

Conclusion

This book has shown that, during the Greater War era, millions of military and civilians were forcibly moved across Europe, the Middle East, and the South Caucasus due to warfare, politics of ethnic cleansing and genocide, revolution, and economic unrest. The cessation of the hostilities in Europe did not translate into an immediate peace: not only did regional wars break out in Central and Eastern Europe for the determination of the new states' borders after the crumbling of continental empires, but the partition of the Ottoman Empire also had far longer consequences. Indeed, Greece attacked the Turkish National Movement in May 1919, and it was only in September 1922, with the destruction of Smyrna by the Turkish cavalry, that warfare in the Eastern Mediterranean region slowly came to an end. To an attentive observer, both the Paris and the Lausanne peace settlements already contained the seeds of future instabilities: the artificial drawing of states' borders in ethnically mixed regions created large numbers of minorities; furthermore, millions of "new" refugees, who found themselves on the wrong side of the border, frantically attempted to join their state, often signing up for a life as second-class citizens.

Against such an unstable context, Russian and Armenian refugees embodied both the rule and its exception. After a small window during which they were offered the possibility of return, the new Soviet and Kemalist states proceeded with their denationalization *en masse*, hence abruptly severing the relation of the state with its supposedly disloyal citizens. Being stateless, in disarray, and privy to identity documents in a world of nation-states, where passports had become compulsory and anti-immigration laws hindered mass migration, was far from ideal. The immense humanitarian needs of hundreds of thousands of POWs and refugees, scattered throughout Europe and beyond, left governments—old and new, solid and fragile—in distress. In assistance came a large set of local and international institutions, private or inter-governmental. The Red Cross was one of them: anchored in the Geneva Conventions, the organization which had assisted both civilians and POWs during the war, questioned its role in peacetime; by protecting all victims, the ICRC wished to strengthen its role in international relations. In contrast, the LON and the ILO were new inter-governmental organizations that emerged from the Treaty of Versailles. If the LON had a humanitarian vocation and agreed to the protection of specific refugee groups whose displacement originated from WWI, the ILO hesitantly engaged in humanitarian aid and did so out of its interest for Soviet Russia and to test the articulation of political and technical cooperation.

This book argues that, in protecting POWs and refugees, the ICRC, the LON, and the ILO accepted a shared set of ideas, which emerged from inter-institutional, international, and transnational negotiations, and which were also the outcome of the day-to-day practices of care that the international, refugee, and local staff implemented. Humanitarian aid encompassed the provision of food, clothing, shelter, hygienic measures, and medical assistance. Such a crystallization of humanitarian practices was a response to the double goal of assisting and protecting POWs and refugees and controlling the exact use of human and logistical resources. This explains why the ICRC, the LON, and the ILO made large use of statistics to determine, for example, the ingredients and calories for an adequate diet, check the numbers of those repatriated or resettled, or be accountable to donors. Nevertheless, the scientific dimension of postwar humanitarianism should not detract from ideas of compassion, fuelled by Christian rhetoric and beliefs, which pushed institutions and individuals towards the assistance and protection of needy strangers.

From the outset, humanitarianism went beyond relief and aimed at rehabilitating morally and physically “fallen” persons. Across the diverse crises that the book examines, refugees were supposed to “help themselves,” meaning that they should participate in actions and programs that would restore their dignity, stop their dependence on foreign aid, and reconstruct the host societies. Rehabilitation became particularly central for the group of Russians in Constantinople, experiencing a limbo situation, uncertain whether they would be sent back to Russia, allowed to stay, or be resettled, or for Armenian women and children who were taught a profession in order to become self-sufficient. Gendered discourses and identities crucially shaped rehabilitation: the Russian refugee men for which the American Red Cross established workshops in Constantinople worked the wood, whereas women were employed in sewing and embroidery, according to a traditional understanding of gendered roles.

Did the ICRC, the LON, and the ILO succeed or fail in assisting and protecting POWs and refugees? This book provides a nuanced answer. On one hand, humanitarian aid saved many POWs and refugees, helped them repatriate or resettle, and invented new instruments such as the Nansen passport thanks to which borders could be legally crossed. Some of the innovations of the 1920s, such as the creation of the High Commissariat for refugees, the beginning of international refugee law, and the association of private, voluntary organizations with inter-governmental politics, epitomized drastic innovations. On the other hand, the humanitarian assistance that emerged at the crossroad of the ICRC, the LON, and the ILO did not save or protect all: it targeted specific groups, leaving others at the margins of international politics; even among the statutory groups, protection emerged as a selective, pernicious, and discriminatory practice. For instance, protection might

depend on unforeseeable circumstances, such as the availability of money at a precise time and place, the success of one humanitarian agent's advocacy, or the political interests of a specific organization. Moreover, protection badly tolerated critical thinking or personal initiatives: international officers pretty much disliked being challenged or contested.

This is a story of institutions but also a story of individuals. While, so far, much of the literature has paid attention to prominent personalities, such as Gustave Ador, Fridtjof Nansen, and Albert Thomas, this book brings to life other agencies within the structures of international organizations. Among the cohort of experts, delegates, and representatives of national governments or of private organizations, there were those who had previous experience in humanitarian matters and others who were neophytes; those who had received formal education and others who possessed lay knowledge; those who were paid and those who were not; most were men, and a few were women. National and international officers, relief workers, lawyers, missionaries, and a large array of experts examined the conditions of forcibly displaced populations, putting their knowledge to use and experiencing processes of professionalization. By trying to understand refugees' needs and conditions, and attempting to elaborate permanent solutions, international officers identified problems, created institutions, and laid the foundation of the global governance of refugee protection.

One of the pernicious consequences of the making of humanitarian heroes—no matter whether men or women—has been the oblivion of the local, refugee staff, as well as of prisoners of war and refugees. The book sheds new light on the Estonian personnel working in the camp of Narva, on the Russian refugees employed by the HCR office in Constantinople, and on the rescued Armenians working in the Neutral and Rescue Houses. Combined with class, race, and ethnicity, a gendered perspective explains why institutions of Western liberalism did not pay tribute to this group of men and women, without whom no camp, institution, or program could possibly have been run. Similar methodological preoccupations have driven me towards bringing to life the agency of prisoners of war and refugees. In addition to letters and petitions, traces of individual paths can be found in statistics, in identity documents, and in biometrical cards. Though the documents of international humanitarian organizations tend to present refugees as passive agents, a close examination of the archives allows for a sounded, more nuanced narrative: prisoners of war in Narva wrote letters denouncing the terms of their internment; Russian refugees in Constantinople refused to be resettled in faraway countries like Brazil; Armenian women and children played a great role in liberating themselves and in rebuilding their lives.

By scaling up and down, this book offers a localized international history, moving the focus from Geneva to places of displacement and intervention, including

Narva, Constantinople, and Aleppo, hence connecting Europe with the Middle East, the South Caucasus, and Latin America. What unifies this global geography is humanitarian organizations' ideological and geopolitical underpinning: the Red Cross, the League of Nations, and the International Labour Organization concurred to create camps, villages, and colonies at what they believed to be the physical and civilizational borders of Europe in order to assist needy persons and to protect world peace. Moreover, international refugee politics—in terms of integration, (re) settlement, or repatriation—very much depended on the political, economic, and ideological interests of the countries which wished to get rid of refugees and of those which welcomed them. Gendered discriminations and racist biases shaped long-term solutions, where refugees became vectors for the reenactment of civilizational categories, economic development, and traditional gender norms.

Through the lens of humanitarian protection, Europe emerges as a continent with porous borders, where experiments in managing socially and politically marginal populations could be implemented, hence participating in the incomplete, malleable, and plural emergence of the global governance of refugee protection. This was fragmented and partial, resulting from a plethora of institutions, agencies, and individuals, including both the provider and the “recipient” of aid. The governance protected the refugee, it concurred in creating her identity and needs, it transformed the refugee into a poorly protected migrant, and it attempted to contain the perceived threats that might come from forced displacement.