fedderser to Mr Hoover, 12 Feb. 1923; Joseph Kissig to the ARA, 7 Jan. 1923, all in Box 347, Folder 11, reel 572, American Relief Administration papers; Department of Care for Jewish Children to Mr Polack, 4 Jan. 1921; J. Scharenfeld to the Department of Care for Children, 15 Dec. 1920; Mrs Scherer to the Department of Care for Jewish Children 14 Feb, 1921, all in American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, 335.3, f.7, YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, New York (hereafter YIVO); Ida MacDonald to the Save the Children Fund, 16 Feb. 1922, EJ114, Save the Children Archives (hereafter SCA).
[40] War Orphan Department Warsaw to Jessie Bogen, War Orphan Department New York, on the Legal Adoption of War Orphans, 14 Feb. 1921, American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, 40.4141, YIVO.

who had initially requested them, they became reluctant to facilitate adoptions.[41] For the few children legally adopted by US citizens, naturalisation processes were relatively straightforward. In the UK, on the other hand, where adoption did not exist as a legal category until 1926, foreign children could not claim British citizenship through an adopted parent.[42] Britain was not unusual in this regard, with most central and eastern European states not recognising adoption until the mid-1920s or later. For most Europeans after the First World War, 'adoption' described an informal arrangement in which children were raised by other members of their families or communities.

International adoption, then, did not fit the legal or cultural norms of the day. Undeterred, British and American donors sought work-arounds. Some went so far as to make trips to Europe to seek permission from parents to adopt their children. In one case, a childless woman from New York wrote directly to President Warren Harding to ask permission to 'import' a 'well developed and good-looking' Polish boy.[43] Hopeful adopters had not identified with the message of *Alice in Hungerland* that all children were innately valuable, and inherently deserving of care. Instead, they believed that some children (European children of the desired age, gender, ethnicity and class) were *more* deserving and desirable than needy children closer to home. Through international adoption, British and American adopters not only sought to gain a 'better class' of child to meet their emotional needs, but also to perform their duty to help Europe within the intimate and immediate familial sphere.

Though adopters like Florence Duryea, Admiral McCully and Francesca Wilson praised their adoptees' rapid acculturation into British and American society, these children were still valued precisely for their difference. They became emblems of the nations from

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[41] Memorandum, American Vice Consul in Charge of Visa Selection, Warsaw, Poland, 15 Oct. 1921, American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, 40.4141, YIVO.
[42] Jenny Keating, *A Child For Keeps, The History of Adoption in England, 1918-45* (Basingstoke, 2008).
[43] Mrs Scherer to Warren G. Harding, President of the United Sates, 7 Feb. 1923, American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, 40.4141, YIVO.

which they came. Taking in Christian 'White Russian', Armenian or Jewish children was a means of protecting cultures and customs under threat in post-1918 Europe. Would-be adopters did not believe children were sufficiently malleable that a British or American upbringing would displace their prior nationality entirely, often specifying that they did not wish to help 'Bolshevik babies' or 'Turkish Moslems'. The children they wished to save were representatives of fetishised pre-war Judeo-Christian cultures and folk traditions. By saving young lives, Anglo-American would-be adoptees sought to preserve the 'old' Europe.

## II. A Child to Keep for Five Dollars a Week

Relentless requests for adoptable orphans irritated humanitarian organisations. One ARA worker even drafted a stock reply that stated (in capitals), 'NO. WE HAVE NO BABIES TODAY'.[44] Immigration laws prevented unaccompanied minors without pre-arranged adoptions from entering the US, and though 'several hundred' exceptions to this rule seem to have been made, the demand for European war orphans (created by the aid organisations themselves) far outstripped supply.[45] In the immediate aftermath of the First World War, charity campaigning became professionalised and theorised. Where aid organisations had previously relied on haphazard collections of images and anecdotes from volunteers, by 1918 press agencies and advertising firms were working to pinpoint a 'science of propaganda' that would compel people to give more money, more often.[46] Newly-appointed experts confirmed the effectiveness of a well-worn humanitarian trope: depictions of lone, starving children. As a professional press secretary hired by the Save the Children explained, these images would

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[44] Irving Squire to Frank Page, 28 June 1923, Box 347, Folder 11, reel 572, ARA.

[45] Department of Care for Jewish Children to Mr I. Polack, 4 Jan. 1921, American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, 335.3, f.43; Department of Care for Jewish Children to Mr J. Calmenson, 335.3, f.46, 1 Mar. 1921, YIVO.

[46] L. Weber-Bauler, *Feuilles de Propagande*, Mar. 1920, UISE, 92.2.6, Archives d'Union Internationale de Protection de l'Enfance (hereafter AUIPE), Archive d'Etat de Genève; George Werner, 'Le Save the Children Fund', *Revue Internationale de la Croix-Rouge,* 21 (Sept. 1921), 1008-24.

make adults feel parental responsibility towards far-off children.[47] More recently, cultural theorists have made a similar claim, that images of suffering children present a 'logic of incompleteness', in which an adult feels compelled to solve the 'narrative problem' by 'stepping in'. By making a donation to 'rescue' the lone child, adults thus become proxy parents.[48] In the interwar period, these child-centred appeals generated donations on an unprecedented scale and underpinned the rapid rise of the international humanitarian movement.[49] However, they also prompted alternative responses, including an interest in international adoption. It was not surprising that British and American charities were inundated with requests to adopt European children; this was a direct measure of the success of their fundraising appeals. The challenge was to turn the desire to rescue a child into revenue.

Humanitarian agencies such as the American Red Cross, the Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, and the Near East Relief Foundation devised a novel way to do this. They advised people enquiring after European children that, rather than literally adopting a child, they could do so figuratively, through 'financial adoption' programmes. These connected individual children with donors overseas, who sent direct gifts in the form of money, food and clothing and exchanged letters. Generally thought to have been a product of post-1945 Cold War diplomacy, the first formal 'financial adoption' schemes (child sponsorship, in contemporary parlance) began during the First World War.[50] When American soldiers arrived in northern France in 1917, children of French soldiers who had died in the war, seeing their

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[47] L. Weber-Bauler, Feuilles de Propagande, Mar. 1920, UISE, 92.2.6, AUIPE; Letter by Etienne Clouzot, secrétaire général de la Xème conférence internationale de la Croix Rouge to Monsieur le Consul Général de Suède, Geneva, 13 Apr. 1921, Archives of the International Committee of the Red Cross, Geneva, CR89.353; on images see also Irwin, *Making the World Safe*, 78-90.

[48] Laura Briggs, 'Mother, Child, Race, Nation: The Visual Iconography of Rescue and the Politics of Transnational and Transracial adoption', *Gender and History*, 15 (2003), 179-200; Karen Wells, 'Child saving or child rights: depictions of children in International NGO campaigns on conflict', *Journal of Children and Media*, 2:3 (2008) 235-250.

[49] Irwin, *Making the World Safe;* Keith Wattenpaugh, *Bread from Stones, The Middle East and the Making of Modern Humanitarianism* (Berkeley, 2015).

[50] Sarah Feldstein, *Raising the World: Child Welfare in the American Century* (Boston MA, 2015)

uniforms, rushed to greet them, thinking that the US doughboys might be their own fathers. The soldiers, taking pity on these 'half orphaned' children and decided that they should become their 'daddies', making monthly contributions to their widowed mothers.[51] From this apparently spontaneous act of compassion, a vast initiative emerged, promoted by the US military magazine *Stars and Stripes* and organised by the American Red Cross. By Christmas 1918, 3,444 children had been sponsored by American soldiers, with units competing to adopt the most. Thus, a *Stars and Stripes* editorial explained, 'Uncle Sam is fathering the Fatherless'.[52]

The rhetoric of 'fathering' French orphans was a deliberate attempt to distance the US liberating armies from German occupying forces. Where the dominant characterisation of the 'Hun' in the Western media had been of the rape and pillage of French and Belgian civilians (leading to biological fathering of babies born to raped civilian women), American forces inverted this trope, benevolently 'fathering' the children of honourable French soldiers.[53] It was a deeply masculine act, in which soldiers positioned themselves as breadwinners for bereaved families, continuing their 'duty' to Europe after they left the continent. At its inception, sponsorship was a symbolically charged form of diplomacy, intended to underscore the benign intentions of US military presence in Europe.

While one origin of international sponsorship schemes lay in American military diplomacy, another lies in French and British anti-governmental pacifist action. In November 1918, the feminist-pacifist Women's International League for Peace and Freedom encouraged its members to breach the Allied blockade of Germany by sending childcare supplies to

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[51] 'Little War Waifs – Adopted Children of American Service Men in France', *The Baltimore Sun,* 27 Oct. 1918*;* 'How To Adopt A War Orphan: Five Hundred Francs Will Support Him For A Year'*, New York Tribune,* May 5, 1918*;* 'Our Boys in France Adopt War Orphans In Stricken Land', *The Atlanta Constitution,* 24 June 1918; 'Waifs of War', *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 14 July 1918.

[52] 'Little War Waifs – the Adopted Children of American Servicemen in France', *The Baltimore Sun,* 27 Oct. 1918.

[53] R. Harris, 'The "Child of the Barbarian": Rape, Race and Nationalism in France during the First World War', *Past and Present*, 141:1 (1993), 170-206.

German mothers, thereby demonstrating the friendship of British women. In April 1919, the leaders of the Women's International League's blockade-breaching activities founded the Save the Children Fund, which similarly sought to use humanitarian provision to forge peaceful connections between British people and their former enemies, undermining the 'unfair and punitive' conditions of the Versailles Treaty imposed by the Allied governments. The Save the Children Fund launched its first child sponsorships in 1919, seeing them as the most effective way to make sure that, through donations for European children, they were also communicating a message of 'peace and goodwill to their families'. One relief worker explained that, 'when the child is put in touch with his adopter and letters are exchanged valuable links are formed between land and land which … bear no unimportant part in realising the unity of the world.'[54] In its first two years, the Save the Children Fund sponsorship schemes aided more than 2,400 children in Austria and Germany. By 1928, the Fund had matched over 20,000 children from twelve European nations with British 'foster parents'.[55]

Like its British counterpart, the French Women's International League became involved in humanitarian actives after the First World War and launched a sponsorship scheme connecting 200 French donors with their 'former enemies' in Germany in 1923. Supported by members of trade unions that opposed German reparation payments, the French Women's International League framed sponsorship schemes as a form of personal atonement for the actions of government.[56] This was in direct contrast to the sponsorship schemes of the American Red Cross, which sought to extend the diplomatic work of the US Government and military through the interpersonal diplomacy of American citizens. In spite of competing diplomatic aims, child sponsorship schemes shared common assumptions: firstly, that

[54] *The World's Children,* Jan. 1924.
[55] Statistics compiled from the files of the British Save the Children Fund at the Save the Children International Union archives in Geneva, AUIPE.
[56] WILPF pamphlet announcing the sponsorship scheme, Gabrielle Duchêne fonds, F delta, rés. 245/2, Bibliothèque Documentation Internationale Contemporaine, Paris.

children would appeal the most to donors, drawing them into the civic diplomacy of international aid; and secondly, that by providing for children, humanitarians were engaged in an effective form of propagandising for their cause. They would win the gratitude not only of parents, but of an entire generation of children, who would (in the words of the Save the Children Fund) 'always remember that, when they had nothing to eat… Britain came to their aid'.[57]

'Financial adoption' schemes idealised interpersonal international relationships between donors and children as the 'building blocks' of international peace. However, by the mid-1920s, it was becoming apparent that the exchange of letters between children and sponsors was difficult to coordinate and often impossible to maintain. Children often forgot to write, or got bored of writing, to their sponsor. At one school in Vienna where 500 children received gifts from sponsors, only 120 letters of thanks were returned; a Save the Children worker commented that it was 'difficult for a healthy child to always remember thankfulness ... and the interest in friends far away soon wanes.'[58] Near East Relief experienced similar difficulties trying to keep up the interest of the sponsors themselves. Having begun their sponsorship schemes in 1921 following the example of the American Red Cross, they noted by 1923 that just one in every five American sponsors was sending letters to 'their' child. By 1926, of the 150 000 Armenian children supported by Near East Relief, just 636 had regularly corresponding sponsors.[59]

Aid organisations endeavoured to create relationships between donors and sponsored children, including cajoling writers and sorting and translating letters, but these were time-consuming and frustrating tasks. However, these organisational difficulties paled into insignificance compared with the difficulties of distributing aid only to selected children

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[57] *The World's Children*, Mar. 1922.
[58] SCF allocations department to Mary Houghton, 18th May 1922, EJ46, SCA
[59] Annual Report of the Near East Relief, Dec. 1926, MRL2 box 9 file 8, Columbia University Theological Seminary Archives (hereafter CUTSA).

rather than – as most other humanitarian groups did – to entire communities. Distribution took a variety of forms. For the American Red Cross, sponsorship was a direct financial allowance, paid to the child's guardian. For Save the Children, sponsored children received meals or clothes, paid for by their sponsor but distributed to them directly through an aid organisation. With both models of distribution, relief workers could never be sure that a child and their guardian were not 'sharing' their gifts from their sponsors with their parents, siblings or friends.

The willingness of humanitarian organisations to continue sponsorship schemes cannot be explained by the need to cater to donor demands alone, as for most aid organisations, sponsorship programmes were auxiliary to other fundraising efforts. However, sponsorship schemes endured because they were seen as furthering the diplomatic agendas of aid organisations, allowing such organisations a greater degree of control and selectivity over the children who would receive support. In the aftermath of the war, aid organisations regarded 'reconstruction' as fundamental to their diplomatic mission to Europe. It was only through creating politically stable and economically prosperous nation states that post-war peace could be maintained. As 'citizens of the future', children were seen as essential to economic productivity, political stability and ultimately European peace. With limited resources, aid organisations focused their attention on children they believed would contribute to national reconstruction and, in turn, international peace, in later life.[60]

For both the Save the Children Fund and the American Red Cross, social class was one of the clearest determinants of a child's potential to become a 'good citizen'.[61] Aid organisations infused a discourse of social efficiency with a moralised language of 'deservingness' inherited from British Victorian and Progressive Era American philanthropic traditions, claiming that the 'endemically poor' who could not 'help themselves' were

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[60] Mary Houghton, Circular letter to SCF subscribers, 9 Dec. 24, EJ46, SCA.
[61] Miss Sidgwick's notes on Austria, 1922, EJ46, SCA.

unworthy of aid, focusing instead on middle-class families whose temporary poverty was due to war.[62] Sponsorship programmes often functioned as elite scholarship schemes, individually selecting children on the basis of their parents' professions, social status and individual school reports. Of the several thousand children who attended one Austrian feeding centre, Save the Children chose just 288 for adoption: 76 children of teachers and doctors, 85 of clerks and businessmen, 62 of army officers or state officials, while the remaining 42 were the offspring of skilled craftsmen such as blacksmiths or locksmiths.[63] The American Red Cross, which predominantly focused on France and Belgium, used the pre-war occupation of the father to select children. Sponsors were invited to double-check that children came from 'suitable' backgrounds. ARC caseworkers explained that it was only through 'push[ing] forward' the 'children of the good and intelligent' that the French could ever overcome the 'loss of [their] best men during the war.'[64] Sponsorships were means of rebuilding pre-war French social order, ensuring that children of 'the best' citizens could take their rightful place in society.

Though both the Save the Children Fund and the American Red Cross took pains to identify the 'best' children to receive sponsorship, they were also prepared to cease sponsorship arrangements if they had mistakenly selected an 'undeserving' child. Sponsors became, in effect, an army of untrained social workers who informed aid organisations if they suspected that 'their' child was unworthy of donations. The American Red Cross asked that mothers forward their children's school reports to their sponsors, who in turn commented on the 'good use' (or otherwise) of their donations. Save the Children also offered to investigate instances when sponsors alleged that donations were being misspent. In May 1922 the Save

[62] 1922 Notes on the principles of relief and where grants are made to, EJ270, SCA; Mary Houghton, Circular letter to SCF subscribers, 9 Dec. 24, EJ46, SCA; Seventeenth Report of the Emery and War Victims Relief Committee of the Society of Friends, 1 Apr. 1920 to 31 Mar. 1921, Friends House London.
[63] List of children sponsored through the Jugend Fursorge, EJ53; Mr Levin to Mr Watson, 18 Jan. 1924, EJ53, SCA.
[64] Notes on the case of Roger Hallier, 1919, Committee for Relief of Belgium, box 483 folder 10, HIA.

the Children Fund received a complaint from Miss Millet, the sponsor of a boy named Johann Bernardz, 'who had received a nice little communication from her child, but is disappointed, declaring that you have given her a Jew, when she specifically desired otherwise.'[65] On investigation, the Save the Children Fund found that the Bernardz family were 'not Jews, but of Polish peasant type and Roman Catholics.'[66] Due to their social class, a Save the Children Fund relief worker stated that 'the case is not one that particularly appeals to our sympathies.'[67] Johann was subsequently dropped from the Fund's list of recipients as one of Austria's 'endemic poor', a prejudice that seemed acceptable to a charity that claimed to help children irrespective of 'race, nationality or creed'.[68]

For all that aid organisations insisted on their 'impartiality', a host of preferences and prejudices governed selection for sponsorship. In addition to favouring middle-class children, humanitarian organisations focused on particular national and ethnic groups. The Save the Children Fund, although established to connect former enemies, gave up trying to find sponsors for German children, realising that there was more public sympathy for Austrian and French youngsters. The American Red Cross explained its focus on France as a continuation of Franco-American friendship that stretched back to French military support in the American Revolution. Care for Armenian and Russian refugee children was justified on both cultural and religious grounds. Both groups were in an elite category of victim (the persecuted Christian), felt to make special cultural contributions to Europe. Jewish children, though not formally excluded from the work of mainstream humanitarian organisations, were almost exclusively cared for by Jewish relief organisations such as the Jewish Joint Distribution Committee.[69]

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[65] SCF allocations department to Mary Houghton, 16 May 1922, EJ46, SCA.
[66] Mary Houghton to Ethel Sidgwick, 8 June 1922, EJ46, SCA.
[67] Mary Houghton to Ethel Sidgwick, 8 June 1922, EJ46, SCA.
[68] Miss Sidgwick's notes on Austria, 1922, EJ46, SCA.
[69] 'American Hebrew Readers Adopt 2 More War Orphans', *The American Hebrew & Jewish Messenger,* 8 Apr. 1921; 'Summer Must See No Lagging In War Orphans' Cause', *Jewish Advocate,* 11 Aug. 1921.

Once the ethnicity, nationality and class status of children available for adoption had been established by aid organisations, other, more arbitrary preferences came into play. In the earliest American Red Cross child sponsorship scheme, in which American troops 'fathered' French children, one unit decided that they would like 'a red headed, freckled faced boy'. This request 'started the rage for red hair, everyone wanted a red haired orphan'. *Stars and Stripes* printed an advert that was widely circulated in France under the slogan *'cherchez le tête rouge'*, and a baby 'with head of blooming peony' whose father had died at the front was eventually found for the unit to adopt.[70] Another army unit stated that they 'weren't too fussy about the age and colour of the children', so long as their names were 'something short and snappy';[71] this was because the unit had 'captured two foxes as their mascots' and intended to name them after their 'adopted' French children. A fox could not very well be called 'Lucile, Madeline or Gaston Claude', they reasoned.[72] The most common preference was gender. While aid organisations usually depicted female children in fundraising appeals, donors generally preferred to sponsor boys. Soldiers requested boys with 'natural fighting proclivities' who they believed would grow up to replace men lost at the front. Civilian sponsors also seemed to believe that boys would have more to offer the recovering nations, seeing them as more likely to become 'professionals' and therefore a better investment of education.[73] In the immediate aftermath of the war, when many widowed or single women found themselves taking on new economic roles, humanitarian interventions sought to recreate pre-war gender divisions, positioning boys as the breadwinners of the future.

The selective criteria employed by aid agencies are not surprising. In class preference, international aid organisations closely echoed the traditions of Late Victorian social work in Britain, and Progressive Era philanthropy in early twentieth-century America from which

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[70] 'Freckles In France? They Don't Grow 'Em: War Orphans' Campaign', *The Stars and Stripes: The Official News Paper of the A.E.F,* 19 Apr. 1918.

[71] 'Little War Waifs – Adopted Children of American Service Men in France', *The Baltimore Sun,* 27 Oct. 1918.

[72] *Ibid.*

[73] *Ibid.*

they had emerged. In other prejudices, international charities reflected the views of Anglo-American bourgeoisie who were, after all, the potential donors that sponsorship schemes aimed to appeal to. These selective criteria, however, become more remarkable when set alongside the fundraising practices of these organisations, which foregrounded children because they were assumed to be universally deserving and, in the aftermath of war, remote from the potentially subversive politics of their parents. A focus on children convinced donors that they were not helping the corrupt, militaristic 'old Europe' of the First World War, but a young, new and (crucially) innocent population.[74] Children, while themselves 'non-political', were positioned as the standard-bearers of 'internationalism' as a political project. Unsullied by a war they had not fought in, children were the builders of the 'new world' in which nations co-existed in peaceful harmony.

Like international adoption, international sponsorship was based on coinciding emotional desires and political visions. Sponsors might be attracted to children based on perceptions of their innocence or potential, but they were quickly enlisted by aid organisations as proxy social workers to police the boundaries between the undeserving and deserving poor. In doing so, rather than creating a new Europe, child sponsorship schemes reinforced old class, ethnic, gender national and religious hierarchies. For all that they appeared to symbolise a 'new world order' in the aftermath of war, children appealed to Anglo-American philanthropists precisely because caring for them presented a means to recover a nostalgic vision of old, pre-war Europe. Through child sponsorship, donors sought to rebuild this pre-war European within European nations. International adoption, meanwhile, sought to preserve 'white' Russian and Armenian children, custom and culture within the US, in the absence of national homes.

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[74] See also Baughan, *Every Citizen of Empire*, and Irwin, *Making the World Safe*.

Historians have celebrated the civic diplomacy of the interwar era as a modernising and democratising force in the history of international relations.[75] Interwar child sponsorship efforts (which, on the surface, seem to exemplify the spirit of progressive humanitarian internationalism) in fact typify the backwards-looking vision of interwar relief work. Though helping children provided humanitarian organisations with a privileged way of speaking about the future peace and prosperity of Europe, they also represented a means through which older forms of class-based and ethnic 'orderings' of society could be re-established within a chaotic post-war world. They did so while meeting the emotional needs of Western donors— needs which humanitarian NGOs had created as they sought to obscure the complex and at times contradictory political agendas at play in post-war relief.

## III. The Land of Orphans

In April, 1922, at a *Jugend Fürsorge* centre in Vienna, fifty Austrian children crowded around a blackboard, copying out a series of English phrases written by their British headmaster. Laboriously, the children penned letters to their English sponsors, thanking them for 'parcels containing condensed milk, cocoa, fat, cereals and soap'. These gifts, every child claimed, were 'what we wanted the most of all'. Each letter was identical. Although the children could not read, write or speak English, having them copy alien phrases by rote was judged the most efficient way to correspond with their sponsors, saving busy relief workers the task of translating children's German handwriting into English type.[76] These letters failed to excite the children's sponsors, with many neglecting to reply to the perfunctory and

[75] See, for example, A. Iriye, *Global Community: The Role of International Organizations in the Making of the Contemporary World* (Berkeley, C.A., 2002); D. Heater, *Citizenship: the civic ideal in world history, politics and education* (Manchester, 2004); T. Davis, *NGOs: A New History of Transnational Civil Society* (London, 2013); D. Gorman, *The Emergence of International Society in the 1920s* (Cambridge, 2012.)
[76] Dr Macfie to Mr Keeling, 23 Apr. 1922, EJ46, SCA.

uniform thanks they received. For the historian, they are equally frustrating, revealing little of the individual experiences of aid recipients. It is, in part, due to the limitation of sources that historians have tended to focus on the aims and intentions of the givers of aid, rather than the experiences of its recipients. This article now departs from and extends the focus prevalent in the literature to date, examining how the cultural and diplomatic agendas that accompanied material relief were experienced, and what the wider implications of humanitarian interventions were for children and their families across Europe.

Only occasionally has correspondence between children and their benefactors been preserved in the personal papers of donors. These rare letters reveal that donors and recipients held radically different conceptions of child sponsorship. An American Red Cross-led scheme in Belgium, which sponsored the children of 'war orphans' (most often children living with widowed mothers), assured donors of the emotional import of the letters that they sent their 'adopted sons and daughters'. Thirteen-year-old Yvonne Ronet was one of the few genuinely parentless children metaphorically and financially 'adopted' by an American benefactor, Mrs. Wahl. Unlike soldier sponsors, who viewed their role primarily as economic, Mrs. Wahl believed she had a maternal duty to Yvonne as well as a material one. Wahl's understanding of the emotional importance of sponsorship was reinforced by a American Red Cross, which claimed that Yvonne would 'live on the affections of her American mother'.[77] Yvonne's letters, however, show an entirely different understanding of sponsorship: one that was predominantly material. She listed her needs to Wahl, and each month was frustrated to find that she had not received 'a red ribbon', the one thing consistently requested.[78] This desire was continually thwarted by the fact that the monthly donation of 30 francs from her godparent was transferred directly to her grandmother, who

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[77] C. Hutchett, *c*. 1919, Committee for Relief of Belgium, box 483 folder 10, HIA; Julia Herta to Mrs Wahl, 12 May 1919, Committee for Relief of Belgium, box 483 folder 10, HIA.
[78] Yvonne and Germaine Ronet to Mrs Wahl, 1919-1920, Committee for Relief of Belgium, box 483 folder 10, HIA.

resolutely spent it only on 'necessary items'. Wahl, for her part, did not get the affectionate letters she desired from Yvonne, nor was her one repeated request for a photograph of Yvonne met. The ARC promised Wahl the undying gratitude and emotional dependence of Yvonne, but in reality their relationship did not provide the anticipated emotional or material gratification for any of the parties involved.

Though Yvonne addresses Mrs. Wahl as 'her dear American friend', it seems not to have occurred to her that her benefactor was meant to provide a proxy mother figure following the death of her parents. Indeed, the emotional significance of the term 'adoption' does not appear to have registered with any of the sponsored children or their guardians. It was, in fact, the guardians who seem to have borne the brunt of letter-writing, perhaps feeling that their children could not be trusted to manage a relationship on which an important source of income depended. While occasionally children wrote enthusiastically thanking their sponsors for toys they had purchased with their sponsor money (one boy, for example, bought a gun, pellets and face paint to become a 'red Indian'), more often guardians used correspondence to convey their responsibility and thrift, having purchased items such as sturdy shoes and school supplies.[79] Such news often displeased sponsors. Mrs. Wahl determinedly ignored letters from Yvonne's grandmother, replying only to Yvonne herself.[80] The metaphor of adoption used by the American Red Cross and other agencies was intended to obscure children's pre-existing familial ties, and present their American 'adopter' as their only 'protector and provider in this world'.[81] Sponsors were therefore often surprised and disappointed to find that 'their' child was not a 'real orphan' after all.

The outcomes of sponsorship were at odds with its rhetoric. In their first iterations, sponsorship schemes were intended to prevent children from becoming orphans by allowing

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[79] 'Little War Waifs – Adopted Children of American Service Men in France', *The Baltimore Sun,* 27 Oct. 1918.
[80] Yvonne and Germaine Ronet to Mrs Wahl, 1919-1920, Committee for Relief of Belgium, box 483 folder 10, HIA.
[81] Circular letter to subscribers by Mrs Hugh Henry Brown, *c*. 1918, Box 1, Folder 5, Commission for Relief of Belgium files, HIA.

them to remain with their families. The American Red Cross scheme in France was explicitly aimed at 'half-orphaned' children, providing a monthly stipend directly to their mothers so that the children would not be 'removed or cast onto the public purse'.[82] The Save the Children Fund, in its pilot child sponsorship scheme in Vienna in 1919, also stated that its primary aim was to keep children with their parents. Relief worker Mary Houghton noted that the distribution of food relief (which often took place far from children's homes and in residential schools and sanatoria) broke up families. This was a problem not because of its emotional implications but its 'moral' ones. Deploying the language of British Victorian social work, Houghton stated that parents no longer responsible for their own children would become 'idle' and 'demoralised'. Houghton's child sponsorship schemes (which funded monthly food packages for children to be consumed in their own homes) were intended to keep families together.[83] Sponsorship sought to preserve parental responsibility for children in Austria and in France, even while it obscured children's relationships with their parents in order to gain donors to 'adopt' European 'orphans'.

If initially the reality of international sponsorship schemes was detached from the representation, this was not to be the case for long. In a drive for ever more 'efficient' forms of aid, the policy of providing for children within their homes was short-lived. In Austria, the Save the Children Fund quickly ceased providing monthly food parcels and reverted to a system of institutional feeding, whereby sponsored children ate at schools and hospitals far from home. This had the added benefit that sponsored children's meals could not be shared with others, such as siblings, parents or friends (a common concern amongst their sponsors).[84]

Targeting individual children for relief disrupted family dynamics. There was, Houghton noted, 'great heartburning' when a child was selected for sponsorship but his or

[82] Children's Bureau, Paris Office Box 29, File 15, HIA.
[83] Mary Houghton, circular letter to SCF subscribers, 9 Dec. 24, EJ46, SCA.
[84] Circular letter to SCF subscribers, Mary Houghton, May 1922, EJ46, SCA.

her siblings were not.[85] More serious was a problem that plagued all child-specific international relief initiatives (not just child sponsorship): the separation of the welfare of children from that of their families, particularly their parents. In providing individual, independent income for children, humanitarian organisations overlooked how parents might provide for their children in the longer term. Rather than focusing on the unemployment of adults as a cause of poverty, humanitarian organisations looked only to the child and its future productivity. By connecting the welfare of children (and only children) with post-war reconstruction, child sponsorship schemes intentionally delayed the rehabilitation of families and communities for a generation.

These dynamics were particularly apparent in refugee relief work in Constantinople, where large communities of Greek, Turkish, Armenian and Russian refugees congregated following their displacements due to the Russian civil war, the Armenian genocide, and the population exchanges of the 1920s. Without citizenship rights, and in overcrowded labour markets, unemployment in refugee communities was endemic. Rather than seeking to provide adult Russian refugees with employment, or directing aid to refugee families, Save the Children used sponsorship programmes to give aid only to children. The failure to provide for adults was ideological as much as logistical. Save the Children workers believed that the 'idleness' experienced by adult refugees had made them 'demoralised' (denoting a moral, rather than emotional, state), and thus a bad influence on their own children.[86] This vision cast refugee adults as a psychologically scarred, lost generation, while seeking to preserve the nations and communities from which these refugees came via their offspring, seen as young enough to have escaped the psychological damage of war and refugee life.

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[85] 'Miss Sidgwick's notes on Austria', 1922, EJ46, SCA.
[86] E. Jebb, 'The problem of Russian children in Constantinople', *c*. Nov. 1921, EJ138, SCA; see also Conférence des organisations volontaires pour les réfugiés russes, 24 Nov. 1921, CR 87, carton 6, 'SDN', ACICR.

Sponsors' donations were used to educate refugee children in out-of-town boarding schools, away from their parents. Determinedly termed 'Russian orphans' by relief workers, at least 20,000 refugee children were eventually removed from their families permanently by the Save the Children Fund and other humanitarian agencies and resettled in 'orphanages' in France, Bulgaria and Czechoslovakia, where their education continued to be funded by foreign sponsors.[87] Russian refugee parents who wished their children to remain faced an ultimatum: either their children left Constantinople, or their relief would be terminated.[88] Many Russian refugees lost contact with their children altogether and, when they appealed directly either to Save the Children or the League of Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for reunification, they were criticised for failing to understand that their children's 'best prospects' lay in separation from their families.[89] The Save the Children Fund, which emphasised the trauma and sadness of war orphans in their fundraising appeals, did not consider whether separating children from living parents might produce emotional distress.

A similar dynamic was produced by Near East Relief, which from 1920 connected US citizens with Armenian children through sponsorship programmes. Near East Relief described Armenia as a 'land of orphans' who looked to 'America [as] their only mother'.[90] Donations from child sponsorship ($100 per year per child) financed large orphanage-schools, which by 1926 housed over 21,000 children. These schools taught trades and crafts to enable Armenian children to become productive, self-sufficient adults, ensuring the resilience of the Armenian people in the absence of an Armenian state. The skills taught were those deemed 'traditional' to Armenian people, such as lacemaking. Thus, orphanages sought

[87] 'Russian Refugee Children in Europe' – the All- Russian Union of Zemstvos, 1927, 92.31.4, AUIPE; M. Gehri to LNHCR, 25 Oct. 1925, R1719/17080, League of Nations Archives (hereafter LNA).
[88] Minutes of a meeting between the SCF, All British Appeal, American Red Cross and Russian Relief Association, 16 Dec. 1921, Box 23, Bakhmeteff Archive, Columbia University Special Collections (hereafter CUSC).
[89] Committee Consultations Organistaions privées de Secours aux réfugiés russes collaborant avec le Haute Commissaire de la SDN, 4 Nov. 1921, 92.31.11, AUIPE; S. Waters to Johnson of the LNHCR 4 Sept. 1922, R1720, 12930, LNA; M. Artichevsky to Johnson, 3 November 1922, R1720, 12930, LNA; see also Victor Voromin Stanimaka - plea to be reunited with children to LNHCR c.1922, R1718/45/22395/12608, LNA.
[90] 'Mrs Duryea to Discuss Armenia', *The Cornell Daily Sun*, 14 Feb. 1922.

to preserve not only a people, but their culture.[91] Through their focus on the child productivity, Near East Relief orphanages presented national reconstruction as a generation away. This was not (as was the case with Russian refugees) because adults were thought to be idle and 'demoralised', but because their presence was overlooked entirely.

In fact, despite the chaos and rate of mortality during the war and the Armenian genocide, many parent-child relationships remained intact. Where this was not the case, children were often being cared for by their extended families prior to rehoming in orphanages. In 1922, Near East Relief invited external auditors to visit Constantinople. Paul Munroe, the President of Columbia University Teachers' College, and Dr. Reeder, head of the Serbian Children's Relief Fund, noted that a surprising number of children living in Near East Relief orphanages had 'one or both parents living'.[92] However, because the care in orphanages was 'so good', parents preferred to 'remain out of sight and delay taking the child for as long as possible'. Stating that 'family and kinship ties and responsibility are marked traits of the Armenian people', Reeder and Munroe urged that 'no Near East policy should ever run counter to these splendid racial qualities.' These recommendations, though praised by relief workers, did little to change the practices of Near East Relief, which continued to educate children in institutional settings outside the family environment.[93]

Near East Relief, however, saw parents' willingness to place children in orphanages not as a calculated decision, but as evidence of a lack of emotional connection. In a Near East Relief Infant Home in Kharpert, the 'despondency' and 'disinterest' of mothers was supposedly evidenced by their willingness to allow trained American nurses to provide their children with care, food, and medical attention. Assuming that a young mother had no emotional attachment to the child, one Near East Relief nurse was taken aback when her offer

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[91] T. Swayze, 'The New Youth Movement in the Near East', *The Epworth Era,* Dec. 1926, MLR2 box 7, file 3, CUTSA.
[92] P. Munroe, Educational Policy of the Near East Relief, 1923, MLR2, box 7 file 8, CUTSA.
[93] B. Dodge, Confidential Report of the Beirut Area, 22 Sept. 1922, MLR2 box 8 file 1, CUTSA.

to adopt the child and take it to America was passionately rejected. Disappointed, the young American nurse consoled herself that at least she had 'taught the mother how to love' the child, certain that the maternal bond would not have developed without professional, American intervention.[94]

The father of Ester Ranzon, the Armenian child star who made her name playing the 'American' Alice in *Alice in Hungerland,* did not have opportunity to object when his daughter was adopted by Florence Duryea. Near East Relief workers assumed that, because Ester was living in an orphanage (the only environment in which she could be sure of an education), her father was not opposed to their long-term separation. She lost contact with him once she moved to New York.[95] Likewise, of the seven 'McCully orphans', at least four were not parentless. McCully claimed, possibly accurately, that he had met with, and secured permission from, the mothers of three to take their children to better lives in the US. McCully had initially 'selected his children' from an orphanage, where their mothers had placed them in order to receive food, warmth and shelter. McCully's assumption, however, was not that these mothers had sacrificed their emotional needs in order to meet their child's physical needs, but that the emotional bond between mother and child did not exist.[96]

Not all parents facing humanitarian crises were willing to give up their children, nor did all resettled children adapt easily to new cultures and communities. Russian refugees, prime targets of child resettlement programmes, campaigned vigorously against the humanitarian removal and 'denationalisation' of refugee children. Refugee community leaders, assembled under exiled organisation the All-Russian Union of Zemstvos, sought to preserve the

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[94] 'The Baby of the Near East', Near East Relief, Vol 11, no. 51, 25 Dec. 1920, p.2, MRL2 box 9 file 8, CUTSA.
[95] The wishes of Alice/Ester's parents were, however, the subject of conflict between a New York rabbi and Duryea, who he claimed was not raising Alice as a Jewess, as her family would have wanted. 'Wants Alice Raised as a Jewess', *New York Times,* 28 Apr. 1922.
[96] Personal Journal of Newton A. McCully, 22 Nov. 1920, Newton A McCully papers, box 1, Library of Congress; 'Admiral and Seven Russian Waifs He Adopted and Took To US', *The Springfield Republican,* 7 Jan. 1921.

'Russianness' of children in exile, hoping that when Bolshevism fell these children would return to their homeland as the rightful leaders of a post-communist Russia.[97] The Save the Children Fund, on the other hand, proposed that Russian refugee children would be better off adapting to new cultures than pining for their lost home. Rather than staying with their parents, or attending the network of Russian-speaking schools run by the Union of Zemstovs, the Fund supported the resettlement and naturalization of Russian children into new nations. This was supported by the Czech and Bulgarian states, keen to bolster their healthy, young populations in order to strengthen them against the Soviet threat on their borders.[98] In 1921, Save the Children collaborated with the Czech government to remove and resettle 1,685 so-called Russian orphans from Constantinople to Czechoslovakia. Many were removed without the prior knowledge or consent of their parents.[99] The Bulgarian foreign minister also offered (and provided funds) to 'educate and shelter' the remaining 5,000 Russian refugee children from Constantinople to orphanages in Sofia. It is unclear how many were eventually resettled in Bulgaria, but Bulgaria received payment for the removal of these children.[100]

Clearly, then, both states and stateless communities across central and eastern Europe regarded their own children (and the children of others) as a national resource, and were reluctant to give them up.[101] British and American humanitarian organisations were well aware of this. The Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, for example, had been informed by Polish child welfare authorities of how reluctant their government was to give up its healthy,

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[97] 'The situation of Russian refugee children at the end of the 1920s - various subsidized organizations report to the SCF', 92.31.14, AUIPE; 'Russian Refugee Children in Europe' - the All-Russian Union of Zemstvos, 1927, 92.31.4, AUIPE

[98] League of Nations Official Journal, Apr. 1922, 338; Observations by the High Commissioner for the Relief of Russian Refugees and the International Russian Relief Committee on the Letter from the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Czecho-slovak republic, C114/ M68 1922, LOC.

[99] Mackenzie to Gehri, 4 Dec. 1921, 92.31.4, AUIPE.

[100] It is unclear how many of the children offered asylum in Bulgaria were transferred. Les réfugiés russes en Tchécoslovaquie: rapport du Dr. Girsa sur la situation de réfugiés russes et les mesures prises en leur faveur, 1921, R1724/45/16011/13955, LNA.

[101] See T. Zahra, *Kidnapped Souls: National Indifference and the Battle for Children in the Bohemian Lands, 1900-1948* (Ithaca, 2008).

young population to would-be American adopters.[102] It is no coincidence that the communities that ultimately did lose children to humanitarian resettlement schemes and international adoptions lacked the protective apparatus of a state: Armenian and Russian refugees. These groups were almost entirely dependent on the aid of humanitarian organisations. Russian and Armenian refugees were often threatened with the withdrawal of support if they did not comply with the wishes of humanitarianism organisations.[103]

Despite their own child removal practices, a number of interwar aid organisations clearly drew connections between the forced separation of families and the destruction of nations and cultures. Near East Relief, the Save the Children Fund, and many of the individuals involved in the American Red Cross and the ARA were supporters and participants in a League of Nations-led effort to reunite Armenian women and children taken into Arab, Turkish and Kurdish communities during the Armenian genocide in 1915, as part of a conscious attempt to eradicate Armenian culture and community. By 'rescuing' these women and girls, the League of Nations Commission for the Protection of Women and Children sought to rebuild the Armenian population.[104] Humanitarian organisations involved in this scheme, such as Near East Relief, could not conceive that their own child sponsorship, child-removal or international adoption practices might be undermining the very communities they sought to preserve. For these organisations, preserving Armenian culture meant simply ensuring ethnic insularity and the continuation of agrarian practices and crafts. 'Culture', shallowly conceived, did not encompass family or community structures.

International adoption, both in its rhetorical form as child sponsorship, and the literal form practiced by McCully and Duryea, did not account for the social, cultural, or emotional

[102] War Orphan Department Warsaw to Jessie Bogen, War Orphan Department New York, on the Legal Adoption of War Orphans, 14 Feb. 1921, American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, 40.4141, YIVO.
[103] Minutes of a meeting between the SCF, All British Appeal, American Red Cross and Russian Relief Association, 16 December 1921, Box 23, Bakhmeteff Archive, CUSC.
[104] See Keith Watenpaugh, 'The League of Nations' Rescue of Armenian Genocide Survivors and the Making of Modern Humanitarianism, 1920–1927', *American Historical Review,* 115:5 (2010), 1315-39.

needs of children beyond those that could be met by donors or adopters. Just as the fundraising appeals of international humanitarian organisations denied the existence of children's parents, the actions of aid workers assumed that these invisible parents and their communities had no emotional connection to their children. Where the emotional needs of children were discussed, it was assumed that they could only be met by the long-distance affections of British or American sponsors, or their new adoptive parents. These assumptions enabled the high-profile international adoptions of children like Ester Ranzon and the McCully 'orphans'. More significantly, these assumptions underpinned the removal of numberless children from parents or family members to be raised in institutions. International adoption programs created the very orphans they described.

**Other People's Children: International Adoption in the Twentieth Century**

In 1919, a comedy performed on New York's Broadway and London's West End satirised the phenomenon wherein men and women content in their 'single blessedness suddenly become seized with a desire to take charge of some homeless youngster from Europe's war zone'. The play, *Daddies*, followed the fortunes of four wealthy bachelors and the unruly central European children they took in. Resulting in series of mishaps caused by the children's refusal to conform to the 'grateful victim' character they had been assigned, the moral of the play was that 'you cannot find domestic bliss by the backdoor'. In *Daddies*, adoptees of European children hardly enjoyed the celebrity status gained by Admiral McCully. Instead, they were portrayed as misguided, ill-equipped figures of ridicule.

After drawing large audiences and critical acclaim as a stage play, *Daddies* was filmed by Warner Brothers in 1924. By the time it was released, however, the vogue for international adoption (both literal and financial) was subsiding. With the impetus for

international friendship less urgent as the memory of war faded, and the 1924 Immigration Act further limiting the ability of foreign nationals to enter the US, the rescue of individual children became less viable and less desirable. It was only in 'exceptional circumstances' that child welfare experts advocated removal and resettlement of unaccompanied children. In these cases, most famously the mass child evacuations in the 1937-39 Spanish Civil War and the *Kindertransport* movement, humanitarians, politicians and the children's hosts intended that children would return to their parents and families once the crisis had passed.

In 1939, the British government evacuated nearly three million children living in cities at risk of aerial bombardment for the duration of the Second World War, sending them to live with strangers in low-risk, rural areas. This was seen as a national crisis. The children who had endured these short-term separations were imagined to be irrevocably damaged, susceptible to crime and vice due to emotional deprivation during their formative years. After the Second World War, the work of Anglo-American psychoanalysts and child psychologists such as John Bowlby and Benjamin Spock gained ground as early attachment to parents and the stability of the nuclear family was placed at the heart of theories of individual personhood and democratic nation-building. Whereas interwar European reconstruction had been vested in the minds and bodies of individual children, after 1945 it was the family unit (rather than individual children) that became the centrepiece of national and international stability.[105]

The work of international child welfare organisations in the aftermath of the First World War reveals how profoundly transformative the Second World War was in the sphere of child development, psychology and theories of family life. When the interwar period is read forward in time, rather than backwards through the lens of post-1945 developments, the separation of children from their biological family units by humanitarian organisations becomes explicable. Interwar international adoption (despite its privileging of familial over

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[105] Denise Riley, *War in the nursery: Theories of the Child and the Mother* (London, 1983); Michal Shapira, *The War Inside: Psychoanalysis, Total War, and the Making of the Democratic Self in Postwar Britain* (Cambridge, 2013).

institutional care) emerged from a long history of child removal schemes in which the children of supposedly 'unfit' white working-class parents were taken (often without the knowledge of their families) for resettlement in the 'wide open spaces' of the British Empire or the American west. Meanwhile, across the British Empire and North America during the nineteenth century and early-to-mid twentieth century, aboriginal children were systematically removed from their parents to be educated in Western norms and culture in mission schools and state-sponsored orphanages. These forms of intervention, far from aiming to preserve cultures, customs and ethnicities, targeted children as part of a broader eugenic plan to slow and ultimately stop reproduction among certain populations. These practices took place in an era when white bourgeois children were becoming seen as ever more 'priceless': the source of increasing financial and emotional investment both by parents and the state.[106]

What is so curious about interwar international adoption, though, is that the very same children considered to be 'priceless and precious' to British and American donors were again assumed to be worthless to their own parents. Russian and Armenian refugees – highly sought after by individual adopters and adoption agencies – were taken from their parents with little discussion of the distress this would cause to parent or child. In Austria, schemes that had sought to preserve family ties were rapidly reworked to focus only on individual children, but there was no opposition. Indeed, the initial drive to preserve parent-child relationships had been intended only to prevent the 'demoralisation' of parents, on the assumption that parents would gladly relinquish their offspring. In spite of fears expressed in the children's own national and ethnic communities about their removal or 'denationalisation', children in central and eastern Europe were seen to be precious to

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[106] V.A. Zelizer, *Pricing the Priceless Child: The Changing Social Value of Children* (Princeton, N.J., 1994).

everyone but their own families, who were often treated by humanitarian agencies and fundraising appeals as if they did not exist.

The obscuring of adults from humanitarian appeals shows how successful aid organisations were in their depoliticisation of both childhood and humanitarianism. A focus solely on children also chimed with the political and diplomatic agendas of these internationalist organisations, which were intent on the reconstruction of post-war Europe, and the recognition of Anglo-American hegemony. Children, seen more as psychologically malleable and physically vulnerable than adults, were ideal targets of relief designed to strengthen their bodies and inculcate their minds with the benevolence of America and Great Britain. As Britain, an old imperial nation, and America, a rising superpower, vied for world leadership after the First World War, care of and attention to Europe's children became a means to perform authority and compassion. Through international adoption schemes, European children became metaphors for continental Europe as a whole: a place in need of reconstruction, or even 'development'. British and American citizens, via humanitarian organisations, became the adoptive parents of the war-torn continent.

In the interwar period, Anglo-American humanitarians promulgated a vision of world leadership that centred on the ability to discern, and the duty to protect, the best interests of other people's children. In doing so, they carried colonial discourses of civilisational hierarchy and moral superiority into the 'new international order' of the twentieth century. Humanitarian interventions reinscribed pre-existing hierarchies at the level of international relations, as well as locally and nationally. While care for children appeared progressive, international adoption, both literal and metaphorical, was designed to protect 'traditional' cultures and preserve pre-war hierarchies. From Admiral McCully's folk-song singing Russian 'orphans', to lace-making Armenian wards of Near East Relief, to the well-dressed and well-educated sponsored sons of France's middle-class war widows, European children

were the bearers of an old European social order, which had outlasted the upheaval of war, genocide and Bolshevism. Further, humanitarian interventions created orphans were they did not previously exist, and disrupted families and communities that had endured war, genocide and migration. The legacy of early-twentieth century humanitarian interventions in Europe was not always the reconstruction that humanitarians intended. It was often disruption, or even destruction, of the communities they sought to save.