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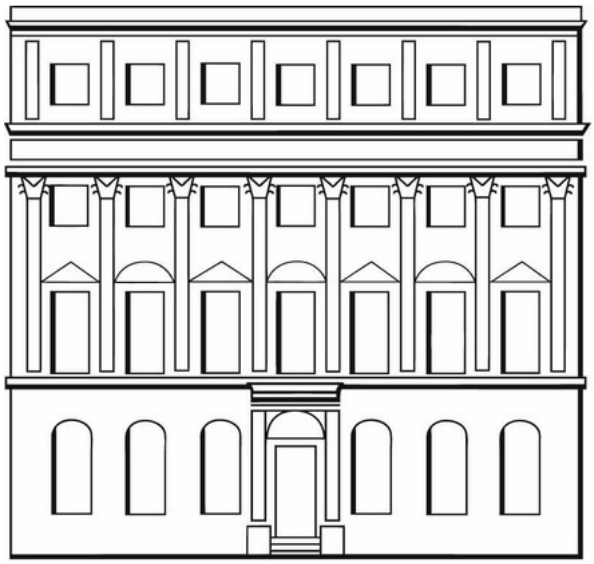

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> I can conceive of no more real and lasting form of relief than that given under a reconstructive policy and the credit redounding to organisations granting such relief and the satisfaction of all concerned should make any effort well worth while.[1]

This essay investigates the work carried out by the League of Nations in Greece during the evacuation of thousands of Ottoman Christians, from September 1922 to the end of 1924, when the Greek Refugee Settlement Commission (RSC) became operational. It focuses more specifically on the 'constructive work' pursued by the League in Western Thrace from late October 1922. We wish to demonstrate why the mission went beyond short-term relief, which provides refugees with food, medical help, accommodation, and clothing, and encompassed a wide range of operations aimed at the social, political, economic, and moral rehabilitation of refugees. Reference to relief and rehabilitation in the title of this paper is deliberate. It is intended to remind the reader of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA), an Allied organization that operated during and shortly after the Second World War. The point is to draw the reader's attention to often overlooked continuities between the inter-war, war, and post-1945

This research is part of a broader project entitled 'From Relief to Rehabilitation: The History of Humanitarian Programmes on Behalf of Civilian Populations during the Interwar Period'.

[1] Archives of the League of Nations (hereafter ALoN), C1128, folder 4, George Treloar to Johnson, 25 July 1923.

periods. Relief and rehabilitation point to the interconnectedness, rather than the separateness, of humanitarian programmes for the relief of distressed populations by providing short-term alleviation of suffering (that is, shelter, food, and medical aid), and rehabilitation and/or reconstruction programmes intended to address the root causes of distress. Since the 1920s, reconstruction programmes have revolved around the same three pillars of post-1945 international development aid programmes: food and agriculture, education, and public health.

The mission in Western Thrace has received little attention from historians.[2] This essay examines the general development of the League's political and humanitarian activities, sketching the work that the organization, through Fridtjof Nansen, undertook. We intend to shed light on the discrepancy between the League's mandate and its achievements, and on the rivalry among the various organizations operating in Greece. We wish to highlight how the League attempted to enhance its recognition and legitimacy as an indispensable actor in post-war settlements in the burgeoning field of humanitarian and refugee affairs. The essay also looks at the role of individuals such as Colonel George Treloar. Entrusted with the mission from the beginning of the operations, Treloar had a specific vision of the way in which humanitarian operations should be carried out, including co-operation with humanitarian organizations and Greek civilian and military authorities. The focus on a single individual is intended to show the fragmentation of views and humanitarian practices within Western humanitarianism, and within a single organization, the League, at a time of unprecedented humanitarian activities, programmes, and investments by non-governmental and governmental institutions.

The League of Nations Humanitarian Politics

The League of Nations was officially created on 10 January 1920. According to the intentions of its founders, its main purpose was to guarantee the peace among nations and prevent other conflicts from breaking out. The Greco-Turkish War of 1919–22 demonstrated that

[2] Claudena M. Skran, *Refugees in Inter-War Europe: The Emergence of a Regime* (Oxford, 1995), 157–67. It is mentioned neither by Michael R. Marrus, *The Unwanted: European Refugees in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford, 1989), nor by Onur Yıldırım, *Diplomacy and Displacement: Reconsidering the Turco-Greek Exchange of Populations, 1922–1934* (New York, 2006).

the League lacked the necessary resources to end conflicts; it played a role only in the peace negotiations which took place in Lausanne (1922–3) and merely formalized a fait accompli by authorizing further exchanges of Christian and Muslim populations between the two countries. As far as the humanitarian side of the story is concerned, other organizations, such as the American Red Cross (ARC), the Near East Relief (NER),[3] and Western governments, played a more significant role than the League. The League did not define itself as a humanitarian actor—peace was its main purpose. However, to achieve peace, the League was involved in a number of activities, including humanitarian, which were intended to improve the political, economic, and social conditions of individuals, communities, and entire nations. A century after its creation, the League's objectives look naïve and delusional, but they are largely explained by the traumas of the First World War, and the burning desire to achieve peace and avoid what contemporaries believed to be the mistakes that had led to the war. War, however, was not over in 1918, and in south-east Europe and the Near East it continued until 1923.

In September 1922 the Turkish army led the final attack against the Greek occupiers, and approximately 800,000 Ottoman Christians from Asia Minor were evacuated to mainland Greece and some Greek islands. In addition, because of the defeat, approximately 250,000 Ottoman Christians were forced to leave Eastern Thrace and were partially resettled in Western Thrace, the region under scrutiny in this essay. Overwhelmed by the situation, the League, initially at least, was only able to expand the activities of its existing Constantinople (Istanbul) office. Although the needs of the civilians were similar in both Greece and Turkey, Greece, as the vanquished power, sought all possible help from Western governments and international organizations; the government of Athens willingly co-operated with international institutions to enhance the settlement of refugees. The Turkish authorities, by contrast, saw the victory as an

[3] The NER was a hybrid secular and faith-based organization born out of the merger of several aid committees created in the USA to relieve civilian populations, mainly Christian and Jewish, who had been mistreated by Ottoman authorities or were victims of the war. From 1919 the NER, like the American Relief Administration, became a chartered organization, recognized by the American Congress, and increasingly operated on the fringes of what would become the newly independent state of Turkey, i.e. the Caucasus, Lebanon, Syria, Palestine, and Greece. See Davide Rodogno, 'Beyond Relief: A Sketch of the Near East Relief's Humanitarian Operations, 1918–1929', *Monde(s)*, 6/2 (2014), 45–64.

opportunity to rid themselves of the European powers' interference in their internal affairs.

In September 1922 the League's humanitarian politics and strategies were far from established. Article 25 of the Covenant referred vaguely to co-operation with 'duly authorised voluntary national Red Cross organisations having as purposes the improvement of health, the prevention of disease and the mitigation of suffering throughout the world'. It did not establish the parameters of the work to be carried out by the League in this regard. Moreover, the League had no funds and depended on contributions by member states that did not necessarily agree on humanitarian policies and priorities, and were experiencing hard economic times. There was no consensual definition of humanitarianism and humanitarian practices. Moreover, League member states (as well as the USA, which did not ratify the Covenant of the League of Nations but played a significant role in international humanitarian emergencies) had no intention of setting up a permanent humanitarian organization. League officials and member states therefore responded to post-conflict humanitarian emergencies, such as the organized exchange of prisoners of war (PoWs) between the ex-enemy countries and Russia, and Russian and Armenian refugees,[4] by establishing ad hoc operations.

A specific instance was PoWs in 1920, when Fridtjof Nansen, Norwegian explorer and chief of the Norwegian delegation to the League, was appointed League High Commissioner with the task of repatriating them to their countries. While he was still dealing with operations on behalf of PoWs, on 1 September 1921 Nansen also took up office as High Commissioner for Russian refugees (HC). This was one of the major 'humanitarian crises' of the day and the League believed its involvement was necessary. Given that the organization did not have officers or volunteers to undertake relief operations, Nansen set up a small group of collaborators who worked from Geneva and in the various field missions of Central, Eastern, and South-Eastern Europe and Constantinople, where thousands of Russian refugees lived in appalling conditions. The League's mandate encompassed only the co-ordination of humanitarian operations carried out by other international organizations

[4] Francesca Piana, 'Towards the International Refugee Regime: Humanitarianism in the Wake of the First World War' (Ph.D. thesis, Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, Geneva, 2013).

and governments. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) fully supported Nansen, and its delegates, who were already in the countries where Russian refugees were concentrated, worked for the HC.

On 19 September 1922 the League Assembly voted to extend Nansen's mandate to the relief of refugees in Asia Minor.[5] The mandate was vague and Nansen did not have access to the human and financial resources required to assist these refugees. It was not clear what the HC could do to rescue an ill-defined group of civilians. Its presence in Constantinople was what made it possible for the HC to expand its mandate to Ottoman Christians crowding into the ex-Ottoman capital from the Pontus, Anatolia, and other regions. Again, it seems that improvisation prevailed over careful planning, contradicting the epic narratives, mythologies, and hagiographical accounts of international organizations and NGOs. Finally, it is worth mentioning that when negotiations started in Lausanne it was clear to all stakeholders that the return of the refugees to their villages and home towns was very unlikely. Consensus was reached among the participants on the permanent resettlement of refugees, possibly in Macedonia and Western Thrace, two areas of mainland Greece from where Muslim minorities would in turn be transferred to Turkey. Nansen and his staff, including Philip-Noel Baker, the British official in charge of the refugee question at the League Secretariat who travelled with the HC in Greece and Constantinople in October 1922, agreed and fully supported such an idea. However, to provide assistance and relief to Asia Minor refugees the HC had at his disposal the meagre amount of £40,000, half of which had been donated by Britain. Proper resettlement of over a million refugees would cost a great deal more.

In fact, as we shall see, the discrepancy between the League's ambitions and its means determined the gradual sidelining of that organization. Moreover, for political and practical reasons, it turned out to be very difficult for Nansen to co-ordinate relief operations. The League Assembly's attempt to gain legitimacy and visibility by involvement in a humanitarian operation was ultimately unsuccessful. While on paper all humanitarian organizations, including the ARC and the ICRC, were in favour of co-ordination and the efficient division of labour, in fact they were content with the setting

[5] ALoN, R1761, 'L'Œuvre du Dr Nansen'. This is an internal League of Nations memorandum, 15 Nov. 1922, 48.24929.24357.

up of a mere clearing house, and contested Nansen's plans and his leadership. Nansen's ultimate failure shows the importance of some non-state actors (or quasi-state actors, such as the ARC) in the aftermath of the First World War and their determination to oversee and be in full control of their operations. They avoided lengthy and unpredictable intergovernmental decisions and stubbornly refused any external control on their operations.

The High Commissioner in Greece

In November 1922 the HC established a temporary satellite site in Western Thrace. The mission in Western Thrace acted within the HC's mandate and under the control of the Constantinople office, which had previously been created to deal with Russian refugees and was headed by Colonel James Procter.[6] The Australian Colonel George Treloar was in charge of the mission in Western Thrace and hired a dozen members of staff.[7] The geographical area covered by the mission was small because of the League's limited financial and logistical resources. It was discontinued in February 1924, when the Refugee Settlement Commission (RSC) took over the work previously done by Treloar and the HC. The RSC was a joint venture between the Greek government, the League, and European and American donors. It had to be chaired by an American—the first was Henry Morgenthau—and it represented American relief organizations active in Greece. The RSC was not a substitute for humanitarian organizations, and was expected to execute a long-term project. The Greek government agreed to adjust the country's internal laws to ensure that the RSC had the necessary capacity and power, and assigned it 500,000 hectares of land as its absolute property for the purpose of establishing the refugees. An International Financial Commission ensured that a loan which the Greek government gave to the RSC was serviced.

[6] Procter (sometimes spelt Proctor) had been the Director General of the Imperial Ottoman Bank. When the ARC terminated its operation in Constantinople in October 1921, Procter set up the Constantinople Relief Fund for Russian Refugees in charge of distributing food, accommodation, and clothing. This experience explains why the British government and British relief organizations trusted him.

[7] George Devine Treloar was born on 23 Apr. 1884 in Ballarat and died on 29 Nov. 1980, at the age of 96. He was a soldier and broadcaster, and attained the rank of Lieutenant Colonel in the First World War. His experience in Russia made him a suitable candidate for the League's Constantinople office.

As for the League's specific responsibility, the RSC undertook to submit quarterly reports to the League's Council, which in turn had the right to consider them and take any action or conduct any enquiries that it believed necessary. On paper, the League was to co-ordinate the RSC's actions but did not provide the funds, which in turn explains why the League did not call the shots or determine the RSC's activities.[8]

Before examining the history of the HC's mission in Western Thrace, it is necessary to introduce two elements to allow a better understanding of the actions and limits of the HC's mission there. First, the majority of Nansen's collaborators, including the ICRC delegates, were military men. Treloar ran the office in a military manner and maintained a close watch over any activity undertaken by his staff.[9] The mission was to be efficient and accountable, and his men had to be 'practical and energetic'.[10] Treloar demonstrated a 'civilizational' stance reminiscent of Bentham and J. S. Mill, claiming that 'adopting an attitude of benevolent autocracy' was the best way to help the refugees.[11] We believe that historians have not adequately considered the role of the military, or the specific nature of its paternalism, in humanitarian operations. From the documents it seems that these military men perceived themselves as heralds of 'modernity', using the most 'efficient' and 'scientific' working methods and forms of administration. In this respect, how they interpreted their work, or 'mission', as they called it, is not completely different from the way in which a number of other humanitarian organizations interpreted theirs. American organizations, secular and faith-based, and, to a lesser extent, European organizations such as the ICRC or Save the Children, believed in the scientific administration of relief. They were utterly opposed to traditional forms of charity, and wanted the recipient of aid to become self-reliant as quickly as possible (because they did not have resources to prolong their aid programmes *ad infinitum*). They saw themselves as the indispensable heralds helping the refugees to help

[8] Dimitri Pentzopoulos, *The Balkan Exchange of Minorities and its Impact on Greece* (Paris, 1962); Louis P. Cassimatis, *American Influence in Greece 1917–1929* (Kent, Ohio, 1998); and, more recently, Elisabeth Kontogiorgi, *Population Exchange in Greek Macedonia: The Rural Settlement of Refugees 1922–1930* (Oxford, 2005).

[9] ALoN, C1128, folder 11, Instructions for representatives, weekly reports, by Treloar.

[10] ALoN, C1133, folder 6, Instructions for the representatives and staff in general, 27 Feb. 1923.

[11] ALoN, C1128, folder 11, Instructions for representatives and staff in general, weekly reports, by Treloar.

themselves. The needy could not discuss or deviate from the path the saviour had set out for them. A further characteristic of Treloar's mission was that it consisted predominantly of British officers, as did the office of the HC. There are many reasons for Britian's involvement (and the relative disengagement of France), among them economic and political interests, the USA's increasingly threatening commercial presence, and, perhaps, the responsibility of having contributed to Greece's military defeat by Turkey that had led to this unprecedented refugee crisis. Not surprisingly, the office's staff prioritized collaboration with British rather than American humanitarian organizations. However, relations between the HC and British humanitarian organizations were not always good. Going beyond the tensions among humanitarians from different nations, the encounter between these military and secular or religious volunteers, even if they came from Britain, resulted in competition and eventually clashes between different humanitarian practices and visions. This, in turn, might explain why Treloar, who regarded the Greek military and civilian authorities with contempt, often sought collaboration.

Second, the Western Thrace mission was maintained only because of the massive relief operation undertaken by the ARC in Greece.[12] As a result of their efforts, the HC was able to focus on a pioneering relief cum rehabilitation/construction programme based on two intertwined sets of activities: a six-month feeding and medical programme for 10,000 refugees; and the construction of houses and the gradual integration of refugees into Greek society through agricultural and trade work. The ARC's decision to discontinue its operations would significantly affect the Western Thrace mission. On 31 March 1923 American Secretary of State Charles Evans Hughes formally announced that the ARC operations would end the following summer. By then, the ARC would have spent the budget at its disposal for operations in Greece, and would be entering a new phase of its activities with a considerably reduced budget. Hughes and the ARC argued that the early warning was intended to provide the Greek government with sufficient time to take over the relief work. At the same time, Hughes sent a note to the major

[12] Dimitra Giannuli, 'American Philanthropy in the Near East: Relief to the Ottoman Greek Refugees, 1922–3' (Ph.D. thesis, Kent State University Graduate College, 1992); ead., 'American Philanthropy in Action: the American Red Cross in Greece, 1918–23', *East European Politics and Societies*, 10 (1995), 108–32.

European powers urging them to work out an international plan of assistance for the refugees in Greece. The Greek government and many foreign humanitarian organizations, the League included, attempted in vain to persuade the ARC to postpone its withdrawal, arguing that the emergency was not yet over. The ARC turned a deaf ear to these criticisms, which threw the Western Thrace mission projects into disarray and eventually accelerated the setting up of the RSC. Here, again, we can hint at competing humanitarian visions and practices; we will expand on this in the following sections.

The League of Nations Mission in Western Thrace: From Short-Term Relief to Rehabilitation Programmes

Treloar described the conditions of the refugees in a report. 'After ten to fifteen days' journey, the scantiest supply of food and water, with little or no sleep and no shelter whatever during the severe weather of November, with thousands of suffering children, the dreadful hardship endured by mothers and babies, burdened with the sick and aged', he wrote, the refugees arrived in a town where there was no hospital and an acute shortage of food, and which was already overcrowded by the army and disorganized by thousands of demobilized soldiers waiting to be transported to Old Greece.[13] The HC Western Thrace's objective was to help the Christian inhabitants of Eastern Thrace to leave the country before the entry of the Turkish army.[14] From the beginning, Treloar counted on the indispensable collaboration of the British Principal Naval Transport Officer, who placed six ships and a number of men at the mission's disposal.[15] It was equally indispensable for the HC's office to co-operate with international organizations and the Greek authorities, because it lacked the manpower and resources to act on its own. The Greek authorities willingly delegated important prerogatives of state sovereignty to Treloar because of the institutional, political, and economic crises which their country was facing.[16] A few days after Treloar's arrival, the Greek military authorities handed over control of organizing the transfer of refugees at Rodosto's port to the

[13] ALoN R1762, Report of Treloar to Johnson, 12 Apr. 1923, 48.28816.24912.

[14] ALoN, C1128, folder 4, Treloar to Johnson, strictly confidential, undated.

[15] ALoN, C1128, folder 8, Captain Basilewitch to Treloar, Rodosto, 22 Oct. 1922.

[16] ALoN, C1128, CF, NOR, Gumuldjina office, no. 8, General reports, Col. Treloar, St Gregoriou to Colonel Treloar, Alexandrople, Dedegatch, 15/29 Oct. 1922.

League's mission. Consequently, 45,000 refugees were despatched to various Greek ports (mainly Volo and Salonika) while a fraction stayed in Western Thrace.

Dedegatch, the mission's first headquarters, was the crossroads through which refugees arrived by ship, train, caravan, and on foot, resulting in 'confusion worse confounded' (Treloar quoting Milton, *Paradise Lost*).[17] The mission's advance guard set up relief depots with food supplies in Dedegatch. As far as relief operations are concerned, Treolar's staff had sufficient rations for 10,000 people for three months, which in turn explains the 10,000 quota for which the mission was ready to take on responsibility. Rations, supplies, and equipment were supposed to last until the end of March 1923, when feeding operations would be taken over by the two British organizations with which the League had signed an agreement: the Imperial War Relief Fund (IWRF) and the Save the Children Fund (SCF). These were to supply relief for an additional three months.[18] Since the beginning of the mission, Treloar had requested military help from the Greek army in the management of logistics. The army provided the mission with lorries and a party of soldiers to move a number of refugees (300 tents and 2,000 people) to a camp hastily set up a kilometre out of Dedegatch.[19] In addition to the camp at Dedegatch, a second feeding station was established at the railway station, where an average of 700 children were fed daily. The League's mission rapidly diversified and adapted its activities to the needs of the refugees. For medical aid, Treloar counted on the Lady Rumbold Hospital at Palasli (named after the wife of the British High Commissioner in Constantinople, Sir Horace Rumbold, who helped to raise the funds) and the co-operation of the British Red Cross.[20] More than 9,000 patients were treated during the six months that the hospital was in operation.[21]

From the outset, Treloar made it clear that its intention was to go beyond short-term relief and start 'constructive work', which would have rehabilitated the refugees. For instance, one of the dis-

[17] ALoN, C1119, Miscellaneous, Report by Treloar, undated, presumably early 1923.
[18] ALoN, C1319, folder 6, Letter to Procter, Lausanne, 2 Dec. 1922.
[19] ALoN, C1119, Miscellaneous, Report by Treloar, undated, presumably early 1923.
[20] ALoN R1762, British Red Cross, Near East Section, Athens, Notes by Mr Patrick Heheir on the work of Lady Rumbold's Hospital at Palazli and medical work among Greek refugees in Gumulgina (Gumuldjine) district, 8 Apr. 1923, 48.27978.23548. See also ALoN, C1128, Gumuldjina Office, folder 5, British Red Cross Society.
[21] ALoN, R1762, Childs to Johnson, 5 May 1923, 48.28828.24912.

tinguishing features of the Dedegatch camp was the establishment of a Labour Bureau which helped to supply and transport refugee labourers from the camps to employers in the town. On behalf of the League, the Russian baron J. Kahma Kaufman supervised the industrial and agricultural programmes in and around Dedegatch camp. He divided the refugees into groups according to their occupations and tried to persuade the Greek authorities that the refugee problem would be solved by ensuring that they were settled on the land as quickly as possible and supplied with the means to produce. The municipality, prefecture, and army accepted Kaufman's suggestions and eventually hired tradesmen and carters. The refugees also participated in unloading the mission's stores from the camp, which saved the mission 30–40 per cent of its expenses. Although similar operations had previously been carried out on behalf of Russian refugees and in collaboration with the International Labour Office, Treloar claimed that this was an absolute innovation.

It is worth noting that Treloar's plan for rehabilitation also included the 'militarization of the refugees'. His plan provided detailed instructions for the camp commander to act in an authoritarian way. The commander worked as a powerful administrator, for example, by fixing prices and levying a small tax on wages, which provided a modest fund that was used to provide small stoves for heating the tents. He organized charcoal-burning and wood-gathering. The semi-dictatorial or quasi-colonial method of running trade activities within the context of a humanitarian emergency sheds some light on an unexplored connection between two universes—the humanitarian, and the military and colonial—which tend to be studied separately.

The next step imagined by Treloar was the resettlement of the refugees. Although land was available, the mission lacked money to buy items of fundamental importance, such as food to feed the refugees, as well as tents, fodder, and seed grain. Early on, Treloar's mission created a Labour Bureau, which had been in operation since 7 January 1923.[22] It started by identifying labour categories potentially applicable to the refugees, such as reed-working, charcoal-burning, brick-making, laundry, carpet-making, embroidery, fishing, and woodcutting. In order to overcome the financial difficulties, the mission initially used the tax of 10 per cent levied on all payments to camp labour, which brought in 2,000

[22] ALoN, C1128, folder 6, Weekly report 26 Jan.–2 Feb. 1923 by Kaufman.

drachmas (equivalent to about £10) a month. With this money, the Labour Bureau started a small charcoal-burning industry. The initial cost of establishing the refugees in this work was covered by the administration funds, which were recredited later from the industry's profits. The surplus was spent on further relief work. The plan proved so successful from an economic point of view that the mayor of Salonika asked the mission to organize charcoal-burning industries to supply the various charity and municipal refugee institutions with fuel. The HC reports do not analyse the long-term consequences of these industrial policies, nor do they seriously consider the social consequences of the 'absorption' of the refugees in Western Thrace. They ignored the wishes of the recipients of aid as well as those of local populations and over-emphasized the fact that the Western Thrace mission provided work for refugees.[23] In assuming its 'superiority' with respect to other humanitarian programmes, the HC mission proved unable critically to examine all the consequences of its rehabilitative practices. In this respect too, there appears to be a clear similarity to Western colonial experiences. Furthermore, historians tend not to connect social welfare experiments undertaken in the USA, Britain, and the Commonwealth. Poor policies, the establishment of asylums, the rise of public health regulated by the state, educational policies, the improvement of London's and New York's slums were the essence of progressivism in America, and of scientific charity, Taylorism, and rationalization movements in Europe. These projects, often funded by charities, wealthy individuals, or philanthropic foundations, were part of a large movement, domestic and transnational, national and colonial, that represents the roots from which the League's projects blossomed and, often, failed. They were part of the same instinct common to all those who wished to avoid social chaos by ensuring and maintaining peace. If historians connected the League with other organizations, they would find that the League's social engineering experiences were far from unique.

In Geneva, Procter emphasized that the guiding principle of the Western Thrace mission was not 'indiscriminate charity', which would have led to the 'degeneration of the refugees'. Its objective was to push refugees to become self-supporting as soon as possible.[24]

[23] ALoN, R1762, Treloar to Johnson, 12 Apr. 1923, 48.28816.24912.

[24] Procter reported to Nansen, who presented his considerations to the League

Procter's discourse and that of the majority of relief organizations, American and European alike, were very similar: 'helping peoples to help themselves'. Like other organizations, Treloar and Procter insisted that relief and rehabilitation were essential components of the same project. In Treloar's view, it was imperative to go beyond a mere feeding policy since he underlined that 'constructive help must go hand in hand with rations'.[25] He believed that unconditional relief 'ruined' the character of the refugees because they became 'utterly worthless citizens, truculent, arbitrary and firmly convinced of their divine right to receive food for nothing and flatly refusing to accept work offered'.[26] It should be noted that Treloar repeated these ideas because he knew that his programme required massive financial support, which in 1923 was far from guaranteed. In fact, writing retrospectively about the beginning of the mission, the Australian officer argued that the word 'constructive' in connection with general relief work was almost unheard of, and that no other organization in Greece was engaged in practical constructive work.[27] It is difficult to believe, however, that Treloar was not aware that other international associations, such as the NER, envisaged integrated relief–rehabilitation projects, especially on behalf of orphaned children.[28]

In the end, 'constructive work' was not mere propaganda. Treloar immediately set up settlement plans. He negotiated with the chief of the local department of agriculture and other local authorities of Gumuldjina. Treloar's initial plan was to settle the 10,000 refugees under his responsibility in existing villages and new settlements.[29] Refugees were to be located in tents close to the sites of the new villages. As a result of collaboration with the Greek government and the participation of refugees, houses were to be erected in the shortest possible time. Once completed, tents were to be moved to continue the building process elsewhere. The plan persuaded local authorities to engage with the League's programmes. Accordingly, a commission elected by the villagers with the participation of

Council in April 1923: ALoN, C1128, folder 4, Near East refugees, Western Thrace refugees settlement, Report by Dr Nansen, Geneva, 2 Apr. 1923, C.347.1923.

[25] ALoN, R1762, Report by Treloar to Johnson, 12 Apr. 1923, 48.28816.24912.

[26] Ibid.

[27] ALoN, C1130, AFRO correspondence in Report on the work of the refugee village co-operative society.

[28] Rodogno, 'Beyond Relief'.

[29] ALoN, C1119, Miscellaneous, Report by Treloar, undated, presumably early 1923.

a government official was created to distribute land among the settlers.[30]

By February 1923 the Western Thrace scheme had laid the foundations of new villages and provided accommodation for approximately 2,000 people (that is, a fifth of the people for whom Treloar was responsible). Treloar often complained to the office of the HC that shortage of funds prevented the mission's work from being carried out on a grander scale. Tensions between the men in Western Thrace and the offices of the HC in Constantinople and Geneva were palpable in this regard.

Treloar often emphasized the merits of the mission in Western Thrace, not mentioning the role of the Greek government and criticizing the ARC's relief programme. He did so more frequently after March 1923, when the ARC announced its decision to withdraw from Greece. Treloar argued that the unconditional feeding of the refugees had disastrous effects because 'the peasant or labourer whose mental equipment is limited can hardly be induced to leave the comparative flesh pots of the town for the stern reality of the country'.[31] He was highly critical of the idea of first feeding refugees and then suddenly reducing rations (as would have happened when the ARC withdrew) as a means of inducing people to find work. According to him, this was a 'short sighted, frequently inhuman policy'.[32] He argued that under those circumstances, refugees would end up creating a surplus of labour on the market, or finding that there was no local demand for their particular trade. By contrast, the Western Thrace scheme he ran provided opportunities for refugees to start businesses of their own, which would 'fit them into the economic machinery'.[33] Treloar argued that it was better to feed a smaller number of people, as his mission did, than to feed a larger number and, after the discontinuation of the aid programme, leave them in the same position as they had been in before. He did not admit that without the ARC hundreds of thousands of refugees would have starved and that the Western Thrace programme of rehabilitation and construction would have been useless. Treolar never acknowledged that the ARC's work allowed the rehabilitation and construction experiments in Thrace

[30] ALoN, C1128, folder 4, Near East refugees, Western Thrace refugee settlement, report by Dr Nansen, Geneva, 2 Apr. 1923, C.347.1923.

[31] ALoN, R1762, Report by Treloar to Johnson, 12 Apr. 1923, 48.28816.24912.

[32] Ibid.

[33] Ibid.

to be undertaken. He reluctantly admitted that, in the end, the Western Thrace scheme applied to a group of 10,000 (2,500 families), fewer than 1 per cent of all refugees in Greece in early 1923. Nonetheless, he argued that the purpose of the entire operation had been to inspire other international organizations, departmental officials, and members of the Greek ministries. He believed that his mission should have provided the model for more ambitious (and better-funded) operations.

From the Western Thrace 'successful miniature' to the Refugee Settlement Commission

S. L. Childs, Nansen's Deputy Assistant at Constantinople, went on an inspection trip in Western Thrace and reported to the League Council on 4 April 1923.[34] He argued that it was 'impossible not to deduce from this successful miniature the ultimate solution of the whole Greek refugee problem'.[35] He was confident that with the replication of the Western Thrace scheme elsewhere, three-quarters of the refugees could be saved while the other quarter 'would probably die or migrate in any case'.[36] In a further document, Childs wrote that Treloar's work 'shows up extremely favourably, when compared with the sketchy and uncontrolled administration of the American rations'.[37]

The political importance of Childs's reports was twofold. First, in a document circulated at the highest levels within the League and in every ministry of foreign affairs of the member states, the ARC relief system was openly criticized. Second, at a time when the later international loan plan had not yet been floated, Childs's report aimed to persuade states and potential stakeholders (that is, the League member states, especially the British government, and the US government) that the League should be in charge and handle the loan money following the allegedly successful example of the Western Thrace scheme. Childs also explained that the loan should not encompass food relief because the Americans should continue their aid for a 'further limited period, till crops come in,

[34] ALoN, R1762, Childs to Nansen, 4 Apr. 1923, 48.28828.24912.

[35] ALoN, R1762, Childs to Nansen, 4 Apr. 1923, 48.28828.24912. [36] Ibid.

[37] ALoN, R1762, Childs to Johnson, 5 May 1923, 48.28828.24912. 'The America's is of course an enormous show, but [the Governor General] said, that ours was infinitely more valuable.'

and the natural moment arrives for withdrawal without disorder and consequent loss of prestige'. Childs failed to make any suggestions as to how the loan should be controlled and expanded, and did not admit that he wanted the ARC to continue the food programme because it had the know-how, the personnel, and the financial resources to do so. Nor did he admit that no American government or organization would have undertaken a food programme under a broader scheme run by the LoN and the European powers.

The flotation of an international loan to save Greece led directly to the creation of the RSC, the Euro-American institution that oversaw the management of resources and the resettlement process, and eventually resulted in the removal of the HC. Repeated attempts by Nansen and his officials to convince the League member states that the work in Western Thrace should become the RSC's prototype operation failed. On 23 April 1923 Nansen presented the settlement project in Western Thrace to the 24th Session of the League Council as an unprecedented success story, which should be 'intensified'. He argued in favour of a loan for Greece and suggested that the HC could run the resettlement of the refugees. Nikolaos Politis, the Greek plenipotentiary at the League, who evidently had a vested interest in the flotation of the loan, also argued that the work carried out in Western Thrace had great potential to transform a demoralized and apathetic community into a useful and productive one.[38] However, the US and European governments did not want Nansen or Treloar to be in charge of the new institution. They preferred to keep tight control and directly oversee the work of the resettlement commission.[39] Moreover, as we shall see below, the RSC's mandate did not encompass the feeding of refugees who had not yet, or had only recently, been resettled, and assumed that the problem was either non-existent or irrelevant. The League, especially the men on the spot such as Treloar, and British charities, who argued that hundreds of thousands of civilians needed food and medical aid to survive, went unheard.[40] Here, too, the tension

[38] ALoN R1762, XXIV^{e} Session du Conseil, Geneva, Apr. 1923, Minutes, 48.27978.24912.

[39] ALoN R1763, Miscellaneous correspondence with Colonel Procter; Memorandum of the Greek Refugee Problem . . ., 6 July 1923, 48.29578.29451.

[40] ALoN, R1764, LON Council draft resolution, Geneva, 29 Sept. 1923, C.655.1923. 'Les revenues et les fonds de l'Office autonome d'établissement des réfugiés ne devront pas être employés au soulagement de misères ou d'autres œuvres charitables qui ne viseraient pas à procurer une occupation productive aux personnes assistées' (Protocole

between competing humanitarian visions, politics, and practices is clearly visible.

In the end, the newly created RSC adopted the idea of not undertaking food relief operations because crops had come in and the food emergency was allegedly over. League reports of the summer of 1923, arguing that hundreds of thousands of refugees were still in need of food, shelter, and medical aid, were completely ignored. Feeding programmes were undertaken, in the midst of growing financial difficulties and on a smaller scale, by a number of Greek, European, and American relief organizations. When the RSC was created, one of the first decisions of its chairman, US ambassador Henry Morgenthau, was to declare that Western Thrace was of no interest to the RSC. In a typical institutional reinvention of the wheel, the RSC decided that it would supervise the resettlement programme in its own way,[41] and in February 1924 the Western Thrace mission was discontinued, leaving it without financial and political support.[42]

In his last report, written in full knowledge of the RSC's takeover, Treloar indicated the 'correct method to adopt in dealing with the problem of settling the agricultural refugees'. He reiterated his top-down authoritarian views on the management of the rehabilitation programme of refugees. Every sentence of this report was politically calculated. When he wrote it, Treloar was fully aware that the issues he was elaborating on were outside the RSC's scope. He was also aware of the League's intention to establish an office in Salonika. He therefore pointed out the necessity of creating a liaison bureau to co-ordinate the efforts of the Greek government and all the commissions and relief organizations. The HC was back to square one: the only thing it could do was to set up co-ordination bureaux and clearing houses. With that objective in mind, Treloar and Kaufman convened a preparatory meeting in October 1923 with several international associations, such as the American Women's Hospital (Dr Ruth Parmelee), SCF (I. H. Milward), NER (F. Welch), the American Mission (D. K. Getchell), the American Refugee Village Cooperative Society, the League Epidemic Commission,

signé par le gouvernement grec le 29 septembre 1923 et modifié le 19 septembre 1924), 48.31344.29451.

[41] ALoN, R1762, Treloar to Gorvin, Salonika, 19 Nov. 1923 and Campbell to Johnson, 20 Nov. 1923, 48.29417.24972.

[42] ALoN, R1764, Campbell to Johnson, Athens, 6 Feb. 1924, 48.31833.29451.

and the Danish Industries Schools. The outcome was the creation of the Association of Foreign Relief Organizations (AFRO). Treloar also suggested that the Greek philanthropic organizations establish a similar centre. Together they would act as a clearing house to inform Greek and foreign organizations as well as the Greek local and central authorities. When he was eventually transferred to Salonika, Treloar devoted the bulk of his work to facilitating the work of AFRO members. He obtained special facilities for the benefit of the relief work undertaken by members of this Association, such as an exemption from custom duties for goods destined for refugee relief and the provision of free transport for refugee purposes.[43]

A second institution, called the Central Coordination Committee for International Relief (CCCIR), was created in Salonika in 1924 under the auspices of the League HC office. No fewer than fifty foreign relief organizations, Greek public departments, and local charities participated. The Committee facilitated the process of settling agriculturalists away from urban centres by centralizing all administrative procedures in a single office. This was an attempt to maximize and rationalize the distribution of relief, and to avoid wasting or duplicating efforts. Through the CCCIR's publicity and statistics bureaux, the League aimed to reach potential donors inside and outside Greece.[44] The CCCIR's strategy was to use photographs to illustrate how the refugees were living. They would be published in magazines and daily newspapers, which, it was hoped, would increase donations.[45] After 30 April 1924, all the activities of the office of the HC in Greece were discontinued. Childs was appointed delegate of the HC in the Balkans and would liaise with the Greek government and the RSC.

The activities of AFRO and CCCIR were an innovative and meaningful response to the RSC's preclusion from devoting any part of the sums at its disposal to relief purposes. They were also a response to the RSC's claiming the lion's share in the resettlement

[43] ALoN, R1765, Preparation of the report to the 29th Session of the League of Nations Council, June 1924, on Greek Refugees, Childs to Johnson, 15 May 1924, 48. 35905.29451.

[44] ALoN, C1119, CF, Rapport de la Délégation du Haut Commissariat pour les Réfugiés de la Société des Nations pour l'Année Septembre 1923 à Septembre 1924.

[45] ALoN, R1767, Kaufman to the office of the HC, 26 May 1924, 48.36397.36397. ALoN, R1765, RAM, registry Minutes of the Meeting held at the Offices of HC in Salonica, 4 Feb. 1924, G. Treloar, 48.33932.29451. The SCF sent a film operator to Greece to take photographs of the work done in order to enlighten the English public.

programme and a way of keeping their legitimacy as humanitarian actors. The HC and international charities marginalized since the creation of the RSC and, for obvious reasons, various Greek authorities drew attention to the mass of refugees who still needed emergency relief and were not yet ready to benefit from the RSC scheme, granted only 'upon a productive basis'. Hundreds of thousands were starving and could not 'produce' unless they were properly fed. Despite increased attention to publicity and the creation of ad hoc propaganda departments whose purpose was to raise awareness among potential donors and public opinion, after the loan and the creation of the RSC it became increasingly difficult to raise funds. The German economic crisis of 1923 and the donors' fatigue explain why the League and international organizations were not able to raise the necessary funds to aid the mass of needy refugees. Curiously, so far at least, in the archives of the League and organizations such as the SCF, we have not found any documents reporting this failure. From these sources it is hard to say what happened to the starving refugees.

Conclusion

This analysis of the League's Western Thrace mission reveals the ambitions, achievements, and disillusionments that the organization faced in Greece. The essay has shown why and under what circumstances the office of the HC tried to adapt to local situations and co-operated with local authorities, the Greek army, governments, and foreign humanitarian agencies. It has demonstrated what the men in charge of refugee work at the League meant by humanitarian programmes and how they attempted to carry them out. Here the reference to men is gendered on purpose. There were no female relief workers, either in the League of Nations mission in Western Thrace or in the office of the HC at the League of Nations' headquarters in Geneva. However, the absence of women in this specific mission seems to be an exception rather than a rule in the emerging 'new' inter-war humanitarianism. Indeed, an increasing number of female professionals, especially doctors and nurses, had begun to have access to traditionally male-dominated fields since the two last decades of the nineteenth century. After the First World War, women also played an increasing role in the decision-making processes of many contemporary NGOs, such as the American

Women's Hospitals, the SCF, the Union Internationale de Secours aux Enfants, and the British Society of Friends.[46]

In the period under consideration, the League lacked the necessary political and financial weight to lead humanitarian operations in Greece. The idea of co-ordinating humanitarian aid was not a planned decision, but a consequence of the lack of resources available to the organization. Moreover, Western Thrace staff and other League officers assumed that they possessed expertise, whereas in fact they had none. The HC's military staff might have had clear ideas about how to combine relief and rehabilitation. Their military background shaped the management of refugee camps and their logistics, an important and often overlooked dimension of any humanitarian enterprise. These men knew how and where to build houses, and how to recruit and despatch men and women to the relevant factories. The urgency of the situation and the struggle for power, however, even within the allegedly apolitical humanitarian area, inhibited these men from taking the social and economic consequences of their policies into consideration. They assumed they would have been successful in the long term and were as arrogant as other organizations when claiming that the Western Thrace programmes should become the model for the resettlement of over a million refugees. The refugees had to build houses, find jobs, and integrate into Greek society under the benevolent and paternalistic supervision of Colonel George Treloar. Ultimately, the purpose of this 'mission' was to transform refugees into more 'civilized' individuals.

This essay has also made an indirect reference to the 'new' humanitarianism, the kind that goes beyond short-term relief operations and encompasses a wide range of programmes from development to human rights, from state-building to social and economic assistance.[47] Our intention was to emphasize that such ideas did not appear out of the blue during the late twentieth century. In

[46] With a few exceptions, so far the lives and careers of female humanitarians have been marginalized in international history. Francesca Piana is conducting a project entitled '"Parallel Lives": Women, Imperialism, and Humanitarianism, *c.*1880–1950', in which she studies the biographies of three women involved in international humanitarianism.

[47] David Chandler, 'The Road to Military Humanitarianism: How the Human Rights NGOs Shaped a New Humanitarian Agenda', *Human Rights Quarterly*, 23/3 (2001), 678–700; Fiona Fox, 'A New Humanitarianism: A New Morality for the Twenty-First Century?', *Disasters*, 5 (2001), 275–89.

our view they had coexisted, at least since the beginning of the twentieth century, with what some scholars refer to as the 'old' humanitarianism embodied by the ICRC and older forms of religious and secular charity and philanthropy. The 1920s and 1930s were a time when, as historian Keith Watenpaugh puts it, international (Western) humanitarianism changed.[48] While it shared some elements with its predecessors, inter-war international humanitarianism, as embodied by the League of Nations, non-governmental organizations, international associations, and philanthropic foundations, was envisioned as a permanent, transnational, institutional, and secular regime (though largely imbued with Christian precepts and morals) for understanding and addressing the roots of human suffering. Inter-war humanitarianism, in Western Europe and the USA, paralleled the evolution of philanthropy, but was distinctive in its reliance on social scientific knowledge-based approaches to the management of humanitarian problems, hugely expanding late nineteenth-century notions of scientific charity and welfare.

Inter-war Western relief workers understood humanitarianism as a doctrine of 'universal' validity which did not reflect its religious/missionary cum colonial, social, and political origins. Inter-war humanitarians understood their 'mission' as encompassing a 'duty' to find and address the root causes of human suffering and injustice, anticipating the development projects of the post-1945 era. This kind of humanitarianism took sides, was biased and selective, though it claimed not to discriminate and to be universalist. Paternalism was as inherent in the early to mid-twentieth century as the impulse to dictate practice in a manner and to an extent that, as in the case of colonial domination, was not shared by the wider society in which these alleged causes of suffering and injustice had taken root. In fact, in the reports of these humanitarians, refugees have no agency, and their only character trait seems to be passivity and apathy. Passivity and apathy could be 'cured' by the intervention of enlightened humanitarians, who would relieve and rehabilitate 'worthy' individuals or entire communities. The most appropriate terms to describe their humanitarian vision are 'relief' and 'rehabilitation' because, as in colonial contexts, these humanitarians assumed that the rescued

[48] Keith David 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.

had to accept—passively and apathetically, for once—the decisions taken on their behalf by those who had knowledge (and power).

Like post-1945 relief workers, their predecessors strove for 'efficiency'. They might have disagreed on many things, but they were persuaded of the 'superiority' of Western civilization, which they believed they fully embodied. Hence they claimed to know how to relieve, aid, and help millions of distressed peoples 'efficiently'. From their point of view, any interference in Greece, Eastern Europe, or the Middle East was as generous and disinterested as it was legitimate. Inter-war humanitarian workers saw themselves as professionals; they carried out their jobs using 'scientific' and 'modern' methods. They wished to export modern Western social reform to Greece and elsewhere in the Middle East. After all, in this view, Ottoman Christian refugees had been 'corrupted' by centuries of intimate contact with the 'barbarous infidel'; it was time to rescue and fully expose them to Western 'civilization'.

Watenpaugh writes that in the unique case of the Ottoman Empire and the greater Middle East this connection between intention and action was predicated on the outcome of the war and the occupation of the region because of the reduction of Ottoman sovereignty, and he is certainly right. One could, however, be less geographically exclusive and include areas such as the Balkans, including Greece, as well as the newly independent states of Central Europe and Poland. Not surprisingly, perhaps, in many respects these were regarded as borderlands of Western civilization.[49] Furthermore, in all these regions organizations such as the American Relief Administration, the American Red Cross, the ICRC, and indeed the League of Nations played a relevant part through their humanitarian programmes. Ironically, Watenpaugh writes, the most internationalist dimension of the League's larger efforts took place in the shadow of inter-war colonialism. The mandate system's liberalizing and tutelary agenda created an unprecedented opportunity for implementing the League's initiatives and was less restrained by questions of national sovereignty because sovereignty itself was held in trust by a colonial power and member state. We argue that, to some extent, as the League of Nations minority regime illustrates, sovereignty issues were at stake also in Eastern and Central Europe, and certainly in Greece, whose sovereign prerogatives were in a kind

[49] Rebecca Gill, 'The Rational Administration of Compassion: The Origins of British Relief in War', *Le Mouvement Social*, 227 (2009), 9–26.

of limbo, especially from 1922 to 1924, the period covered in this essay. The case of the League of Nations programme in the Greek region of Western Thrace has shown that relief projects turned into more ambitious rehabilitation plans whenever national sovereignty was fragile or in crisis because of internal or external factors. In countries facing such a crisis, a plethora of non-state actors, European and American, intervened to rescue needy populations or specific categories of individuals—refugees, women, children—and to build nations and states. They attempted to do so by the social, political, economic, and moral (re)habilitation of rescued humanity.