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# **State-Led Humanitarian Evacuation: A Critical History, 1942-1999**

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for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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## Abstract

This thesis, situated within the historiography of humanitarianism, seeks to explain how humanitarian evacuation came to be viewed as a solution to problems of civilian protection during crises, and how the US and UK, who evacuated the greatest number of civilians during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, instrumentalized evacuation to further their geostrategic goals. Four cases studies focus on major evacuations of the 20<sup>th</sup> century that illustrate how evacuation became a tool of both civilian protection and international relations. Spotlighting the nexus between military actors and non-governmental organisations, the case studies critically explore the *motives* of evacuator, the *rationale* they presented to the public, and the *outcomes* of the evacuation projects.

While recognizing that states have mixed motives for their humanitarian operations, I claim that all evacuations essentially signify a series of political failures, and that in cases where the US and UK were aggressors *and* rescuers, they spun their failures into narratives of rescue and redemption. In this way, I argue, the militaristic state strategically communed itself with its victims, blurring the distinctions between aggressor and victim in service to a hegemonic rescue narrative in an attempt to limit criticism in order to defend national prestige and bolster geostrategic endeavours.

In illustrating these points across the use of state-led humanitarian evacuation through four case studies, this thesis makes an original contribution to the field of humanitarian history by offering a new interpretation of humanitarian evacuation that gives insight into relationships between repressive and ideological state apparatuses within a humanitarian context.<sup>1</sup> I contend that state and NGO performances of hegemonic rescue narratives strengthen state apparatuses through the reproduction of American and British foundational national myths and in turn relations of power.

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<sup>1</sup> Louis Althusser, *On the Reproduction of Capitalism: Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses*, translated. by Ben Brewster (London: New Left Books, 1971; 2014).

## Introduction

The use of humanitarian evacuation as a tool of civilian protection is increasingly prevalent, with a number of mass evacuations taking place recently (2022) in Afghanistan, Syria, Libya, and the Central African Republic. As a measure of last resort, evacuations signal a failure of other protection measures and can have grave unintended consequences. This thesis, situated within the historiography of humanitarianism, aims to contribute to our understanding of forced displacement through the critical historical study of humanitarian evacuation as a tool of civilian protection during crises, and how states, namely the US and UK, who evacuated the greatest number of civilians during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, instrumentalized evacuation to further their geostrategic goals. This Lord Kelvin/Adam Smith fellowship-funded, interdisciplinary project housed in the department of History with guidance from the department of Political Science at the University of Glasgow was guided by the research questions:

- 1) What political and cultural factors made humanitarian evacuations thinkable and practicable?
- 2) How did they come to be seen as a solution to perceived crises?

The thesis extends the scholarship on the practice of humanitarian evacuation. There has been no single work examining evacuation that is focused on understanding the emergence of the practice and how it has been utilised by states and NGOs in varying contexts and epochs. While there has been scholarly work conducted on specific evacuations, this thesis is the first to consider the history of the practice over an extended period and to compare its applications in different contexts. Through the case studies presented here, this thesis explores the interplay between motives, publicised rationale, and outcomes of four civilian evacuations undertaken in the 20<sup>th</sup> century by the US and UK.

As the result of a breakdown of civilian protection measures, humanitarian evacuation primarily occurs under a logic of emergency; it is a practice of crisis response that is oriented to the present. This helps explain why few have

considered its historical precedents. The practice of humanitarian evacuation has a contingent character and context that theory cannot predict. As a result of a chain of failures that have left limitations and grave alternatives, evacuation is defined by perilous dilemma in which the best path for action may be chosen for its potential for inflicting the least harm. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) states in its Handbook for the Protection of IDPs that humanitarian evacuations have ‘serious security, ethical, political and logistical implications’, and that actors have only utilised evacuations in ‘utterly extreme circumstances’.<sup>1</sup>

This thesis explains the historical and structural dimensions of humanitarian evacuation and the dominant rescue narratives that the US and UK at times employed to obscure these dimensions and rally public support. With a primary focus at the nexus of humanitarianism and militarism, this thesis aims to contribute to the literature a history of the political instrumentalization of humanitarian evacuation. The thesis advances explanatory scholarship on civilian evacuation by demonstrating the practice’s utility in matters of international relations related to national prestige. It is situated within the history of humanitarianism with focus on a humanitarian phenomenon primarily used by the military, and identifies several links between evacuation and militarism, labour, adoption, and empire.

Emerging from the initial research I undertook to answer the research questions came three categories of analysis: *motives*, *publicised rationale*<sup>2</sup>, and *outcomes*.

In analysing motives of the evacuators, I question what material and ideological factors drove their actions. This category includes the two research questions in that it seeks to understand the political and cultural logics of evacuators, and to explain what their aims may have been in response to crises of

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<sup>1</sup> UNHCR’s Handbook for the Protection of IDPs, Guidance Note 9: Humanitarian Evacuations, page 137, < <https://www.unhcr.org/4794a5512.pdf> > [accessed 23 June 2022].

<sup>2</sup> A note about terminology: I have chosen the term *publicised rationale* instead of *pretext*, with its inherent implication of subterfuge, or *justification*, which is too broad for my use here. The term *publicised rationale* refers to the set of reasons put forth for public consumption by government officials to explain their course of action regarding an evacuation. While these reasons *can* often be considered pretext, I have opted instead to use the more precise - though somewhat awkward - term *publicised rationale*.

diplomacy and civilian displacement. What did they have to gain? My initial assumptions centred on issues of geostrategy, including military preparedness, force projection, national prestige, and expanding political and economic hegemony. Much has been written on these subjects but not in relation to evacuations.

The category of *publicised rationale* considers various aspects of the second research question and seeks to critically analyse the state and media discourses around humanitarian evacuations in order to explain how evacuators and collaborating NGOs garnered popular support for evacuations. To critically analyse the rescue narratives composed and performed by states and NGOs to explain - or dissemble - their motives to the public, I used the lense of (Althusserian) ideology and applied it in my examination of media framing, collective memory, and voluntary civic engagement in humanitarian evacuation projects. These first two topics have strong bodies of literature to build on, specifically in the field of Critical Refugee Studies, though only two academics have applied such analysis to the question of evacuation, and both to the 1975 US-led evacuation of South Vietnam.<sup>3</sup> The third topic under the category of *rationale* examines the deontology of civic engagement in state-led evacuation projects, an approach that appears to have few precedents even within the wider study of humanitarianism.<sup>4</sup> I examine how hegemonic rescue narratives of evacuations influenced citizens' sense of moral duty and how that may have led to active voluntary participation in state-led humanitarian projects.

*Outcomes* considers the enduring effects of the evacuation projects in the case studies, the legacy of their constitutive and regulative dynamics, and the government and grassroots memory activities around the evacuations. For this category of analysis, I drew from primary government documents in British and

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<sup>3</sup> Yen Le Espiritu, 'The "We-Win-Even-When-We-Lose" Syndrome: US Press coverage of the 25th anniversary of the "fall of Saigon"', *American Quarterly*, 58:2 (2006), 329-352; and Ayako Sahara, 'Theater of Rescue: Cultural Representations of US Evacuation from Vietnam', *The Journal of American and Canadian Studies*, 30 (2012).

<sup>4</sup> See Ricardo Gomez, Bryce Clayton Newell, Sara Vannini, 'Empathetic Humanitarianism: Understanding the Motivations behind Humanitarian Work with Migrants at the US-Mexico Border', *Journal on Migration and Human Security*, 8:1 (2020); and Nockerts and Van Arsdale, 'A Theory of Obligation', *The Journal of Humanitarian Assistance* (12 May 2008).

American archives for official evaluations of evacuations and subtext in government and NGO communications, as well as contemporary medical reports, and the memoirs of evacuees.

### *Defining the topic*

“Chili, if we move Vietnamese, they are evacuees.  
If they come to us to be evacuated, they are refugees.”

-Lt. Lockhart, US military newspaper editor, advising correspondent Chili on the nomenclature of displacement in the film *Full Metal Jacket* <sup>5</sup>

Though fictional, the quote above illustrates the circumlocution found in state narratives crafted around evacuating civilians. In my research on the history of humanitarian evacuations I came across various, sometimes conflicting uses of the term. This raised questions on motives, framing, and notions of obligation. So before continuing, let us first unpack the term and come to a working definition.

A mass evacuation, the organised voluntary movement of persons from an endangered area to one of relative safety, can occur in response to a natural disaster, public health emergency, armed conflict, or a combination of these. The logistics of movement and settlement can be organised at any number of levels by government, individuals, or inter or non-governmental actors. No matter the cause or method of transport, an evacuation is essentially the result of a series of failures that have left no other option but to flee an area of danger. Evacuations indicate the breakdown of other protection measures.<sup>6</sup>

Differing interpretations of the term *humanitarian evacuation* begin when we attempt to understand what constitutes a humanitarian act. To what effect is the signifier *humanitarian* used here? Humanitarianism is, at its essence, a combination

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<sup>5</sup> *Full Metal Jacket*. Directed by Stanley Kubrick. Warner Brothers, 1987. Quote found on page 57 of script: < <https://indiegroundfilms.files.wordpress.com/2014/01/full-metal-jacket.pdf> > [accessed 23 June 2022].

<sup>6</sup> *UNHCR's Handbook for the Protection of IDPs*, Guidance Note 9: Humanitarian Evacuations, page 137, < <https://www.unhcr.org/4794a5512.pdf> > [accessed 23 June 2022].

of a belief in the universal sanctity of human life with action in support of vulnerable people. Nockerts and Van Arsdale assert that to be considered humanitarian an act must entail a crossing of a boundary in order to help people in danger; the act should transcend legal responsibility.<sup>7</sup> Such a boundary crossing, the authors state, can be ‘economic, cultural, ethnic, psycho-social, or geopolitical’, and this crossing must entail an element of risk for all involved.<sup>8</sup> Following on from this idea of a metaphorical or physical boundary crossing, we can say that a humanitarian evacuation is a voluntary and organised movement of vulnerable persons carried out by an actor who is not legally bound to protect them.

The UN’s refugee agency, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), is bound by conventions ratified by member states to protect the forcibly displaced. Can an evacuation planned and implemented by UNHCR be considered humanitarian if the agency is bound by its mandate to protect refugees? In doing so they cross no boundary. UNHCR’s mandate binds it to the international protection of refugees. When UNHCR uses the term *humanitarian evacuation* to describe an operation it takes part in as it did in 1999 during its Humanitarian Evacuation Programme - purportedly the first articulated use of the term - it is using the term as a buzzword, as a way to conveniently, if not accurately, convey that its actions are in defence of vulnerable people and should be seen as admirable.<sup>9</sup> We might conclude that the signifier *humanitarian* is used for public relations, as a gesture of lofty intentions. This is an issue that we will visit throughout the thesis.

A useful definition of *humanitarian* for the purpose of researching the history of humanitarian evacuation can be found in the working paper ‘A History of the

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<sup>7</sup> Nockerts and Van Arsdale, ‘A Theory of Obligation’, *The Journal of Humanitarian Assistance* (12 May 2008), paragraph 9.

<sup>8</sup> Nockerts and Van Arsdale, ‘A Theory of Obligation’, paragraph 9.

<sup>9</sup> Benjamin T. White, ‘A grudging rescue: France, the Armenians of Cilicia, and the history of humanitarian evacuations’, *Humanity*, 10:1 (2019), page 1. In her May 1999 briefing to the UN Security Council, UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Sadako Ogata, erroneously stated that UNHCR’s 1999 evacuation programme ‘has no precedent in UNHCR’s history.’ The Hungarian 1956 case study in this thesis will show that there was in fact a precedent. See ‘Briefing by Mrs. Sadako Ogata, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, to the United Nations Security Council, New York, 5 May 1999’, < <http://www.unhcr.org/3ae68fc14.html> > [accessed 23 June 2022].

Humanitarian System' published by the Humanitarian Policy Group. There it is defined as 'the impartial, independent, and neutral provision of relief to those in immediate danger of harm.'<sup>10</sup> We will base our definition on this with Nockerts and Van Arsdale's notion of boundary crossing and conclude that: a humanitarian evacuation is the organised voluntary lawful movement of civilians from an endangered area to one of relative safety based on principles of impartiality, independence, and neutrality. On the part of the evacuator it entails a physical or metaphorical boundary crossing and transcends legal responsibility.

It is important to note here that though this is a history of humanitarian evacuation, the humanitarian character of each of the evacuations in my case studies is debated. I do not intend to present or defend them as purely humanitarian, nor do I claim that they necessarily possess the three traits listed in my definition above. They are, however, precursors of what are referred to today as humanitarian evacuations and are therefore fundamental for my investigation. Persuasive arguments against the impartiality, independence and neutrality of all humanitarian actors, especially of the UN, are rightfully made by many. The politics of humanitarian agencies claiming to take non-political stances has long been a topic of debate. Economic and geopolitical issues often obstruct the three principles, but humanitarian actors press on and repeat their mantras of impartiality, independence, and neutrality for a number of reasons, not least because it is a tool to create an impression of legitimacy. Legitimacy opens paths for action.

The definition of evacuation sounds much like resettlement. What are the differences then between resettlement and evacuation then? UNHCR offers an explanation in its 'Handbook for the Protection of IDPs, Guidance Note 9: Humanitarian Evacuations': 'These programmes [Humanitarian Transfer and Humanitarian Evacuation] are different from existing Refugee Resettlement programmes, which mainly deal with individually recognized refugees and with clearly defined refugee groups in a country of asylum and are undertaken annually

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<sup>10</sup> Eleanor Davey, *et al.*, 'A history of the humanitarian system: Western origins and foundations', *Humanitarian Policy Group Working Paper* (June 2013), page 2.

by States independently of other States and humanitarian actors, although in coordination with them, according to their own criteria for humanitarian programmes.’<sup>11</sup>

Group resettlement has long been a feature of UNHCR’s work for groups of refugees who face a lack of foreseeable alternative durable solutions. Whether being evacuated or group resettled under *prima facie* status, the people of concern are individually vetted, officially recognised, and part of a ‘clearly defined refugee group’. Based on my work experience in UNHCR resettlement units, I contend that group resettlement is in fact the preferred method of resettlement for states accepting the greatest number of refugees. Group resettlement streamlines the resettlement process, which is of great benefit to the receiving states, UNHCR, and to the refugees themselves.

The latter part of UNHCR’s explanation of the differences between evacuation and resettlement is also open to question. Though states certainly do sometimes act independently in resettling refugees - as they have done in evacuations - they often do it to uphold their purported obligations under a concept of ‘burden sharing’ of refugee protection in implicit or explicit partnership with other states. As for resettling refugees according to their own criteria, evacuating states, as we will see in the case studies, have often evacuated people precisely because of what the evacuee could offer to that state by way of labour skills, education, and/or family composition. States act in their national interest and set their criteria accordingly, whether within the context of humanitarian evacuation or refugee resettlement.

The process of resettlement under the current, post-1951 Refugee Convention system of refugee protection originates from ‘a country of asylum’, meaning that a person or group to be resettled must have first been granted official refugee status from either UNHCR or the hosting state. UNHCR’s explanation quoted above of the differences between evacuation and resettlement seems to imply that this granting

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<sup>11</sup> UNHCR’s Handbook for the Protection of IDPs, Guidance Note 9: Humanitarian Evacuations, page 138, < <https://www.unhcr.org/4794a5512.pdf> > [accessed 23 June 2022].

of status does not happen in evacuations, which is inaccurate. My case studies on the Hungarians in 1956 and Kosovars in 1999 prove this; both groups were granted official refugee status, though through different legal mechanisms as we will see. Evacuation may occur from an evacuee's country of nationality, as in the case study of Vietnam 1975, or, as with our three other case studies, from a second or even third country of refuge. We see then that the country from which the displaced are transported matters little in defining evacuation.

In analysing UNHCR's explanation of the differences, there seems not to be any foundational distinction between evacuation and resettlement. Perhaps the only difference between evacuation and resettlement that could be argued is the evacuating state's intended length of protection and stay in the third country. Whereas resettlement's ultimate aim is most often permanent residency and full integration into the country of asylum, evacuation's aim is often stated to be more immediate and temporary. However, as we will see in the following case studies, this aim of temporary safety has repeatedly been supplanted by permanent asylum in the third country due to political exigencies. Therefore, in practice, as illustrated in the case studies, there is little if any difference between evacuations and resettlement apart from terminology.

As exemplified in the current (as of June 2022) forced displacement of Ukrainian civilians by invading Russian forces, under international humanitarian law (IHL), the distinctions between evacuation and *deportation* from conflict areas in times of war can be loosely interpreted.<sup>12</sup> Parties to a conflict may be able to use the vague wording found in sources of IHL to force deportations from a conflict zone under the guise of an evacuation undertaken to protect civilians. In this section I briefly trace the history of IHL, specifically the law of war, and argue that this system of constraints has created legal ambiguity with regards to the

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<sup>12</sup> See Lily Hyde, 'Evacuation challenges and bad optics: Why Ukrainians are losing faith in the ICRC', *The New Humanitarian*, 3 May 2022 < <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/news-feature/2022/05/03/the-icrc-and-the-pitfalls-of-neutrality-in-ukraine> > [accessed 23 June 2022]; and Natalia Yavorska, 'I was forcibly evacuated from Mariupol to Russia', *OpenDemocracy*, 28 March 2022 < <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/odr/forced-evacuation-ukraine-mariupol-russia/> > [accessed 23 June 2022].

interpretation by combatants of evacuations and deportations that allows them to forcibly displace civilians by citing military necessity.

The Fourth Geneva Convention (GC IV) prohibits the forced movement of protected persons unless, as stated in Article 49 of GC IV, ‘the security of the population or imperative military reasons so demand.’<sup>13</sup> If not due to reasons of civilian security or military necessity, such displacement would constitute an unlawful expulsion and, in an international conflict, could be considered a war crime. In non-international conflicts there are more general constraints against forced movement of civilians, unless, as above, it is claimed that their security or imperative military reasons so demand. With this catch-all of military necessity and/or security of the population, there is latitude for interpreting conditions in war so that it could suit an armed group’s objectives and avoid charges of war crimes.

Numerous sources of IHL cover evacuation of protected persons, including all four Geneva Conventions and two of their three Protocols. Many sources of IHL endorse the principle that deportation is a breach of the law of war, however, each source of IHL that I have consulted includes an exception for situations of military necessity. That is, the law of war allows for combatants to forcibly displace civilians if such a transfer can be justified as part of an objective to defeat an enemy, with a caveat being that the move is proportional and is not ‘excessive in relation to the concrete and direct military advantage anticipated.’<sup>14</sup>

It was not until 1949 when ICRC delegates finalised the Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War that articles on civilian evacuation were created. The first paragraph of Article 49 of GC IV prohibits deportations of protected persons. The second paragraph, however, conditionally allows room for derogation. It reads:

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<sup>13</sup> Protected persons include civilian persons who, because of a conflict or occupation, are in the power of a party whose nationality they do not possess. Paragraph 2 of Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War. Geneva, 12 August 1949.

<sup>14</sup> Article 51, paragraph 5(b) of Protocols Addition to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949.

‘Nevertheless, the Occupying Power may undertake total or partial evacuation of a given area if the security of the population or imperative military reasons so demand. Such evacuations may not involve the displacement of protected persons outside the bounds of the occupied territory except when for material reasons it is impossible to avoid such displacement.’<sup>15</sup>

Under IHL, the fundamental difference between evacuation and deportation is in the occupying power’s stated purpose for the movement of protected persons. As the relevant treaties are worded, the deporting power can attempt to justify the move as a security measure that aims to keep public order. Use of the terms *deportation*, *removal*, *population transfer*, and *evacuation* by officials can be protean, with terms being used interchangeably.

Forced relocations - with exceptions possible due to military necessity or safeguarding protected persons - are not permissible under IHL. Conversely, voluntary relocations are allowed. An important component of any evacuation is informed consent, but it is debatable whether or not consent is required under IHL when an evacuation is ordered for reasons of military necessity. The vague phrasing of articles relating to evacuation leaves them open to interpretation. Article 17 of GC IV exemplifies this:

‘The Parties to the conflict shall endeavour to conclude local agreements for the removal from besieged or encircled areas, of wounded, sick, infirm, and aged persons, children and maternity cases, and for the passage of ministers of all religions, medical personnel and medical equipment on their way to such areas.’<sup>16</sup>

Parties to the conflict are not required to obtain consent from protected persons

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<sup>15</sup> Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War. Geneva, 12 August 1949.

<sup>16</sup> Article 17 of the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War. Geneva, 12 August 1949.

before they are removed but shall merely *endeavour* to make agreements locally. This paragraph again demonstrates that under IHL the ultimate decision whether or not to move civilians rests with the military in control of a particular area. The military necessity escape clauses in treaties relating to evacuation should be of concern to those committed to civilian protection. IHL is but a system of constraints with oftentimes deficient supervision and edentulous punitive measures. As evidenced by the repeated use of deportation to quash dissent in Sri Lanka, Ethiopia, and occupied Palestine, further elaboration is needed to strengthen IHL and clarify the distinctions between evacuation and deportation.<sup>17</sup>

Further complicating the issue, evacuation can sometimes be confused with population transfers, exchanges, and mass deportations. However, unlike evacuation, these forms of human movement have primarily been used in state formation and imperial governance.<sup>18</sup> They were often employed as collective punishment, labour transfer, and for demographic engineering as seen in the numerous examples of internal forced displacement within the Soviet Union from 1930 to 1952. Labour transfer in the USSR specifically has been referred to in English and Russian as ‘evacuation’, though such forced displacement does not fall under the definitional boundaries of this thesis.<sup>19</sup> Norman Finkelstein contends that transfer and deportation were accepted solutions to problems of ethnic conflict up until around WWII.<sup>20</sup> The Nuremberg Charter, which declared mass deportation a war crime and crime against humanity, brought on changes in international law that saw a decrease in its practice.<sup>21</sup> Though the terms *deportation*, *transfer*, and *exchange* cannot be used interchangeably with *evacuation*, their practice and the practice of humanitarian evacuation are part of a political repertoire of organised

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<sup>17</sup> See <https://casebook.icrc.org/glossary/deportation> for several case studies in which unlawful deportation may have been used by state governments [accessed 23 June 2022].

<sup>18</sup> The exception to this would be the ‘evacuations’ of Jews from other states to the then-nascent settler state of Israel. The Zionist state is a unique example of using evacuation for state-building.

<sup>19</sup> See Rebecca Manley, ‘The Perils of Displacement: The Soviet Evacuee between Refugee and Deportee’, *Contemporary European History*, 16:04 (2007), 499-500; Rebecca Manley, *To The Tashkent Station: Evacuation and Survival in the Soviet Union at War* (London: Cornell University Press, 2013); Larry E. Holmes, *Stalin's World War II Evacuations: Triumph and Troubles in Kirov* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2017).

<sup>20</sup> Norman Finkelstein, ‘Securing Occupation: The Real Meaning of the Wye River Memorandum’, *New Left Review*, 0/232 (1998), 128-139.

<sup>21</sup> Nuremberg Charter < [https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/documents/atrocities-crimes/Doc.2\\_Charter%20of%20IMT%201945.pdf](https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/documents/atrocities-crimes/Doc.2_Charter%20of%20IMT%201945.pdf) > [accessed 2 April 2023].

movement with origins in roughly similar contexts. Fundamental differences exist, however, in that humanitarian evacuations cannot be conducted under duress or coercion, and that they have been undertaken by states largely for reasons of national prestige.<sup>22</sup>

Now that we have defined *evacuation* and explained the differences between it and resettlement, deportation, and population transfer and exchange, let us move to consider the use over time of the term *humanitarian evacuation* to see how it has been applied and for what purposes.

Searching archives in the US and UK for the term, I saw examples as early as 1922 of the words *humanitarian* and *evacuation* in proximity to each other within documents but not as a specific joined term until 1946. In the US State Department document ‘Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, 1922’, we see that the acting High Commissioner at Constantinople, Frederic Dolbeare, sent a telegram to the US Secretary of State, Charles Evans Hughes, on 26 November 1922 about the deteriorating security situation for Ottoman Christian refugees awaiting evacuation in Constantinople. Dolbeare wrote, ‘for humanitarian reasons I will endeavor to keep [US Navy] destroyers in those ports where Greek ships are expected to arrive to evacuate refugees’.<sup>23</sup> Humanitarian to Dolbeare appears to have meant an implied military defence of civilians communicated to the Turkish nationalist troops via a display of American naval power.

The next published use of both words in proximity in US or UK archives does not appear until 16 January 1929, six years later, when US Ambassador Joseph Grew wrote to Secretary of State Frank Kellogg about the proposed evacuation of Russian civilians from Turkey: ‘I said that I was interested in the matter [of Russian civilian evacuation] not only from the humanitarian point of view but that I also had a legitimate interest in it on account of the large donations given by American

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<sup>22</sup> To further put these various forms of human movement into context, see Appendix A for a timeline of state-led humanitarian evacuations, and see Appendix B for a timeline of transfers, exchanges, and mass deportations.

<sup>23</sup> Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, 1922, Volume II, US Department of State (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1938), page 964.

citizens to assist the evacuation'.<sup>24</sup> Though Ambassador Grew's 'humanitarian point of view' is not elaborated in the correspondence, we see that his stressed 'legitimate interest' is fulfilling the expectations of American donors.<sup>25</sup>

I mention these examples not because these are the earliest instances of what I consider in essence to be humanitarian evacuations<sup>26</sup> but because I aim to explore the creation of a semantic domain through which humanitarian evacuation became perceived as a political solution. Semantic domain in this sense refers to an 'area of cultural emphasis' - such as humanitarianism - and the lexicon we use to communicate relevant ideas.<sup>27</sup> With the creation of a semantic domain in which humanitarian evacuation became a feature also came expectations of its use. In this way the creation of a semantic domain of humanitarianism influenced American and British social imaginaries, the intersubjective set of values and symbols through which we imagine our individual selves as part of the social whole. Relatedly, as Žižek put it: it is the 'appellation of a thing that brings to light its [...] potentials.'<sup>28</sup> By naming the phenomenon we increase our expectations of its use and possible applications. These concepts may help answer the question of how evacuations came to be seen as a solution to perceived crises. Tracing the evolution of a semantic domain of humanitarianism can lead us to a deeper understanding of the nature of duty and obligation as they relate to the suffering distant other.

It is unlikely, however, that a semiotic approach to understanding the deontological dimensions of humanitarian evacuation is alone sufficient to fully grasp its historical transformation. There is in practice a confusingly broad range of

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<sup>24</sup> Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, Part 3, US Department of State (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1943), document number 639.

<sup>25</sup> The donors are unnamed in this document but I speculate that they were associated with Near East Relief's expansive and successful campaigns. See the Near East Foundation's archives at <https://neareastmuseum.com/> and James L. Barton's *Story of Near East Relief, 1915-1930: an Interpretation* (New York: MacMillan Company, 1930).

<sup>26</sup> I agree with White (2019) who states that the modern practice of civilian evacuation is rooted 'in the forced displacements of the first world war and its aftermath'. The evacuations of Ottoman Christians (Armenian, Assyrian, and Greek) were not, as far as I can tell from archival records, contemporarily referred to as humanitarian. Benjamin T. White, 'A grudging rescue: France, the Armenians of Cilicia, and the history of humanitarian evacuations', *Humanity*, 10:1 (2019), page 2.

<sup>27</sup> Harriet Ottenheimer and Judith Pine, *The Anthropology of Language: An Introduction to Linguistic Anthropology* (Boston: Cengage, 2018), page 18.

<sup>28</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (London: Verso, 1989), page xi.

uses of the term. Take for example the earliest published use of the complete English term *humanitarian evacuation*, which is found in the 1946 sworn affidavit of Walter Schellenberg, *Brigadeführer-SS* of German intelligence during WWII.<sup>29</sup> In the affidavit, which was given in English to American and British prosecutors in preparation for the Nuremberg Trials, Schellenberg described how he used Jewish civilians and Allied military prisoners held in German-controlled camps as leverage to try and force concessions from the Allies during negotiations towards the end of WWII.<sup>30</sup> Though Schellenberg had the support of *Reichsführer-SS* Himmler who himself had been in regular contact with Swedish diplomat Count Folke Bernadotte to discuss proposed evacuations, Hitler learned of the negotiations and quickly put a stop to them.<sup>31</sup> Describing the breakdown of negotiations, Schellenberg wrote in the affidavit: ‘I then discussed the matter with Himmler who also failed to take action [...] and was thereafter unable to maintain communication [with colleagues in Switzerland] and the proposed attempt to bring about a humanitarian evacuation was thus circumvented.’<sup>32</sup>

This bears repeating: the earliest published use of the complete English term *humanitarian evacuation* was written in January 1946 by a German Nazi military officer in reference to the planned transportation of Jews and Allied POWs. We can attempt to explain away the profundity of this by questioning Schellenberg’s command of English or by considering the pressure he may have felt to appease his Allied captors. From his affidavit and subsequent testimony during the Nuremberg trials we see that Schellenberg made attempts to mitigate potential punishment for the war crimes in which he played a significant role. During the trials he went so far

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<sup>29</sup> This conclusion of the term’s earliest published use is based on research I have done in the archives of ten institutions, many in person and all online, and the results from Google’s Ngram for the term ‘humanitarian evacuation’ with varying capitalisation. < <http://books.google.com/ngrams> > [accessed 23 June 2022].

<sup>30</sup> *Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression, Volume VIII, Office of the United States Chief of Counsel for Prosecution of Axis Criminality*, (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1946), page 629. There is a note at the end of the affidavit, above Schellenberg’s signature, that reads ‘[In handwriting of Schellenberg] “I understand written English”’. According to Polish historian Robert Wistrich, Schellenberg spoke English fluently. Wistrich, *Who’s Who in Nazi Germany*, (London: Routledge, 1995, 2002), page 221.

<sup>31</sup> In spring of 1945, Count Folke Bernadotte did lead the evacuation and repatriation of over 15,000 prisoners of war from German-controlled camps after WWII in what came to be known as the ‘White Buses Operation’, an operation primarily carried out by the Swedish Red Cross with the help of the Danish government. See Sune Persson, ‘Folke Bernadotte and the White Buses’, *Journal of Holocaust Education*, 9:2 (2000), pages 237–268.

<sup>32</sup> *Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression, Volume VIII*, page 629.

as to invoke his concern for the ‘human rights’ of Jews in concentration camps as alleged proof of his innocence, for he was, he claimed, ‘merely in an information service’.<sup>33</sup>

However we may try to contextualise it, Schellenberg’s use of the term *humanitarian evacuation* illustrates its often cynical and motley assortment of semantic applications. What constitutes humanitarian action is contextual and contingent. In practice it is not a precise concept but rather a complex linguistic framework through which actors project their political aims onto their intended ideological market. Invocations of humanitarianism have long served to legitimise morally problematic acts, as in the case of Walter Schellenberg. This example of Schellenberg’s use of the term *humanitarian* may seem to be a deviation from its orthodox use but, as has been expressed by others writing in the field, it is difficult to pin down a precise definition of humanitarianism.<sup>34</sup> The very concept of humanitarianism is awash with ambiguities.<sup>35</sup> Its manifestations continuously transform, as Hugo Slim writes, due to the boundaries of humanitarian action being ‘pulled in various directions by [...] actors, methodology and context’ that gives it ‘an elasticity that [...] sometimes seems to go beyond its fundamental moral purpose.’<sup>36</sup>

This thesis considers how that elasticity affected the implementation of humanitarian evacuation undertaken by the US and UK in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. By looking at the historical transformation of humanitarianism’s lexicon and its strategic use in the political instrumentalization of evacuation projects by governments and their collaborating NGOs, this thesis also explores why and how civic responsibility is created.

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<sup>33</sup> ‘Nuremberg Trial Proceedings, Volume 4, Twenty-Seventh Day, Friday, 4 January 1946’, page 378 < <https://avalon.law.yale.edu/imt/01-04-46.asp> > [accessed 23 June 2022].

<sup>34</sup> See: Matthew Hilton, Emily Baughan, Eleanor Davey, Bronwen Everill, Kevin O’Sullivan, Tehila Sasson, ‘History and Humanitarianism: A Conversation’, *Past & Present*, 241:1 (2018), pages e1-e38.

<sup>35</sup> Antonio Donini, ‘Humanitarianism in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century’, *Humanitaire* (Online), 25 June 2010 <http://journals.openedition.org/humanitaire/771> [accessed 15 March 2023].

<sup>36</sup> Hugo Slim, *Humanitarian Ethics: A Guide to the Morality of Aid in War and Disaster* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, Incorporated, 2015), page 8.

### *Mixed Motives*

Before moving on to explain my methodology, I acknowledge here the reality of mixed motives and multiple goals in political action related to state-led humanitarian evacuation. Though this thesis focuses on certain political motives as impetuses for humanitarian evacuation and explores these motives in depth, there can certainly be interpretations that take a less critical view of the US and UK's evacuation projects in light of the extraordinarily complicated matters involved in related decision-making. In all four case studies, the US and UK - their governments, private organisations, and individual citizens - were faced with a series of wicked problems to which a partial solution was believed to be the evacuation of suffering others. Post-WWII global humanitarian norms developed to fundamentally challenge the earlier principals of non-intervention in foreign conflicts.<sup>37</sup>

Mixed motivations and resource dilemmas often create their own logic (similar to the *logic of emergency* I discuss in later sections). This recognition of mixed motives does not discharge an actor from the responsibility for creating a scenario that may then force an evacuation to occur, but rather to call attention to the fact that a complex emergency often involves a wide coalition of actors and interests. While recognising the existence of mixed motives in the face of wicked problems, this thesis focuses on limited ideological and military motives: national prestige, relations of power, and the legitimating function of language used in rescue narratives.<sup>38</sup> This thesis tackles these issues while acknowledging the existence of mixed motives.

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<sup>37</sup> Nicolas J. Wheeler, *Saving Strangers: Humanitarian Intervention in International Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), page 1.

<sup>38</sup> The concept of the legitimating function of language is from Nicolas J. Wheeler, *Saving Strangers: Humanitarian Intervention in International Society*, page 9. See also Duncan S.A. Bell, 'Language, legitimacy, and the project of critique', *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political*, 27:3 (2002); and Quentin Skinner, 'Language and Social Change', in J. Tully (ed.) *Meaning and Context: Quentin Skinner and his Critics* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1988).

## *Methodology*

I undertook case studies of state-led civilian evacuations to investigate how humanitarian evacuation came to be viewed as a solution to problems of civilian protection during crises, and how the US and UK instrumentalized evacuation to further their geostrategic goals. I chose to study the US and UK because they, over the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, evacuated the greatest number in total.<sup>39</sup> I did not set out to focus only on these two states but felt compelled to once I realised that the archival material on evacuations repeatedly highlighted collaborations between them. While other Liberal democratic states, such as France and Switzerland, have conducted a few of their own independent evacuations of non-nationals and have participated in US- or UK-led evacuation operations, it was the US and UK who evacuated the greatest number by far and who led evacuations in which more than three Western states participated.

My framework, built on the two research questions mentioned above, analyses critical historical junctures for both countries with regards to humanitarian evacuation and aims to explain the transformation of their use of the practice. My exploratory analysis is intentionally broad because it is oriented to the explanation of historical processes associated with the US and UK's instrumentalization of humanitarian evacuation. Within this broad approach I focus further on elements of motives, rationale, and outcomes, as well as contextual factors that may have indirectly affected evacuation decision-making. I investigate causal relationships between instances of evacuation across case studies. I do this to understand the transformation and instrumentalization of humanitarian evacuation as practiced by the two states.

For temporal boundaries I focused on the period of 1942-1999, just before and after the Cold War, as mass population displacement became increasingly practicable through military logistical developments by the start of this period and,

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<sup>39</sup> I arrived at this conclusion by adding the official number of evacuees for each state-led evacuation of the 20<sup>th</sup> century by country. If official numbers were not available, I used the highest published estimates arrived at by historians.

as such, evacuation as a political solution to perceived crises became increasingly thinkable.<sup>40</sup> Towards the end of this period, humanitarian evacuation transformed structurally in response to geopolitical changes occurring after the dissolution of the USSR.

The start of this time period does leave out what I consider to be the earliest examples of humanitarian evacuation. This thesis is about the US and UK's political instrumentalization of state-led evacuations; my focus is state-centric. The examples of civilian evacuations in the WWI and inter-war periods are largely of ad hoc, decentralised operations led by Western-based private individuals or religious organisations that focused on their co-religionists. These evacuations, which occurred mainly in the Near East and the Pale of Settlement, do deserve greater scholarly attention but are out of the scope of this thesis. Similarly, the evacuation of Spanish children during the Spanish Civil War and the Kindertransport during WWII are not case studies in this thesis. While they are significant in the evolution of humanitarian evacuations, neither fit my state-centric purview as well as the chosen case studies. I also feel it is important to choose case studies that are representative of stages of transformation during the Cold War period. My four case studies are richer in this regard.

My data collection initially entailed searching online databases for articles and books that contained relevant key terms: *evacuation*, *humanitarian evacuation*, *airlift*, *babylift*, and *rescue operation*. I then collected references from the bibliographies of these sources, as well as the bibliographies of articles and books recommended to me by supervisors, peers, and professors of History and Political Science I consulted at other universities. In the archives I explored collections of documents organised by events surrounding the evacuations in my case studies, the personal papers of key figures in the events, and newspapers from the periods under study. All the sources I read were written in or translated into English.

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<sup>40</sup> Benjamin T. White, 'A grudging rescue: France, the Armenians of Cilicia, and the history of humanitarian evacuations', *Humanity*, 10:1 (2019), page 14.

Initial archival research was in London at the National Archives and the British Library. Much of the material containing the keyword *evacuation* was about the planning of contingent evacuations for British officials and their families overseas if ever an enemy state attacked. For example, some of the more detailed documents on evacuation planning concerned the British legation in Afghanistan at the start of WWII. British officials seemed to expect a German invasion of Afghanistan and so planned their own evacuation accordingly. Though this was not a humanitarian evacuation, it did shed light on the logistical and financial preparations for different types of evacuation. The documents illustrated the British military's strength and geographical reach. Considered from an enemy's view, such an evacuation, if ever enacted, would demonstrate the UK's force projection capabilities and its willingness to concentrate a great amount of materiel to defending but a few of its own citizens.

#### *Case study methodology: evacuation of Poles, 1942-1948*

The evacuation for which there is the richest archival record within the National Archives and British Library is the 1942-1948 evacuation of Poles from the USSR. I also conducted research on this UK-led, US-supported operation in the Polish Institute and Sikorski Museum, as well as the Weiner Holocaust Library, both in London. The evacuation, which by 1948 transported 109,000 Poles from famine conditions in the USSR to twenty countries worldwide, was born from the concern of a patrician English woman who was a member of the Women's Voluntary Services. Barbara Vera Hodge's original letter, in which she outlined her 'Tashkent Scheme' to evacuate Polish children from Russia, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan, was the start of a document trail that followed the development of what became a vast and complex humanitarian evacuation that saw the collaboration of the UK, US and, grudgingly, the USSR.<sup>41</sup> The archives of the India Office at the National Archives and the British Library were especially helpful in piecing together the early

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<sup>41</sup> Barbara Vera Hodge, Letter from B.V. Hodge to K. Patrick, 19 September 1941, British Library IOR/L/PJ/8/412/298.

discussions of the scheme in the UK and the initial logistical planning. The documents at the Polish Institute helped illuminate the often-acrimonious debates between Soviet and Polish officials over the evacuation numbers of Polish civilians detained in the USSR and recruitment into and deployment of the Polish Armed Forces in the East (Anders' Army).<sup>42</sup> These documents show the political instrumentalization of evacuation, the material and geostrategic benefits of such an operation, and raised questions of national prestige. The archives at the Weiner Holocaust Library related to this evacuation focused primarily on the personal experiences of Jewish Poles who participated in the early stages of the evacuation from the USSR but who then fled independently to Palestine. Though these personal accounts offer insight into, among other things, social relations amongst the evacuees, I do not include them in my state-centric thesis.

Because of the magnitude and scope of the evacuation, the 1942-1948 evacuation of Poles from the USSR is my first case study. The case illuminates a point in the evolution of humanitarian evacuations where we see an evacuation project born from the idea and networking of a private individual - Barbara Vera Hodge - that soon became a global project once it was implemented by the UK, US, and USSR military commands.

The three most relevant archives in London - the National Archives, the British Library, and the Polish Institute and Sikorski Museum - provided a wealth of information about the early stages of the evacuation. Documentation became patchy once the operation expanded beyond the initial evacuations from the USSR to Iran and India. This exposes a weakening of central government control and an assumption of more grassroots agency by Polish diaspora groups and Catholic organisations involved in the project. I found more robust documentation on the later stages of the evacuation - the overseas 'settlement' - in the US National Archives at College Park, Maryland than in any British archive. This shows that it

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<sup>42</sup> General Sikorski Historical Institute, *Documents on Polish-Soviet Relations, 1939-45*, (London: Heinemann, 1961).

was the US military who assumed major duties in transporting the evacuees, even to the UK's colonies, as well as farther afield to Mexico.

The Polish evacuees themselves kept records of their living situations within the 'settlement camps' that housed most of them until the end of the war. Many of these records, found in all the archives I visited for this case study, focused on the minutiae of daily camp life: financial management, building maintenance, alimentionation, and punishment meted out for drunkenness and thievery. After the war's end and the global dispersion of the Poles who refused to repatriate to a Communist Poland, diasporic evacuees formed community groups, wrote memoirs, and commemorated their suffering and triumphs with memory activities that survive to tell their stories.

There is an avenue of research I intended to pursue but that was postponed because of the pandemic. I had hoped to dig deeper into the work of Barbara Vera Hodge in her capacity with the Women's Voluntary Services (WVS). There are archival documents from the organisation held in the National Archives, the Imperial War Museum, and the National Archives of Scotland, though none contain information specific to Hodge or her WVS work apart from the letter I mentioned above about the Tashkent scheme. Relevant documents are held at the archives of the Royal Voluntary Service in Wiltshire, but this location was closed to visitors during the pandemic. In researching other humanitarian evacuations, I have seen further examples of wealthy women of social standing leading the call for rescue projects, from Biafra and South Vietnam. The dimensions of class and gender in evacuation projects deserve attention. I intend to pursue this research, though this work will inform my future research agenda, not this thesis.

#### *Case study methodology: evacuation of Hungarians, 1956-1957*

The evacuation of Hungarians from Austria occurred after the failed uprising against the Soviets in which approximately 200,000 fled Hungary. Austria was a newly independent country at the time, with an intention of becoming neutral after

German and then Allied occupation. The evacuation of Hungarian refugees to North American and European states stands as an early example of ‘burden sharing’, a term often used presently in discussions on states hosting and resettling refugees. Building on the work of Marjoleine Zieck, I contend that the US and UK along with UNHCR created much of the modern framework for refugee resettlement during the evacuation of Hungarians.<sup>43</sup> Primarily for this reason, I have chosen this event as a case study for this thesis.

Research for this case study entailed trips to archives in the US, as well as to the National Archives and the British Library in London. While each archive was rich with relevant material, it was the archive at Rutgers University’s Institute for Hungarian Studies in the US that proved to be the most fruitful for my research. Housed there are the papers of Tracy Voorhees, a Rutgers alumnus who had a decorated military career before being appointed by President Eisenhower to serve as the chairman of the President’s Committee for Hungarian Refugee Relief. Voorhees was industrious and a meticulous keeper of notes. His personal papers cover important aspects of the planning, undertaking, and conclusion of the evacuation. Some of the procedures Voorhees and his committee devised have withstood the test of time. For example, the Position Classification Form used by immigration officials to process Hungarian evacuees bound for resettlement in the US closely resembles UNHCR’s Refugee Resettlement Form that is still in use as of 2022.<sup>44</sup>

The Hungarian evacuation was one of the first large-scale refugee protection operations to occur under the framework of the 1951 Refugee Convention, which is still the legal paradigm we use today for the protection of forcibly displaced people. The process of evacuation then was essentially similar to the process of group refugee resettlement today. The Hungarian evacuation stands as an example of burden sharing, in that the ultimate concern for Austria’s Liberal allies was that

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<sup>43</sup> Marjoleine Zieck, ‘The 1956 Hungarian Refugee Emergency, an Early and Instructive Case of Resettlement’, *Amsterdam Law Forum*, 5:2 (2013), 45-63.

<sup>44</sup> I used the RRF while serving with UNHCR as a Resettlement Expert from 2009 to 2016. I confirmed in December of 2022 with current UNHCR resettlement staff that the RRF is still in use.

country's political situation, not necessarily the condition of the refugees themselves. The Liberal West sought to resolve the precarious political circumstances Austria found itself in while seeking status as a neutral state but hosting 200,000 presumably anti-Communists fleeing Soviet oppression from neighbouring Hungary.

The evacuation of Hungarians also serves as an example of the political instrumentalization of evacuation projects for both the US and UK. 1956 was a tumultuous year. The UK's involvement in the tripartite invasion of Egypt and the Soviet's invasion of Hungary a mere five days later increased already high tensions between the blocs. The displacement of hundreds of thousands of Hungarians - 'voting with their feet', it was repeatedly stated in Western newspapers - provided the West with ample fuel for the propaganda machine. The US and UK made the most of the opportunity to use the displacement as a publicity coup against the Soviets in particular and against Communism in general. Detailed archival records show how Voorhees enlisted the help of powerful Madison Avenue advertising agencies to exploit every opportunity presented by the Soviet invasion and subsequent evacuation to the West. Receiving countries worldwide - from the US, UK, Canada, and as far afield as Australia - basked in the self-righteous spotlight emanating from the media's coverage of the West's collective rescue of victims of Soviet Communism.

To better understand the ideological uses of the Hungarian evacuation, I read coverage of the operation in American and British archives of the three highest-circulation newspapers in the US and UK at the time. Though an argument could be made that popular media is not wholly representative of its consumers, it does offer insight into how ideology is created and disseminated in such critical junctures. By elevating the idea and image of the Hungarian 'freedom fighter', the media restricted what could be considered appropriate emotional responses from individuals, akin to the illogical yet oft-repeated, 'you are either with us or against us.' The displaced Hungarian performed his anti-Communism duties, and we in the West, the popular media told us, had a duty to protect him and in turn his wife and children. Any discontent about the evacuation project was thus effectively silenced

for fear of being perceived as a supporter of Communism, especially in the US during McCarthyism and the second wave of the Red Scare. The rhetoric found not only in the popular media of the time but also in communication between US and UK officials demonstrates this. The Hungarian case study is fertile in this regard.

*Case study methodology: evacuation of South Vietnamese, 1975*

By the time of the US-led evacuation of South Vietnam in April 1975, West-imposed forced displacement had become normalised in Vietnam. The spectacular footage of the evacuation panic in Saigon was but the final scene in a long history of forced displacement of Vietnamese by foreign forces that began with the *agrovilles* of the occupying French and continued through the US' strategic hamlets program. Both the *agrovilles* and strategic hamlet programs, in efforts to pacify the population and stymie the independence movement, displaced hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese.<sup>45</sup> The British also took part in the planning of forced displacement of Vietnamese civilians, sharing with the French and later the Americans their expertise in population control that they had gained in the Kenyan and Malayan campaigns. British colonial authorities had not long before displaced Kenyans with the New Village System, and Chinese-Malay with the Briggs' Plan.<sup>46</sup> Demographic engineering in SE Asia had become normalised by the time of the evacuation from Saigon in 1975.

The US military's involvement in Vietnam began and ended with humanitarian evacuations. In 1954, with British military assistance, the US Navy's 'Operation Passage to Freedom' transported 310,000 Vietnamese, mainly Christians, from the north of the country to the south after the Geneva Accords of 1954 called for the

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<sup>45</sup> P. Busch, "'Killing the 'Vietcong'": The British Advisory Mission and the Strategic Hamlet Programme', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 25:1 (2002), 135-162; Philip E. Catton, 'Counter-Insurgency and Nation Building: The Strategic Hamlet Programme in South Vietnam, 1961-1963', *The International History Review*, 21:4 (1999), 918-940.

<sup>46</sup> Joshua R. Goodman, 'Shirking the Briggs Plan: Civilian Resistance to Reform and the Army's Struggle for Control in Malaya, 1950-1952', *the Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 20 February (2021), 1-35.

country's partition.<sup>47</sup> The Vietnamese who were evacuated chose to flee the Communist-controlled north, though only after an intense anti-Communist propaganda campaign that saw the collaboration of France, the US, and the reactionary monarchist South Vietnamese government. The US government and media touted this 1954 evacuation of Vietnamese - as they would the Hungarians two years later - as freedom-loving people voting with their feet against the tyranny of Communism. In 1975, twenty-one years after Operation Passage to Freedom, US involvement in Vietnam ended the same way it started: with an evacuation. In both the 1954 and 1975 examples, we see the political instrumentalization of humanitarian evacuation.

Though there were a number of stages of evacuation from South Vietnam in 1975, my study focused specifically on what came to be known as 'Operation Babylift', and an accompanying 'mercy flight' organised by the UK's Daily Mail newspaper. This purported rescue began as a grassroots operation of Western orphanage volunteers who feared that the string of Communist victories against US-backed South Vietnam would end with the nationalists wresting control of Saigon and exacting revenge on Westerners and the South Vietnamese who collaborated with them. At least this is what many of the volunteers wrote afterwards.<sup>48</sup> To escape this anticipated massacre, the orphanage volunteers rallied support with the help of a woman of high social standing whose father owned an airline. (The father, incidentally, had taken part in the 1956 evacuation of Hungarians.) By the time the evacuation of some Saigon orphanages had gained momentum, the US government stepped in and commandeered the operation, giving it a name, presenting itself as the saviour of Vietnamese orphans, and creating a rescue narrative that helped reframe its failures in Vietnam and mask its abandonment of its allies.

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<sup>47</sup> Ronald B. Frankum, *Operation Passage to Freedom: The United States Navy in Vietnam, 1954-1955*, (Lubbock: Texas Tech University Press, 2007).

<sup>48</sup> See Patrick Ashe, *Dust And Ashes* (online memoir, 1995/updated 2011); Shirley Peck-Barnes, *War Cradle: Vietnam's Children of War, Operation Babylift – The Untold Story* (Denver: Vintage Pressworks, 2000); Rosemary Taylor, *Orphans of War: Work with the abandoned children of Vietnam 1967-1975* (London: Collins, 1988).

Much scholarly work has been done on the ‘fall of Saigon’ and its accompanying evacuations: operations Babylift, Frequent Wind, and New Life. None of the authors I have read, however, have placed these operations in a wider history of evacuations or within the dimension of population displacement, which is one of the reasons I chose this for a case study. Documents from the US’ National Archives, Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library, and the UK’s National Archives and British Library demonstrate that discussions about demographic engineering in the region were had between US and UK officials from as early as 1954. Up for discussion, for example, was whether to forcibly displace 50,000 ethnic Vietnamese alleged Communist sympathisers from NE Siam to North Vietnam once the country was partitioned. The archives show that British officials in the SE Asia Department of the Foreign Office requested American assistance in moving them as a way to hinder the spread of Communist ideology in the region. Though it was decided not to move them because doing so could amount to delivering the Viet Minh 50,000 new recruits, the discussion indicates a tendency of the UK and US to turn to forced displacement as a potential approach to solve crises.

Apart from the four archives mentioned above, there is publicly available information online about Operation Babylift posted by some of its participants. Memoirs written by those involved in Babylift have also provided insight for my research. The memoirs written by directors of orphanages have been especially useful in piecing together the stages of the initial evacuation flights and how agencies and individuals in the US and UK received them. Between these, the archives, and secondary sources, this case study proved to be rich in information on military-civilian (repressive-ideological) collaborations in humanitarian contexts.

#### *Case study methodology: evacuation of Kosovar Albanians, 1999*

My fourth and final study is that of the 1999 evacuation of Kosovar Albanians from Macedonia. It was not until then that such a project was officially named a humanitarian evacuation. At the insistence of NATO and the Macedonian government, UNHCR implemented its Humanitarian Evacuation Programme (HEP)

during the Kosovo War to, as was claimed at the time, provide protection to Kosovars displaced by Serb attacks. I claim, however, that HEP was created for two reasons: 1) to alleviate Macedonia's burden of hosting a rapid and massive inflow of Kosovars and in exchange obtain the Macedonian government's permission for NATO to use its land as a staging area for a ground invasion against the Serbs if the situation required; and 2) to rally public support for NATO's invasion after initial diplomatic and military blunders.

This phase of my research began just before the pandemic; I postponed my plans to visit the UNHCR archives in Geneva. In 2019, the twenty-year embargo on UNHCR's Kosovo records was lifted. I anticipated being one of the first to view the newly-released documents. My research plan was to read records of the earliest discussions of the evacuation and follow leads from there. From reading secondary sources it seemed that there was friction between UNHCR and NATO, as NATO assumed the lead in relief activities in the earliest stages without proper consultation with UNHCR.<sup>49</sup> Early on, NATO enlisted the assistance of national relief organisations who were amenable to their aims and were perhaps easier to control. NATO soon realised, however, that they needed UNHCR's collaboration to add legitimacy to their legally dubious invasion of Kosovo. Similarly, UNHCR needed NATO's logistical support to rapidly provide relief to the Kosovars. I had hoped that the UNHCR archives contain material that could help illuminate this matter. Since no relevant documents have been digitised and put online yet, I must defer this search for now.

There are many documents relevant to my research on HEP already digitised and accessible online. These include records of debates in the UK Parliament and US Congress, reports from the UN Secretary-General, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, as well as patchy reports from the US National Security Council to President Clinton that are

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<sup>49</sup> Nicholas Morris, 'Macedonia: an NGO perspective', *Forced Migration Review*, August 1999:5, 18-19; Sadako Ogata, *The Turbulent Decade: Confronting the Refugee Crises of the 1990s* (London: W.W. Norton & Company, 2005), page 149.

accessible from the archives of the William J. Clinton Presidential Library. Each one of these sources is profoundly biased on the NATO invasion of Kosovo. This is a thesis on the US and UK's political instrumentalization of humanitarian evacuation, however, so the subtext of such biased material can indeed be useful in illuminating the motives and publicised rationale of the evacuator.

*Case study methodology: evacuee 'voices'*

Another source of information about the evacuations that can be considered biased is the accounts of the evacuees themselves. For each of the case studies, I searched for records of the voices of those displaced by the evacuations. These sources included diaries, memoirs, interviews, and accounts of public commemoration projects led by evacuees.

While many of these sources proved to be rich in detail of such subjects as logistics, daily life in settlement camps, and the stress of arriving in a new land, methodological and epistemological challenges arose for me when deciding what information to include or omit. First was the conspicuous gratitude in some of the material, an issue compounded perhaps by the fact that I only was able to consult English language sources. Because I focused on English language sources, I am leaving out some of the voices of evacuees whose own writing about their evacuation experiences was not originally in English, nor has been translated into English. None of the four evacuations in the case studies originated from majority English-speaking countries, therefore it is likely that the evacuees who did later write of their experiences in English learned it after being evacuated or were of a privileged class in their home country where they received formal education in English. Most of the writing by evacuees that I found had been composed and published in the country to which the author was evacuated and had lived for many years, which I contend could lead to a gratitude bias towards the rescuer nation. An evacuee writing of their experience while in their country of resettlement may feel a duty to 'repay' that nation in gratitude for their evacuation lest they be deemed

ungrateful. The evacuee may even come to accept the dominant rescue narrative in order to make sense of their own suffering. Following Nguyen and Derrida, I claim that this internalisation of the burden of the gift of freedom may effectively silence sincere critique.<sup>50</sup> Another challenge in deciding if and how to include evacuee voices gleaned from memoirs and other primary sources is the shortcomings of memory. It is imperfect as a source of historical knowledge because, as Ewa Stańczyk writes, ‘it combines the individual and the collective, the intimate and the political, the past and the present’; [...] such sources are never about the time which they record, they look ‘both forward and back.’<sup>51</sup>

My intention here is not to be dismissive of an expressed gratitude by evacuees to the governments that evacuated them and the societies in which they resettled or to be dismissive of memory, but to consider that such factors will colour my reading of their memoirs and in turn affect my conclusions. In this thesis, the evacuee sources I use are primarily for information of on-the-ground details of the evacuation, as well as life in the settlement camps or resettlement countries. While I do include evacuee voices in this regard, I do not set them apart in a sort of methodological spotlight; the research questions do not demand it. I am also cautious not to tokenize the stories of evacuees; that is, to include them in the thesis simply for the sake of performing inclusivity or representation.

In the next section of the Introduction, I review literature related to key debates in the field of the history of humanitarianism, explain how they are relevant to my research, and explain the contributions this thesis is making to the literature.

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<sup>50</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Given Time: I. Counterfeit Money*, translated by Peggy Kamuf (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994); Mimi Thi Nguyen, *The Gift of Freedom: War, Debt, and other Refugee Passages*.

<sup>51</sup> Ewa Stańczyk, ‘Exilic Childhood in Very Foreign Lands: Memoirs of Polish Refugees in World War II’, *Journal of War & Culture Studies*, 11:2 (2018), page 138. See also Susan Crane, ‘Writing the Individual Back into Collective Memory’, *American Historical Review*, 102:5 (1997), pages 1372–1385; and Kerwin Klein ‘On the Emergence of Memory in Historical Discourse’, *Representations*, 69 (2000), pages 127–150.

## Literature Review

I begin the literature review with an examination of the major works on the history of humanitarianism and consider their authors' claims about its starting point. I do this to place the evolution of evacuations within the wider genealogy of humanitarianism in order to examine what influence they may have had on each other and to understand the importance of historical starting points for the construction of disciplinary and political narratives.

Michael Barnett's *Empire of Humanity: A History of Humanitarianism* is considered to be the first comprehensive historical account of humanitarianism. Barnett puts the birth of humanitarianism, at its earliest, at the international (pan-European) response to the 1755 Lisbon earthquake.<sup>1</sup> Another historian of humanitarianism, Silvia Salvatici, also plots its start there. Salvatici mentions two main factors for considering the response as a humanitarianism of modernity.<sup>2</sup> The first is that the sovereign of Portugal responded responsibly to the tragedy. King José I assumed the lead in relief to his subjects and in the reconstruction of the city, marking the first instance of centralised intervention. The second factor is the international response to the earthquake, in which foreign states sent cash, provisions, and material aid directly to the victims.

Despite this agreement on the Lisbon response as the start of modern humanitarianism, Barnett says that it was not until the late 18<sup>th</sup> century that humanitarian sentiment became an organised part of everyday life. He references Hannah Arendt's claims in agreement that it was the French Revolution and industrialisation that brought a rapid rise of a 'passion for compassion'.<sup>3</sup> The Industrial Revolution brought urbanisation and along with it wage labour, which disrupted traditional safety nets and familial structure. With this disruption came destitute and dislocated children. This in turn, Barnett writes, led to 'tremendous

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Barnett, *Empire of Humanity: A History of Humanitarianism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011), page 50.

<sup>2</sup> Silvia Salvatici, *A history of humanitarianism, 1755-1989: In the name of others*, translated by Philip Sanders (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2019), page 15.

<sup>3</sup> Barnett, *Empire of Humanity*, page 51.

religious experimentation' and in turn to evangelicalism and charity work.<sup>4</sup> He asserts that it was evangelicalism that was of paramount importance for the development of humanitarianism.

Barnett claims a causality in the development of humanitarian sentiment and its organisation that relies heavily on displaced children and religious charity. I agree with him on the importance of these two factors, though his claim has an omission. Great Britain's child migration scheme, which sent orphaned and destitute children from its urban centres to its growing overseas colonies, began in 1618 in the name of religious charity.<sup>5</sup> It was an international project with the purported aim of rescuing children from the dangers of urban poverty and redeeming them by transporting them overseas to a place of relative safety. Like many modern evacuation narratives, the official framing of this scheme was one of rescue, redemption, regeneration, and adoption. What was not publicly highlighted, much like modern evacuation narratives, was that this supposed rescue project, which lasted from 1618 to 1967, was tied to labour needs in an expanding empire. Barnett does not mention Britain's child migration scheme, nor does any other historian of humanitarianism that I have found. Though it transcends the parameters of this thesis, approaching the child migration scheme through the lense of humanitarian history could provide insight into how evacuation became thinkable. I plan to conduct future research on this topic.

Other scholars who work on topics related to the history of humanitarianism begin their investigations much later than do I, Barnett, or Salvatici. Bruno Cabanes places the origins of humanitarianism in the early interwar period, during which, he argues, humane impulses were organised into humanitarian action on a level not seen in pre-war transnational charity endeavours. This higher level of coordination

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<sup>4</sup> Barnett, *Empire of Humanity*, page 52.

<sup>5</sup> I group together the various English and Scottish organisations that sent children overseas from 1618 to 1967 and place them under a broad 'child migration scheme'. There was no governing body overseeing a unified project but rather a number of organisations that acted largely independent of each other. I also take liberty in grouping them as British, as the child migration scheme began eighty-nine years before the creation of the Kingdom of Great Britain and continued two hundred and sixty more years. For more, see Gillian Wagner, *Children of the Empire*; and Bean and Joy, *Lost Children of the Empire: The Untold Story of Britain's Child Migrants*.

was not only a product of logistical developments but of a ‘new psychic landscape’ built on international law rather than mere concern for groups of victims.<sup>6</sup> Cabanes also places great emphasis on the role military veterans’ organisations played in the development of modern humanitarianism in their efforts to tie human rights with dignity, seeing the veterans groups a precursors to modern-day NGOs. On the origins of humanitarianism, Didier Fassin contends that French humanitarian sentiment has its beginnings in religious charity organisations, but he does not offer a date. He writes that France’s social security and public healthcare systems stem from this same sentiment but that our ‘new moral economy’, in which we currently live, came into being ‘during the last decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century’.<sup>7</sup> His earliest case study in the book begins in 1968, with the birth of Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) and its practice of bearing witness (*témoignage*). Fassin seems to overlook humanitarianism’s long history, a problem that Eleanor Davey discusses in her book *Idealism Beyond Borders: the French Revolutionary Left and the Rise of Humanitarianism, 1954-1988*. Davey asserts that a short historical view of humanitarianism can lead historians and practitioners to a sense of a ‘perpetual present’ in which major emergencies are viewed as singular events that require novel responses with no input from the lessons of history. The ‘disconcertingly alien character of the past’, Davey argues, has dissuaded practitioners and scholars alike from investigating longer processes of political and intellectual change.<sup>8</sup> This has been the case with the few academics who have published work related to humanitarian evacuations. Perhaps even more at fault of this oversight are humanitarian practitioners, of which I was one and can attest.

Eleanor Davey, John Borton and Matthew Foley have also published work that investigates the birth and rise of the humanitarian system. Their extended working paper for the Humanitarian Policy Group, ‘A History of the Humanitarian System: Western Origins and Foundations’, pins the creation of the ICRC in 1863 as a critical

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<sup>6</sup> Bruno Cabanes, *The Great War and the Origins of Humanitarianism, 1918–1924* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2014), page 311.

<sup>7</sup> Didier Fassin, *Humanitarian Reason: A Moral History of the Present*, translated by Rachel Gomme (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), page 7.

<sup>8</sup> Eleanor Davey, *Idealism beyond Borders: The French Revolutionary Left and the Rise of Humanitarianism 1954-1988* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), page 7.

juncture in the history of modern humanitarianism, identifying this moment as humanitarianism's 'conceptual, operational and institutional root'.<sup>9</sup> Davey, *et al.* largely credit the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century's technological advances in transport and communication with allowing news of mass suffering to reach international audiences more quickly, which in turn inspired people and pressured governments to act in aid of the victims. The authors assert that with improved technologies in communication, information about war travelled more quickly and that 'governments had greater incentive to minimise its impact upon soldiers so as to contain discontent at home.'<sup>10</sup> I will expound on this in later chapters and show that technological advances in transportation and changing approaches to mass communication had profound effects on state-led humanitarian evacuations. Davey's article also covers medical evacuations, although briefly. They write that it was during the US Civil War (1861-65) that advances in medical transportation allowed for faster evacuation of wounded soldiers from the battlefield. Though they make no mention of civilians, this is one of the few general histories of humanitarianism that does mention evacuations.

Pater Gatrell's *The Making of the Modern Refugee* is also a work that mentions evacuations.<sup>11</sup> While responses to forced displacement are important in humanitarian aid, modern refugee support is a specific branch of humanitarianism that, Gatrell argues, began in the 20<sup>th</sup> century with the World Wars. I include this book here because it does, like the other works in this section, add to the conversation on the evolution of humanitarianism, of which civilian evacuation is an integral but largely overlooked phenomenon. Gatrell, like Barnett, Davey and Salvatici, discusses the impact of technological advancements in transportation and communication on international disaster response. These improvements were integral in the development of evacuations. Apart from Davey's article, Gatrell's is the only general history of humanitarianism I have come across that includes reference to evacuations. He briefly mentions the international responses to the

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<sup>9</sup> Eleanor Davey, *et al.*, 'A history of the humanitarian system: Western origins and foundations', *Humanitarian Policy Group Working Paper* (June 2013), page 5.

<sup>10</sup> Eleanor Davey, *et al.*, 'A history of the humanitarian system: Western origins and foundations', page 5.

<sup>11</sup> Peter Gatrell, *The Making of the Modern Refugee* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

evacuation of Spanish children in 1937 and of Greek children during the 1948-49 civil war. For these mentions of evacuations, Gatrell's account is rare in that it specifies evacuations as a phenomenon within the field of forced displacement. He does, however, fall victim to a confusion over terminology when he refers to the Finns internally displaced by wars with the USSR between 1940-47 as evacuees.<sup>12</sup> While this may seem a minor semantic issue, it is indicative of a wider misunderstanding in academia of what an evacuation is. This widespread misunderstanding carries risks, as I will illustrate in later sections.

Similar to Fassin, Kevin O'Sullivan looks to the late-1960s as the ascent of humanitarian NGOs' importance in transnational relief work, and how that turn helped create the modern humanitarian system. O'Sullivan writes that 'the lens was the market' for these NGOs, an approach that allowed NGOs to be integrated into the foreign aid industry as 'allies rather than pawns of the dominant order'.<sup>13</sup> Co-financing of aid projects during the period of 1967 to 1985, he asserts, led to closer relationships between NGOs and government foreign policy. O'Sullivan posits that this well-funded symbiotic relationship between NGOs and government paved the way for a particular group of Western international NGOs to be regarded as experts on relief and development. Despite this, he argues that the Western NGO sector's rise was 'a rejection of imperialism and a product of anti-colonial activism'. Assuming this to be true, we again can see the contradictory nature of the humanitarian aid industry in that, despite its purported roots in Western anti-colonial activism, it steered itself into a close collaboration with governments to become a tool of foreign policy in order to expand its services and ensure self-preservation. We are reminded of Hugo Slim's view of the moral elasticity that actors, methodology and context may allow for in the defining of what is considered humanitarian. We also see that the problem of mixed motives in aid and development is perhaps inherent and not novel.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Peter Gatrell, *The Making of the Modern Refugee*, page 254.

<sup>13</sup> Kevin O'Sullivan, *The NGO moment: the globalisation of compassion from Biafra to Live Aid* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), pages 112 and 11.

<sup>14</sup> Hugo Slim, *Humanitarian Ethics: A Guide to the Morality of Aid in War and Disaster*, pages 8 and 9.

While I do not commit to a deep dive into the origins of humanitarian thought, as doing so would mire this thesis on the history of humanitarian evacuation in the extensive work of political philosophers of the European Enlightenment, I do take a brief look at John Headley's book *The Europeanization of the World: On the Origins of Human Rights and Democracy* to consider how humanitarian thought came to influence Western political imagination, global ethics, and Liberal politics by the period under my investigation.<sup>15</sup>

Headley contends that the notion of human rights extending globally is a European concept in origin. He finds in Renaissance humanism's expansion of geographic knowledge and its mapmaking a symbolic meaning of an interconnectedness across the world. This new sense in Europe of rights extending to all people, even those considered alien, Headley argues is the origins not only of human rights but, what he calls, the Europeanization of the world, a concept of universal brotherhood borne from advances in European thought. This universalising notion of equal rights extending to all, he contends, is of European derivation and came to influence societies across the globe.

While Headley offers evidence of the evolution and importance of thought in Europe on universal ethics by citing the works of, among others, Ptolemy, Machiavelli, Immanuel Kant, Martin Luther, and Thomas Paine, he does not adequately explain away or defend Europe's long history of brutal colonialism and imperialism that is clearly in conflict with such ethics. His fawning interpretation of Western exceptionalism and European thought on democracy, political dissent, and human rights are influential on scholarship related to humanitarian ethics, however, and is thus included here.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> John M. Headley, *The Europeanization of the World: On the Origins of Human Rights and Democracy*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008). For more on the history of humanitarian ethics, see Slim, *Humanitarian Ethics: A Guide to the Morality of Aid in War and Disaster*. See also David Hume, *A treatise of human nature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2009), original work published 1739-40; Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (Indianapolis: Liberty Classics, 1982).

<sup>16</sup> For more see John M. Headley, 'Western Exceptionalism and Universality Revisited', *Historically Speaking*, 9:2, (November/December 2007), pages 9-12; and J.G.A. Pocock, Jack Goldstone, Constantin Fasolt, John M. Hobson, John M. Headley, and Robert E. Lerner in the 'Letters' section of *Historically Speaking*, Volume 9:4 (March/April, 2008), pages 50-53.

The literature review now moves to the first published work that considers humanitarian evacuation as a distinct phenomenon within a historical framework. Benjamin T. White is one of the few authors who have published on issues related to the history of humanitarian evacuations. White's article 'A grudging rescue: France, the Armenians of Cilicia, and the history of humanitarian evacuations' is the first to investigate evacuation as a specific topic of study within the historiography of humanitarianism.<sup>17</sup> He observes that while others have touched on evacuations incidentally when writing on related subjects, evacuation itself has not been properly investigated. White's article sets out to 'establish humanitarian evacuations as an object of historical enquiry.'<sup>18</sup> This thesis answers that call; the research questions guiding my study spring from the knowledge gaps White identified in his article.

White focuses his enquiry on the 1921 French-led evacuation of Armenians from Cilicia in modern-day Turkey, an early example of evacuation to which little scholarly attention has been given. This focus is consequential for two reasons: it illustrates that the early practice of humanitarian evacuation was not limited to children; and it contributes to our understanding of the 'context in which the practice of humanitarian evacuation emerged and the political logics that underpinned it.'<sup>19</sup> The Cilicia evacuation occurred two decades before the earliest case study I present, that of the Poles evacuated from the USSR. Though I do place the French-led Cilicia evacuation within a longer timeline of major evacuation projects that I discuss in the introduction, I do not take it as a case study because my focus is on the two states that have evacuated the greatest number: the US and UK.

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<sup>17</sup> Benjamin T. White, 'A grudging rescue: France, the Armenians of Cilicia, and the history of humanitarian evacuations', *Humanity*, 10:1 (2019).

<sup>18</sup> White, 'A grudging rescue', page 2.

<sup>19</sup> White, 'A grudging rescue', page 24.

There is a minor misconception, however, in the article's introduction in which White assumes validity in a statement by the former UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Sadako Ogata, who erroneously claimed that UNHCR's 1999 Humanitarian Evacuation Programme (HEP) had no precedent in the agency's history. In 1956, UNHCR participated in the evacuation of Hungarian refugees from Austria. This undoubtedly was a precedent. The similarity between HEP and the 1956 evacuation is clear: UNHCR collaborated with militaries of states party to the North Atlantic Treaty to evacuate civilians from politically precarious states - Austria in 1956 and Macedonia in 1999 - whose cooperation was crucial to Western geostrategic goals in Central and Eastern Europe. Ogata's misconception about the history of her own organisation and its practices stands as evidence of the historical amnesia suffered by humanitarian practitioners. It also serves as a reminder of the practical importance that historical research such as this can have on humanitarian operations.

A thread that runs through the Cilicia evacuation and all four of the case studies I present in the following chapters is that empire made these evacuation projects possible, in both the ambition of expanding empire and in empire's geographic reach. For the French, aspirations for an Armenian-controlled Cilicia under French influence led them to commit political and military blunders vis-à-vis the Ottoman Empire and the burgeoning Turkish nationalist movement, which resulted in limited choices of resolution for the French in Cilicia and their Armenian allies. The reach of the French military in the Near East, with its logistical network and methods of transport, made the journey of evacuation possible. In the case studies that follow, I demonstrate how the imperial ambitions and reach of the US and UK militaries made evacuations across continents practicable.

White makes important connections between the practices of civilian evacuation and military repatriation of prisoners of war, as well as the military-led repatriation and resettlement of refugees. By placing civilian evacuation within the broader timeline of states and the League of Nations facilitating mass population transfers, White suggests that mass displacement had become normalised by 1921. Furthermore, WWI-era advances in military logistics made mass evacuation

practicable. These points highlight the military origins of evacuation and refugee resettlement, and remind humanitarian scholars, as Critical Refugee Studies scholar Yen Le Espiritu emphasises, of the link between our field and the field of War Studies.<sup>20</sup> White does not go into depth on this topic in his article but instead points out a gap in our understanding of how relevant military techniques were transmitted from national militaries to humanitarian agencies. This thesis makes an original contribution to this question in sections that follow.

A point of paramount importance in understanding the evolution of evacuations is broached cautiously by White. His treatment of what I claim is an undeniable link between humanitarian evacuations and ‘wider strategic and diplomatic imperatives’ is prudent, based on his findings of a lack of an ‘immediate military element’ in the Cilicia evacuation.<sup>21</sup> I contend that such a lack does not disqualify an evacuation project from having far-reaching geostrategic goals. Instead I assert that state-led evacuations are one aspect of wider strategic ambitions, whether those ambitions concern strategic military advantages in the most extreme cases or simply protecting national prestige in the least. White identifies this topic, which he ties to the notion of responsibility and how it is constructed in relation to civilian evacuations, as an area for future research. I investigate responsibility in later sections and how it is constructed through manipulative communication strategies of ideological state apparatuses.

My thesis is grounded in White’s article. It was the inspiration for this study in that it identified gaps in our understanding of mass displacement and specifically of humanitarian evacuations, which prompted me to further investigate these gaps and in turn identify others.

Above I have shown how the evolution of evacuation fits into the wider historiography of humanitarianism. I show that evacuation is an overlooked area of

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<sup>20</sup> Yen Le Espiritu, *Body Counts: The Vietnam War and Militarized Refuge(es)* (University of California Press, 2014), page 17.

<sup>21</sup> White, ‘A grudging rescue’, page 25.

investigation in the study of forced displacement and that this thesis makes an original contribution because it is the first to take a long history approach to the study of the evolution of humanitarian evacuations. The next section considers the question of motives in regard to state-led evacuations. *Motives* is one of the three analytical categories I have set as an overarching framework for my examination of humanitarian evacuations. After motives, I consider rationale and outcomes.

I claim that evacuations largely signify a series of diplomatic and/or military failures, and that, in my case studies, the US and UK publicly reinterpreted and framed these failures to varying degrees to give them rationale as rescue narratives in order to deflect criticism of failures and to protect national prestige. The states performed the role of defender of innocents and bestower of liberty. In doing so, the US and UK strategically communed themselves with their objects of rescue, blurring the distinctions between aggressor and innocent in service to the geopolitical objective and the accompanying rescue narrative. By this I mean that the evacuating state brings the victim into itself, at times, as in my four case studies to varying degrees, physically by resettling the evacuee within its borders and making it a legal subject, and symbolically by bestowing the putative ‘gift of freedom’, an unpayable debt that carries a profound psychic burden on the recipient.<sup>22</sup> This assimilation of aggressor and victim is strategic in that it is meant to disarm critics and perpetuate foundational national myths, reinforcing cultural hegemony through the state’s collaboration with ideological state apparatuses in the form of NGOs. As agents of collective memory, the state can draw on this rescue narrative as evidence of their intentions should their intentions be called into question. When the hegemon’s rescue narrative is projected on to and psychically embedded in the rescued (as happens in third-country resettlement), it becomes a burden that can silence evacuee discontent lest they be called

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<sup>22</sup> Mimi Thi Nguyen, *The Gift of Freedom: War, Debt, and other Refugee Passages*. On the concept of the gift, see also Georges Bataille, *The Accursed Share, Vol. 1*, translated by Robert Hurley (New York: Zone, 1991); Jacques Derrida, *Given Time: I. Counterfeit Money*, translated by Peggy Kamuf (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994); Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies 1954*, translated by W.D. Halls (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2000).

ungrateful and undeserving. Thus, few insider critics remain, and the state's narrative remains largely intact.

In analysing motives of the evacuees, I question what material and ideational factors drove their actions. My research focuses on issues of geostrategy, including military preparedness, national prestige, and the expansion of political and economic hegemony. With the exception of national prestige, a subject on which few scholars have published, much has been written on these subjects, but not in relation to evacuations. Here I review what relevant scholarly secondary work has been done on these subjects to see how they might be applied in answer to my research questions and to identify what knowledge gaps exist. Much of my initial research focused on primary sources from military and diplomatic records found in US and UK government archives. I examined these documents with the goal of understanding the wider political contexts influencing decision making regarding evacuation and to gain insight into the debates between officials in order to discern possible motives. The archival documents gave me a sense that humanitarian operations in general and civilian evacuations in particular were employed by the British and American militaries for immediate material and strategic gains, as I demonstrate in the case study of the Polish evacuation of WWII, and for force projection, trialling new logistics systems, and, above all, recasting failures into palatable humanitarian projects as illustrated in the three other case studies. I mention this here because I have not found, and thus cannot include in the literature review, secondary sources that explore these topics. Because force projection and logistical development are elements of my argument about the instrumentalization of humanitarian evacuations, I point out that they are not covered in my review of secondary literature.

Here I consider Thomas Haskell's work 'Capitalism and the origins of the humanitarian sensibility'.<sup>23</sup> Haskell plots the start of modern humanitarianism at

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<sup>23</sup> Thomas L. Haskell, 'Capitalism and the Origins of the Humanitarian Sensibility, Part 1', *The American Historical Review*, 90:2 (1985).

1750 with the British and American movements to abolish the trans-Atlantic slave trade. He points to industrialisation and changes in the economic bases of the two states to explain the origins of modern humanitarianism, asserting that reform 'served the interests of the reformers and was part of the vast bourgeois project that Max Weber called rationalization', a worldview that favours formally rational criteria for decision-making over traditions and customs.<sup>24</sup> In a Marxist historical materialist approach, Haskell considers how industrialisation and the rise of capitalism within the economic bases of American and British societies influenced developments like humanitarianism within their ideological superstructures. In this way, he argues, the rise and spread of capitalism brought with it 'a change in the perception of causal connection and consequently a shift in the conventions of moral responsibility that underlay [...] humanitarianism.'<sup>25</sup> This change in perception was market-oriented, what Haskell calls 'the intensification of market discipline, and the penetration of that discipline into spheres of life previously untouched by it.'<sup>26</sup> When this market orientation deepened, it altered wider perceptions of causation, influencing the superstructure and in turn the reformer's underlying sense of responsibility for others and for his own self-interest. Haskell asserts that 'ideas and interests are interwoven at every level and in fact arise from the same source - a certain way of perceiving human relations fostered by the forms of life the market encouraged.'<sup>27</sup>

The change in orientation to a market economy that began in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, as Haskell asserts, may indeed have altered perceptions of our duties toward each other and in turn sparked a rise in a humanitarian sentiment. Parallels can be drawn with the humanitarian evacuations in my case studies. In later sections I demonstrate how, at times, evacuations of civilians by the US and UK were linked to labour needs in the two core countries.

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<sup>24</sup> Haskell, 'Capitalism and the Origins of the Humanitarian Sensibility, Part 1', page 340.

<sup>25</sup> Haskell, 'Capitalism and the Origins of the Humanitarian Sensibility, Part 1', page 342.

<sup>26</sup> Haskell, 'Capitalism and the Origins of the Humanitarian Sensibility, Part 1', page 342.

<sup>27</sup> Haskell, 'Capitalism and the Origins of the Humanitarian Sensibility, Part 1', page 343.

I move on to consider another motive in state-led humanitarian evacuations: national prestige. Though national prestige most often remains implicit, it is an important characteristic in the political psychology of international relations. Whether a nation state possesses it or does not, it is a motivating force in decisions of foreign policy. Steven Wood, who writes on the importance of prestige in international relations and national identity, places prestige at ‘the upper echelon on a theoretical scale of recognition’ for states and as ‘an element of continuity in human affairs’.<sup>28</sup> Prestige can be thought of as positional and relational, with dimensions both positive and negative. It may be earned through various means, including cultural, scientific, economic, and military accomplishments. As an element of continuity in human affairs, a young nation state may be driven by a desire to earn prestige and a place among core states, while older nations may find motivation to regain the prestige they believe they once possessed but unjustly lost in the present world order. Prestige is amorphous and open to interpretation, which makes it a useful instrument to inspire a society to rally around a cause when needed, for example in the case of a mass evacuation of orphans from a country invaded by one’s government.

National prestige can serve as a potent state symbol, strengthening national identity when, as William Bloom writes, a ‘condition in which a mass of people have internalised’ the state’s symbolic prestige and ‘act as one psychological group when there is a threat to, or the possibility of enhancement’ of that symbol.<sup>29</sup> No modern state possesses a given, unified ethnic base. Therefore, the nation - ‘the people’ - must be created, ideally in a way that allows the nation to continually produce itself.<sup>30</sup> National prestige is a means for this. It is a meeting place of communal ambition in which the ordinary citizen invests hope and a conceptual vehicle through which national aspirations can be expressed. Wood posits that the man in the street conceptualises an ideal image of the nation to which he belongs and in turn this image becomes an element of his psyche. Reinhold Niebuhr wrote about

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<sup>28</sup> Steven Wood, ‘Nations, national identity and prestige’, *National Identities*, 16:2 (2014), page 99.

<sup>29</sup> William Bloom, *Personal identity, national identity and international relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), page 52.

<sup>30</sup> Etienne Balibar, ‘The Nation Form: History and Ideology’, *Review (Fernand Braudel Center)*, 13:3 (Summer, 1990), page 345.

the ordinary citizen: ‘With his lust for power and prestige thwarted by his own limitations, [he] projects his ego upon his nation and indulges his anarchic lusts vicariously. So the nation is at one and the same time a check upon, and a final vent for, the expression of individual egoism.’<sup>31</sup>

The etymology of prestige uncovers another layer of the concept. Originating from the Latin *praestigiae*, which is defined by the Oxford English Dictionary as ‘conjuring tricks’, the meaning transferred into the French ‘illusion’ before the advent of the English usage of ‘widespread respect and admiration [...] on the basis of a perception of achievements or quality’.<sup>32</sup> As perception it is best situated in the posturing of soft power, a way to co-opt rather than coerce. Prestige in international relations is not an end in itself but occupies a position in government that, Wood writes, enables a state to govern ‘a vast, far-flung network of colonies’.<sup>33</sup> It is on this concept of national prestige that I focus as an important motive for state-led humanitarian evacuations. The desire to raise the prestige of one’s own nation-state relative to rivals in the international system is a form of nationalism, a purported civic virtue inculcated in us within the realm of the superstructure with the aim of strengthening state legitimacy. National identity and prestige can be viewed as conduits for the self-esteem of individuals who perform nationalism. In this performance the cultural hegemony of a state or system is recreated and preserved. In the cases of the UK and US, civic nationalism is a modern Liberal creation that can be framed by ideological state apparatuses as a citizen’s political duty. I question if, in heeding the call of the ISAs to support a state-led humanitarian evacuation, the civilian volunteer affirms the hegemon’s rescue narrative and thus their place within that rescuer/redeemer nation, a community of prestige with inferred ideals and aspirations.

These conception of prestige helps me understand the motives and publicised rationale of state-led evacuations that political leaders devised, and that mass

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<sup>31</sup> Reinhold Niebuhr, *Moral man and immoral society: A study in ethics and politics* (New York: Charles Scribner, 1932), page 93.

<sup>32</sup> Oxford English Dictionary, < [https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/prestige\\_1](https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/prestige_1) > [accessed 23 June 2022].

<sup>33</sup> Wood, ‘Nations, national identity and prestige’, page 100.

media and other ideological apparatuses cast in the language of rescue and redemption. When viewing the issue through this lens, the initial widespread public support for humanitarian evacuations in the US and UK becomes understandable. Prestige, as an ambiguous concept open to interpretation, can be manipulated by structures of government to play a role in forming identities and perpetuating nationalism.

In further consideration of the motives for state-led humanitarian evacuations, I turn to the Cold War and the instrumentalization by the UK and US of humanitarianism to counter Soviet global influence. The geostrategic use of humanitarianism during the Cold War has been well documented, though no scholars I am aware of have specifically considered civilian evacuations through this lens. Below I review scholarly work on the subject of humanitarian projects during that Cold War that provided a foundation for my thinking and that have identified gaps in knowledge.

Bethany Sharpe, in her PhD thesis ‘Transforming Emergencies: The Rise of a Humanitarian Ideology in the United States, 1959-1987’, asserts that a rapid growth of humanitarian ideology in the US coincided with the onset of the Cold War. Sharpe stresses the highly contingent nature of American responses to humanitarian emergencies, citing an opportunistic approach to crises in which a humanitarian response would paint the US in a positive light.<sup>34</sup> The rise of humanitarian thought in the US went along with the development of its industrial military complex. In line with Haskell’s argument on the parallel expansion of capitalism and rise of humanitarian thought, Sharpe believes that humanitarianism, militarism, and the struggle for the expansion of capitalist hegemony went hand-in-hand.<sup>35</sup> ‘The result’, she writes, ‘was a paradoxical cycle in which American military and foreign policy presence contributed to the rise of emergencies [in which] American citizens were asked to direct their humanitarian impulses towards ameliorating those

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<sup>34</sup> Bethany A. Sharpe, ‘Transforming Emergencies: The Rise of a Humanitarian Ideology in the United States, 1959-1987’ (PhD thesis, University of Kentucky, 2016), page 2.

<sup>35</sup> Haskell, ‘Capitalism and the Origins of the Humanitarian Sensibility, Part 1’.

emergencies.’<sup>36</sup> The case studies in my thesis illustrate how this paradoxical cycle functioned in the context of evacuations, with the state’s repressive and bureaucratic apparatuses feeding into and off of the work and narratives of NGOs, generating a symbiotic relationship in which RSAs created suffering, directly or indirectly, and contracted with ISAs to ameliorate that suffering, and together they framed it as rescue.

The Cold War also profoundly affected refugee admission policy in the US, and in turn humanitarian evacuations. Two books closely examine the effects of policy: *Calculated Kindness: Refugees and America’s Half-Open Door, 1945-Present* by Loescher and Scanlan, and *Americans at the Gate* by Carl J. Bon Tempo.<sup>37</sup> Both argue that the US’ Cold War geostrategic aims were the greatest influence on refugee policy and assert that asylum was nearly impossible to attain for displaced people fleeing non-Communist persecution. It was the US’ foreign policy agenda that played the lead role in deciding refugee admission during the Cold War period.

Loescher and Scanlan consider two events in which humanitarian evacuations were involved: the crises in Hungary in 1956 and in Vietnam in 1975. They claim that these two events were examples of a confluence of conditions that resulted in outcomes for the US and the refugees themselves that could be considered successful: an upsurge in public anti-Communist sentiment, a clear humanitarian goal to end immediate suffering, and low domestic resistance to the operation. Though the authors do not explicitly examine the aims or processes of the evacuations, they do offer insight into the political and social milieus in which the US military and NGOs operated and illustrate how the executive branch of government leveraged loopholes in immigration law to advance its foreign policy

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<sup>36</sup> Sharpe, ‘Transforming Emergencies: The Rise of a Humanitarian Ideology in the United States, 1959-1987’, page 12.

<sup>37</sup> Carl J. Bon Tempo, *Americans at the Gate: The United States and Refugees during the Cold War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008); Gil Loescher and John A. Scanlan, *Calculated Kindness: Refugees and America’s Half-Open Door, 1945 to the Present* (New York: The Free Press, 1986).

agenda. This relates to my research in that it shows the opportunistic approach by the federal government to use humanitarian evacuations to further US geostrategy.

Bon Tempo's treatment of the US' Cold War-era refugee admission policies largely parallels that of Loescher and Scanlan, though he goes further in-depth on some topics. The book's period of examination is 22 years longer than *Calculated Kindness*, but Bon Tempo essentially arrives at a similar conclusion: US refugee policy during the Cold War was shaped by foreign policy interests and the domestic socio-political environment of anti-communism. Bon Tempo goes deeper in his analysis of the domestic politics of restrictionists vs 'Liberalizers', and the gap between policy formulation and implementation. Both *Americans at the Gate* and *Calculated Kindness* give close analysis to the ideology of 'American-ness' and how this was strongly linked with anti-communism. Bon Tempo also gives closer examination to the executive branch's paroling of Hungarians in 1956-57 and suggests that this reshaped refugee admission to the US. Bon Tempo gives two pages to describe the process of evacuation for Hungarian refugees to the US in 1956-57, though he does not offer us an analysis or critique of the evacuation.

Adding nuance to the explanatory emphasis that Sharpe, Loescher and Scanlan, and Bon Tempo assign to the role of the Cold War in the US and UK's humanitarian endeavours are the works of Julia Irwin and Thomas Peak. Irwin, in her book *Making the World Safe: The American Red Cross and a Nation's Humanitarian Awakening*, contends that politics alone cannot sufficiently explain American interventionism but that a deeper understanding requires tracing the rise in the US of an international humanitarian sensibility. Discourses in the US of a civilizing mission and of progressivism, she argues, emerged at the turn of the twentieth century and led to a collective, national sense of responsibility to foreign suffering others. This sentiment was the catalyst for large-scale international humanitarian projects. Arguing that humanitarian projects originating in the US are psychologically linked to a 'distinctly imperial mindset', Irwin does not place special explanatory emphasis on the Cold War but does question whether international humanitarianism was a 'gentler variety of American cultural

imperialism’.<sup>38</sup> In her book’s focus on the American Red Cross, Irwin considers how the US government came to see that overseas aid was invaluable as a tool of statecraft and diplomacy, and how the US began to use private organisations for the diplomatic goals of government.<sup>39</sup> Despite this, Irwin insists that we should not abandon our humanitarian duty to suffering others.

To further consider counter arguments to the Cold War explanatory emphasis and to nuance my interpretive prism of hegemony, I looked at Thomas Peak’s article ‘Rescuing Humanitarian Intervention from Liberal Hegemony’. Peak contends that criticism of humanitarian intervention is often compounded by a ‘problematic conflation’ of it with Liberal intervention, what he defines as ‘the more expansive project of international social engineering and “Liberal hegemony” pursued by the United States and its principle [sic] allies since the end of the Cold War.’<sup>40</sup> Peak levels the charge that critics of intervention often fail to analytically distinguish Liberal from humanitarian motives. In following sections of this thesis I argue that, to various degrees, all four case studies of US- and UK-led evacuations demonstrate how humanitarian motives overlapped with motives of social engineering in the way of reorganising global sovereignty norms and of Liberal democracy promotion. While Peak argues that Liberal intervention is a practice that became embedded in the strategy of ‘Liberal hegemony pursued by the United States since 1993, abetted by many of its closest allies, the United Kingdom above all’, I assert that Liberal intervention in the form of state-led humanitarian evacuation became a tactic in the strategy of spreading Liberal hegemony as early as WWII and certainly by the post-WWII era as evidenced in my Hungary case study.<sup>41</sup> As demonstrated in my Hungary, Vietnam, and Kosovo case studies, the US and UK militaries were involved in creating and purportedly resolving - by evacuating - problems that led to forced displacement. Thus, I argue, in opposition to Peak’s assertion that there is a conceptual entanglement that leads to conflating humanitarian intervention with

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<sup>38</sup> Julia F. Irwin, *Making the World Safe: The American Red Cross and a Nation’s Humanitarian Awakening* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), pages 158 and 209.

<sup>39</sup> Julia F. Irwin, *Making the World Safe: The American Red Cross and a Nation’s Humanitarian Awakening*, page 1.

<sup>40</sup> Thomas Peak, ‘Rescuing Humanitarian Intervention from Liberal Hegemony’, *Global Responsibility to Protect*, 13:1 (2021), page 37.

<sup>41</sup> Thomas Peak, ‘Rescuing Humanitarian Intervention from Liberal Hegemony’, page 38.

purported humanitarian projects whose end goal is to expand Liberal hegemony, that ‘militarised social engineering which imposes Western values upon others’ has been part of the US and UK’s humanitarian endeavours since the post-WWII era, and that it, as I explain in the case studies, intensified during the Cold War.<sup>42</sup>

Marlou Schrover and Tycho Walaardt’s ‘The Influence of the Media on Policies in Practice: Hungarian Refugee Resettlement in the Netherlands in 1956’ looks at the government’s selection criteria and subsequent media framing that occurred in Dutch news service coverage of the 1956 evacuation of Hungarian refugees to the Netherlands.<sup>43</sup> The authors assert that press coverage was largely positive before the arrival of the first evacuees but then cooled soon after due to the perception that not enough women, children, or ‘freedom fighters’ had been resettled, which raised questions of deservingness among the Dutch public. Schrover and Walaardt conclude that the press coverage did influence policy, as the Dutch government made adjustments in selecting which refugees to evacuate in response to how the media covered the Hungarians’ resettlement.

I include this article here in the analytical category of *motives* instead of the category of *rationale* where I more closely examine framing because it is an example of who Western states favoured evacuating and how they benefitted more by receiving certain evacuees. The Dutch government’s selection of university students, skilled tradesmen, and miners over less employable people shows a clear orientation to resettle in response to national labour needs. Soviet critics of the 1956 evacuation of Hungarian refugees from Austria often pointed to the selection criteria of resettlement states as proof that the evacuation was merely a labour drive and that Western propaganda about liberty was hollow. The research by Schrover and Walaardt shows there is some truth to the Soviet criticism. The labour motive in the Dutch case, as in the cases of the US and UK, influenced how the

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<sup>42</sup> Thomas Peak, ‘Rescuing Humanitarian Intervention from Liberal Hegemony’, page 48.

<sup>43</sup> Marlou Schrover and Tycho Walaardt, ‘The Influence of the Media on Policies in Practice: Hungarian Refugee Resettlement in the Netherlands in 1956’, *Journal of Migration History*, 3:1 (2017), pages 22- 53.

government justified - or framed - its resettlement of Hungarian evacuees. The tropes of rescuing women and children, and of defending freedom fighters against Communist tyranny were employed, as these offered a much more compelling symbolism than filling labour needs. We will see other examples of this bait-and-switch tactic of selling evacuations to the receiving public later in the thesis.

I move now from the analytical category of *motives* of state-led humanitarian evacuations to the category of *rationale*. The works that follow have offered me insight into how states and their collaborating ISAs have cooperated to cast their evacuation projects as acts of rescue and redemption in order to garner the support of their publics.

In my early archival research it became clear that official government narratives and media coverage of civilian evacuations seemed to either depoliticise evacuations, most evident in the case of Operation Babylift in 1975, or hyper-politicise them, as best exemplified by the 1956 Hungarian evacuation. Contemporary US and UK news coverage, across case studies, often took the approach of privileging personal stories of suffering over macro level political analysis. Such an ahistorical approach, whether deliberate or not, helped administrations instrumentalize the wider conflicts in which the evacuations took place by allowing greater license for state apparatuses to mediate relations of power. Sympathetic coverage often included references of a state's purported allegiance to individual freedom and refuge from tyranny. These codes act as self-referential components of narratives that perpetuate national myths. In other words, established cultural norms expressed through the language of a mediated rescue serve to bolster, in a circular logic, the norms' symbolic significance in that culture and to reproduce relations of power within it. Take, for example, some of the names given by US and UK evacuators to their evacuation projects: Passage to Freedom, Safe Haven, Freedom Flights, Mercy Lift, and New Life. These contain codes - or themes - commonly found in language in both British culture and (especially) American culture: of freedom from foreign tyranny by way of geographic passage, of deliverance to and sanctuary in 'freedom', of redemption

and regeneration.<sup>44</sup> The scholarly works that follow offer my research a foundation on which I construct my analysis of the discourse and framing around humanitarian evacuations.

Mary Tomsic's article "'Happiness again": photographing and narrating the arrival of Hungarian child refugees and their families 1956-1957' explores the dichotomy between Australian government debates on the resettlement of Hungarian evacuees and the narrative of Australian NGOs and popular media on the Hungarians.<sup>45</sup> It is a study of how ideological state apparatuses helped to sell refugee resettlement to the public in order to gain support for large scale immigration projects to Australia.

In the case of 1950s Australia, immigration was motivated primarily by labour needs, or as the Deputy Chairman of the Immigration Planning Council phrased it in 1956, 'the refugee concept is behind us [and] we are in the migration business now for business reasons.'<sup>46</sup> The Ministry of Immigration believed this alone was not enough to convince the Australian populace to accept the Hungarians' resettlement and so began a public relations campaign to create a narrative, like the US and UK did, of giving succour to so-called freedom fighters and their families. Tomsic notes how images of Hungarian children were used to achieve this. Despite not featuring prominently in government discussions of the refugees, Hungarian children featured heavily in the photographs and newsreels of Australian media. Ministry of Immigration officials, Tomsic writes, staged a number of events for Hungarian children immediately after their arrival that provided photo opportunities for the press in which the newly arrived Hungarians were portrayed as 'good Australians'. She states that the agenda was to place them 'within the assimilatory public discourse of late 1950s Australia.'<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> See Tuveson's *Redeemer Nation: The Idea of America's Millennial Role* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980) and Spanos and Pease's *Redeemer Nation in the Interregnum: An Untimely Mediation on the American Vocation* (New York City: Fordham University Press, 2016).

<sup>45</sup> Mary Tomsic, "'Happiness again": photographing and narrating the arrival of Hungarian child refugees and their families, 1956-1957', *History of the Family*, 22:4 (2017).

<sup>46</sup> As quoted in Tomsic, "Happiness again", page 491.

<sup>47</sup> Tomsic, "Happiness again", page 501.

Australia's efforts to persuade their established European settler population to accept these new 'migrant refugees' is similar to the public relations push in the US in which the government contracted with Madison Ave advertising firms for similar goals of public acceptance and faster assimilation.<sup>48</sup> Tomsic calls this a 'governmentally endorsed vision of immigration' and claims that its message was also for international audiences as well - a sign of national prestige.<sup>49</sup> She asserts that children were most often used in the forefront of publicity campaigns like the one for the Hungarians because, in contrast to adults, children are widely perceived to be able to assimilate rapidly. Heteronormative families with children were needed in these government images, she writes, 'as a way to (re)produce an Australian way of life.'<sup>50</sup> It was a method of cultural creation through photography, a 'medium of interaction that shapes social processes of identity formation and cultural exchange'.<sup>51</sup>

I find Tomsic's insight into Australia's approach helpful in my investigation of ways in which the US and UK governments justified their evacuation projects and, in particular, how they rallied public support for the resettlement of Hungarian evacuees. Tomsic exposes a gulf that seems to reveal a disconnect between business priorities and what the government deemed to be public interest. She suggests there was less emphasis in Australia placed on the Cold War aspects of the Hungarians' resettlement - that Australia was joining in a Liberal struggle against the spectre of Soviet Communism - than in the US or UK narratives. This stands as evidence that the humanitarian label is ambiguous enough for states to offer differing narratives for the same operation and in so doing achieve their respective goals.

How Tomsic examines the 'development of particular cultural spaces in which meanings are made' through her study of the creation and representation of images of Hungarian refugees in Australia helps me analyse the social semiotic aspects of

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<sup>48</sup> See Carl J. Bon Tempo, *Americans at the Gate: The United States and Refugees during the Cold War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), page 77.

<sup>49</sup> Tomsic, "Happiness again", page 488.

<sup>50</sup> Tomsic, "Happiness again", page 488.

<sup>51</sup> Tomsic, "Happiness again", page 494.

US and UK-led evacuations.<sup>52</sup> By this I mean the production and dimensions of meaning in influencing individuals and society. Understanding the semiotic dimensions of ideological power in shaping individual and societal reactions to humanitarian projects is instrumental in answering the research questions regarding what cultural factors make humanitarian evacuations thinkable and how they came to be seen as a solution to perceived crises. As Tomsic shows, photographs of evacuees do not simply reflect historical moments but rather mediate historical forces that shape our understanding of politics. The images Tomsic discusses show children *after* the evacuation and as such do not directly show how evacuation became thinkable, but Tomsic's work does illustrate how the Australian government and collaborating media rationalised the evacuation of Hungarians and assimilated purported cultural norms.

I take Tomsic's approach further to consider performativity within the domain of the symbolic to investigate how the US and UK framed their actions to emphasise coded aspects of their cultures. Building on Tomsic's article as well as Richard Schechner's work on performativity, I consider the constitutive power of performing evacuations to understand how they fed into American and British formative myths, such as providing refuge from tyranny, safeguarding personal liberty, and bestowing democratic ideals upon other nations.<sup>53</sup> Looking into the link between evacuations and culture codes reveals a previously unexplored semiotic aspect of humanitarian evacuation that ties into national prestige and illuminates the state's attempt as agents of collective memory to craft rescue narratives from their military and diplomatic failures. This semiotic aspect of evacuations helps me understand how individuals became emotional participants in state-led evacuation projects and in turn perpetuated the cynical political instrumentalization of humanitarian relief.

Becky Taylor's article "'Don't just look for a new pet': the Vietnamese airlift, child refugees and the dangers of toxic humanitarianism' considers framing in line with Tomsic's approach. Taylor asserts that the evacuation of Vietnamese children to the UK in 1975 was not an isolated, one-off event but that it contains threads

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<sup>52</sup> Tomsic, "Happiness again", page 496.

<sup>53</sup> Richard Schechner, *Performance Theory* (London: Routledge Classics, 1988, 2003).

that run through modern Britain's relationship with refugees. Paramount to Taylor is the depoliticising focus on child refugees in otherwise highly politicised situations. The evacuation of Vietnamese children to the UK in 1975, she argues, was toxic in that children were 'used to make complex geopolitical situations tangible to, and manageable for, the British public.'<sup>54</sup> In her article, which she situates within humanitarian historiography, Taylor focuses on the Vietnamese evacuation and suggests that this theme deserves greater historical attention.

This political instrumentalization of charity during the 1975 evacuation of Vietnamese children is an example of how due process was forsaken in favour of a rash humanitarian urgency that saw many children sent away under the belief that they were orphans or had been abandoned by their families. We see the negative effects of this emergency humanitarian logic in other case studies as well, and to put it in a broader perspective, in the modern norm of humanitarian intervention. In the case of the Vietnamese children evacuation, Taylor describes this cavalier approach of the NGOs as a 'crusading mindset that positioned bureaucratic procedure as irrelevant in the face of virtuous humanitarianism.'<sup>55</sup>

Taylor's article draws semiotic parallels between the Vietnamese evacuation and the Kindertransport, examining how Britons spoke of themselves as caring and open-armed, while simultaneously being, by accounts of certain conservative politicians, 'a small and overcrowded country' and 'not a country of immigration'.<sup>56</sup> This 'myth of toleration', as Taylor calls it, was used for cynical political ends. Narratives of this type also occurred around the evacuations of the Poles, Hungarians, and Kosovars.

Taylor touches on aspects of child welfare in the UK to discuss the historical association between empire and charity. In so doing she places her argument in conversation with a longer history of British charity and child welfare. When we

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<sup>54</sup> Becky Taylor, "'Don't just look for a new pet': the Vietnamese airlift, child refugees and the dangers of toxic humanitarianism', *Patterns of Prejudice*, 52:2-3 (2018), page 208.

<sup>55</sup> Taylor, "Don't just look for a new pet", page 204.

<sup>56</sup> As quoted in Taylor, "Don't just look for a new pet", page 205.

place Taylor's article on the Vietnamese evacuation into conversation with other humanitarian histories concerned with the notion of childhood and innocence, we see that removing children from places deemed dangerous has long been justified as 'a legitimate and [...] benign act, offering the potential of a new life.'<sup>57</sup> Taylor, along with Arissa Oh, whose work is discussed in the following section, draw from the history of child welfare and adoption to analyse child protection in modern war.<sup>58</sup> Taylor cites the development in Victorian Britain of a legal definition of child and connects it with the protean, context-dependent ideas of innocence and redemption.

Much has been written on the spectacle that can be humanitarian action directed toward children.<sup>59</sup> By spectacle it is meant an aggrandised exhibition for public consumption. A few academics, such as Ayako Sahara and Yen Le Espiritu, have included evacuations in this literature but more often studies have covered food and medical supply airlifts that included the occasional impulsive evacuation of children, as in the case of the Biafran relief flights.<sup>60</sup> Lasse Heerten's book *The Biafran War and Postcolonial Humanitarianism: Spectacles of Suffering* examines how popular media privileged the emotional responses of Western viewers in its coverage of the conflict and asserts that this emotional bias led to rash decisions by Western aid workers regarding the welfare of Biafran children. These hurried decisions resulted in poorly planned and hastily executed evacuations, what

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<sup>57</sup> Taylor, "Don't just look for a new pet", page 199.

<sup>58</sup> Arissa H. Oh, 'From War Waif to Ideal Immigrant: The Cold War Transformation of the Korean Orphan', *Journal of American Ethnic History*, 31:4 (2012), 34-55.

<sup>59</sup> See Laura Briggs, 'Mother, Child, Race, Nation: The Visual Iconography of Rescue and the Politics of Transnational and Transracial Adoption', *Gender & History*, 15:2 (2003), 179-200; R. Charli Carpenter, *Innocent Women and Children: Gender, Norms and the Protection of Civilians* (London: Routledge, 2006, 2020); Liisa H. Malkki, *The Need to Help: The Domestic Arts of International Humanitarianism* (London: Duke University Press, 2015); Laura Suski, 'Children, Suffering, and the Humanitarian Appeal', in *Humanitarianism and Suffering: The Mobilization of Empathy*, ed. by Richard Ashby Wilson and Richard D. Brown (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 202-222; and McKenzie Wark, 'Fresh Maimed Babies: The Uses of Innocence', *Transition*, 65 (1995), 36-47.

<sup>60</sup> See Yen Le Espiritu, 'The "We-Win-Even-When-We-Lose" Syndrome: US Press coverage of the 25th anniversary of the "fall of Saigon"', *American Quarterly*, 58:2 (June 2006), 329-352; and Ayako Sahara, 'Theater of Rescue: Cultural Representations of US Evacuation from Vietnam', *The Journal of American and Canadian Studies*, 30 (2012). For Biafra, see Bonny Ibhawoh, 'Biafran Children, UNHCR, and the Politics of International Humanitarianism in the Nigerian Civil War', *African Studies Review*, 63:3 (2020), 568-592; and Mie Vestergaard, 'An Imperative to Act: Boarding the Relief Flights of the International Committee of the Red Cross in Biafra (1967-1970)', *New Political Science*, 40 (2018), 675-690.

Heerten calls ‘a benign form of child abduction’.<sup>61</sup> Despite the displacement and separation these ‘relief flight’ evacuations entailed, they came to be seen as an acceptable response by Western relief workers in Nigeria. Heerten argues that this testifies to the privileging of emotion in such responses.

I claim that when ideological state apparatuses, such as refugee charities, privilege the emotions of their aid workers in humanitarian response, they grant themselves a performative authority in which they can act with exception. By this I mean that their rescue project and its accompanying emotional narrative affords them ethical room for manoeuvre, allowing them license to bypass established operating procedures in purported service to protecting children. The performance of evacuations then has a reflexive constitutive power that helps legitimise the rescue narrative. To paraphrase Judith Butler on performativity, there is no doer before the deed.<sup>62</sup> There is no self before the performance of self. In our study of evacuations, especially the child-focused projects, the emotional, hastily planned ‘mercy flights’ complete the rescuer’s story of rescue from catastrophe and then deliverance to redemption, giving the narrative a political utility that ISAs and RSAs alike can utilise.

Considering a counter-argument to this critical interpretation, Becky Taylor stresses that while we should maintain a critical eye on relief operations, we must also remember that in general they are partly comprised of compassion and ‘expressions of common humanity’ when considered from the individual’s level.<sup>63</sup> Humanitarianism, she says in agreement with Caroline Shaw, has always been a ‘project of aspiration’ made up of many threads, sometimes seemingly disparate.<sup>64</sup> While state-led evacuation projects are most often opportunistic and contingent, the individuals involved may be motivated by compassion and aspirations of what

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<sup>61</sup> Lasse Heerten, *The Biafran War and Postcolonial Humanitarianism: Spectacles of Suffering* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), page 142.

<sup>62</sup> Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (London: Routledge, 1999), page 181.

<sup>63</sup> Taylor, “Don’t just look for a new pet”, page 201.

<sup>64</sup> Caroline Shaw, *Britannia’s Embrace: Modern Humanitarianism and the Imperial Origins of Refugee Relief* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), page 5; Taylor, “Don’t just look for a new pet”, page 201.

they believe ought to be done. That compassion, however, is engendered by dominant ideology.<sup>65</sup>

Becky Taylor, by examining the tension present in the Vietnamese evacuation between due legal process and logics of emergency, begins to consider how states of exception are utilised for humanitarian purposes. With this examination she contributes to the wider conversation within humanitarianism's history around Giorgio Agamben's scholarship on states of exception and how they have influenced emergency relief.<sup>66</sup> Taylor's focus is on the exceptional use of immigration policy by Home Office officials to allow the blanket clearance entrance of the Vietnamese children evacuated by the Daily Mail's 1975 so-called mercy flight in contradiction to established UK immigration procedures. We see similar tailoring of immigration laws in all four of my case studies, showing the state's ability to accommodate large groups of displaced people in emergencies when they see such movement as a benefit to them. In the case studies I illustrate how the US and UK governments modified immigration policies to make exceptions for their evacuations, proving that due process was often trumped by a purported humanitarian urgency that rendered established immigration policy moot.

Taylor identifies themes in her article that warrant further study, including comparative historical research on the motivations of private individuals who participate in humanitarian movements, the 'hollowing out' of political context from the objects of rescue, and the often problematic role of private voluntary organisations in the movement of refugees.<sup>67</sup> I examine these subjects across case studies and so make original contributions to the field of refugee studies.

McKenzie Wark's article 'Fresh Maimed Babies: The Uses of Innocence' shows us an example of the strategic commodification of pity in the campaign for the evacuation of Irma Hadžimuratović, or 'Baby Irma' as popular media dubbed her, a

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<sup>65</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (London: Verso, 1989), page 45.

<sup>66</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *States of Exception*, translated by Kevin Attell (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003, 2005).

<sup>67</sup> Taylor, "Don't just look for a new pet", pages 195 and 209.

gravely injured Bosnian child in need of urgent medical care, in which childhood innocence is used as a way to rally popular opinion around a cause.<sup>68</sup> In 1993, Irma's media savvy medical team bypassed the established procedures of seeking care from the UN and instead sought the media's help in advertising their aim of evacuating her abroad for treatment. Wark shows how this appeal to emotion using an injured child helped reach people outside of Bosnia who had not before been interested in the conflict. She asserts that the Baby Irma event illustrates a barter trade established in humanitarian assistance in which we on the outside are sent images of 'fresh maimed babies' and in return we send food and medicine. This abstract relationship, Wark argues, is repeated with every new crisis because 'compassion has no memory' and unless we as viewers are confronted with narratives on the taking away of childhood innocence, we are unlikely to actively support aid projects.<sup>69</sup>

An important point Wark makes is that oftentimes desperate images like the ones of injured Baby Irma in her hospital bed compel us to do something, no matter if it is clear what needs to be done. We are not, she writes, 'induced to act in any coherent way [but] merely to appear to act on behalf of innocence with a memorable display of compassion'.<sup>70</sup> This inclination can be seen in some examples of humanitarian evacuation, which in essence are the result of a chain of failures and leave nothing more than limitations and poor choices. Samimian-Darash and Rotem argue that in situations of violent crisis with all possible paths of action ambiguous, the logic of emergency demands us simply to act, akin to the goalkeeper's dilemma in Bar-Eli's action bias theory.<sup>71</sup> In this way we respond to

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<sup>68</sup> McKenzie Wark, 'Fresh Maimed Babies: The Uses of Innocence', *Transition*, 65 (1995).

<sup>69</sup> Wark, 'Fresh Maimed Babies', page 42.

<sup>70</sup> Wark, 'Fresh Maimed Babies', page 44.

<sup>71</sup> Michael Bar-Eli, 'Action Bias among Elite Soccer Goalkeepers: The Case of Penalty Kicks', *Journal of Economic Psychology*, 28:5 (2007), 606-621. Bar-Eli found that goalkeepers favour jumping left or right during penalty kicks despite the evidence that shows the optimal strategy is to stay centre. The explanation is that goalkeepers feel more intense negative emotions if they stay centre and fail than if they take extreme action and fail. They prefer to be seen as *doing something*.

present conditions instead of having a future-oriented ‘consequentialist ethic’, as Barnett phrases it.<sup>72</sup>

I have explained my analytical categories of *motives* and *rationale*, related scholarly writing, and how I apply and build on these sources in my explanation of the instrumentalization of state-led humanitarian evacuations. The final analytical category is *outcomes*. Here I review secondary scholarly work that helps me contemplate the possible enduring effects of the evacuation projects from the case studies and what memory activities around them might remain.

Firstly, I consider what others have written related to the influence of national foundational myths that states have used to frame humanitarian projects in attempts of self-exculpation. This line of investigation helps me understand enduring effects of the evacuation projects in my focus. I examine related scholarly work in recognition of how three of my four case studies demonstrate the US and UK governments’ uses of evacuations to recast failures within a nationalistic humanitarian paradigm and how this in turn helped them mask ulterior motives and maintain legitimacy.

Mimi Thi Nguyen, writing from a critical refugee studies perspective, explores relevant themes in her examination of the imbrication of US Liberal war and peace as it relates to Vietnamese refugees resettled in the US. She conceives of the American trope of the gift of freedom bestowed upon resettled refugees as a ‘national cultural fantasy of American benevolence.’<sup>73</sup> This Manifest Destiny-like propagation of an asserted freedom across cultures and space is indicative, Nguyen argues, of the US’ inheritance of ‘colonial and imperial schemata’ that overlap with Liberal governmentality.<sup>74</sup> Relating this concept to my thesis, I see the US - often

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<sup>72</sup> Limor Samimian-Darash and Nir Rotem, ‘From Crisis to Emergency: The Shifting Logic of Preparedness’, *Ethnos*, 84:5 (2019), page 911; Michael Barnett, ‘Humanitarian Governance’, *Annual Review of Political Science*, Vol. 16 (2013), page 393.

<sup>73</sup> Mimi Thi Nguyen, *The Gift of Freedom: War, Debt, and other Refugee Passages* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012), page 197.

<sup>74</sup> Nguyen, *The Gift of Freedom*, page 46.

the aggressor-rescuer - deeming its object anachronistic and in need of rescue, and then redeeming that object through the gift of freedom in the form of evacuation from periphery to core. In this way the victim is redeemed and, in a cynical and manipulative way, so too is its aggressor. It is a reflexive rescue in that the primary perpetrator of violence rescues and exculpates itself from its atrocities through its redeemed victim, the evacuee. Nguyen's conceptualisation of the gift of freedom for resettled refugees covers the intertwining of catastrophe and redemption in a similar way. It is relevant to my study in that catastrophe and redemption, through the evacuators' manipulation of moral argument, complete each other in nearly every story of humanitarian evacuation, and certainly in three of my four case studies, with the exception being the evacuation of Poles from the USSR, what I argue was the US and UK's first major humanitarian evacuation.

Elizabeth Hirschman's article 'Social contract theory and the semiotics of guns in America' is one of the few that connects social contract theory with the semiotics of violence.<sup>75</sup> Hirschman's work is relevant to my thesis because, in investigating social contract theory's relationship with the coded signs of gun ownership in the US, she weaves in a national formative myth that I also consider in relation to evacuations: resistance against tyranny. Hirschman proposes that two semiotic images play heavily in the origin myth of the US that relate to gun ownership. The first is that of pioneers living on a savage frontier, and the second is citizens rebelling against the tyranny of a far-off undemocratic government. Both of these semiotic images affirm a sanctity in individual gun ownership. Hirschman writes that the US military serves as a 'rhetorical vessel from which cultural ideals [...] are derived'.<sup>76</sup> This confluence of investigation on the cultural role of the military and the impact on citizens of semiotic imagery regarding state legitimacy helps me understand the public perception of government narratives surrounding evacuations. I assert that one of the main semiotic themes in US nationalist formative myths is opposing tyranny and that this theme has been injected into

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<sup>75</sup> Elizabeth C. Hirschman, 'Social contract theory and the semiotics of guns in America', *Social Semiotics*, 24:5 (2014), 541-556.

<sup>76</sup> Hirschman, 'Social contract theory and the semiotics of guns in America', page 541.

official narratives of the humanitarian evacuations across my case studies in an effort to rally national support.

Nguyen and Hirschman show us the range and power of semiotic affordance that nationalist myths can grant the enactors of purported emancipatory projects like humanitarianism. By *semiotic affordance* I mean the perceptual possibilities of symbols for the subject, the message receiver.<sup>77</sup> Both authors stress the idea that, as Nguyen writes, ‘violence and refuge are not separate but the same.’<sup>78</sup> For the evacuating state that has - in at least two of my case studies: Vietnam and Kosovo - wrought much of the violence from which it claims it rescued the evacuee, refuge demands protectionary violence. In a manner redolent of Munchausen by proxy, the state creates the affliction for which it offers relief. In this custodial approach, war can be seen not only as justified but necessary. Structural violence creates a demand for large-scale humanitarian projects, which in turn may be perceived by interpellated subjects as alleviating some of war’s excesses. This military-humanitarian symbiosis ensures the continuance of both.

War - and by extension, humanitarianism - can be an assurance of a nation’s perpetuity. Michael Barnett writes that the mixing of humanitarianism and nationalism has ‘elements of the sacred’.<sup>79</sup> He goes on to write that ‘if there is a symbol of cosmopolitanism and the possibility of moral progress, it is humanitarianism.’<sup>80</sup> Anthony Smith believes that ‘nationalism provides the sole legitimation of states the world over.’<sup>81</sup> These two elements are situated within the domain of the symbolic and have constitutive and regulative dynamics. It is here in this symbolic domain that the semiotic affordance that evacuation projects and their accompanying meaning- and memory-making narratives allow for resides, constructed by ideological apparatuses and affirmed by those of us who have

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<sup>77</sup> For more see Simone Morgagni, ‘Rethinking the Notion of Affordance in its Semiotic Dynamics’, *Intellectica*, 2011:55, 241-270.

<sup>78</sup> Nguyen, *The Gift of Freedom*, page 79.

<sup>79</sup> Michael Barnett, ‘Humanitarian Governance’, *Annual Review of Political Science*, Volume 16 (2013), page 384.

<sup>80</sup> Barnett, ‘Humanitarian Governance’, page 380.

<sup>81</sup> Ernest Gellner, ‘Gellner on nationalism’, *Prospect Magazine*, <https://www.prospectmagazine.co.uk/magazine/gellneronnationalism> [accessed 23 June 2022], paragraph 6. This article is based on an excerpt from a lecture given by Gellner in which Anthony Smith presents a lengthy introduction. Gellner is credited as the author though the quote is from Smith.

responded positively to the hegemon's hail to participate in the state's purported humanitarianism. We will see detailed examples of how the US and UK employed national formative myths in their reflexive rescue in the case studies that follow.

A concept related to national myths and reflexive rescue in my thesis is memory activities, referred to by various terms across the humanities and social sciences: memory studies, collective memory, public memory, etc. I employ this lens of memory within my wider framework of examining the effects of ideology on the practice of state-led humanitarian evacuations. I do this through critical discourse analysis in the reading of cultural texts associated with commemoration in the aim of understanding our present, active relationship with the history of humanitarian evacuations. Here I review the scholarly work on memory activities that have helped me conceptualise how states and their ideological apparatuses construct and frame the past related to evacuation projects in ways that affect our perpetual present.

To understand the impact of memory activities as they relate to the outcomes of the evacuations in our case studies, it is important to clarify the distinction between memory and history. Pierre Nora phrases the difference precisely when he writes that 'memory is a perpetually actual phenomenon, a bond tying us to the eternal present; history is a representation of the past.'<sup>82</sup> In this way memory is structured within the context of our social identity within the superstructure of the dominant ideology. Maurice Halbwachs writes that our memories are formed 'under the pressure of society' and it is here within this societal pressure that we 'recall, recognize, and localize [our] memories'.<sup>83</sup> Linking this back to my earlier ideas on national identity, we can see how memory activities constructed around nationalist myths can disguise the failures that resulted in civilian evacuations and how they can be used to turn material losses into ideological gains.

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<sup>82</sup> Pierre Nora, 'Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire', *Representations*, 26 (1989), page 8.

<sup>83</sup> Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, translated by L.A. Coser (London: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), pages 51 and 38.

Yen Le Espiritu interrogates public recollections of the US war in Vietnam, ‘the war with a difficult memory’, and claims that because the US lost the war and thus had no liberated country to showcase, the US popular media’s narrative invested in the images of the heroic American military veteran and the grateful resettled Vietnamese refugee in an attempt to justify US military action during the Second Indochina War.<sup>84</sup> In shifting focus away from the reasons it had lost the war, the US tried to protect its narrative - or its ‘national cultural fantasy’ - in which it rescues innocents from tyrannical rulers and redeems them through the gift of freedom simply by allowing them entrance.<sup>85</sup> Espiritu calls this ongoing attempt the ‘cultural legitimation of the Vietnam War.’<sup>86</sup>

Espiritu’s analysis entailed reading a range of US media coverage of the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the ‘fall of Saigon’ to find recurrent themes. She identified two overarching narratives that focused on US military veteran’s as ‘heroic Vietnam warriors’, and financially successful Vietnamese refugees.<sup>87</sup> Espiritu’s approach was novel in that it combined these two tropes, already critically examined but most often as separate phenomena, to illustrate that they are necessarily joined in dominant narratives in order to undergird American remembrance activities of the Vietnam War that cast the war as legitimate and just. Espiritu’s approach to studying the media framing of American combat veterans in relation to Vietnamese refugees exposes semiotic constructs that further US militarism. She shows how these constructs have been used to rescue the Vietnam War for Americans.<sup>88</sup>

This method of discourse analysis in the field of refugee studies has been employed in other studies of specific refugee populations but not in a comparative manner as I do across crises, refugee groups, time, and space. My longer-term historical approach helps us understand how framing and cultural memory interpellate us to participate in dominant narratives concerning humanitarian

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<sup>84</sup> Yen Le Espiritu, ‘The “We-Win-Even-When-We-Lose” Syndrome: US Press coverage of the 25th anniversary of the “fall of Saigon”’, *American Quarterly*, 58:2 (June 2006), page 329.

<sup>85</sup> Nguyen, *The Gift of Freedom*, page 197.

<sup>86</sup> Espiritu, ‘The “We-Win-Even-When-We-Lose” Syndrome’, page 340.

<sup>87</sup> Espiritu, ‘The “We-Win-Even-When-We-Lose” Syndrome’, page 330.

<sup>88</sup> Espiritu, ‘The “We-Win-Even-When-We-Lose” Syndrome’, page 330.

projects and how that process in turn promotes the reproduction of hegemonic relations of power. Critiquing narratives and memory activities in this way is necessary to identify, as Espiritu phrases it, ‘what is at stake in remembering and forgetting past events in certain ways and not others.’<sup>89</sup> Marita Sturken also makes this important point by saying that how we construct the memories of certain wars influences the ways we wage future wars.<sup>90</sup>

Espiritu’s analysis of US press coverage of the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the so-called fall of Saigon fits with Ayako Sahara’s work on the representations of the US evacuation from South Vietnam.<sup>91</sup> It is not only the semiotic process of instrumentalization that concerns Sahara as it does Espiritu, but what I term the *re-politicisation* of the refugees, that is their continued but reinterpreted use as codes symbolising US foundation myths around personal liberty and financial opportunity. For decades after their evacuation from South Vietnam and their resettlement in the US, the US government and popular media paraded them - sometimes literally, as in the case of Madalenna Lai in the Tournament of Roses Parade<sup>92</sup> - as examples of American freedom and opportunity, ready props in evidence of US benevolence. This was done, Sahara argues, not only to divert attention away from the US defeat in Vietnam but to enable the US to present itself *ad infinitum* as rescuer of the oppressed. This continued role is why Sahara refers to it as a theatre of rescue; it is a show ongoing. Here we see further evidence of what Pierre Nora calls the ‘perpetually actual phenomenon’ of memory.<sup>93</sup>

Humanitarian projects carry a wide semiotic affordance for the state and its ISAs that can be interpreted in a number of ways by participating private citizens who are motivated by an empathy - assuming the best, or a pity if we assume the worst - for the subjects of rescue. I keep this in mind as an analytical tool across my case studies where we see states promoting narratives of rescue and redemption

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<sup>89</sup> Espiritu, ‘The “We-Win-Even-When-We-Lose” Syndrome, page 332.

<sup>90</sup> Marita Sturken, *Tangled Memories: the Vietnam War, the AIDS epidemic, and the politics of remembering* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

<sup>91</sup> Ayako Sahara, ‘Theater of Rescue: Cultural Representations of US Evacuation from Vietnam’, *The Journal of American and Canadian Studies*, Issue 30 (2012), 55-84.

<sup>92</sup> Nguyen, *The Gift of Freedom*, page 1.

<sup>93</sup> Nora, ‘Between Memory and History’, page 8.

with little attention paid to the catastrophes that preceded the evacuations, certainly when the evacuating state was also an invader. I claim that it is through the rescue narratives and memory activities surrounding evacuations that states, as agents of collective memory, prepare their legacy by working to depoliticise the evacuations in order to deflect blame and place the burden of recovery on NGOs and individuals. These volunteers, in support of the state's projects, respond to the hegemon's ideological hail to participate in its ambitions.<sup>94</sup> This articulation of empathy effectively redeems the state and their citizens, the private volunteers involved in the state's geostrategic aims, absolving them of guilt by completing a story of redemption that wipes clear, or at least diminishes, the difficult memories of the suffering and destruction their state wrought in their names. In this way, the political instrumentalization of humanitarian evacuations is often crucial for a state to justify to the world and itself its international military actions. War narratives that rely on the pretext of rescue, redemption and regeneration cannot be complete without the figure of the rescued. The evacuee - in the role of the redeemed victim - has served this purpose for the US and UK often, as we will see in the following chapters.

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<sup>94</sup> This concept of the hail is based on Louis Althusser's work *On the Reproduction of Capitalism: Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses*, trans. by Ben Brewster (London: New Left Books, 1971; repr. London: Verso, 2014).

## Chapter 1: Evacuation of Poles from the Soviet Union, 1942-1948

### Introduction

On 12 March 1942, a convoy of twenty British military lorries set out on a journey from an orphanage in Ashgabat, Turkmen SSR to a newly prepared camp in the Princely State of Nawanagar, India. Their cargo: Polish children, forcibly displaced by Soviets from their homeland to the far reaches of the USSR in the aftermath of the joint Soviet-German invasion of Poland in 1939. All of the children were said to be orphans, their families either killed during the occupation of Poland or after the Soviets had deported them to prison camps in Siberia and the Kazakh SSR. The evacuees were 173 in all: 161 children and their 12 Polish adult caretakers, including Hanka Ordonówna, the cabaret star of pre-war Poland.<sup>1</sup> Theirs was a perilous route that took the convoy, with its Polish and Indian Sikh drivers, over the Kopet Dag mountain range into Iran, south through Afghanistan and present-day Pakistan, to Delhi, by train to Bombay, and eventually by road into Nawanagar on the Indian Gulf of Kutch.

This relatively small operation was significant in that it was the first overland evacuation of Polish refugees planned and supported by the British in what initially was called by its earliest planners ‘the Tashkent Scheme’.<sup>2</sup> Many more evacuations would follow, moving approximately 48,000 Polish women and children from the Soviet Union and eventually resettling them in twenty countries across the globe by

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<sup>1</sup> Kresy-Siberia Organisation’s Virtual Museum <<http://kresy-siberia.org/indie>> [accessed 23 June 2022]. I have used information from the Kresy-Siberia Organisation because it is one of the most extensive online repositories for archival material and testimonies related to Polish forced displacement during WWII. Though it is not rigorously academic, information from the organisation’s Virtual Museum should be examined because it contains personal narratives, photographs and film footage that I have not seen elsewhere, and because of when and by whom much of the information was produced (during the evacuations, sites of the evacuations and subsequent settlement, the evacuees and officials involved in planning and transporting). Polish survivors of the evacuations helped establish the organisation with the goal of creating a physical museum to tell the stories of the evacuees during the Polish *Gehenna* (‘ordeal’) of WWII. The localisation and authorship in the information presented in the Virtual Museum makes it a unique and important source.

<sup>2</sup> I use the designation *refugee* not in the sense of the legal definition found in the 1951 Refugee Convention but in a more general sense of one who has been forcibly displaced by conflict from their country of citizenship and/or nationality.

1948.<sup>3</sup> In return for the evacuation of Polish civilians, the USSR agreed to Polish, UK and US requests to release Polish men of fighting age from detention in work camps, train them in warfare, and organise them to fight alongside the Allies against the Germans. Approximately 70,000 Poles of fighting age were militarily evacuated from prison camps and sent to aid the Allied war effort.<sup>4</sup> Such a large-scale and wide-reaching evacuation conducted over six years during a time of global conflict was an enormous task whose historical study presents a set of related questions. In this case study I seek to understand and explain: the context these evacuations emerged in as a solution to the extraordinary suffering heaped upon the Poles by the Soviets, the political reasons for which these evacuations occurred, and what the UK and US had to gain in this massive undertaking.

While previous studies on the evacuation of Poles from the Soviet Union during WWII have taken mostly region-specific approaches to understanding its causes and impact, this chapter considers the evacuation within the context of international relations, examining how the UK, with the active military and diplomatic support of the US, used the evacuations as a way to strengthen their new military alliance with the Soviets after the signing of the Anglo-Soviet Agreement in July 1941. Moreover, it examines what role citizen activism in the UK and US may have played as the catalyst for the evacuations, as well as the effects fundraising within the global Polish diaspora had on the evacuations and eventual worldwide resettlement of Polish refugees.

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<sup>3</sup> This figure of 48,000 refers specifically to the evacuees, mainly women and children, who did not go on to serve in the military. Kresy-Siberia Organisation's Virtual Museum <<http://kresy-siberia.org/indie>> [accessed 23 June 2022]; Andrzej Szujewski, 'Near and Middle East: The evacuation of the Polish people from the USSR', in T. Piotrowski (ed.) *The Polish Deportees of World War II: Recollections of Removal to the Soviet Union and Dispersal Throughout the World* (London: McFarland, 2007) page 97. I have used two non-academic sources for the figure of 48,000 women and children evacuees because these are the sources I have found that estimate such figures over the temporal and geographic entirety of the evacuations. Archival material from the British Library was inconclusive on number evacuated and often mixed numbers of civilian evacuees with Polish soldiers destined for deployment. British officials debated the numbers to be evacuated with themselves and with Polish officials who pressed for higher numbers; the estimates ranged too wildly to be considered reliable. I have not yet found an academic source that considers the temporal and geographic whole of the evacuations. Instead, the authors whose work I have read have focused on geographical regions of settlement of the Polish evacuees, e.g. Bhattacharjee's study of Polish refugees in India, Kalaska and Suchcicka's study of Poles in Lebanon and Egypt, and Kesting and Lukas' study of Polish evacuees in Mexico.

<sup>4</sup> Andrzej Szujewski, 'Near and Middle East: The evacuation of the Polish people from the USSR', in T. Piotrowski (ed.) *The Polish Deportees of World War II: Recollections of Removal to the Soviet Union and Dispersal Throughout the World* (London: McFarland, 2007), page 99.

Using British, American, Soviet, and Polish government documents from the archives of the British Library, UK National Archives, the Polish Institute and Sikorski Museum, and the US National Archives, as well as memoirs of Polish evacuees, primary accounts from the Kresy-Siberia Organisation's Virtual Museum, and secondary sources, this chapter argues that the UK and US used the evacuation of Polish civilians from the USSR as a political instrument to solidify their newly formed military cooperation with the Soviets, further their geostrategic goals *vis-à-vis* Germany, and boost their national prestige. The Tashkent Scheme, as the evacuation was known in its earliest stages, is a significant juncture in the evolution of humanitarian evacuations because it is perhaps the earliest example of a state military taking control over what began as a citizen's initiative.

This thesis' main source of primary information came from the Kresy-Siberia Organisation's Virtual Museum. Evacuee accounts from the Kresy-Siberia Organisation's Virtual Museum were used because it is one of the most extensive online sources for archival material and testimonies related to Polish forced displacement during WWII. Though it is not rigorously academic, information from the organisation's Virtual Museum should be examined because it contains personal narratives, photographs and film footage that I have not seen elsewhere, and because of when and by whom much of the information was produced: during the evacuations, on sites of the evacuations and subsequent settlement, and by the evacuees and officials involved in planning and transporting. Polish survivors of the evacuations helped establish the organisation with the goal of creating a museum to tell the stories of the evacuees during what they refer to as the *Gehenna* ('ordeal') of WWII. The localisation and authorship in the information presented in the Virtual Museum makes it a unique and important source.

Reading primary sources I have found there to be two main categories that illuminate my study: work that deals with the governance of the evacuees, and work that focuses on memory-making and the experiences of evacuees. In this case study's historiography, I discuss the major works and themes within both of these categories.

## Historiography

I consider this evacuation within a longer genealogy of forced displacement within Imperial Russia and the USSR. Within both states the practice was applied during campaigns of economic development, political repression, and, in the case of the USSR, in collectivisation and atheisation. Considering these earlier instances of forced displacement, one can argue that displacement had become normalised by the time the Soviets expelled approximately one million Polish civilians from Poland and imprisoned them in camps in Siberia and the Kazakh SSR.<sup>5</sup>

Though no author whose work I have come across overtly claims a normalisation of forced displacement of Poles at Russian or Soviet hands, there is a substantial body of literature that illustrates the historical linkages of the exile of Poles to Siberia starting in the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century and ending in the late-20<sup>th</sup>. Piotrowski's work is the most rigorous, with his methodology including extensive archival and oral history research, though he does privilege personal testimony at the expense of a robust macro-level examination of political powers at play. He places the start of the major deportation of Poles in 1936 with Stalin's 'Great Purge', which was aimed at national minorities within the USSR and for which Poles accounted for roughly 10% of the total number of victims.<sup>6</sup> By the time of the 1939 deportations, the logistical infrastructure for such operations was well established. Piotrowski argues that these deportations were primarily punitive and repressive in nature, rather than being driven primarily by economics. On this, Leonczyk and Iwanow largely agree. They argue that the 1939 displacement was but the culmination of de-Polonization campaigns that began in 1934 with the signing of the

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<sup>5</sup> Piotr Wrobel, 'Class War or Ethnic Cleansing? Soviet Deportations of Polish Citizens from the Eastern Provinces of Poland, 1939-1941', *The Polish Review*, 59:2 (2014), page 19; Tadeusz Piotrowski (ed.) *The Polish Deportees of World War II: Recollections of Removal to the Soviet Union and Dispersal Throughout the World* (London: McFarland, 2007), page 5. Estimates of Poles deported to the USSR in 1939 range from roughly 300,000 to 500,000. See also Peter Gatrell, *A Whole Empire Walking: Refugees in Russia during World War I* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005); and Pavel Polian, *Against their Will: The History and Geography of Forced Migrations in the USSR* (Budapest: CEU Press, 2004).

<sup>6</sup> Tadeusz Piotrowski (ed.) *The Polish Deportees of World War II: Recollections of Removal to the Soviet Union and Dispersal Throughout the World* (London: McFarland, 2007), page 2.

German-Polish non-aggression pact.<sup>7</sup> These were, they contend, attempts to destroy Polish nationalism.

Popova takes the ‘perspective from the colonies’ approach in her work on the Imperial Russian system of mass deportation. She examines the overlap of exile and imprisonment in deportations and their relation to labour with focus on 19<sup>th</sup> century Siberian settlement camps to which Russian imperial officials sent more than 800,000 subjects, many of them Poles.<sup>8</sup> Popova challenges the view that exile was a simple procedure emanating from only central authorities and contends that the agency of local administrators played an important role in the settling of Russian hinterlands and thus in local economic development. Here there are parallels with my case study on the Poles in that decisions about evacuation made by Russia, the US and UK were based to varying degrees on labour needs: firstly, forced labour in Soviet camps, then the mass conscription of Poles for the newly-formed Polish Armed Forces in the East under Soviet command, as well as Polish labour in many of the resettlement countries.

An existing gap within the literature on the 1939 forced displacement of Poles by Soviet forces is a consideration of the involvement of other states in that and subsequent displacement. This thesis contributes to the literature an examination of the US and UK’s collaboration with the USSR in further displacing the exiled Poles. It may seem like a leap to imply that there is a conceptual linkage in the two displacements but displacement they both were. As we will see in the case study, no genuine attempt at mass repatriation to Poland was attempted. The adopted solution to the displacement suffered at the hands of the Soviets was further - and farther - displacement at the hands of British and American forces. The Soviets exiled the Poles to the periphery of the USSR, to what Stalin deemed as

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<sup>7</sup> Nikolay Iwanow, *The First Nation Punished: Poles in the Soviet Union, 1921-1939* (Warsaw: Polish Scientific Publishing House, 1991), page 344; Sergiusz Leonczyk, ‘The Policy of Industrialization, Collectivization and Atheization on the Example of Polish Diaspora of 1930-1940’, *The International History Review*, 43:6 (2021), page 1247.

<sup>8</sup> Zhanna Popova, ‘Exile as Imperial Practice: Western Siberia and the Russian Empire’, *International Review of Social History*, 63:26 (2018). See also Zhanna Popova, ‘The Two Tales of Forced Labour: Katorga and Reformed Prison in Imperial Russia (1879-1905)’, *Almanack*, 14 (2016).

‘underpopulated’ regions: Siberia, Kazakh SSR, and Turkmen SSR.<sup>9</sup> The Allies then evacuated them to the edges of their empires: India, Rhodesia, New Zealand, jointly-occupied Iran, and Mexico among many others. In both the Soviet and US-UK cases it was the reach of empire that made the extent and breadth of the displacement possible. In both cases, as we will see, labour and population engineering played roles in the decisions to move the Poles.

Another tendency within the historiography on Polish exiles in Soviet Russia is the focus on individual stories of exiles/evacuees rather than on international politics.<sup>10</sup> Historians, especially those of Polish descent in the US and UK, who have written on the subject have focused on the ethno-cultural aspects of the Soviet deportations, often with the aim of compiling evidence of Communist atrocities. When these scholars do investigate the US/UK-led evacuation using first-person accounts, a rescue narrative undergirds their examination. While personal accounts are profoundly important in understanding forced displacement committed by repressive state apparatuses they are but a component of what is in motion. What the literature on the Polish deportations and subsequent evacuation needs is further examination of Soviet, as well as British and American imperial aspirations. In this case study I aim to contribute to the literature a macro-level inquiry into the international geopolitical forces at play in the evacuation of Poles from the USSR.

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<sup>9</sup> Alexander Statiev, ‘Soviet Ethnic Deportations: Intent Versus Outcome’, *Journal of Genocide Research*, 11:2-3 (2009), 244.

<sup>10</sup> For examples on the tendency towards micro-level studies that privilege personal testimony, see: Anuradha Bhattacharjee, *The Second Homeland: Polish Refugees in India* (London: Sage, 2012); Tadeusz Piotrowski (ed.) *The Polish Deportees of World War II: Recollections of Removal to the Soviet Union and Dispersal Throughout the World* (London: McFarland, 2007); Marek Jan Chodakiewicz, ‘The fate of the Siberian exiles: On the methodology of studying ethnic cleansing in the Soviet-occupied Polish lands’, *The Institute of World Politics, Papers & Studies*, Fall (2006); Bradley E. Fels, ‘Whatever Your Heart Dictates and Your Pocket Permits: Polish-American Aid to Polish Refugees during World War II’, *Journal of American Ethnic History*, 22:2 (2003), 3-30; Matthew Kelly, *Finding Poland: From Tavistock to Hruzdowa and Back Again* (London: Random House, 2010); Robert W. Kesting, ‘American Support of Polish Refugees and Their Santa Rosa Camp’, *Polish American Studies*, 48:1 (1991), 79-90; Jared Knoll, ‘Memories of WWII refugees live on in Tanzania’, *Speak*, 28 November 2013.

## *Precedents*

The history of the modern practice of humanitarian evacuation predates the Tashkent Scheme; a clue to a previous civilian evacuation can indeed be found in its name. After Germany invaded the USSR in June of 1941, the Soviets implemented an internal evacuation scheme in which they transported civilians - or encouraged them to flee - from the frontlines to areas of relative safety within the Soviet Union. One of the primary destinations was Tashkent in the Uzbek SSR. Historian Rebecca Manley explains the significance of Tashkent in her book *To the Tashkent Station* when she writes that Tashkent became a destination for these evacuees due not only to its relatively mild winter climate but, perhaps almost as important, because of a book written by a survivor of the 1921 famine that describes Tashkent as an oasis full of food. Alexander Neverov's *Tashkent - City of Bread* sold widely when it was published in 1923, and was soon translated into Polish, Yiddish, and Hebrew.<sup>11</sup> *Tashkent - City of Bread* describes the journey of a Russian boy who flees the famine-stricken Volga region to search for food in Tashkent. Manley asserts that through Neverov's book, Tashkent entered the Russian imagination as a place of refuge. I can only speculate if this book also held a place in the imagination of Barbara Vera Hodge, the person who my research suggests was the catalyst for the Polish evacuation. The book may have been an inspiration for the evacuation plan that Hodge later referred to as 'this scheme of mine'.<sup>12</sup> Hodge naming her plan 'the Tashkent Scheme' seems to suggest that she was at least aware of previous evacuations that had passed through the Uzbek city.

Manley places this WWII Soviet internal evacuation scheme within the context of Stalin's total war approach, claiming that it was distinct from other civilian evacuations that happened in Soviet states after the 1917 revolution.<sup>13</sup> Manley does not see a practical or conceptual link to the impromptu evacuations that occurred in response to the revolution-era violence that often targeted wealthy families in

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<sup>11</sup> Rebecca Manley, *To The Tashkent Station: Evacuation and Survival in the Soviet Union at War* (London: Cornell University Press, 2013), page 142.

<sup>12</sup> British Library, India Office Records and Private Papers, 'Proposed Evacuation from Russia to India of Polish women and children', Collection number 110/N1, Reference number IOR/L/PJ/8/298.

<sup>13</sup> Manley, *To The Tashkent Station: Evacuation and Survival in the Soviet Union at War*, page 7.

major Russian cities and Jewish families residing in the Pale of Settlement. However, Floyd Miller's work on the American Red Cross' involvement in aiding displaced Russians during the 1920s shows a link in the Russian practice of sending civilians away from areas of conflict with the intention to return once the threats subsided.<sup>14</sup>

For many of the evacuees from this era, however, the threats did not subside. Internal displacement set them adrift to be consumed by other ravages, such as hunger and disease. What followed for a few though were humanitarian evacuations out of the USSR initiated by private charitable organisations based in the West. An example is the evacuation of 'Ochberg's orphans', in which Isaac Ochberg, a South African Jew, transported approximately 200 Jewish children he personally selected from orphanages in the Pale of Settlement to South Africa in 1921.<sup>15</sup> This shows that there is also an *international* humanitarian connection between the Russian evacuations in the immediate post-revolution and WWII periods.

Prior to WWII there occurred a number of evacuations of civilians in the Near East that were facilitated by Western individuals and private voluntary organisations (PVOs). The crumbling of empires in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century brought with it massive dispersals of populations. The disintegration of the Russian Empire, for example, was marked by forced displacement of entire ethnic and religious communities, some into the Near East, while Turkish nationalists waged violent campaigns against Christians during the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire and largely expelled them from territory that would become the Republic of Turkey. Within this context operated Western charity organisations, mainly Christian, who provided relief for the displaced. Evacuations transpired in extreme situations of violence against civilians in the Near East, such as in Smyrna in 1922 when Asa K.

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<sup>14</sup> Floyd Miller, *Wild Children of the Urals* (New York: E.P. Dutton and Co, Inc., 1965).

<sup>15</sup> During the initial phase of the evacuation, Ochberg sought and received the assistance of the apartheid South African government under Prime Minister Jan Smuts. With government funds, Smuts matched donations given to the operation by the Cape Jewish Orphanage. Bertha Epstein, *This was a Man: the Life Story of Isaac Ochberg, 1879-1937* (Wanneroo: David Solly Sandler, 2014). It is worth noting that Ochberg, upon his death, bequeathed his fortune to the Jewish National Fund, a Zionist organisation whose aim was and is still to seize Palestinian land and annex it to the Zionist state. We see here not only Ochberg's orientation towards identity politics/religious tribalism but also his inclination towards demographic engineering and settler colonialism.

Jennings, an American administrator of the Smyrna YMCA, spontaneously organised a group of Americans to assist Christian refugees fleeing Turkish attacks. The group was comprised of educators from US-sponsored schools in the area, as well as executives from American tobacco and oil companies who had business interests in Turkey.<sup>16</sup>

## Case Study

In the wake of the joint invasion of Poland in September 1939, German and Soviet forces began a violent campaign of de-Polonization, attempting to quash potential resistance and take full control of the land and industry. In operations in the east of Poland, the Soviet secret police, the NKVD, rounded up between 300,000 and 500,000 Poles and deported them to work camps in remote areas of the USSR.<sup>17</sup> Whole families were deported, including children and the elderly. The NKVD executed tens of thousands of Polish military officers, government officials, the broadly understood 'elite', and journalists, among others. In the 1940 Katyn Massacre alone, the NKVD murdered an estimated 22,000 Poles in the span of a few weeks, including nearly half of the Polish officer corps.<sup>18</sup>

The tide of war quickly changed when, in June of 1941, Germany broke the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact and attacked Soviet forces. In turn, the Soviets joined the Allied Powers' efforts against Germany. With British political support, the Polish Government-in-exile, headquartered in London since the invasion of 1939, seized the opportunity and negotiated an agreement with the Soviets that allowed for the

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<sup>16</sup> James Barton, *Story of Near East Relief (1915-1930), an interpretation by James L. Barton* (New York: McMillan, 1930), page 154; Lou Ureneck, *Smyrna, September 1922: the American Mission to Rescue Victims of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century's First Genocide* (New York: HarperCollins, 2016), page 88.

<sup>17</sup> Scholarship differs on the number of Soviet deportation operations in the east of Poland, and the number of Polish deportees. There are a number of factors that hinder a more accurate estimate, with access to Soviet archives being a major obstacle. See Marek Jan Chodakiewicz, 'The Fate of the Siberian Exiles: On the methodology of studying ethnic cleansing in the Soviet-occupied Polish lands', *Glaukopis*, no. 4 (2006): 74-96; Piotr Wrobel, *The Devil's Playground: Poland in World War II* (Quebec: Price-Patterson Ltd, 2000); and T. Piotrowski (ed.) *The Polish Deportees of World War II: Recollections of Removal to the Soviet Union and Dispersal Throughout the World* (London: McFarland, 2007).

<sup>18</sup> George Sanford, 'The Katyn Massacre and Polish-Soviet Relations, 1941-43', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 41:1 (2006), 95-111. See also J.K. Zawodny, *Death in the Forest: The Story of the Katyn Forest Massacre* (New York: Hippocrene Books, 1988).

creation of a Polish military force from among the displaced Poles deported to the USSR who had been languishing in Soviet gulags. As a result of the Sikorski-Mayski Agreement, the Polish Armed Forces in the East and West were created on 30 July 1941.<sup>19</sup> Initially and informally referred to as Anders' Army after its commander General Wladyslaw Anders, the paramount objective of the Polish Armed Forces in the East was to defeat the Germans and regain sovereignty over Poland.<sup>20</sup> The agreement granted 'amnesty' - so-called by the Soviets - to all Poles in Soviet detention, not only those of military age and ability, which allowed for large numbers to leave the USSR for refuge abroad.<sup>21</sup> On General Anders' insistence and with Prime Minister Churchill's explicit support, the Sikorski-Mayski Agreement included conditions for the release and evacuation of all Polish citizens who had been forcibly deported from Poland by the Soviets.<sup>22</sup> Because of the German invasion of Russia, the Soviets had their own displacement crisis to contend with. As Hodge phrased it in her *Proposed Scheme for the Organisation of the Transfer of Polish Families from Russia to India*, 'the Soviet government will undoubtedly have its own refugee problems, and therefore may be willing to facilitate the evacuation from the country of other nationalities.'<sup>23</sup> These were some of the events that made possible the evacuations to come.

Mrs Barbara Vera Hodge of the Edinburgh chapter of the Women's Voluntary Services for Civil Defence developed a scheme to evacuate the Poles suffering from famine conditions in the work camps of the Soviet Union and to transfer them to

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<sup>19</sup> The Polish Institute and Sikorski Museum, *Documents on Polish-Soviet Relations, 1939-1945*, 'No. 7, Statement on Polish-Soviet relations made by Deputy Commissar Vyshinsky to the representatives of the English and American Press, Moscow, May 6, 1943', Sov. For. Pol., 1/203; Piotr Wrobel, 'Class War or Ethnic Cleansing? Soviet Deportations of Polish Citizens from the Eastern Provinces of Poland, 1939-1941', *The Polish Review*, 59:2 (2014), 19-42.

<sup>20</sup> Compelled by the spirited insistence of archivists at the Polish Institute and Sikorski Museum, I must choose accuracy over brevity and will thus refer to Anders' Army as the Polish Armed Forces in the East.

<sup>21</sup> Norman Davies, *Trail of Hope: The Anders Army, An Odyssey across Three Continents* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2015).

<sup>22</sup> The Polish Institute and Sikorski Museum, *Documents on Polish-Soviet Relations, 1939-1945*, 'No. 7, Statement on Polish-Soviet relations made by Deputy Commissar Vyshinsky to the representatives of the English and American Press, Moscow, May 6, 1943', Sov. For. Pol., 1/203; Wieslaw Rogalski, *The Polish Resettlement Corps 1946-1949: Britain's Polish Forces* (Warwick: Helion & Company, Ltd., 2019), page 31.

<sup>23</sup> British Library, India Office Records and Private Papers, 'Proposed Evacuation from Russia to India of Polish women and children', Collection number 110/N1, Reference number IOR/L/PJ/8/296.

refuge abroad.<sup>24</sup> From the available historical record, it seems Mrs Hodge was the catalyst for the proposal of what she coined, and what became referred to among British officials, as the ‘Tashkent Scheme’, though the proposal did not specifically mention the Uzbek city. She submitted her recommendations for the British government’s consideration in or around August 1941. In it she outlined her idea ‘for the transfer and care of Polish exiles now in Russia, and their establishment in India’.<sup>25</sup> It is not clear in which capacity she submitted the proposal or to whom at first, but what is evident in the flurry of correspondence that soon followed, Hodge was a person of influence well aware of the political realities - but only some of the logistical challenges - that lay before her and her proposal.

Whatever her personal motivation may have been, it is evident from her tenaciously worded proposal that she felt tasked with the monumental challenge of saving the Poles from annihilation and that she wanted others to join her in the cause. Evidently not one to mince words, her letter stressed ‘that the aim of this proposal is the preservation of the Polish race’.<sup>26</sup> In her proposal Hodge placed blame only on the Germans for the suffering of the Poles, stating that there were ‘systematic efforts of the German government to annihilate the Polish race’.<sup>27</sup> It seems unlikely but perhaps Hodge was unaware of the Soviets’ culpability in the persecution of the Poles. More likely is that it was a deliberate attempt to sanitize the details of Soviet deportation and detention of Poles in order to safeguard the new Anglo-Soviet alliance while still assisting Polish refugees.

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<sup>24</sup> British Library, India Office Records and Private Papers, ‘Proposed Evacuation from Russia to India of Polish women and children’, Collection number 110/N1, Reference number IOR/L/PJ/8/296. Founded in 1938 as the Women’s Voluntary Services for Air Raid Precautions, and currently known as the Royal Voluntary Service, the organisation’s mission during WWII was to assist civilians during air raids and to help evacuate British children from cities to the countryside to escape the danger of bombardment. The archival record indicates, via the letterhead on which she wrote about her proposal to evacuate Poles, that Hodge was a member of the organisation. Hodge’s clout is evident from the archival record. It appears that she was the catalyst for the initial plan to evacuate Polish civilians from the USSR. However, there is a dearth of information in sources I have consulted about who Hodge was (official title, social standing, etc.) and how she came to be involved in this evacuation scheme.

<sup>25</sup> British Library, India Office Records and Private Papers, ‘Proposed Evacuation from Russia to India of Polish women and children’, Collection number 110/N1, Reference number IOR/L/PJ/8/296.

<sup>26</sup> BL, IOR, ‘Proposed Evacuation from Russia to India of Polish women and children’, Collection number 110/N1, Reference number IOR/L/PJ/8/296.

<sup>27</sup> BL, IOR, ‘Proposed Evacuation from Russia to India of Polish women and children’, Collection number 110/N1, IOR/L/PJ/8/296.

Hodge's proposal is not only remarkable for its strongly emotional wording but also because it contains in great detail many recommendations that were later implemented. One of the first of these recommendations, which was later undertaken by soldiers in the Polish Armed Forces in the East, was reconnaissance to find and gather Polish refugees scattered throughout the hinterlands of the USSR in order to assemble them at specific points on the Soviet-Iranian border and from there prepare for evacuation.<sup>28</sup> Receiving centres in Karachi and Quetta were proposed to house the evacuees on their long journey, with suggestions that British colonial officials in these areas might house the refugees temporarily in their own homes if space permitted.<sup>29</sup> It is not clear from the archival record if colonial officials did shelter any evacuees but Hodge's recommendation is noteworthy in that it shows possibility for empathy between Polish refugees and British officials.<sup>30</sup> It may also show that the scale of the problem was incomprehensible to Hodge at the time, as accommodating a stream of tens of thousands of evacuees in the houses of colonial officials was surely unsustainable.

In addition to these and other logistical recommendations, Hodge offered guidance on fund-raising and publicity for the scheme. She suggests the formation in India of a branch of a Polish relief fund to be headed by the Viceroy of India.<sup>31</sup> Hodge also understood the importance of public relations, writing in her proposal that 'if publicity were skilfully handled, the generosity of the public, both European and Indian, would respond willingly to an appeal on behalf of the Poles [...] who

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<sup>28</sup> BL, IOR, 'Proposed Evacuation from Russia to India of Polish women and children'. After the so-called amnesty, many Poles, suspicious of Soviet intentions, left the gulags independently to seek warmer climes in the Turkmen SSR. There they were fed and sheltered by locals or, for the unaccompanied children, were cared for in orphanages.

<sup>29</sup> BL, IOR, 'Proposed Evacuation from Russia to India of Polish women and children'.

<sup>30</sup> Considering this suggestion along with Hodge's appeal to save the 'Polish race' makes me contemplate how significant race and ethnicity were in inspiring her – and others – to rally around the Polish cause. I found letters in the archives of the British Library between British officials on the subject of the evacuations of the Poles in which they express concern that the British government's treatment of the Polish refugees would be seen by other refugee groups as being preferential because of their race. There are a few discussions on the Polish evacuees' race and class in the archives. Besides the discussion of perceived preferential treatment, there were also discussions about the economic class of the Poles being evacuated, with East African colonial governors attempting to block the settlement of Polish evacuees in their territory because they did not want more poor Whites. While race may not have been as powerful a motivating factor in the UK's support of the evacuation as potential rapprochement with the Soviets, it nonetheless seems to have played a part.

<sup>31</sup> There were a number of relief funds for Polish refugees at the time, many with similar names. It is unclear which Hodge refers to specifically.

have suffered in the cause of freedom'.<sup>32</sup> On this point she makes a number of recommendations for a small organising committee to be established, and for its members, Poles and Britons familiar with Polish language and culture, to travel and promote the scheme, garnering support, it is suggested, from Catholic organisations and the media. Hodge, striving to appeal emotionally to potential benefactors, goes so far as to recommend that Polish Countess Sophie Golejewska and her two children be promoted as 'an example of the type of family' the scheme would help.<sup>33</sup> The majority of Hodge's written proposal concerns itself with public relations as opposed to actual logistics.

The India Office archives of the British Library contain one other clear record of Hodge's efforts: a private letter, dated September 19<sup>th</sup> (presumably 1941), written to a friend simply addressed as 'K' in which Hodge writes of her experience promoting her proposal and thanking K for her/his encouragement and all the interest s/he has 'taken in this scheme of mine'.<sup>34</sup> Hodge wrote of the positive reception among Polish officials of her proposal, stating that she had heard 'through Polish friends in the Polish Foreign Office that "l'affaire marche"', and that a number of Polish ministers and military officers thought evacuation practicable.<sup>35</sup> The letter implies a connection between Hodge and Lord Tweeddale, stating that 'Lord Tweeddale had a reply from the Polish Ambassador in which he said he was definitely interested in the scheme, and was putting it in the hands of

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<sup>32</sup> BL, IOR, 'Proposed Evacuation from Russia to India of Polish women and children', Collection number 110/N1, Reference number IOR/L/PJ/8/297.

<sup>33</sup> BL, IOR, 'Proposed Evacuation from Russia to India of Polish women and children', Collection number 110/N1, Reference number IOR/L/PJ/8/297. I have tried to find more information on Countess Sophie Golejewska so that I may better understand what motivating factor class played in Hodge's promotion of the evacuation scheme, but I have so far been unsuccessful other than to find a birth record of a Zofia Golejewska. It seems Hodge knew Golejewska or was aware of her through a personal connection, as Hodge through her writing purports to know the 'type of family the Golejewskas are'. With a countess in the family, they are likely to have been of wealth and influence. A representation in film or a news article of such a family in dire circumstances may have run counter to the more common representation of poor refugees and thus may have been able to elicit sympathy and financial donations from affluent sectors of British society. It is also worth noting that a Polish refugee family was widely promoted in such a manner, though it was not the family suggested by Hodge. It was a family - real or staged - named Kowalski. The British Pathé news service featured the family in a propagandistic report titled 'Poles in Persia', which serves an example of hyper-idealised, proactive, and 'deserving' refugees. See <https://www.britishpathe.com/video/poles-in-persia>.

<sup>34</sup> BL, IOR, 'Proposed Evacuation from Russia to India of Polish women and children', Collection number 110/N1, Reference number IOR/L/PJ/8/299.

<sup>35</sup> BL, IOR, 'Proposed Evacuation from Russia to India of Polish women and children', Collection number 110/N1, Reference number IOR/L/PJ/8/298.

people competent to deal with it'.<sup>36</sup> In the letter, Hodge also wrote of a meeting she had with Captain Shankar Hayat Khan, the son of the Minister for Punjab, during which Khan expressed that India, 'particularly [...] the Mohammadans, would warmly welcome the opportunity to provide refuge for Polish orphans evacuated from the Soviet Union.'<sup>37</sup>

The letter is significant in that it is the earliest record in the archives about the evacuations to come. This may stand as strong evidence that a private individual was the catalyst for one of the most significant evacuations of civilians during World War II. Anuradha Bhattacharjee, a historian whose research has largely focused on the experience of Polish refugees in India, wrote that a 'study of subsequent documents [...] shows that Vera Hodges' [sic] suggestions formed the backbone of the methods and administration of the evacuation and camp facilities for the Poles'.<sup>38</sup> If Hodge was in fact a member of the Women's Voluntary Service as the letterhead on her correspondence to K suggests, she may have had experience in evacuating British children from English cities to rural areas in order to escape German bombardment; Hodge could have applied that experience to her proposal to evacuate Poles from the USSR. Further research on Hodge might help to deepen our understanding of what contributions she made to the protection of Polish refugees during WWII and could present an engaging case study on the role of citizen advocacy in the evolution of humanitarian evacuation.<sup>39</sup>

Though Hodge's proposal stated there were roughly 30,000 Polish woman and children in need of evacuation, by late-1941 it became clear that the number of

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<sup>36</sup> BL, IOR, 'Proposed Evacuation from Russia to India of Polish women and children', Collection number 110/N1, Reference number IOR/L/PJ/8/298.

<sup>37</sup> BL, IOR, 'Proposed Evacuation from Russia to India of Polish women and children', Collection number 110/N1, Reference number IOR/L/PJ/8/299. I have not found in the archives any other mention of a meeting between Hodge and Captain Khan, nor is it mentioned when or where this meeting occurred. The meeting does hint that Hodge travelled to promote her evacuation scheme. As for Khan's assertion that Muslims especially would welcome the opportunity to give refuge to Polish orphans, there may have been a political logic to it, as Khan was a prominent member of the Muslim League party that advocated for a separate Muslim-majority state (future Pakistan). By agreeing with Hodge's scheme and pointing out that Muslims would be especially keen to assist, he may have been attempting to garner favour with the British government for his future political endeavours. This is speculative.

<sup>38</sup> Anuradha Bhattacharjee, 'Polish Refugees in India, During and After the Second World War', *The Sarmatian Review*, 33:2 (2013), 1743-1756.

<sup>39</sup> I had planned to visit the archives of WVS, now the Royal Voluntary Service, in Devizes, Wiltshire but the Covid 19 pandemic forced a postponement.

Poles in need of protection was larger. After soldiers in the Polish Armed Forces in the East gathered information and evacuee numbers from the various sites throughout the USSR where displaced Poles were found, the Polish government reported to the British that there were nearly 1.5 million Poles in the Soviet Union facing harrowing conditions and in desperate need of assistance.<sup>40</sup> The British Red Cross reacted quickly, providing food and medical relief for some displaced Poles inside the Soviet Union, but the situation was mammoth and quickly worsening.

Overwhelmed by the extent of the crisis and with the British government slow to act, likely due to fear of offending the Soviets and jeopardizing the new Anglo-Soviet alliance, Polish officials set out to procure assistance from the US and India. They enlisted the help of delegates from the Polish Red Cross who travelled to India and the US to raise awareness about the condition of Poles in the USSR and to raise funds for their assistance. One of the delegates was Kira Banasinska, wife of the Polish Consul General to India, Eugene Banasinska, who would prove instrumental in the implementation of the plan a few months later when the first overland evacuation took place.<sup>41</sup> Meanwhile, the Polish government-in-exile was negotiating with the British government over the proposed evacuations, pressing UK officials to evacuate larger numbers of refugees and imploring swifter action.

Another factor in the increasingly complex political environment of the period was the joint Anglo-Soviet invasion and occupation of Iran. The UK and USSR invaded Iran in August 1941 in order to exploit its oil reserves for the war effort against the Axis Powers and to use Iran's railway system to transport materiel to the fronts in the region.<sup>42</sup> The occupation and possibility of German attacks made the already multifarious task of planning an evacuation through Iran more challenging, as hosting large groups of refugees in transit camps in Iran might aggravate relations with the Iranians and would expose the Poles to the dangers of German bombardment. British military officials in Iran, though an occupying force,

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<sup>40</sup> Wrobel, *The Devil's Playground: Poland in World War II* (Quebec: Price-Patterson Ltd, 2000).

<sup>41</sup> Anuradha Bhattacharjee, 'Polish Refugees in India, During and After the Second World War', *The Sarmatian Review*.

<sup>42</sup> Shaul Bakhash, 'Britain and the abdication of Reza Shah', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 52:2 (2015), 318-334.

seem to have been concerned not only with the safety of the Polish evacuees in transit but also with the Iranian government's attitude towards hosting, even temporarily, large numbers of refugees. India Office archives contain letters between British officials in which they discuss how to avoid gravely embarrassing their relations with the Iranians by ensuring them that the Poles' stay in Iran 'would be of the shortest possible duration'.<sup>43</sup>

The primary concern of the British military in Iran, however, was most likely the extraction and shipment of oil from the fields of Abadan to the active fronts in the region. To this end, more troops were needed to protect the oil fields, and so the Polish Armed Forces in the East were given their first mission in October of 1941.<sup>44</sup> The Polish Armed Forces in the East had until that time been receiving training under Soviet advisors, but after being tasked with defending Iran's oil facilities, units were transported by ship from Turkmenbashi on the Caspian Sea to the Iranian city of Bandar Anzali.<sup>45</sup> There Soviet authorities prepared a temporary camp of canvas tents for the arriving Polish soldiers. A few months later, in March 1942, the tents would shelter Polish civilian evacuees on their way to settlement camps in India.<sup>46</sup>

Towards the end of 1941, British authorities were still working to implement Hodge's proposal and seeking to raise funds and garner wider political support. By the end of October 1941, Secretary of State for India and Burma, Leo Amery, had approved the evacuation plan.<sup>47</sup> Amery assisted in the establishment of the Polish Children's Maintenance Fund, started with an initial contribution of 50,000 rupees

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<sup>43</sup> BL, IOR, 'Proposed Evacuation from Russia to India of Polish women and children', Collection number 110/N1, Reference number IOR/L/PJ/8/48.

<sup>44</sup> Norman Davies, *Trail of Hope: The Anders Army, An Odyssey across Three Continents* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2015).

<sup>45</sup> Kresy-Siberia Organisation's Virtual Museum <<http://kresy-siberia.org/indie>> [accessed 23 June 2022].

<sup>46</sup> Kresy-Siberia Organisation's Virtual Museum <<http://kresy-siberia.org/indie>> [accessed 23 June 2022].

<sup>47</sup> Anuradha Bhattacharjee, 'Polish Refugees in India, During and After the Second World War', *The Sarmatian Review*.

from the Viceroy of India, Indian princes, and wealthy citizens including the Tata family of Mumbai, owners of the Tata Group.<sup>48</sup>

Two obstacles to the implementation of the evacuation scheme by late-November of 1941 were financing such a large operation and finding suitable locations in India that could accommodate the 30,000 refugees estimated by Hodge. Donations in support of the plan slowed after the initial interest, and with no financial commitment from the UK or US by this time, the Polish government headquartered in London was forced by circumstances to pledge to cover all the future costs of evacuation and subsequent upkeep, though they would have to do so on credit from His Majesty's Government.<sup>49</sup> As for locations, there were a few Indian princes - leaders of semi-autonomous Princely States - who had offered land but British colonial officials at first rejected their offers, perhaps in fear of the Princely States developing direct ties with foreign governments, compromising colonial power over the princes.<sup>50</sup>

With the pledge from the Polish government in December 1941 to fund all costs associated with the evacuations of Polish civilians, negotiations intensified. Polish delegates met with Soviet authorities to seek permission to evacuate Polish orphans from the USSR. In a letter dated 30 December 1941, J. Rucinski, an official of the Polish government-in-exile, wrote to E.A. Walker in the UK Foreign Office that 'the Soviet authorities have agreed to the transfer of 500 Polish children from [the] USSR to India'.<sup>51</sup> With permission to transfer the orphans granted by the Soviets and credit to fund the evacuation given to the Polish government by HMG, the only missing component was finding accommodation in India for the first proposed evacuation of 500 Polish orphans from Ashgabat, Turkmen SSR.

With these assurances in place, the leader of the Princely State of Nawanagar, His Highness Maharaja Jam Saheb Sri Digvijaysinhji Ranjitsinhji (the

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<sup>48</sup> Bhattacharjee, 'Polish Refugees in India, During and After the Second World War'.

<sup>49</sup> BL, IOR, 'Proposed Evacuation from Russia to India of Polish women and children', Collection number 110/N1, Reference number IOR/L/PJ/8/8.

<sup>50</sup> BL, IOR, 'Proposed Evacuation from Russia to India of Polish women and children', Collection number 110/N1, Reference number IOR/L/PJ/8/181.

<sup>51</sup> BL, IOR, 'Proposed Evacuation from Russia to India of Polish women and children', Collection number 110/N1, Reference number IOR/L/PJ/8/269.

Jam Saheb), offered to construct housing, schools, recreation facilities, and a hospital on his private land in the seaside town of Balachadi to host the 500 children and their Polish adult caretakers. British colonial officials in India knew the Jam Saheb well. He was a decorated twenty-year veteran of the British Army, having served as a Lieutenant in the 125<sup>th</sup> Napier's Rifles and Egyptian Expeditionary Force in the early 1920s.<sup>52</sup> At the time he offered his support to the evacuation scheme in January 1942 he was also a member of the UK's War Cabinet.<sup>53</sup>

The British approved and sent initial funds to India so that construction could begin. The Jam Saheb's land already hosted a resort, many buildings of which would soon be occupied by Polish refugees. With local labour and supplies, additional buildings were constructed, including a hospital and cinema. The contributions of the Jam Saheb stand as testimony to his empathetic reaction to the plight of the Polish orphans. His creation of a refuge was an act that is memorialized even today in Poland, with streets, squares, and schools throughout the country named after him.<sup>54</sup> Mention is also made of the 'Munificent Maharaja' in a number of popular articles and films.

As the Soviets and British assigned more missions in places outside Iran to units of the Polish Armed Forces in the East completing their training in the USSR, its commander, Wladyslaw Anders, placed a demand to evacuate Polish women and children along with his soldiers as their units left the Soviet Union for staging in Iran. Hodge's scheme was slow to be implemented, and tens of thousands of Poles, still trapped in Soviet states with only basic assistance from the Red Cross and

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<sup>52</sup> Bhattacharjee, 'Polish Refugees in India, During and After the Second World War'.

<sup>53</sup> BL, IOR, 'Proposed Evacuation from Russia to India of Polish women and children', Collection number 110/N1, Reference number IOR/L/PJ/8/44; Ian Copeland, *The Princes of India in the Endgame of Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997). I have not found details on the Jam Saheb's position or title within the Imperial War Cabinet.

<sup>54</sup> Bhattacharjee, 'Polish Refugees in India, During and After the Second World War'.

empathetic locals, were suffering deplorable conditions, many dying from starvation, typhus, and tuberculosis.<sup>55</sup>

One of the earliest groups of Polish civilians to be evacuated from the Soviet Union - relatives of the Polish Armed Forces in the East soldiers who had managed to reunite - arrived in Soviet-occupied Bandar Anzali, Iran by ship from Turkmenbashi on 24 March 1942.<sup>56</sup> The Soviets temporarily housed them in tents in a reception centre originally built for Polish troops. Conditions were not ideal. Many of the Poles wanted to leave but were initially barred by the Soviets, reasons for which are unclear in official records.

It is possible that the Soviets barred the evacuees from leaving so that the Soviets could use them as leverage in case they wanted to pressure the Polish government for more Polish troops, or for reasons of protecting Soviet prestige if the full scale of Polish suffering in the USSR were to be attested to by survivors. The reasons are unclear, though a clue lies in a telegram to 'Foreign Office No. 1447 Minister of State', dated 17 November 1942 from Sir Reader Bullard, then British Ambassador to Iran. In it, Bullard wrote that 'the Soviet government have stopped all further evacuation of children from Askabad on the grounds of prestige and are unlikely to allow the evacuation to recommence until January 1943, if then.'<sup>57</sup> Though this mentions the children from Turkmen SSR, it may provide a hint as to why the Soviets would bar evacuees from traveling unhindered from reception centres in Iran to the settlements prepared for them in other countries. The Soviets may have thought that their national prestige could have been damaged if news of their treatment of Poles became widely known.

One way to leave the reception centre, however, was to enlist in the Polish Armed Forces in the East. Many did join in Iran perhaps in the hope of escaping direct Soviet supervision.<sup>58</sup> As members of the Polish Armed Forces in the East were deployed throughout the Middle East and Europe, their family members who

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<sup>55</sup> Kresy-Siberia Organisation's Virtual Museum <<http://kresy-siberia.org/indie>> [accessed 23 June 2022].

<sup>56</sup> Kresy-Siberia Organisation's Virtual Museum <<http://kresy-siberia.org/indie>> [accessed 23 June 2022].

<sup>57</sup> BL, IOR, 'Proposed Evacuation from Russia to India of Polish women and children', Collection number 110/N1, Reference number IOR/L/PJ/8/125.

<sup>58</sup> Kresy-Siberia Organisation's Virtual Museum <<http://kresy-siberia.org/indie>> [accessed 23 June 2022].

had been evacuated languished in temporary camps in northern Iran. By mid-1942, however, the British and Americans would evacuate them as well.

Meanwhile, planning continued on the logistics for the overland evacuation of the 500 orphans allotted to the Jam Saheb's settlement in India.<sup>59</sup> The ultimate arrangement was worked out by Kira Banasinska, one of the delegates from the Polish Red Cross who had travelled to India and the US to raise awareness about the condition of Poles in the USSR and to raise funds for their assistance.<sup>60</sup> A route was secured for twenty British Army lorries to bring food and medical supplies paid for by the Polish government-in-exile with credit from HMG overland from bases in Iran to Polish refugees assembled in the Turkmen SSR. On their return they were to bring the 500 children and their adult caretakers from an orphanage in Ashgabat to the Jam Saheb's settlement.<sup>61</sup>

By 12 March, however, only 161 children had been assembled at the orphanage for evacuation.<sup>62</sup> The available archival records do not clarify why there were fewer than the planned 500 but secondary sources hint that a Japanese advance toward West Bengal may have diverted attention and supplies.<sup>63</sup> Regardless, the convoy set out with the 161 children and 12 adult caretakers on the arduous journey. They travelled south on roads built by the British and Americans for the US Lend-Lease program with the Soviets, through Afghanistan and present-day Pakistan, and then to Quetta for a two-week quarantine. From Quetta they travelled by lorry again to Delhi where they boarded trains to Bombay. Once in Bombay they stayed in a large villa rented for them by the Polish government because construction in Nawanagar had not been completed.<sup>64</sup> They remained

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<sup>59</sup> BL, IOR, 'Proposed Evacuation from Russia to India of Polish women and children', Collection number 110/N1, Reference number IOR/L/PJ/8/269.

<sup>60</sup> Bhattacharjee, 'Polish Refugees in India, During and After the Second World War'.

<sup>61</sup> Kresy-Siberia Organisation's Virtual Museum <<http://kresy-siberia.org/indie>> [accessed 23 June 2022].

<sup>62</sup> BL, IOR, 'Proposed Evacuation from Russia to India of Polish women and children', Collection number 110/N1, Reference number IOR/L/PJ/8/264.

<sup>63</sup> Matthew Kelly, *Finding Poland: From Tavistock to Hruzdowa and Back Again* (London: Random House, 2010); Piotr Wrobel, *The Devil's Playground: Poland in World War II* (Quebec: Price-Patterson Ltd, 2000).

<sup>64</sup> BL, IOR, 'Proposed Evacuation from Russia to India of Polish women and children', Collection number 110/N1, Reference number IOR/L/PJ/8/205; Bhattacharjee, 'Polish Refugees in India, During and After the Second World War'.

there until 16 July 1942 when the Jam Saheb was ready to receive them.<sup>65</sup> More convoys of orphans arrived from Ashgabat in September and December of 1942, increasing the number of evacuees in the Nawanager settlement to nearly 800.<sup>66</sup>

Despite this series of evacuations and the improvements it brought for the 800 Polish orphans living in Nawanager, conditions for many thousands of other displaced Poles were worsening. News about the widespread starvation and inhuman conditions the Polish refugees were suffering in reached London by mid-1942.<sup>67</sup> The Polish government rallied for more support from the British. In a letter dated 6 June 1942, British Foreign Minister Anthony Eden wrote to British Secretary of State for India Leo Amery:

‘The Poles are pressing us hard over their civilians in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics whom they represent as living in harrowing conditions, diseased and threatened with death from starvation. Our own reports on the condition of those Poles who have reached Persia recently confirm much of what the Poles tell us, and the Polish Ambassador in Kuibyshev has begged his Government to appeal to us and the United States to help in removing 50,000 Polish children’.<sup>68</sup>

By this time, many Polish able-bodied adults who had been deported to the Soviet Union were able to leave and join the war effort. Many others, however, had perished from typhus and starvation, leaving behind many orphaned children adrift in the USSR in precarious conditions with no or very scarce organized support.<sup>69</sup> What benefit would it be to the British to evacuate them? Would they consider evacuation solely on humanitarian grounds or was there any leverage they could gain over the Soviets through evacuation? The Soviets, suffering immense losses on the battlefield against the Germans and also losing a great many civilians, would seem not to have had the resources to support the Poles. The evacuations may have

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<sup>65</sup> Bhattacharjee, ‘Polish Refugees in India, During and After the Second World War’.

<sup>66</sup> Bhattacharjee, ‘Polish Refugees in India, During and After the Second World War’.

<sup>67</sup> BL, IOR, ‘Proposed Evacuation from Russia to India of Polish women and children’, Collection number 110/N1, Reference number IOR/L/PJ/8/205.

<sup>68</sup> BL, IOR, ‘Proposed Evacuation from Russia to India of Polish women and children’, Collection number 110/N1, Reference number IOR/L/PJ/8/232.

<sup>69</sup> Matthew Kelly, *Finding Poland: From Tavistock to Hruzdowa and Back Again*.

been a tactic for the British to gain favour with the Soviets, a way to help alleviate a burden.

The June 1942 letter from Eden to Amery offers a hint as to why the British would evacuate the Poles. Eden wrote: 'Our humanitarian interest is re-inforced by certain political considerations. [...] Sikorski has told me that the condition of his people in Russia is an important obstacle to a full Polish-Russian understanding'.<sup>70</sup> News reports of the starving Poles were being published in British newspapers.<sup>71</sup> Perhaps the Soviets were primarily interested in removing the embarrassment that images of Polish deportees dying of starvation had brought them. Such reports did not fit the sanitized image of the Soviets the Allies may have been attempting to portray in order to maintain the delicate alliance with the USSR in the war against Germany and the Axis Powers.

The British dedicated great effort and resources to evacuating Poles. In 1942 they scrambled to find countries that would shelter the refugees for the duration of the war. They sought the help of the US and Canadian governments.<sup>72</sup> The US president, Franklin Roosevelt, pledged financial support but refused to settle any Polish refugees in the US.<sup>73</sup> Instead, FDR suggested southern Iran, Syria or Iraq, which the British and Polish officials rejected - according to a letter from Polish Ambassador Raczynski to Anthony Eden in June 1942 - for reasons that included 'opposition of the competent military authorities' in the region, presumably on the basis of ongoing military operations in the wake of both the Syria-Lebanon

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<sup>70</sup> BL, IOR, 'Proposed Evacuation from Russia to India of Polish women and children', Collection number 110/N1, Reference number IOR/L/PJ/8/232.

<sup>71</sup> BL, IOR, 'Proposed Evacuation from Russia to India of Polish women and children', Collection number 110/N1, Reference number IOR/L/PJ/8/73 and IOR/L/PJ/8/205. News clippings are contained in these collections. Also, British Pathé news service produced a number of news reels about the difficult conditions of the Poles in the USSR.

<sup>72</sup> Richard C. Lukas, 'Polish Refugees in Mexico: An Historical Footnote', *The Polish Review*, 22:2 (1977), 73-75.

<sup>73</sup> BL, IOR, 'Proposed Evacuation from Russia to India of Polish women and children', Collection number 110/N1, Reference number IOR/L/PJ/8/182 and IOR/L/PJ/8/225.

campaign and the Anglo-Iraqi war, and the dangers to the refugees and the complications for the military that a civilian presence would create.<sup>74</sup>

Being pressed by the Polish government and eager to appease the Soviets, the British explored other options. The President of Lebanon offered to host as many as 50,000 Polish children from the USSR in exchange for 6,500 tons of wheat per year for their upkeep.<sup>75</sup> The US Red Cross offered their services if the Poles were to be evacuated to South Africa.<sup>76</sup> Eritrea was considered as well but was rejected because, wrote C.D. Jennery of the Ministry of Transport, 'there are already in Eritrea camps for Jewish terrorists. [...] A further batch of foreigners would produce more than proportionate local irritation'.<sup>77</sup> From the archival record, it seems British officials were reluctant to accept or to advocate strongly for the placement of thousands of Polish refugees in areas where ethnic conflict was existent or likely.<sup>78</sup> This predicament is what may have inspired the Polish and British governments to search for settlement sites among the British territories, in areas where British authorities had tighter control of affairs and would be able to impose their decisions with force if needed.

On 21 August 1942, A.W.G. Randall of the Foreign Office wrote a four-page letter to W.L. Fraser of the Treasury Department about the need to evacuate the Poles in Iran still awaiting settlement and the remaining Poles in the Soviet Union. He wrote, 'I think it would be advisable for us to make up our minds about the future of the Polish civilians [...]'.<sup>79</sup> Randall suggested that the 13,000 Poles already

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<sup>74</sup> BL, IOR, 'Proposed Evacuation from Russia to India of Polish women and children', Collection number 110/N1, Reference number IOR/L/PJ/8/225.

<sup>75</sup> BL, IOR, 'Proposed Evacuation from Russia to India of Polish women and children', Collection number 110/N1, Reference number IOR/L/PJ/8/225.

<sup>76</sup> BL, IOR, 'Proposed Evacuation from Russia to India of Polish women and children', Collection number 110/N1, Reference number IOR/L/PJ/8/225.

<sup>77</sup> BL, IOR, 'Proposed Evacuation from Russia to India of Polish women and children', Collection number 110/N1, Reference number IOR/L/PJ/8/72.

<sup>78</sup> For me as a non-Briton, the formal style in which British officials corresponded with each another is remarkable not only for its politeness but also for its vagueness. In the British Library documents I have read there is no direct order on the subject of evacuating tens of thousands of Poles on the brink of starvation, only courteous requests and recommendations. This seems to have been part of the reason why clear plans for the evacuation were slow to develop. It makes deciphering the timeline of decisions about the evacuations challenging.

<sup>79</sup> BL, IOR, 'Proposed Evacuation from Russia to India of Polish women and children', Collection number 110/N1, Reference number IOR/L/PJ/8/180.

in Iran be evacuated to East Africa, which would make room in the reception centres for the waves of Polish refugees expected to arrive from the USSR. Randall continued,

‘Their place in Persia will be much more than occupied by the 25,000 Polish civilians who, with our full consent as a condition for securing 40,000 Polish soldiers, have now started to arrive in Persia, where they will have to be accommodated until our present search for a permanent home, which is being pursued with the United States, is successful’.<sup>80</sup>

The details of the arrangement for 40,000 Polish soldiers are unclear from the archival record. These 40,000 could have been the troops already serving in the Polish Armed Forces in the East and West, or they were possibly assigned to the ranks of the Soviet Army at the Soviets’ insistence. The 40,000 were certainly a sort of payment from the Polish government to the Allies for their assistance in evacuating Poles from the USSR.

By October 1942, a number of sites throughout East Africa had been procured after negotiations with colonial officials. Construction began in Uganda, Kenya, South Africa, Nyasaland, Tanganyika, and Northern and Southern Rhodesia.<sup>81</sup> Evacuations from the USSR continued under British and Polish supervision, by sea and over land to staging areas in Iran, and then by rail to Karachi, which became the primary port of embarkation for evacuation by sea to points farther afield.<sup>82</sup> Soon the Polish and British governments secured additional settlement sites in India, Palestine, Egypt, New Zealand, Australia, and, with the assistance of the US government, in Mexico.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> BL, IOR, ‘Proposed Evacuation from Russia to India of Polish women and children’, Collection number 110/N1, Reference number IOR/L/PJ/8/180.

<sup>81</sup> I came across archives relating to the construction and administration of some of these settlements. These documents include financial ledgers, as well as aerial photographs and records of crimes committed by Polish evacuees in the settlements and the punishment meted out by British and Polish administrators. What was missing is detailed information on the evacuations themselves, e.g. which methods of transport used, routes, numbers of evacuees, etc.

<sup>82</sup> Kresy-Siberia Organisation’s Virtual Museum <<http://kresy-siberia.org/indie>> [accessed 23 June 2022].

<sup>83</sup> Richard C. Lukas, ‘Polish Refugees in Mexico: An Historical Footnote’, *The Polish Review*, 22:2 (1977), 73-75.

Evacuations continued with Soviet permission until April 1943 when the USSR severed ties with the Polish government-in-exile.<sup>84</sup> The German government had in that month reported their discovery of mass graves in the Katyn forest near the Russian border with Belarus, accurately placing blame on the Soviets for the massacre of Polish officers and government workers.<sup>85</sup> The British and Americans, fearful of offending the Soviets and jeopardizing the alliance, formally accepted the USSR's denial of guilt for the massacre. The Polish government, conversely, accepted the German's conclusion.<sup>86</sup> In response, the Soviets severed diplomatic relations with the Polish government, further complicating the already fragile collaboration on evacuations.<sup>87</sup> The Soviets installed a puppet provisional government in Poland, effectively ending any hope among Polish refugees for a return to an independent, post-war Poland. Polish consulates were closed in the countries hosting Polish refugees. Polish staff working in the refugee settlements soon found themselves without a government wage to support them.<sup>88</sup> A number of Polish children's funds were closed at British and American insistence, leaving the refugees with financial support only from the Polish diaspora.<sup>89</sup>

Despite the severing of official relations between the London-based Polish government and the Soviet government, British officials remained dutiful to the evacuees and continued to provide support, albeit reduced. This may show that the British were not only supporting the evacuations because of a self-serving motivation to maintain the Anglo-Soviet alliance but may have felt a moral obligation to assist the Polish refugees. In a letter on the subject of continued British support of the Polish refugees after the termination of diplomatic relations

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<sup>84</sup> Piotr Wrobel, *The Devil's Playground: Poland in World War II* (Quebec: Price-Patterson Ltd, 2000).

<sup>85</sup> George Sanford, 'The Katyn Massacre and Polish-Soviet Relations, 1941-43', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 41:1 (2006), 95-111.

<sup>86</sup> Sanford, 'The Katyn Massacre and Polish-Soviet Relations, 1941-43'.

<sup>87</sup> BL, IOR, 'Proposed Evacuation from Russia to India of Polish women and children', Collection number 110/N1, Reference number IOR/L/PJ/8/48.

<sup>88</sup> Bhattacharjee, 'Polish Refugees in India, During and After the Second World War'; BL, IOR, 'Proposed Evacuation from Russia to India of Polish women and children', Collection number 110/N1, Reference number IOR/L/PJ/8/48.

<sup>89</sup> Bradley E. Fels, 'Whatever Your Heart Dictates and Your Pocket Permits: Polish-American Aid to Polish Refugees during World War II', *Journal of American Ethnic History*, 22:2 (2003), 3-30.

between the Soviets and the London-based Polish government sent on 21 June 1943, AWG Randall of the Foreign Office wrote to JW Wood of the Ministry of War Transport:

‘You are probably aware that the Polish government are anxious to remove some 50,000 Polish citizens from the Soviet Union and that in their view this has become particularly urgent since, owing to the virtual rupture of relations between the two countries and the consequent suspension of the distribution of relief supplies, the position of the Polish citizens in the Soviet Union has become desperate. In the circumstances, we feel that on the grounds of both policy and humanity we are unable to refuse to assist the Polish government to the best of our ability to evacuate these people [...]. There are still nearly 16,000 Poles in Persia and as their presence there gravely embarrasses our relations with the Persian government, we wish to ensure that should additional Poles arrive their stay would be of the shortest possible duration.’<sup>90</sup>

This letter offers insight into the motivations of the British in supporting the evacuations. It is remarkable primarily because a high-ranking British official specifically mentions humanity as grounds for why the British should assist the London-based Polish government in the evacuations. Furthermore, AWG Randall wrote this letter after the Soviets had terminated diplomatic ties with the Polish government, making a suggestion that could have angered the Soviets and jeopardized the Anglo-Soviet alliance. The letter stands as evidence to a speculation that the British supported the evacuations at least partially out of a humanitarian concern for the Poles.

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<sup>90</sup> BL, IOR, ‘Proposed Evacuation from Russia to India of Polish women and children’, Collection number 110/N1, Reference number IOR/L/PJ/8/48.

## Conclusion

After the Soviets' severance of diplomatic ties with the Polish government, circumstances for the refugees in the temporary settlements grew grimmer. With the suspension of relief, many settlements in East Africa were left to survive only on what they could grow and produce themselves.<sup>91</sup> Despite the new hardships, many evacuees were unwilling to repatriate to a Poland occupied and administered by the Soviets.<sup>92</sup> When representatives of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) visited a number of Polish settlements between 1945 and 1947 to discuss options for repatriation to Poland, they were sometimes physically attacked by the evacuees.<sup>93</sup> It was a show of defiance to the overtures of the new Soviet-installed Polish government to entice the evacuees to return to Poland.

It became clear to the British that there was strong resistance to the prospect of repatriation in all the settlements and that an alternative must be offered. Many of the settlements, especially the ones in East Africa, had prospered through farming and local trade.<sup>94</sup> The Poles had proven they were resilient and resourceful. Some Poles chose to stay, and today are the ancestors of small Polish communities in Tanzania, Malawi, Iran, and Mexico.<sup>95</sup> Others found opportunities to settle in England and Wales through the UK government's Polish Resettlement Corps

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<sup>91</sup> Kresy-Siberia Organisation's Virtual Museum <<http://kresy-siberia.org/indie>> [accessed 23 June 2022]; Jared Knoll, 'Memories of WWII refugees live on in Tanzania', *Speak*, 28 November 2013

<<http://speakjhr.com/2013/11/memories-of-wwii-refugees-live-on-in-tanzania/>> [accessed 23 June 2022].

<sup>92</sup> Norman Davies, *Trail of Hope: The Anders Army, An Odyssey across Three Continents* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2015); Kresy-Siberia Organisation's Virtual Museum <<http://kresy-siberia.org/indie>> [accessed 23 June 2022]; Richard C. Lukas, 'Polish Refugees in Mexico: An Historical Footnote', *The Polish Review*, 22:2 (1977), 73-75.

<sup>93</sup> Richard C. Lukas, 'Polish Refugees in Mexico: An Historical Footnote'.

<sup>94</sup> Jared Knoll, 'Memories of WWII refugees live on in Tanzania', *Speak*, 28 November 2013; Kresy-Siberia Organisation's Virtual Museum; Richard C. Lukas, 'Polish Refugees in Mexico: An Historical Footnote'.

<sup>95</sup> Ryszard Antolak, 'Iran and the Polish Exodus from Russia 1942', *Pars Times*, no date given, <[http://www.parstimes.com/history/polish\\_refugees/exodus\\_russia.html](http://www.parstimes.com/history/polish_refugees/exodus_russia.html)> [accessed 23 June 2022]; Kresy-Siberia Organisation's Virtual Museum; Richard C. Lukas, 'Polish Refugees in Mexico: An Historical Footnote'.

program.<sup>96</sup> The majority eventually emigrated with the logistical support of the UK and US governments to join relatives in the US, Canada, and Australia.<sup>97</sup>

The context in which the evacuations emerged as a solution to the suffering of the Poles was replete with geopolitical complexity. With the UK embroiled in battles against the Axis powers on a number of vastly different fronts, and with a new and delicate alliance forged with the Soviets, the British dedicated themselves to a far-reaching and demanding operation to bring Polish refugees to relative safety. The evacuations may have bolstered the fledgling Anglo-Soviet alliance against the Axis Powers by lifting burdens off the Soviets who by that time had their own refugee crisis, a crisis of Russians displaced by German invasion. The British-led evacuations alleviated much of the Soviets' financial and material strain caused by the large number of Poles in the gulags and orphanages. Despite this burden-lifting, it is unlikely that the alliance would have collapsed if the British did not evacuate the Poles, as the threat of German victory over both the USSR and UK was too great for the alliance to be jeopardized by the issue of Polish refugees alone.

The exchange of Polish troops for British assistance was surely a major factor in the agreement between the UK and Polish governments regarding the evacuations. As humanitarian acts tend to be at least in part self-serving, we can view this trade of troops for assistance as an example of the tensions that exist in what Barnett called the 'paradox of emancipation and domination' in humanitarian acts.<sup>98</sup> The British devoted a substantial amount of financial, material, and logistical support to the evacuations of Poles from the Soviet Union and their subsequent refuge and resettlement across the globe, but did so on the condition that tens of thousands of Polish troops serve under Allied command. Thus, the UK acted self-servingly under the demands of total war. Though this arrangement for

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<sup>96</sup> Matthew Kelly, *Finding Poland: From Tavistock to Hruzdowa and Back Again*; 'Polish Resettlement Camps in the UK, Ships and Passenger Lists of Polish WW2 DPs arriving from Africa and Europe', no date given <<http://www.polishresettlementcampsintheuk.co.uk/passengerlist/shipsindex.htm>> [accessed 23 June 2022].

<sup>97</sup> Marek Jan Chodakiewicz, 'The fate of the Siberian exiles: On the methodology of studying ethnic cleansing in the Soviet-occupied Polish lands', *The Institute of World Politics, Papers & Studies*, Fall (2006); Maciej Kalaska and Maria Suchcicka, 'Contemporary Migration of Poles to Lebanon and Egypt', *Miscellanea Geographica – Regional Studies on Development*, 16:1 (2012); Piotrowski, T. (ed.), *The Polish Deportees of World War II: Recollections of Removal to the Soviet Union and Dispersal Throughout the World* (London: McFarland, 2007).

<sup>98</sup> Michael Barnett, *Empire of Humanity: A History of Humanitarianism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011), page 11.

Polish troops was not a selfless, magnanimous gesture of Britain's humanity, it should not detract from the humanitarian aspect of the British government's efforts to protect the Poles from further suffering at the hands of the Soviets.

There is a gap in my understanding of what cultural factors made this series of humanitarian evacuations thinkable. As Barbara Vera Hodge seems to have been the catalyst for the evacuations, I will continue my research on her with the aim of learning more about how she came to influence policy makers in the UK government. Another notion to explore regarding cultural factors is that the British may have acted partly on emotions of obligation inspired by the extraordinary performance of Polish airmen defending the UK in the Battle of Britain in 1940.<sup>99</sup>

The logistical techniques that made the evacuations practicable seem to have been ever-changing and provisional, based largely on the seasonal, military, and political conditions of the moment. Judging from the paucity of details in the archival record, it appears that many of the decisions related to logistics were left largely to military officials - British, American, and Soviet - as well as to provincial colonial administrators. I make these assumptions aware of a gap in my knowledge that may reflect a gap in the historiography related to the evacuations, a gap in the archival record, or may simply reflect the reality of the logistical challenges in humanitarian evacuation, especially a series of evacuations with a wide geographical and temporal reach.

The evacuations of Poles from the USSR during WWII may be a paradigmatic case in the evolution of humanitarian evacuations. It is an early example of a collaborative civil-military undertaking that could initially have been inspired and partially planned by a civilian that was taken control of by the UK and US militaries. It is premature to assert such an idea without learning more about Hodge and her role, but this speculation will guide my future research on this case study.

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<sup>99</sup> I first came across this notion in Matthew Kelly's book *Finding Poland: From Tavistock to Hruzdowa and Back Again*.

## Chapter 2: The Evacuation of Hungarians from Austria, 1956-1957

### Introduction

The Hungarian Revolution of 1956 was one manifestation of a nationalist, anti-Soviet political movement that Eastern Europe experienced after the 1953 death of Soviet Premier Joseph Stalin. Public desire for the de-Stalinization of the Hungarian government was expressed in Hungary as early as 1955 after the Moscow-directed liberalisation policies imposed by Premier Khrushchev proved unpopular.<sup>1</sup> By October 1956, Hungarians, inspired by the Poznań protests in Poland that began in June of that year and led to the creation of a nationalist Communist government by October, publicly demanded more autonomy from Moscow.<sup>2</sup> What began as a student-led protest in Budapest calling for independence and the withdrawal of Soviet troops quickly spread across the whole of Hungary. On 23 October, as unarmed protesters rallied for political reform, members of the State Security Police (ÁVH) opened fire, killing and wounding many.<sup>3</sup> This event radicalized the protesters and sparked an armed uprising that lasted eighteen days until invading Soviet forces quashed it in early November 1956.

The conflict displaced approximately 200,000 Hungarians, the majority of whom fled to neighbouring Austria, while fewer sought refuge in Yugoslavia.<sup>4</sup> Many Liberal democracies, including the US and UK, responded quickly to the Austrian government's call for assistance and provided humanitarian support to the Hungarian refugees. In addition to food aid, medical supplies, and financial

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<sup>1</sup> Johanna C. Granville, *The First Domino: International Decision Making during the Hungarian Crisis of 1956* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2004).

<sup>2</sup> Carl J. Bon Tempo, *Americans at the Gate: The United States and Refugees during the Cold War* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2008).

<sup>3</sup> UN Special Committee on the Problem of Hungary, 'Report of the Special Committee on the Problem of Hungary', General Assembly Official Records: Eleventh Session, Supplement No. 18 (A/3592), New York, 1957.

<sup>4</sup> UN Special Committee on the Problem of Hungary, 'Report of the Special Committee on the Problem of Hungary'.

donations to the government of Austria, the US and UK participated in the evacuation and resettlement of approximately 167,000 of the 200,000 refugees.<sup>5</sup>

This chapter examines the impetus and impact of the evacuation of Hungarians to the US and UK by placing it in the broader evolution of humanitarian evacuations through the Cold War. Drawing from archived government documents, NGO reports, first-hand accounts, contemporary news coverage, and secondary sources, this chapter focuses on the categories of *motives*, *rationale*, and *outcomes* in order to better understand the political and cultural factors that made this evacuation possible.<sup>6</sup>

### *Historiography*

In this section I consider how other historians have approached the study of the 1956 displacement and subsequent resettlement of Hungarian refugees, the relevant key themes their work has covered, and identify what gaps in our understanding of the evacuation this thesis helps fill. There is an expansive body of literature on the Hungarian refugees, but scant attention has been focused on the evacuation itself. No work that I am aware of places it within a genealogy of humanitarian evacuations. Scholarly work, however, has been done that historicises the reception of the Hungarians refugees within specific nationalist contexts, most notably from the British historian Becky Taylor and the American historian James Niessen.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> United Nations, 'Yearbook of the United Nations, 1958', United Nations Office of Public Information, New York, 1959.

<sup>6</sup> Though I have researched first-hand accounts of evacuees, I have not included them in the thesis because they did not serve the research questions. Much of the work around the time of the evacuation focused on highly emotional anti-Soviet sentiments.

<sup>7</sup> For articles on the American context see: James P. Niessen, 'God Brought the Hungarians: Emigration and Refugee Relief in the Light of Cold War Religion', *The Hungarian Historical Review*, 6:3 (2017), 566- 596; James P. Niessen, 'Hungarian Refugees of 1956: From the Border to Austria, Camp Kilmer, and Elsewhere', *Hungarian Cultural Studies: e-Journal of the American Hungarian Educators Association*, 9 (2016), 122-136; Arthur A. Markowitz, 'Humanitarianism versus Restrictionism: The United States and the Hungarian Refugees', *The International Migration Review*, 7:1 (1973), 46-59; Peter Pastor, 'The American Reception and Settlement of Hungarian Refugees in 1956–1957', *Hungarian Cultural Studies e-Journal of the American Hungarian Educators Association*, 9 (2016); and Vera Sheridan, 'Support and Surveillance: 1956 Hungarian Refugee Students in

The 1951 UN Refugee Convention entered into force in 1954 and laid out the rights of forcibly displaced persons and the responsibilities of asylum granting states. The Hungarians displaced by the 1956 uprising were the first significant group of refugees created after the Convention's adaptation. Despite this multilateral treaty, the post-WWII era saw a narrative of anti-Communism become paramount for the development of the Western human rights regime.<sup>8</sup> Scholars such as Taylor and Bischof have undertaken critical evaluation of how, despite the then newly adopted 1951 Refugee Convention, human rights discourse did not factor strongly in many Liberal states' response to the Hungarian crisis or their reception of Hungarian refugees. Instead, the response was largely framed around supporting supposed anti-Communists and thus 'deserving' refugees.<sup>9</sup> Historians and immigration scholars have considered not only the US and UK's response, but also those of the Netherlands and Australia. Despite no author stating it directly, the research considered together illustrates, among other motives, how receiving Liberal democratic states instrumentalized their participation in the overseas resettlement of Hungarian refugees in efforts to harm Soviet national prestige and promote their own.

Critical to my argument of how the US and UK instrumentalized evacuation during the 20<sup>th</sup> century is an understanding of the dynamics of the Cold War and the

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Transit to the Joyce Kilmer Reception Center and to Higher Education Scholarships in the USA', *History of Education*, 45:6 (2016), 775-793. For the British context see: Becky Taylor, 'Their Only Words of English Were "Thank You": Rights, Gratitude and "Deserving" Hungarian Refugees to Britain in 1956', *Journal of British Studies* 55 (January 2016), 120-144. For Canada see: Christopher Adam, *et al.*, eds., *The 1956 Hungarian Revolution: Hungarian and Canadian Perspectives* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2010); Thomas Robert Cameron, 'Through the Eyes of The Guardian Newspaper: Securitization and Humanitarian Discourses and the Arrival of Hungarian (1956-1957) and Kosovar Refugees (1999) on Prince Edward Island, Canada', thesis (2009), University of Prince Edward Island; and Robert H. Keyserlingk, ed., *Breaking Ground: The 1956 Hungarian Refugee Movement to Canada* (Toronto: York Lanes Press, 1993). For the Netherlands see: Marlou Schrover and Tycho Walaardt, 'The Influence of the Media on Policies in Practice: Hungarian Refugee Resettlement in the Netherlands in 1956', *Journal of Migration History*, 3:1 (2017), 22- 53. For Australia see: Mary Tomsic, "'Happiness again": photographing and narrating the arrival of Hungarian child refugees and their families, 1956-1957', *History of the Family*, 22:4 (2017), 485-509.

<sup>8</sup> Marco Duranti, 'Conservatism, Christian Democracy and the European Human Rights Project, 1945-1950', PhD dissertation, Yale University (2009); Stefan-Ludwig Hoffman, 'Genealogies of Human Rights', in *Human Rights in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

<sup>9</sup> Günter Josef Bischof, 'The Collapse of Liberation Rhetoric: The Eisenhower Administration and the 1956 Hungarian Crisis', *Hungarian Studies*, 1 (2006), 51-63; Becky Taylor, 'Their Only Words of English Were "Thank You": Rights, Gratitude and "Deserving" Hungarian Refugees to Britain in 1956', *Journal of British Studies*, 55 (January 2016), 120-144.

containment strategies the two states used against the Soviet Bloc. Being attentive to the semiotics of state-led humanitarian evacuations - that is, the symbolic language employed by the state and its collaborating ISAs to frame such operations - I consider here historical works on the Hungarians that cover communication, propagandistic, and 'soft power' aspects of the event and its wider geopolitical context.

A recurrent theme in the English language historiography of the 1956 Hungarian uprising is the role US-led anti-Soviet propaganda played in fomenting rebellion against the Communist government in Hungary. In examining the reasons why so many Liberal democratic states - and many Western-aligned undemocratic states<sup>10</sup> - participated in the rapid response and received large numbers of displaced Hungarians we see some historians contend that the propaganda efforts in Hungary that cultivated active resistance inevitably led to an expectation on the part of the Hungarian rebels that the US would support the uprising with materiel.<sup>11</sup> This miscalculation, as Zieck argues, led to a guilt on the part of the American government especially, a guilt subsequently partially assuaged, I argue, by evacuating and resettling the refugees in nearly forty countries throughout the world.<sup>12</sup>

Of focused criticism among historians such as Granville, Johnson, and Webb was the psychological warfare waged by the CIA front Radio Free Europe, whose incendiary anti-Communist broadcasts before and during the uprising have been

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<sup>10</sup> Many dictatorial and colonialist regimes supported the Western-led efforts as a way of countering Communist influence. The undemocratic states that received refugees were the Dominican Republic, Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, Israel, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Portugal, Spain, Venezuela, and the Union of South Africa. United Nations, 'Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, General Assembly, Twelfth Session, Supplement No.11 (A/3585/Rev.1)', United Nations, New York, 1957.

<sup>11</sup> Johanna Granville, "'Caught with Jam on Our Fingers": Radio Free Europe and the Hungarian Revolution of 1956', *Diplomatic History*, 29:5 (2005), 811-839; Johanna Granville, 'Radio Free Europe's Impact on the Kremlin in the Hungarian Crisis of 1956: Three Hypotheses', *Canadian Journal of History*, 39:3 (2004); Ross A. Johnson, 'Setting the Record Straight: Role of Radio Free Europe in the Hungarian Revolution of 1956', *Woodrow Wilson Center Working Paper*, December 2006; and Alban Webb, 'Cold War Radio and the Hungarian Uprising, 1956', *Cold War History*, 13:2 (2013), 221-238.

<sup>12</sup> Marjoleine Zieck, 'The 1956 Hungarian Refugee Emergency, an Early and Instructive Case of Resettlement', *Amsterdam Law Forum*, 5:2 (2013), page 61.

found to have intensified and complicated the conflict.<sup>13</sup> Radio Free Europe broadcasts were part of a larger US-led Western effort that began with the announcement of the Truman Doctrine in 1947 to destabilise and weaken Communist movements. Though originally designed to aid anti-Communist forces in Greece and Turkey, the primary objective of the Truman Doctrine was to contain Soviet geopolitical expansion.<sup>14</sup>

In practice in Hungary, as covered by Comte, Corke, and Granville among many others, this approach manifested in a number of propagandistic projects.<sup>15</sup> One such project relevant to this thesis in that it has parallels to the Hungarian evacuation was the Escapee Program, which encouraged and supported defection from the Soviet Bloc to the West, primarily for purposes of intelligence gathering from defectors and to boost US national prestige by having further examples of ‘freedom-loving’ anti-Communists fleeing to the safety and liberty of the West.<sup>16</sup> Though there is work from scholars such as Comte and Greenhill that examines the encouragement of outflows from the Eastern Bloc as an offensive strategy to weaken Communist governments, no work that I have come across in the historiography connects, as this thesis does, how the US instrumentalized the displacement facilitated by the Escapee Program and the evacuation of Hungarians from Austria.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Granville, “‘Caught with Jam on Our Fingers’: Radio Free Europe and the Hungarian Revolution of 1956’, *Diplomatic History*; Granville, ‘Radio Free Europe’s Impact on the Kremlin in the Hungarian Crisis of 1956: Three Hypotheses’; Johnson, ‘Setting the Record Straight: Role of Radio Free Europe in the Hungarian Revolution of 1956’; and Webb, ‘Cold War Radio and the Hungarian Uprising, 1956’.

<sup>14</sup> See Lamont Colucci, ‘American Doctrine: The Foundation of Grand Strategy’, *World Affairs*, 181:2 (2018), 133-160; Robert Frazier, ‘Acheson and the Formulation of the Truman Doctrine’, *Journal of Modern Greek Studies*, 17:2 (1999), 229-247; Robert Frazier, ‘Kennan, “Universalism,” and the Truman Doctrine’, *Journal of Cold War Studies*, 11:2 (2009), 3-34; and Dennis Merrill, ‘The Truman Doctrine: Containing Communism and Modernity’, *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, 36 (2006), 27-38.

<sup>15</sup> Emmanuel Comte, ‘Waging the Cold War: the Origins and Launch of Western Cooperation to Absorb Migrants from Eastern Europe, 1948–57’, *Cold War History*, 20:4 (2020), 461-481; Sarah-Jane Corke, ‘The Eisenhower Administration and Psychological Warfare’, *Intelligence and National Security*, 24:2 (2009), 277-290; Johanna C. Granville, *The First Domino: International Decision Making during the Hungarian Crisis of 1956* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2004).

<sup>16</sup> See Susan L. Carruthers, ‘Between Camps: Eastern Bloc “Escapees” and Cold War Borderlands’, *American Quarterly*, 57:3 (2005), 911-942; Benjamin Tromly, ‘Ambivalent Heroes: Russian Defectors and American Power in the Early Cold War’, *Intelligence and National Security*, 33:5 (2018), 642-658; and George L. Warren, ‘The Escapee Program’, *Journal of International Affairs*, 7 (1953), 82-86.

<sup>17</sup> Emmanuel Comte, ‘Waging the Cold War: the Origins and Launch of Western Cooperation to Absorb Migrants from Eastern Europe, 1948–57’, *Cold War History*, 20:4 (2020), 461-481; Kelly Greenhill, *Weapons of Mass Migration: Forced Displacement, Coercion, and Foreign Policy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010).

Above are the major relevant themes in the historiography of the 1956 Hungarian uprising and subsequent resettlement that I have come across in my research. I have identified gaps in our understanding of the evacuation from Austria in that no research that I have seen considers the evacuation within a genealogy of such operations nor how the US and UK instrumentalized the evacuation for geopolitical purposes *vis-à-vis* the Soviet Union. Below are move on to briefly consider precedents of projects that occurred after the evacuation of Poles in 1942 and before the evacuation of Hungarians in 1956.

### *Precedents*

The US' emergence from WWII as a superpower and the start of the Cold War in 1947 changed the nature of US- and UK-led humanitarian operations. The Cold War compelled the US to establish a global peacetime military presence in an effort to contain Soviet geopolitical expansion and extend the dominance of Liberal democracy. Born from this global military presence were new designs for military cargo aircraft adaptable for relief missions, as well as a worldwide network of air bases and flight routes that facilitated rapid response in times of war and peace.

The Berlin Airlift that began in June 1948 exemplifies the approach the US and UK took through relief operations to counter Soviet influence and demonstrates developing technologies. Though there was no major component of evacuation in the operation, the massive airlift of supplies into Soviet-blockaded West Berlin demonstrated the need for larger aircraft for such relief missions. In 1949, in response to this need and developed on the lessons learned during the Berlin airlift, the US built a fleet of heavy-lift transport aircraft that would become the backbone of humanitarian airlift operations for the US, as well as the UK who purchased a fleet of American cargo planes.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Daniel L. Haulman, *The United States Air Force and Humanitarian Airlift Operations: 1947-1994* (Washington, DC: Air Force History and Museums Program, 1998), page 4; Royal Air Force, 'About the Hercules (C-130J)',

American and British air forces and private airlines participated in the 1949-1950 evacuation of Jews from Yemen and the Horn of Africa to the newly-declared state of Israel in the land of historic Palestine. At the initiation and under the direction of two ideological state apparatuses - the World Zionist Organisation and the American Joint Distribution Committee - Israeli, British and American forces evacuated approximately 51,000 Jews to Israel, the majority from Yemen. Combining nationalist and sacred elements into the rescue narrative, the Israeli government named the undertaking 'Operation on Wings of Eagles' in reference to a passage in the Book of Exodus - though the evacuation is more widely known by the crude Orientalist name 'Operation Magic Carpet'.<sup>19</sup> As Jewish Studies historians Esther Meir-Glitzstein and Tudor Parfitt argue, the reasons for the evacuation were based more on building the nascent Zionist state rather than the purported rescue of Jews from Muslim persecution.<sup>20</sup>

Soon after the end of Operation on Wings of Eagles, the Israeli government undertook another large-scale evacuation of Mizrahi (Eastern) Jews from the Middle East, this time approximately 125,000 Jews from Iraq and again with substantial lobbying and funding from the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee and logistical support from US and UK militaries.<sup>21</sup> 'Operation Ezra and Nehemiah', named after the two men who purportedly led the Jewish people from exile in Babylonia to Persian-controlled Jerusalem, also had the active participation of two American private airlines - Near East Air Transport and Alaska - whose directors were personally involved in the evacuation.

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<https://www.raf.mod.uk/aircraft/hercules-c130j/#:~:text=ROLE,brought%20into%20service%20in%201999> [accessed 23 June 2022].

<sup>19</sup> 'Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto Myself.' – Exodus 19:4. Translation from the JPS 1917 Tanakh.

<sup>20</sup> Esther Meir-Glitzstein, 'Constructing the Myth of the Magical Immigration of Yemenite Jews to Israel', *Israel Studies*, 16:3 (2011), 149-173; Tudor Parfitt, *The Road to Redemption: The Jews of the Yemen 1900-1950* (Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 1996).

<sup>21</sup> Moshe Gat, *The Jewish Exodus from Iraq: 1948-1951* (London: Frank Cass, 2013). See also Orit Bashkin, *New Babylonians: A History of Jews in Modern Iraq* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012); Esther Meir-Glitzstein, *Zionism in an Arab Country: Jews in Iraq in the 1940s* (London: Routledge, 2004); and Tad Szulc, *The Secret Alliance: The Extraordinary Rescue of the Jews Since WWII* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1991).

Both of these evacuations to Israel are relevant to this thesis and are covered briefly in this section because they are further examples of British and American involvement in the instrumentalization of evacuation of foreign nationals for political goals. In the case of Israel, evacuation was a tactic employed to help accomplish demographic goals of the settler colonial state *vis-à-vis* the indigenous Palestinian population. We also see in these two Israeli examples the power of religious and nationalist symbolism to rally support for evacuation projects. Evacuations and the narratives created around them were tools to build formative Zionist nationalist myths, a way of ‘inventing a country, inventing a people’.<sup>22</sup>

### Case Study

The next major evacuation of the era, in which approximately 167,000 Hungarians were resettled abroad, began in 1956 after the failed Hungarian uprising against Soviet rule.<sup>23</sup> October 1956 saw a number of crises that impacted relations between Western Liberal democracies and states of the Communist Eastern Bloc, increasing the tensions of the Cold War. The UK was embroiled in the Suez Crisis and by month’s end would invade Egypt alongside Israel and France. In Poland, anti-Soviet unrest led to fundamental changes in Polish policy, impacting the USSR’s relationship with Poland and later with other satellite states.<sup>24</sup> In the US, which three years earlier had ended its military involvement in the Korean war, Dwight Eisenhower was campaigning for re-election in the presidential elections scheduled for 6 November 1956. In his 1965 memoir, Eisenhower called the period ‘the most crowded and demanding weeks of my entire Presidency.’<sup>25</sup> These events, as we will see below, impacted decision-making regarding the evacuation of Hungarians from Austria in 1956-57.

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<sup>22</sup> Yaffa Berlowitz, *Inventing a Country, Inventing a People* (Tel Aviv: United Kibbutz, 1996). See also Esther Meir-Glitzstein, ‘Constructing the Myth of the Magical Immigration of Yemenite Jews to Israel’, *Israel Studies*, 16:3 (2011), 149-173.

<sup>23</sup> UN Special Committee on the Problem of Hungary, ‘Report of the Special Committee on the Problem of Hungary’, General Assembly Official Records: Eleventh Session, Supplement No. 18 (A/3592), New York, 1957.

<sup>24</sup> Granville, *The First Domino: International Decision Making during the Hungarian Crisis of 1956*.

<sup>25</sup> Dwight D. Eisenhower, *The White House Years: Waging Peace, 1956-1961* (New York: Doubleday, 1965).

Eisenhower had won the previous election four years earlier, promising to combat the growth of Communist influence.<sup>26</sup> By 1956, he faced strong criticism from within his own party for failing to deliver on that promise. It was not for lack of trying. Soon after assuming office in January 1953, Eisenhower gathered a diverse group of senior-level military officers and diplomats to research strategies to counter the expansion of Soviet influence. Project Solarium set a course of action for the US to 'confuse and unbalance' the Eastern Bloc, which included building alliances to circumscribe Eastern Bloc countries and 'conveying the benefits of capitalism' to the people of Europe via mass communication.<sup>27</sup> The Eisenhower government incorporated these findings as part of its New Look national security policy. This policy stance entailed a constant military preparedness in relation to potential Soviet aggression.<sup>28</sup> As we will see later in this chapter, humanitarian airlifts were a way for the US military to maintain military preparedness.

Radio was a method the US used extensively to disrupt the Eastern Bloc. CIA-funded Radio Free Europe broadcast into Hungary during the uprising, encouraging rebels to actively resist Communist Hungarian and Soviet troops. Magyar broadcasts from 27 and 28 October 1956 gave details on how to sabotage railroad lines with explosives and how to disable Soviet communication lines.<sup>29</sup> On 30 October, presenters communicated technical details of building explosives and employing techniques for anti-tank warfare. In the same broadcast they implored rebels to continue their attacks on Soviet-aligned offices and installations in order to influence the debate on Hungary that was taking place in the UN.<sup>30</sup> These efforts show that the US encouraged armed resistance against Communist forces in Hungary during the uprising and thus bore some responsibility for the violence and mass displacement that followed.

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<sup>26</sup> Carl Bon Tempo, *Americans at the Gate: The United States and Refugees during the Cold War*.

<sup>27</sup> National Security Council, 'NSC 162 and NSC 162/12: Review of Basic National Security Policy', 28 October 1953.

<sup>28</sup> National Security Council, 'NSC 162 and NSC 162/12: Review of Basic National Security Policy'.

<sup>29</sup> Alban Webb, 'Cold War Radio and the Hungarian Uprising, 1956', *Cold War History*, 13:2 (2013), 221-238.

<sup>30</sup> Webb, 'Cold War Radio and the Hungarian Uprising, 1956', *Cold War History*.

At the same time the CIA program Radio Free Europe was encouraging the rebels, the US central government was quick to find ways to exploit the uprising for the benefit of their international image. Their first public act in support of the Hungarian rebels was the offer of medical and food aid, which was slated to be given to Hungary through the UN. To offer it through the UN was a tactical proposal, as evidenced in a telegram a junior US representative to the UN sent to US Senator Lodge on 25 October 1956:

‘Even if the final action [of aid] is blocked by Soviet veto, the initiative would, in addition to increasing US prestige, add to the prestige of the UN in the eyes of the satellite peoples who now hold the organization in low esteem because of its past failure to note their plight. The UN is also a unique publicity center, and consequently UN action - or attempted action - would generate great influence.’<sup>31</sup>

The telegram illustrates how important national prestige was to US officials in the competition for influence against the USSR, and how relief aid and the UN were used to gain political leverage. Such aid could have been given through the Red Cross but to do so would have minimized the political impact. By channelling the aid offer through the UN where transparency and media coverage were greater, the US created a no-win situation for the Soviets. Accepting the aid would equate to an admission by the Soviets that they had been weakened by the uprising. Rejecting the aid would make them appear cruel.

The US’ propaganda efforts in Hungary contributed to creating a volatile environment in which armed conflict was inevitable. Radio Free Europe’s disruptive broadcasts had for years been agitating for the people of the Eastern Bloc to rise up against the Soviets. Its broadcasts during the uprising of 1956 that gave detailed instructions to the rebels on how to wage guerrilla war against the Communists helped to bring the Soviets to the limits of their tolerance. Eisenhower’s actions to confuse and unbalance the Eastern Bloc had worked, at least temporarily in

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<sup>31</sup> As quoted in Johanna Granville, *The First Domino: International Decision Making during the Hungarian Crisis of 1956*, page 196.

Hungary. The fallout, however, was unexpected and rapid, overwhelming all involved.

The tactics the US employed to counter the spread of Communism are evident in its immigration policies from the period. The Escapee Program was one such method. In March of 1952, President Truman authorized \$4.3 million to establish the Escapee Program.<sup>32</sup> Its primary objective was to promote US political, psychological warfare, and intelligence objectives in Eastern Europe by encouraging people living there to defect to a Liberal state in the West.<sup>33</sup> The program established reception and care facilities for escapees in their first country of asylum and assisted them in emigrating to the US or to a European Liberal democracy if they chose.<sup>34</sup> It also granted economic and technical aid to countries that hosted the defectors.

The US created the program to promote displacement from Communist countries. It was a subversive component of the US' efforts to weaken the Eastern Bloc. Escapees were valuable to the US' intelligence-gathering activities. The CIA's annual review of the program from 1953 attests to its perceived benefit to the US government:

'The cost of this program to the United States is relatively small when related to the importance of the foreign policy issues involved. The Escapee Program is fundamental to such US objectives in Europe as the promotion of the overall defense and stability of free Europe and the securing for the free world the friendship of the enslaved populations behind the Iron Curtain.'<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> George L. Warren, 'The Escapee Program', *Journal of International Affairs*, 7 (1953), 82-86.

<sup>33</sup> Director of the US Foreign Assistance Agencies, 'United States Escapee Program, 1959 Recommended Program Level', Records of the US Foreign Assistance Agencies (1948-1961).

<sup>34</sup> Warren, 'The Escapee Program', *Journal of International Affairs*.

<sup>35</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, 'Escapee Program: Section 101(a)(1) MSA 1951'.

In this official CIA document, we see the US' conflation of being anti-Communist with being worthy of asylum. The Escapee Program showed clearly what was at the heart of rapidly evolving US refugee policies in the early 1950s: to be displaced and be worthy of care, one need only be an avowed anti-Communist. This shows that the CIA encouraged and funded displacement from Communist-led states in Eastern European so that the displaced could be used to advance the US government's foreign policy goals *vis-à-vis* the Soviet Union, either by simply symbolizing the moral superiority of democratic states or by the escapee being trained to gather intelligence to use against the Communists. In this subversive tactic we see an early example of the weaponization of refugees. This intent heavily influenced US policy regarding granting asylum to immigrants from Communist states and affected the US' decision to evacuate such a large number of Hungarians.

With the emotional and dramatic narrative around the Escapee Program, we see the coercion of those who came to subscribe to its notion of escaping to Liberal freedom from Communist tyranny. Despite its government supporters spinning a yarn about the supposed friendship of the US toward those who were said to be trapped behind the Iron Curtain, the Escapee Program intentionally displaced families and disrupted communities to achieve political gain. It was an exploitative project built on a thinly-veiled structural violence of induced displacement. The narrative around it was international virtue signalling at its worst, causing displacement in the name of individual freedom in order to gain national prestige for itself while undermining societies in Eastern Europe.

The Escapee Program may have been a unique example of the weaponization of refugees, as it does not neatly fit into the categories of forced engineered migrations that Kelly Greenhill has written on the subject.<sup>36</sup> In the case of the US Escapee Program, it was the receiving state that initiated the displacement for their own political benefit, whereas in other examples it was the goal of the displacing power, the 'challenger', to leverage the receiving state, the 'target'.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Kelly Greenhill, *Weapons of Mass Migration: Forced Displacement, Coercion, and Foreign Policy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010).

<sup>37</sup> Greenhill, *Weapons of Mass Migration: Forced Displacement, Coercion, and Foreign Policy*.

The US used the escapees for intelligence gathering, whether by debriefing them before entry to the US or allied state, or by training them in espionage techniques to collect intelligence in their country of origin or in capitalist states with large Hungarian émigré communities.<sup>38</sup>

There was dissent among US lawmakers against the Liberalization of immigration policy that allowed for greater numbers of immigrants from Eastern European Communist states to be given asylum in the US, with some lawmakers specifically singling out what they saw as vulnerabilities created by the Escapee Program.<sup>39</sup> The opposition was comprised mostly of representatives with isolationist tendencies who were concerned that Communist spies could infiltrate the US under the guise of being refugees. In an effort to persuade restrictionist lawmakers, Truman created a commission of prominent political and business leaders who wanted a more Liberal immigration policy with the goal of producing a report on immigration for Congress. The President's Commission on Immigration and Naturalization's report, titled *Whom Shall We Welcome?*, employed a histrionic narrative to present its anti-Communist agenda to Congress. In the introduction to the report, President Truman is credited with writing:

“The countries of Eastern Europe have fallen under the Communist yoke – they are silenced, fenced off by barbed wire and minefields – no one passes their borders but at the risk of his life. We do not need to be protected against immigrants from these countries – on the contrary, we want to stretch out a helping hand, to save those who have managed to flee into Western Europe, to succour those who are brave enough to escape from barbarism, to welcome and restore them against the day when their countries will, as we hope, be free again. [...] The time to develop a decent policy of immigration – a fitting

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<sup>38</sup> Warren, 'The Escapee Program', *Journal of International Affairs*.

<sup>39</sup> Arthur A. Markowitz, 'Humanitarianism versus Restrictionism: The United States and the Hungarian Refugees', *The International Migration Review*, 7:1 (Spring, 1973), 46-59.

instrument for our foreign policy and a true reflection of the ideals we stand for, at home and abroad — is now.”<sup>40</sup>

Truman’s efforts to liberalize immigration policy may have influenced the first Session of Congress to succeed his administration. The Refugee Relief Act of 1953 (RRA) was legislation that newly elected President Eisenhower fought hard to push through Congress. In what may have been a compromise between the Liberal and restrictionist camps of Congress, it allocated 205,000 immigrant visas in addition to the national quotas set earlier.<sup>41</sup> Visas reserved for escapees from Communist states in Eastern Europe were not to exceed 45,000 by the RRA’s expiration in December 1956, which happened to be the month after the US began evacuating Hungarian refugees from Austria. The RRA proved at first to be an obstacle to assisting the Hungarian evacuees in late 1956 but President Eisenhower created a solution, which I discuss below, that had a profound impact on US immigration policy to this day.

In many ways Austria was still recovering from the impact of WWII by the time displaced Hungarians began crossing into its territory in October 1956. Annexed into Nazi Germany in 1938, Austria was regarded as a part of Germany throughout WWII. In 1943 however, leaders of the Allied Powers agreed in the Declaration of Moscow to consider Austria a separate state, one that had been liberated from German occupation. The Allies then replaced the Germans as occupiers in Austria and jointly governed the country under the command of the Allied Control Council until the May 1955 signing of the Austrian State Treaty. The treaty accorded Austria independence and stipulated perpetual neutrality for the country, disallowing it from entering into military alliances with other states and forbidding foreign military bases on its territory. In the two years immediately following the end of WWII, Austria had been forced by the Allied occupiers to pay for much of the

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<sup>40</sup> President’s Commission on Immigration and Naturalization, ‘Whom Shall We Welcome?’, 1 Jan 1953.

<sup>41</sup> United States Statutes-at-Large, Volume 67 (1953), Public Law 203 (Refugee Relief Act of 1953).

occupation costs.<sup>42</sup> These costs included keeping foreign troops on its soil. This burden greatly impacted Austrian civilians, a segment of whom had been on a near starvation diet until the UN Relief and Rehabilitation Administration began to provide rations.<sup>43</sup>

In Hungary on 1 November 1956, Chairman Imre Nagy declared the new Hungarian government's intention to withdraw from the Warsaw Pact and establish Hungary as a neutral, multi-party democracy. This was unacceptable to the Soviets; they invaded Hungary three days later on 4 November. Within a week they had crushed the uprising and reinstalled a pro-Soviet government, causing tens of thousands more to seek refuge in Austria and Yugoslavia.<sup>44</sup> A CIA review of the uprising and its consequences noted that on 6 November the CIA 'were already talking about the mechanics and methods of exploiting the refugees'.<sup>45</sup> The displacement was seen by the CIA as a way to demoralize the Soviets and their allies, and as an inroad to gathering intelligence.

In the wake of the Soviet invasion, Liberal democracies led by the US were left searching for a measured response that could be seen to challenge the Soviets without provoking them militarily. As Hungarian refugees poured into Austria, there was concern that the Soviets might pursue the displaced across the border and in turn spark a larger conflict. Austria at the time was only one year out from the 1955 end of Soviet occupation post-WWII and was establishing itself as neutral state.<sup>46</sup> In the face of Soviet objections to its accommodation of the Hungarians, Austria was trying to convince the world that it was not aligned with anyone in the conflict. Its diplomats pleaded for assistance with the ever-increasing number of Hungarians seeking refuge within its borders, predicting that without help the displaced

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<sup>42</sup> Rolf Steininger, *Austria, Germany, and the Cold War: from the Anschluss to the State Treaty 1938–1955* (Berghahn Books: Oxford, 2008).

<sup>43</sup> Fritz Fellner, 'The Problem of the Austrian Nation after 1945', *The Journal of Modern History*, 60:2 (1988), 264-289.

<sup>44</sup> UN Special Committee on the Problem of Hungary, 'Report of the Special Committee on the Problem of Hungary', General Assembly Official Records: Eleventh Session, Supplement No. 18.

<sup>45</sup> As quoted in Charles Gati, *Failed Illusions: Moscow, Washington, Budapest, and the 1956 Hungarian Revolt* (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2006), page 203.

<sup>46</sup> Johanna Granville, 'Of Spies, Refugees and Hostile Propaganda: How Austria Dealt with the Hungarian Crisis of 1956', *History*, 91:301 (2006), 62-90.

Hungarians might continue their uprising from inside Austria. With Austria's neutrality and regional security at stake, they warned that swift action needed to be taken.

A burden that remained on the country was its complicity in the war crimes committed by Nazi Germany of which it was a part. This legacy, as well as the burden of proving its newly declared neutrality, may have inspired Austria to go above and beyond in providing support to the Hungarians crossing the border in 1956. The many displaced Hungarians desperately seeking protection within its borders in 1956 and 1957 gave Austria the opportunity to raise its national prestige and reclaim some moral authority. By all accounts it did rise to the occasion and prove to be exemplary in its support of the refugees.

The number of Hungarians fleeing the violence in their country increased exponentially during and immediately after the Soviet invasion. At the height of the border crossings, Austria recorded a rate of nearly 5,000 Hungarians arriving per day.<sup>47</sup> While the majority of the displaced Hungarians fled to Austria for safety, approximately 10% fled to Yugoslavia.<sup>48</sup> Austria reported to the UN that the total number of registered Hungarian refugees who were or had been in its territory as of 6 April 1957 to be 174,704. Yugoslavia's Ministry of the Interior reported registering a total of 19,181 during a similar period.<sup>49</sup> Many lauded Austria's response to the emergency. The Hungarian historian Katalin Soós later wrote that 'Austria behaved, with its support of the displaced and protection of the right to asylum, like a great power.'<sup>50</sup> The American novelist James Michener, who happened to be living in

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<sup>47</sup> Markowitz, 'Humanitarianism versus Restrictionism: The United States and the Hungarian Refugees', *The International Migration Review*; James A. Michener, *The Bridge at Andau* (New York: The Dial Press, 1957; 2015).

<sup>48</sup> United Nations Special Committee on the Problem of Hungary, 'Report of the Special Committee on the Problem of Hungary', General Assembly Official Records: Eleventh Session, Supplement No. 18 (A/3592), New York, 1957. The majority of the Hungarians who initially sought refuge in Yugoslavia and requested resettlement abroad were later transported to Austria from where they were processed and evacuated. For this reason, and because official records from Yugoslavia are difficult to access, I am focusing on Austria's experience of hosting the displaced Hungarians.

<sup>49</sup> UN Special Committee on the Problem of Hungary, 'Report of the Special Committee on the Problem of Hungary'.

<sup>50</sup> As translated from the Magyar and quoted in James Niessen's 'Hungarian Refugees of 1956: From the Border to Austria, Camp Kilmer, and Elsewhere', *E-Journal of the American Hungarian Educators Association*, 9 (2016), page 125.

Austria in 1956, wrote in his book *Bridge at Andau*: 'It would require another book to describe in detail Austria's contribution to freedom. I can express it briefly only in this way: If I am ever required to be a refugee, I hope to make it to Austria.'<sup>51</sup>

Austria's Minister of Interior, Oskar Helmer, played an important role in rallying international support for his country as it struggled to support the many Hungarians seeking safety. Helmer was aware of the impact a positive Austrian response could make on the world stage and how it could help promote Austria's national prestige.<sup>52</sup> He lobbied successfully for foreign contributions to cover the costs of accommodations in the camps throughout the country.

Austria was in a politically precarious situation. It balanced the competing interests of the capitalist states of the West, the Communist states of the East, and the Hungarian refugees themselves. Of utmost importance was the maintenance of Austria's appearance of neutrality. Austria was a signatory to 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and so had a responsibility to protect the Hungarians seeking refuge. Fulfilling their obligations to the 1951 Convention upset the Soviets, however, when Austria began to officially recognize the Hungarians as refugees on a *prima facie* basis. The decision to grant legal refugee status on a group basis rather than individually provoked the Soviets who considered it a factor attracting greater numbers of Hungarians.<sup>53</sup> The Soviets responded to the assumed provocation in word and deed. While Soviet diplomats aired their grievances through official diplomatic channels, Soviet soldiers blew up a bridge between Jánossomorja, Hungary and the Austrian town of Andau in an attempt to disrupt the flow seeking refuge in Austria.<sup>54</sup> This act of aggression was a sign that the Soviets were willing to use force to in response to the refugee movement into Austria. This put greater pressure on Austria and the international community to resolve the crisis in order to avert a Soviet invasion of Austria. Not only was Austria's neutrality

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<sup>51</sup> Michener, *The Bridge at Andau*.

<sup>52</sup> Niessen, 'Hungarian Refugees of 1956: From the Border to Austria, Camp Kilmer, and Elsewhere', *E-Journal of the American Hungarian Educators Association*.

<sup>53</sup> Chairman of the Committee of Political Advisers at NATO, 'Report on Hungarian Refugees', NATO document C-M (57) 65, 17 April 1957.

<sup>54</sup> Michener, *The Bridge at Andau*.

at stake but so was the post-war balance that was taking shape. The outbreak of a wider conflict was certainly a possibility. Austria had to walk a precarious line to avoid provoking the Soviets.

The magnitude of the numbers of refugees entering Austria quickly overwhelmed the country. Minister Helmer ordered that the Hungarians be accommodated in former military camps throughout the country but those were filled to capacity within weeks. Schools, hospitals and warehouses were then used until the arrivals again increased, forcing the Austrians to use trains and buses as shelter for the refugees.<sup>55</sup> Austria was unable to handle the immense costs of caring for the Hungarians and so pleaded for international support. UNHCR, in its first major operation, took the lead on the humanitarian response, collaborating with the Red Cross who in turn managed the many smaller NGOs involved in direct refugee care. The International Committee for European Migration (ICEM), the predecessor of the International Organization for Migration, was responsible for the registration and transportation of the refugees.<sup>56</sup>

It was soon evident that the number of refugees was unmanageable; Austria requested international assistance in evacuating and resettling those willing to leave. Many Western states headed the call. A number of European governments agreed to permanently resettle a relatively small number while simultaneously offering a greater number of temporary visas with the understanding that the Hungarians would either soon repatriate voluntarily or be transferred to countries willing to accept them on a permanent basis.<sup>57</sup> Thirty-seven countries in all eventually accepted Hungarian refugees as new permanent residents, while a few more countries unsuccessfully offered resettlement to Hungarians who chose not to emigrate to those countries.<sup>58</sup> Austria desperately needed the support, as

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<sup>55</sup> United Nations Special Committee on the Problem of Hungary, 'Report of the Special Committee on the Problem of Hungary'.

<sup>56</sup> Chairman of the Committee of Political Advisers at NATO, 'Report on Hungarian Refugees'; UN Special Committee on the Problem of Hungary, 'Report of the Special Committee on the Problem of Hungary'.

<sup>57</sup> Marjoleine Zieck, 'The 1956 Hungarian Refugee Emergency, an Early and Instructive Case of Resettlement', *Amsterdam Law Forum* (2013), 45-63.

<sup>58</sup> Chairman of the Committee of Political Advisers at NATO, 'Report on Hungarian Refugees'. These were all Central American countries.

thousands of Hungarians crossed the border into Austria every day, straining the resources of the country. Between 11 and 17 November 1956, over 10,000 Hungarians arrived in Austria.<sup>59</sup>

Some of the thirty-seven states that accepted refugees were not signatories to the 1951 Refugee Convention and thus did not have an obligation to assist in the resettlement. Burden sharing was instead the rationale. To help relieve Austria of its difficulties and to defend it against possible Soviet invasion, capitalist-led states collaborated to evacuate and resettle the Hungarians, safeguarding the country's neutrality, blocking it from further Soviet pressure and ensuring it remained Western-oriented and open to international trade and investment.

No Communist-led states participated in resettling the refugees, nor did they offer any financial assistance to Austria.<sup>60</sup> While Western states lauded Austria, governments of the Eastern Bloc, none of whom were party to the 1951 Convention, strongly criticized Austria's handling of the displaced. This shows not only Soviet culpability but also Austria's orientation toward the West. The international reaction to the mass displacement of Hungarians helped to unite capitalist governments against the Soviets. At least perhaps this was the capitalists' intention.

The details of how participating states operated in selecting which Hungarians to resettle tell another side of the story. Instead of accepting whomever the Austrians requested, resettlement states imposed their national preferences on the British and American non-governmental organizations who conducted the initial processing and allocation of evacuees.<sup>61</sup> Considering the requirements of certain states regarding the profiles of potential evacuees, it becomes clear that these states wanted to bolster their workforces. They often requested single men of

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<sup>59</sup> UN Special Committee on the Problem of Hungary, 'Report of the Special Committee on the Problem of Hungary'.

<sup>60</sup> Chairman of the Committee of Political Advisers at NATO, 'Report on Hungarian Refugees'.

<sup>61</sup> James Niessen, 'Send us a Planeload!: Catholic Organizations and the Resettlement of 56ers', notes from the presentation at the annual conference of the American-Hungarian Educators Association (unpublished), Cleveland State University, April 14, 2018.

working age. Mining or farming experience was desired. Those with university degrees were also requested, while anyone with an acute medical condition was difficult to place.<sup>62</sup> In an internal government document, an Austrian Interior official expressed his frustration with the US' multi-tiered physical examination of each potential evacuee, mockingly stating that the Americans wanted to make sure that each US-bound refugee had 'no fingers or toes missing'.<sup>63</sup> The US Labor Department's Bureau of Employment Security stationed a team in Vienna to interview US-bound evacuees to begin the task of matching their vocational backgrounds with suitable job offers from US employers.<sup>64</sup> This demonstrates that growing the workforce was a priority of the US in its decision to resettle Hungarian refugees.

In Austria the maintenance and processing of refugees who requested third-country resettlement involved the participation of dozens of non-governmental organizations. While many Austrian NGOs participated, a greater number of American and British organizations took part. Many were faith-based organizations: Catholic, Protestant, Jewish. American Catholic organizations were the most numerous and best funded operating in Austria.<sup>65</sup> The American Council of Voluntary Agencies for Foreign Service oversaw and coordinated the US-based NGOs operating in Austria during the response. Coordinating the crisis committee made up of Austrian NGOs was Archbishop Franz König.<sup>66</sup>

For the refugees in Austria who would soon be resettled to the US, religion played a role in determining their future. UNHCR allotted each refugee slated for US resettlement to a faith-based NGO of the same religion. In this way, with

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<sup>62</sup> Zieck, 'The 1956 Hungarian Refugee Emergency, an Early and Instructive Case of Resettlement', *Amsterdam Law Forum*.

<sup>63</sup> Translation quoted from Andreas Gémes' 'Deconstruction of a Myth? Austria and the Hungarian Refugees of 1956-57', *Time, Memory, and Cultural Change*, ed. S. Dempsey and D. Nichols, Vienna: IWM Junior Visiting Fellows' Conferences, Vol. 25, page 67.

<sup>64</sup> Markowitz, 'Humanitarianism versus Restrictionism: The United States and the Hungarian Refugees', *The International Migration Review*.

<sup>65</sup> Peter Pastor, 'The American Reception and Settlement of Hungarian Refugees in 1956-1957', *E-Journal of the American Hungarian Educators Association*, 9 (2016), 197-205.

<sup>66</sup> Niessen, 'Send us a Planeload!: Catholic Organizations and the Resettlement of 56ers', unpublished notes from the presentation at the annual conference of the American-Hungarian Educators Association.

roughly 70% of the Hungarians identifying as Catholic, Catholic Relief Services (CRS) became accountable for the reception and placement of the largest number of US-bound evacuees.<sup>67</sup> As Hungarians in Austria were being prepared for evacuation to the US, CRS rallied sponsors to host and guide new arrivals. They recruited sponsors through their Resettlement Newsletter, which began circulation in 1945. Local dioceses pledged to provide temporary housing, vocational placement assistance, and financial support until the evacuee became self-sufficient.<sup>68</sup> This model of resettlement continues to this day, whether in the official Community Sponsorship model of the UK government or in the informal sponsorship projects used in many US domestic resettlement agencies. In this way, the resettlement of ‘56er Hungarians’ is paradigmatic. The current system of refugee resettlement overseen by UNHCR functions similarly to the 1956 Hungarian operation. The foundation of today’s resettlement regime began with a humanitarian evacuation. Here, five years after the signing of the 1951 Refugee Convention, we see an early example of burden-sharing with regard to refugee emergencies. The preamble of the Convention states that ‘the grant of asylum may place unduly heavy burdens on certain countries’ and that signatory states should cooperate to prevent the ‘problem of refugees [...] from becoming a cause of tension between States’.<sup>69</sup> The Convention, however, does not detail policy or prescribe a procedure on such cooperative action to share the burden and thus leaves the decision whether to act up to the discretion of states.

On 7 November 1956, the first group of Hungarian evacuees was transported by the French Red Cross from Austria to Switzerland.<sup>70</sup> Only nine days before, on 28 October, the first displaced Hungarians entered Austria seeking refuge. Considering the scale of the evacuation, its swiftness is remarkable. Western European states quickly followed Switzerland’s lead and, with the assistance of ICEM in transportation, began evacuating Hungarians by rail and road. The first stage of

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<sup>67</sup> Niessen, ‘Send us a Planeload!: Catholic Organizations and the Resettlement of 56ers’.

<sup>68</sup> Niessen, ‘Send us a Planeload!: Catholic Organizations and the Resettlement of 56ers’.

<sup>69</sup> United Nations, ‘Convention relating to the Status of Refugees’, 28 July 1951, 189 UNTS 137.

<sup>70</sup> Gémes, ‘Deconstruction of a Myth? Austria and the Hungarian Refugees of 1956-57’, *Time, Memory, and Cultural Change*.

preparation for evacuation to the US began on 8 November 1956 following the US' announcement that a limited number of additional escapee visas would be made available to allow for the entry of Hungarian refugees into the US.<sup>71</sup>

Despite this expansion of the Refugee Relief Act, Eisenhower calculated that escapee visas would not suffice; another way to quickly resettle a large number of refugees had to be devised. The President's solution was to use a provision under the Immigration and Nationality Act known as the parolee provision.<sup>72</sup> The provision allowed for the executive branch of government to assume responsibility of judgement in issuing this visa type. The ultimate decision on parolee visa applications lies with the President or whomever the President delegates, whereas with other types of immigrant visas the legislative branch of government is responsible. Of the approximately 35,000 Hungarian refugees the US admitted between late-1956 and early-1957, just under 32,000 were admitted as parolees.<sup>73</sup> Eisenhower's approach signalled a new chapter in US immigration policy, one that continues to this day.

Under the guidance of UNHCR, NGOs working in Austria collected personal and family details of refugees who expressed their preference to resettle in the US. An accelerated security vetting process undertaken by US officials began based out of the US consulate in Vienna.<sup>74</sup> The allocation process is not clear from the archival record but the US' resettlement application form from the period hints that relatives or any other pledged financial sponsor in the US was reason enough to

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<sup>71</sup> Markowitz, 'Humanitarianism versus Restrictionism: The United States and the Hungarian Refugees', *The International Migration Review*.

<sup>72</sup> Pastor, 'The American Reception and Settlement of Hungarian Refugees in 1956-1957', *E-Journal of the American Hungarian Educators Association*.

<sup>73</sup> Markowitz, 'Humanitarianism versus Restrictionism: The United States and the Hungarian Refugees', *The International Migration Review*.

<sup>74</sup> President's Advisory Committee on Refugees, 'Background Papers (2)', Box 11, folder *Indochina Refugees – President's Advisory Committee: Background Papers (2)*, Theodore C. Marris Files at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library. This folder contains documents about Hungarian refugees because the committee studied precedents in order to prepare for the evacuation of South Vietnamese allies toward the end of US involvement in the Second Indochina War.

allocate an individual or family for resettlement in the US.<sup>75</sup> These refugees were not the only ones allocated to the US, however. Being allocated for a certain resettlement destination may simply have been a matter of a refugee choosing to queue outside one of the processing entities in an Austrian camp. Historians of the Hungarian uprising have noted that the allocation process was haphazard and improvisational, not just to the US but to most if not all of the receiving countries.<sup>76</sup> Later in this chapter I examine how this disorganized allocation process created great difficulties for many Hungarians evacuated to Britain.

Other states joined in to resettle the refugees, with Canada, in the midst of an international campaign to attract skilled immigrant labour, pledging to admit 37,000 Hungarians.<sup>77</sup> A number of states in Western Europe, and Central and South America also expressed their interest in resettling the refugees, though offers from smaller states were likely more symbolic than practical. It was symbolic of a country's willingness to stand alongside the Liberal democracies in what essentially became a matter of Western Liberal democracy vs Soviet Communism, or the US vs the USSR. Smaller states, like Honduras, made a show of their offer in attempts to win the good graces of their more powerful allies.

After passing an initial physical examination and a security vetting interview, US immigration officers on mission in Austria granted each US-bound Hungarian a visa. In the earliest stage of the evacuation to the US, ICEM-chartered planes flew the refugees from Vienna to New York City from where US Army buses drove them to Kilmer Reception Center for further processing.<sup>78</sup> Within a few days of the start of the evacuation, the US' Military Air Transport Service (MATS) took over the flight transportation. To avoid having MATS-chartered planes in Austria that might

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<sup>75</sup> President's Advisory Committee on Refugees, 'Background Papers (2)', folder *Indochina Refugees – President's Advisory Committee*.

<sup>76</sup> Niessen, 'Send us a Planeload!: Catholic Organizations and the Resettlement of 56ers'; Pastor, 'The American Reception and Settlement of Hungarian Refugees in 1956-1957'.

<sup>77</sup> Chairman of the Committee of Political Advisers at NATO, 'Report on Hungarian Refugees'. While scanning newspapers from 1956-57 in the archives of the British Library, I saw a number of advertisements in various British newspapers from the Canadian government about emigrating to Canada. Some advertised free parcels of land in western Canada to immigrant farmers and ranchers.

<sup>78</sup> Tracy Voorhees, 'The Freedom Fighters: Hungarian Refugee Relief, 1956-1957', memoir (1971), Tracy Voorhees Papers, Rutgers University Archives.

antagonize the Soviets, ICEM first transported the US-bound evacuees by bus or rail from Austria to ports in Germany from where they continued their journey to the US on chartered US-based civilian airlines.<sup>79</sup> The US military, as I discuss below, soon took over complete control of the transportation from Germany, flying in clearly marked military planes in a public relations push to boost their image.

MATS played a pivotal role in the Hungarian evacuation (as it did in a number of other humanitarian endeavours before and after 1956). MATS came into existence in June 1948 when the US Department of Defense (DoD) consolidated the air transport services of both the Navy and Air Force to create a unified command with the purpose of centralizing the DoD's airlift capabilities.<sup>80</sup> Eight years before the Hungarian evacuation, MATS' first mission was the Berlin Airlift. Utilizing both military and commercial cargo aircraft as it would during the 1956 evacuation, MATS provided humanitarian aid by air to the people of West Berlin blockaded by Soviet forces. MATS then participated in a number of airlifts, including, among others, the 1952 airlift of nearly 4,000 Muslims to Mecca who had been stranded in transit in Beirut due to the overwhelming number of pilgrims, and the 1953-58 airlifts of West German children from West Berlin to holiday with host families in the UK and US.<sup>81</sup> The Hungarian evacuation was the largest MATS operation after the Berlin Airlift. MATS participated in a number of airlifts that spanned the globe until 1966 when the Navy withdrew from the partnership with the Air Force and MATS was redesignated as the Air Force's Military Airlift Command.<sup>82</sup>

In 1963, the Department of Defense produced a MATS promotional video with the entertainer Bob Hope. The script spoke of the imbalances of the modern world at the time, which included 'man's encroachment upon the rights of other men', and how the US military could correct those imbalances by providing humanitarian aid to 'neighbours' in times of crisis. The video goes chronologically through a long list of airlifts the US had participated in since its inception and, in its conclusion,

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<sup>79</sup> Tracy Voorhees, 'The Freedom Fighters: Hungarian Refugee Relief, 1956-1957'.

<sup>80</sup> United States Department of Defense, 'The Role of Military Air Transport Services in Peace and War', February 1960, Smithsonian Libraries.

<sup>81</sup> United States Air Force, *Humanitarian Airlifts* (film: 1963).

<sup>82</sup> United States Air Force, *Airlift... Working for Humanity* (film: 1979).

states that maintaining military preparedness was a factor for the US to participate in such humanitarian endeavours.<sup>83</sup> The video lauded the extending reach of US military equipment and in turn an implied reach of American empire, asserting that the world shrinking through improved military transportation capabilities and logistical techniques had facilitated ‘the expansion of man’s humanity toward man.’ Bob Hope narrated: ‘Today, as a peacetime by-product of its military airlift capacity, the US can send relief assistance to any spot on earth within seventy-two hours.’<sup>84</sup>

A similar promotional video produced in 1979 for the Military Airlift Command (MAC), MATS’ successor, offers more detail about how engaging in humanitarian airlifts help the military:

‘MAC’s humanitarian airlift mission is possible because of the necessity to maintain an airlift fleet capable of quick response to military contingencies. In peacetime, this response is mainly to natural disasters, yet it exercises the airlift capability and trains airlift personnel so that the military skills of aircrews are refined and sharpened. In this way, the humanitarian mission continues to maintain the readiness posture of the Military Airlift Command, while extending the helping hand of friendship to all in need.’<sup>85</sup>

In addition to helping to maintain a readiness posture, military humanitarian airlifts can also test new transportation routes. Military planners use airlifts for transport topology optimization, to trial load capabilities and boundary conditions. This is why many of the airlifts that MATS participated in early in its command were conducted in extreme weather conditions.<sup>86</sup> Establishing potential forward positions is also a motive for the military to conduct humanitarian airlifts. By flying

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<sup>83</sup> United States Air Force, *Humanitarian Airlifts* (film: 1963).

<sup>84</sup> United States Air Force, *Humanitarian Airlifts* (film: 1963).

<sup>85</sup> United States Air Force, *Airlift... Working for Humanity* (film: 1979).

<sup>86</sup> For a detailed chronology see Daniel L. Haulman, *The United States Air Force and Humanitarian Airlift Operations: 1947-1994* (Washington, DC: Air Force History and Museums Program, 1998).

new routes and building the necessary infrastructure for accommodating military humanitarian airlifts conducted in the recipient territory, the military expands its strategic depth and capacity to sustain its forces far from home. Humanitarian airlifts make accessible new territory and create new logistical architecture. A military humanitarian airlift then can be viewed as an asset of a state's force projection capabilities. This projection of power is essential to a state's ability to leverage others in international decision-making processes.

An example of this is the San Francisco System created in the 1950s by the US with asymmetrical alliances with South Korea, Taiwan, and Japan. Essentially a hub-and-spoke transportation paradigm, the system places the US, specifically the San Francisco Bay area, as the dominant military transportation hub with the East Asian nations acting as spokes, hosting bases and refuelling stations that support the reach of the US military. In return the Asian hosts receive economic and military aid and defence commitments.<sup>87</sup> Unlike multilateral defence pacts, the San Francisco System is bilateral, which allows the US to exert policy influence on the host territories. This system developed post-WWII as the US military began to shift its attention from Europe to Asia. I will expand on this concept in the chapter on Operation Babylift.

The first Hungarian refugees arrived in the US on 21 November 1956, when an ICEM-chartered plane transported sixty evacuees from Germany to McGuire Air Force Base in New Jersey. The Secretary of the Army, junior dignitaries, and the press greeted them as the disembarked.<sup>88</sup> The Army then drove the evacuees by bus to hurriedly prepared accommodations at Camp Kilmer in northern New Jersey.<sup>89</sup> Built in 1942 for the Army Service Forces Transportation Corps, Camp

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<sup>87</sup> Victor Cha, 'Powerplay: Origins of the U.S. Alliance System in Asia', *International Security*, 34:3 (2010), 158-196.

<sup>88</sup> President's Committee for Hungarian Refugee Relief at Joyce Kilmer Reception Center, 'A Manual of the Policies and Procedures Followed in Connection with Hungarian Refugee Resettlement', (no date), President's Committee for Hungarian Refugee Relief Collection, Rutgers University Archives.

<sup>89</sup> Tracy Voorhees (Correspondent), 'Folder: Air Lift/Sea Lift, 1956-1957', Tracy Voorhees Papers, Rutgers University Library.

Kilmer served as a staging area for troops destined for Europe during WWII.<sup>90</sup> At the time of the Hungarian evacuation, the Army camp had been inactive and uninhabited for over a year. Because of its proximity to sea and air ports in New York City, as well as the New York City headquarters of the various NGOs involved in resettlement, the government reactivated Camp Kilmer to receive and process the Hungarian evacuees.<sup>91</sup> It was intended to be only a temporary processing station from where faith-based organizations would send the Hungarians to relatives or match adults with job offers and accommodation throughout the US.

Though domestic NGOs had a small number of staff at Kilmer as soon as the first group of Hungarians arrived, the camp was dominated by military personnel and procedures. The US press were quick to criticize, questioning how those fleeing the Soviet iron fist would interpret American men in uniform.<sup>92</sup> This criticism soon led to a public relations campaign overseen by Presidential appointee Tracy Voorhees to soften the image of the evacuation. One of the PR campaign's first acts was to rename Camp Kilmer the 'Kilmer Reception Center'.<sup>93</sup> With approximately 850 uniformed Army personnel working within the perimeter, the circumlocution had a hard time sticking.<sup>94</sup>

On 23 November, two days after the first arrival, a steady stream of ICEM-chartered planes began arriving with greater numbers of evacuees. Archival documents detail the reception and placement process at Camp Kilmer.<sup>95</sup> After the adult refugees had been examined by doctors and interviewed by customs and immigration officials, US Employment Service and IBM employees interviewed them to determine their occupational skills and then, 'by the use of IBM machine processes', matched them with relevant job offers relevant to the IBM machine's

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<sup>90</sup> United States Army, *Camp Kilmer* (pamphlet: 1945), Army Special Services Branch.

<sup>91</sup> Niessen, 'Send us a Planeload!: Catholic Organizations and the Resettlement of 56ers', unpublished notes from the presentation at the annual conference of the American-Hungarian Educators Association, Cleveland State University, April 14, 2018.

<sup>92</sup> For example, see the New York Times' article 'The Mess at Kilmer', 26 November 1956.

<sup>93</sup> Tracy Voorhees, 'Joyce Kilmer Reception Center: Story of the Program for Hungarian Refugee Relief, 1957', Tracy Voorhees Papers, Rutgers University Archives.

<sup>94</sup> President's Committee for Hungarian Refugee Relief at Joyce Kilmer Reception Center, 'A Manual of the Policies and Procedures Followed in Connection with Hungarian Refugee Resettlement'.

<sup>95</sup> President's Advisory Committee on Refugees, 'Background Papers (2)'.

‘suggested disposition for employment’.<sup>96</sup> This process may be the first example of automated refugee reception and placement. It illustrates the paramount importance of economic self-sufficiency that has been a lasting characteristic of refugee resettlement in the US.

On 1 December, President Eisenhower increased the number of Hungarians to be accepted by the US. In response, the US Employment Service (USES) sent representatives to Austria to interview those slated for resettlement in order to expedite the matching of US job offers to suitable candidates.<sup>97</sup> USES interviewed every male and single female over the age of 16 and classified them for potential occupations and preferred areas of resettlement. USES staff collaborated with IBM specialists who then matched these profiles with offers of employment, occupational needs by region, and an inventory of housing offers throughout the US.<sup>98</sup> The information was shared on IBM summary cards with the faith-based NGOs taking the lead in direct service.<sup>99</sup>

Matching employment profiles with job offers and with regions in need of specific labour skills was a novel idea in 1956. Not wholly successful for reasons I will discuss below, data-driven resettlement was not attempted again in the US until 2018 with the creation of the software program *Annie*, which uses historical data of resettlement success and personal data to predict where a refugee may have the greatest opportunities to be financially self-sufficient once resettled.<sup>100</sup>

Because of the widespread press coverage of the ‘Freedom Fighters’ arriving to the US, offers of employment, accommodation, and orphan adoption flooded the

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<sup>96</sup> President’s Advisory Committee on Refugees, ‘Background Papers (2)’.

<sup>97</sup> President’s Committee for Hungarian Refugee Relief at Joyce Kilmer Reception Center, ‘A Manual of the Policies and Procedures Followed in Connection with Hungarian Refugee Resettlement’.

<sup>98</sup> President’s Committee for Hungarian Refugee Relief at Joyce Kilmer Reception Center, ‘A Manual of the Policies and Procedures Followed in Connection with Hungarian Refugee Resettlement’.

<sup>99</sup> American Council of Voluntary Agencies for Foreign Service, Inc., ‘Report of Fact Finding Committee on the Hungarian Refugee Program’, 21 April 1958, Rutgers University Archives.

<sup>100</sup> Krishnadev Calamur, ‘How Technology Could Revolutionize Refugee Resettlement’, *The Atlantic*, 26 April 2019.

NGOs.<sup>101</sup> The Administrative Service Department at Kilmer collaborated with the NGOs, USES, and IBM to categorise and respond to the offers.<sup>102</sup> The Administrative Service Department collected the job offers and coded them according to IBM directions, punching corresponding holes into thick Manila paper cards - one for each job offer - that for our purpose of understanding we will call the 'job offer card'. The holes punched in the job offer card were what the potential employer required of the refugee applicant. In a separate office at Kilmer, an IBM specialist coded each adult refugee's vocational and educational experience onto separate Manila paper cards (the 'evacuee card') and punched holes corresponding to the specific skills of each individual. The evacuee cards seem to have been stored inside an enormous IBM computer housed in a dedicated barrack at Kilmer. In a process that is not explained in any archival document I have found but that is seen briefly in an Army propaganda film about the evacuation, an IBM operator placed one job offer card into the computer to read the punched holes corresponding to a job offer's specific requirements. Any evacuee card that matched the requirements then fell neatly into a chute and out of the computer to be collected by an administrative staff member. The evacuees whose cards were collected were then summoned in Magyar over a loudspeaker to immediately attend a job interview.<sup>103</sup>

It was a labyrinthine process destined for failure. The NGOs said as much. In their August 1957 report on the Kilmer Reception Center, the American Council of Voluntary Agencies for Foreign Service (ACVAFS) wrote: 'Because of the fundamental concept that resettlement of refugees cannot be done satisfactorily in terms of labour needs alone, the agencies do not accept the value of IBM machines

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<sup>101</sup> There seems to have been very few orphans unlike other evacuations. At least there was minimal press coverage of any orphans. The only coverage of orphans I have come across in contemporary news articles was of teenage boys who did not know the fate of their families left behind in Hungary. The articles portrayed these boys as brave young men whom the Soviets had potentially made orphans.

<sup>102</sup> President's Committee for Hungarian Refugee Relief at Joyce Kilmer Reception Center, 'A Manual of the Policies and Procedures Followed in Connection with Hungarian Refugee Resettlement'.

<sup>103</sup> American Council of Voluntary Agencies for Foreign Service, Inc., 'Report of Sub-committee of Fact Finding Committee on Hungarian Refugee Program re Kilmer Reception Center'; United States Army Pictorial Center, *The Big Picture: Operation Mercy*; President's Committee for Hungarian Refugee Relief at Joyce Kilmer Reception Center, 'A Manual of the Policies and Procedures Followed in Connection with Hungarian Refugee Resettlement'.

as placed upon them in the press, or the classifications and interviews done by the USES.<sup>104</sup>

Perhaps one reason why the IBM process did not fare well was that there were many ethnic Hungarian communities long established throughout the US who were quick to aid the evacuees. With the help of Hungarian-Americans, many of whom travelled to Kilmer to find relatives and friends, a large number of the evacuees left Kilmer on their own accord to join kith and kin in American cities with Hungarian communities. Reports from the ACVAFS reveal the frustration of the NGOs working at Kilmer who devoted resources to assisting a refugee who had already left the camp but, against official procedures, had not informed the assigned agency or Kilmer's military administration of their leaving.<sup>105</sup> While the military presence at Kilmer and their camp organisation certainly imposed a measure of control over the bodies and lives of the Hungarians, it was not powerful enough to stop them from simply walking away. Perhaps their experiences with Soviet Communism in their homeland had soured them to any semblance of bureaucratic control.

Despite the hiccups, arrivals to Kilmer increased exponentially in late November. With the rapidly growing number of new arrivals, the reception at Kilmer was by many accounts inadequate and unorganized. The situation soon caught the attention of the media. The New York Times ran an editorial on 30 November 1956 titled 'The Mess at Kilmer' in which the decision to evacuate the Hungarians was strongly criticized.<sup>106</sup> In an attempt to counter the negative press coverage, President Eisenhower received some of the Hungarian refugees at the White House on 26 November.<sup>107</sup> The reception was covered widely in the US and UK print and television news. The event also showed Eisenhower's intention to use the refugees for leverage against the Soviets in the court of public opinion and

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<sup>104</sup> American Council of Voluntary Agencies for Foreign Service, Inc., 'Report of Sub-committee of Fact Finding Committee on Hungarian Refugee Program re Kilmer Reception Center'.

<sup>105</sup> American Council of Voluntary Agencies for Foreign Service, Inc., 'Report of Fact Finding Committee on the Hungarian Refugee Program'.

<sup>106</sup> New York Times, 'The Mess at Kilmer', November 30, 1956, 1:3.

<sup>107</sup> Bon Tempo, *Americans at the Gate: The United States and Refugees during the Cold War*.

signalled the start of an intensive public relations campaign sanctioned by the President with the aims of making Hungarian resettlement more palatable to the American public and exploiting the refugees in the battle for national prestige against the USSR.

President Eisenhower appointed Tracy Voorhees, a lawyer who had previously served the Department of Defense as the Under Secretary of the Army and before that as the Director of Offshore Procurement in Europe, as his personal representative to the Hungarian refugees and as the chairman of the newly-formed President's Committee for Hungarian Refugee Relief.<sup>108</sup> While the committee's mission was to coordinate services between the twenty-two private service organizations involved in supporting the resettled Hungarian, Voorhees' first challenge was to spearhead a public relations campaign to counter the negative press and to facilitate the refugees' integration.<sup>109</sup> On accepting the President's appointment, he wrote: 'My instant thought was that I would probably be presiding at Kilmer over the biggest concentration camp which ever existed in the United States'.<sup>110</sup>

Voorhees set about changing the public image of the US' participation in the evacuation and the image of the refugees themselves. One of his initial acts was to contact Henry Ford II to ask for his help in bringing on board an experienced public relations director. Ford loaned him his Assistant Chief of Public Relations, Mr. Leo Beebe. In his memoir about his time working on the Hungarian evacuation, Voorhees wrote about Beebe, 'the only chance we had of resettling these people was to get Americans to love the Hungarian Freedom Fighters for the next four or five months, and to that end I needed the highest-powered public relations organization I could get.'<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> Tracy Voorhees, 'The Freedom Fighters: Hungarian Refugee Relief, 1956-1957'.

<sup>109</sup> Rutgers University Institute for Hungarian Studies, 'Resources on Refugees of the Revolution of 1956 in the United States: About the President's Committee for Hungarian Refugee Relief'.

<sup>110</sup> Voorhees, 'The Freedom Fighters: Hungarian Refugee Relief, 1956-1957'.

<sup>111</sup> Voorhees, 'The Freedom Fighters: Hungarian Refugee Relief, 1956-1957'.

Voorhees hired advertising firms to influence news coverage and create short films that portrayed the Hungarians in a positive light, as freedom-loving people loyal to the anti-Communist cause.<sup>112</sup> Voorhees himself clipped and saved newspaper articles about the Hungarians and years later donated this collection, as well as hundreds of other documents about the Hungarian uprising, to Rutgers University, his alma mater. The clippings show that the journalists laid on the freedom fighter/victim of Communism trope quite heavily, likely influenced by the hyperbole of the public relations campaign and following the government's script. Voorhees himself wrote an extended press release titled 'What a Refugee is Like' that his office distributed to news organizations. In it Voorhees cloyingly wrote:

'The Hungarian refugees who have come into this country under the President's program for Hungarian relief are much like John and Jane Smith who live next door to Americans all over our country. For the most part, they are folks of an independent spirit who believe in making their own way in life.'<sup>113</sup>

The Hungarians' education, occupational skills and willingness to work were touted as important contributions to the US economy. Voorhees' exaggerated rhetorical enthusiasm was oft repeated in the mainstream press. The New York Herald Tribune went so far as to monetize the Hungarians' contributions to the country in an article titled 'Freedom's \$30 Million Bonus'.<sup>114</sup> Not to be outdone, Time Magazine named 'the Hungarian Freedom Fighter' its Man of the Year for 1956.<sup>115</sup>

The public relations push had an impact on the logistics of the evacuation as well. With Voorhees' success in influencing the mainstream media to promote the

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<sup>112</sup> Bon Tempo, *Americans at the Gate: The United States and Refugees during the Cold War*; Voorhees, 'The Freedom Fighters: Hungarian Refugee Relief, 1956-1957'.

<sup>113</sup> Voorhees, 'What a Refugee is Like', Records of the President's Committee for Hungarian Refugee Relief, Tracy Voorhees Papers, Rutgers University Archives.

<sup>114</sup> Voorhees, 'Newspaper Clippings', Records of the President's Committee for Hungarian Refugee Relief in the Tracy S. Voorhees Papers at Rutgers University.

<sup>115</sup> Time Magazine, 'Man of the Year: The Hungarian Freedom Fighter', 7 January 1957.

Hungarians and their resettlement, he soon convinced the federal government that it would be best for all involved if the military itself were to transport the refugees to the US using clearly marked military planes. Voorhees persuaded the military to commit a large number of planes and ships to work alongside the civilian airlines operating under contract from MATS. He did this to accelerate the process of evacuation, reducing the numbers in Austrian camps awaiting resettlement to the US and thus avoiding negative press coverage, and to create a favourable public impression of the resettlement. 'The word "airlift" had become favourably known from our Berlin Airlift', he wrote in his 1971 memoir. 'A United States military airlift would obviously stimulate public interest in the care of the refugees and so aid in their resettlement once they got here.'<sup>116</sup>

As common practice dictated, the military gave the evacuation a name: Operation Safe Haven. Because there was a short reduction in operations on Christmas day (though one flight still ferried evacuees to the US on that day), the operation was split into Safe Haven I and Safe Haven II. For unknown reasons, the evacuation was also referred to by the military and media as Operation Mercy. This practice of an evacuation carrying more than one name is common through the history of humanitarian evacuations, as are the names 'Safe Haven' and 'Operation Mercy'.

Voorhees understood the symbolic significance to the American public of using US military planes and personnel to evacuate Hungarian 'freedom fighters' and deliver them to safety in the US. He was also keen to exploit the sentimentality that seems to affect Americans during the Christmas period. Hearing that President Eisenhower's plane was in Europe on Christmas Eve and was scheduled to return to the US empty, Voorhees was given permission to use the President's plane to evacuate Hungarians who had recently been processed in Germany. So, on Christmas day 1956 using President Eisenhower's plane, Voorhees orchestrated an evacuation flight that had a dazzling effect on the US and international press. The story made headlines all over the world. Voorhees said of the stunt, 'It was easier

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<sup>116</sup> Voorhees, 'The Freedom Fighters: Hungarian Refugee Relief, 1956-1957'.

to persuade people here to take the Hungarians into their homes if the President was willing to use his personal plane to bring a lot of them over.’<sup>117</sup>

The media coverage of the evacuation and of the Hungarians themselves had by the new year turned positive. The rare exception being a few opinion pieces in newspapers criticizing what was said to be a lax vetting effort to screen out potential Communist infiltrators. Voorhees and the Madison Ave advertising firms collaborating with him on the public relations push were sensitive to this criticism. In an effort to quash any anxiety that they thought might arise from the public seeing images of thousands of Hungarians at a time arriving by ship at the Brooklyn Navy Yard, Voorhees persuaded the military to abandon the transport of refugees by ship.<sup>118</sup> Despite the fact that the USES and NGOs preferred naval transport so they could use the time aboard during the journey to interview and process the evacuees, smaller groups arriving by air were more discrete, making their press coverage easier to control. By early January all transportation to the US was conducted by air.<sup>119</sup>

By May 1957 when Voorhees felt the public relations campaign had fulfilled its purpose, he stepped down as head of the President’s Committee. By then a total of 32,075 evacuees had passed through Kilmer Reception Center and on to resettlement in areas around the country.<sup>120</sup> In this time there had been 347 flights and 3 naval transports without major incident. The evacuation was overwhelmingly regarded as a success by US government officials, as noted in their reviews of the operation.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> Voorhees, ‘The Freedom Fighters: Hungarian Refugee Relief, 1956-1957’.

<sup>118</sup> Niessen, ‘Send us a Planeload!: Catholic Organizations and the Resettlement of 56ers’.

<sup>119</sup> Niessen, ‘Send us a Planeload!: Catholic Organizations and the Resettlement of 56ers’.

<sup>120</sup> Voorhees, ‘The Freedom Fighters: Hungarian Refugee Relief, 1956-1957’. It is not clear from the archival record how the additional approximately 3,000 entered the US if not through Kilmer. This number may have entered before or after Kilmer was operational, arrived at different ports, or the arrival number reported may not be completely accurate.

<sup>121</sup> Rutgers University Archives, Institute for Hungarian Studies, United States Army Refugee Reception Center, ‘Kilmer Reception Center Summary’, Boxes K and L, United States Congressional Record, 85th Congress, 1st Session, Part II, Tracy Voorhees Papers.

Aware that there were lessons to be learned from their success and that such an evacuation might happen again, one of Voorhees' last directives to his staff was to produce a manual of policies and procedures undertaken at Kilmer Reception Center during the evacuation's reception period. The team produced a detailed manual and distributed copies to a number of government offices for posterity.<sup>122</sup> This illustrates again that military preparedness was one of the primary reasons for the US' involvement in the evacuation.

## Conclusion

October 1956 saw a confluence of crises that steered the course for the US and UK's reaction to the Hungarian uprising and its aftermath. The tripartite invasion of Egypt during the Suez Crisis was one that had an indirect but critical impact on the decision to evacuate Hungarian refugees from Austria. The international condemnation of the invasion of Egypt may have dissuaded the US from providing direct military support to the Hungarian uprising, as such a move would have further turned world opinion against Western states and may have triggered a direct confrontation with the Soviets. The US and its allies certainly bore some responsibility for encouraging the uprising.

Though the bellicose broadcasts from Radio Free Europe suggested otherwise, the US may never have intended to provide military support to the Hungarian rebels. Instead, the US-funded provocations may have meant only to embarrass the Soviets and weaken their national prestige by indirectly prompting Soviet oppression of popular dissent. Perhaps the most telling testimony to this is found in the minutes of the 290<sup>th</sup> US National Security Council (NSC) meeting that took place in Washington, DC on 12 July 1956. The minutes reveal a frank conversation among the NSC about how best to pursue a flexible policy towards individual states in the Soviet bloc that would open the way for greater trade with the US. To this end, the council aimed to weaken the influence of the USSR by embarrassing the Communist

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<sup>122</sup> Voorhees, 'The Freedom Fighters: Hungarian Refugee Relief, 1956-1957'.

leaders in the region. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, referring to the US' offer of food aid to Poland during the June 1956 Poznan uprising, said 'We never seriously thought we would be able to provide food to these people. [...] Our main idea was to embarrass the government of Communist Poland.'<sup>123</sup> Dulles thought the US should continue to promote 'spontaneous manifestations of discontent and opposition to the Communist regime despite risks to individuals' to which Vice President Nixon responded that 'it would be an unmixed evil, from the point of view of US interest, if the Soviet iron fist were to come down again on the Soviet bloc.'<sup>124</sup>

The Hungarian uprising and its wake showed the world what an unmixed evil the Soviet iron fist was and to what lengths the US would go to protect 'freedom fighters' from the tyranny of Communism. At least this is how the US was hoping to portray the crisis. Orchestrating or exploiting uprisings for propaganda purposes has been a tactic of the US for some time. In this way we can view the US' participation in the Hungarian evacuation as a proactive self-exculpation of the potential charge of complicity in provoking or prolonging the uprising.

This humanitarian evacuation resulted from a series of failures: the failure, foremost, of the uprising itself, and of the West's propaganda in Hungary that encouraged it. The failure of the Tripartite Aggression against Egypt, as explained, came into play as well. The diplomatic and military failures of 1956 however occurred at the height of the Cold War and thus needed to be framed within the larger Western narrative of freedom vs tyranny. The US' inability to gauge Soviet reaction to its belligerent propaganda efforts in Hungary contributed to massive displacement. It also offered the US and its allies an opportunity to frame the Soviet response as unadulterated Communist aggression on a people wanting nothing more than freedom from a godless ideology. In this way, each Hungarian refugee who chose evacuation over repatriation represented a victory of Liberal democracy over Soviet Communism.

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<sup>123</sup> National Security Council, 'Minutes of the 290<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, July 12, 1956'.

<sup>124</sup> National Security Council, 'Minutes of the 290<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, July 12, 1956'.

In the US, showing one's support for the Hungarian 'freedom fighters' and their struggle against Communist domination became a cultural phenomenon. This communicative act bolstered Western Liberal symbols and institutions. The amplification of the freedom fighter rhetoric was most evident in the American media. Liberal states latched on to the opportunity to exploit a popular nationalist uprising that had been crushed by invading Communist forces. It was also the first televised conflict and so entered the social imaginary of the West perhaps more quickly and emotionally than any conflict before.

Overall, the failed uprising and subsequent evacuation proved to be a windfall for the US and its allies, as the CIA's 'Report on Hungarian Refugees' summarizes:

'When you add the thousands of reports and items to the training and area familiarization and divide it by the cost (Army food and quarters were provided, and no additional personnel were hired) you find that the intelligence community has made a bargain purchase. The Hungarian exploitation effort, American domestic style, will be a source of example and anecdote for some time to come.'<sup>125</sup>

The US exploited the displacement for gathering intelligence, collecting information in Austrian camps and during debriefings at Kilmer. After the evacuation was complete, the US attempted to recruit spies from among those Hungarians left behind in Austria.<sup>126</sup> This illustrates that preserving Austria's neutrality was not as important to the US as leveraging the Soviets in every way possible.

Cold War intrigue and manoeuvring aside, what is perhaps the most remarkable aspect of the Hungarian uprising was the swift international action to the refugee emergency created in Austria. It was the first example of a rapid international response to evacuate and resettle such a large number of refugees. It set a paradigm for burden-sharing and refugee resettlement that lasts to this day.

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<sup>125</sup> Guy E. Coriden, 'Report on Hungarian Refugees', CIA Historical Review Program, Central Intelligence Agency Library.

<sup>126</sup> Andreas Gémes, 'Deconstruction of a Myth? Austria and the Hungarian Refugees of 1956-57'.

For the first time in its existence, UNHCR served as the lead agency in a humanitarian emergency. It was also the first time that UNHCR and ICEM (now IOM) worked together in joint management, a partnership that is common today.<sup>127</sup> Administrative processing techniques pioneered during the Hungarians' resettlement are still in use, evidence that the Hungarian evacuation helped create the blueprint for today's resettlement regime.

The evacuation resettled the majority of the Hungarian refugees that had fled to Austria. According to UNHCR, they were resettled in 37 countries, with the US accepting the largest number.<sup>128</sup> Evacuation to the US was completed in under three months.<sup>129</sup>

The process of resettlement, including integration into host communities, would prove to be a much longer road. As the intensity of the freedom fighter rhetoric subsided with time in the media, US isolationist lawmakers stepped up their opposition to refugee resettlement, citing the dangers of lax vetting allowing for Communist infiltration. When the Senate debated legislation allowing for an increase of the fixed percentage of escapee visas allotted, Vice President Nixon, in support of allowing increased numbers of escapees to resettle in the US, said 'We should not place a ceiling on what we will do in fulfilling our traditional natural mission of providing a haven of refuge for victims of oppression.' The Vice President supported a proposed amendment to the Immigration and Nationality Act that would 'provide flexible authority to grant admission to this country of additional numbers of Hungarians and other refugees from Communist persecution'.<sup>130</sup>

The opposition to an expansion of refugee resettlement to the US also expressed its objections within this reductionist narrative of Communism vs Liberal democracy, citing the danger of allowing hastily vetted Hungarians who had, in the

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<sup>127</sup> Jérôme Elie, 'The Historical Roots of Cooperation Between the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Organization for Migration', *Global Governance*, 16:3 (2010), 345-360.

<sup>128</sup> United Nations, 'Yearbook of the United Nations, 1958', United Nations Office of Public Information, New York, 1959.

<sup>129</sup> Voorhees, 'The Freedom Fighters: Hungarian Refugee Relief, 1956-1957'.

<sup>130</sup> Richard M. Nixon, 'Report to President Eisenhower By Vice President Nixon', January 1, 1957, Department of State Bulletin, 36.

words of Representative Francis Walter, 'deserted their homeland in time of crisis' to enter the US under the guise of freedom fighters in order to become 'Communist spies'.<sup>131</sup> During debates in Congress focused on proposed revisions to the Immigration and Nationality Act in the wake of the Hungarian evacuation, a number of lawmakers framed refugee resettlement as an existential threat to the US. Questioning the validity of the Hungarians' claims of persecuted status, Representative George Long said of them: 'We are almost engulfed by a tide of immigrants who could scarcely qualify as bona-fide refugees. [...] Sooner or later we will burst at the seams.'<sup>132</sup> The assertions of Representative Long and others in the restrictionist camp echoed the racist nativist discourse prominent in earlier debates on immigration to the US but added a Cold War dimension of subversion and infiltration of Communist spies, a detail added to a growing list kept by isolationists of foreign bogeymen bent on disrupting the American way of life. Many of the lawmakers who in 1957 opposed further Hungarian resettlement had in November and December of 1956 supported their evacuation from Austria. Perhaps they thought the evacuation had served its political purpose by then and had caused enough embarrassment to the Soviets. The Hungarians no longer served their purpose in increasing US national prestige.

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<sup>131</sup> United States Congressional Record, 85th Congress, 1st Session, Part II.

<sup>132</sup> United States Congressional Record, 85th Congress, 1st Session, Part II.

## Chapter 3: Evacuation of Vietnamese Children from South Vietnam, 1975

### Introduction

In April of 1975, US-led Operation Babylift evacuated 2,547 Vietnamese unaccompanied, abandoned, and orphaned children from South Vietnam on a series of flights from Saigon and resettled them with adoptive families in countries in North America and Western Europe.<sup>1</sup> At the height of the evacuation between 20-28 April, approximately forty planes departed every twenty-four hours from Saigon's Tan Son Nhut airport.<sup>2</sup> Initiated by Western volunteers who worked in South Vietnamese orphanages, the evacuation's purported aim was to protect children considered to be at risk of maltreatment by the Communist forces fast approaching Saigon in late-March of 1975.

The evacuation evoked conflicting interpretations as it happened and to this day inspires debate about legality and ethicality. Operation Babylift is considered by some to be a courageous act of rescue in the face of a brutal military advance, a salvation of innocents that came to symbolize a redemption of Western morals in the closing chapter of the US' disastrous invasion of Vietnam in the Second Indochina War.<sup>3</sup> It is considered by critics, however, to be yet another manifestation of an ethnocentric, Western imperialistic mode of international relations.<sup>4</sup> The impulse to 'save' children, the purest of war's victims, can be

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<sup>1</sup> Agency for International Development, *Operation Babylift Report (Emergency Movement of Vietnamese and Cambodian Orphans for Intercountry Adoption, April - June 1975)*, Washington, DC, 1-14. The report states that 1,945 of these children were adopted or otherwise resettled in the US. 602 were adopted in countries outside the US. 91% of all children were under the age of eight. 20% of all child evacuees were recorded as being 'racially mixed'.

<sup>2</sup> Ford Library Museum, Operation Babylift Timeline, 'Subsequent flights from Saigon were filled with babies, children, and, as the North Vietnamese Army approached Saigon, adults' <<https://www.fordlibrarymuseum.gov/museum/exhibits/babylift/>> [accessed 23 June 2022].

<sup>3</sup> Among the numerous opinion pieces supporting Operation Babylift that appeared in UK and US newspapers in April and May 1975, conservative US journalist George Will's from the Washington Post perhaps is the most emotional and direct, implying that any American who did not support the evacuation had a 'soul so dead'. <[https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/lifestyle/1980/06/25/king-of-the-cut-rate-airways/56e3a6cb-adca-4bc9-866f-e382f7df7452/?utm\\_term=.e7fca0c985b0](https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/lifestyle/1980/06/25/king-of-the-cut-rate-airways/56e3a6cb-adca-4bc9-866f-e382f7df7452/?utm_term=.e7fca0c985b0)> [accessed 23 June 2022]. See also Alan Young's 'Mercy airlift critic rebuked', *The Daily Mail*, 10 April 1975, page 2.

<sup>4</sup> Gloria Emerson, 'Operation Babylift', *The New Republic*, 26 April 1975, 8-9.

powerful, and the reasons compelling. But an impulsive act of kindness, as Babylift might be considered at its inception before being co-opted by government leaders, can have detrimental effects on those it is meant to save.

This chapter considers the motives, rationale, and outcomes of Operation Babylift in relation to the US' political objectives in the wake of their defeat in Vietnam and examines why staff of the British newspaper The Daily Mail participated in a parallel evacuation. This case study draws from US and UK government documents found in the collections at the Gerald Ford Library, the British Library, and the British National Archives, as well as from the work of intercountry adoption scholarship, first-hand accounts of participants, and secondary sources. Of particular interest to me while conducting this case study was what role citizen activism played from the inception of the evacuation through to the adoptions of the children. I also consider how earlier instances of civilian displacement within Vietnam specifically, as well as the SE Asia region during the era of European colonialism may have set a trajectory in which evacuation was utilised as a solution to a perceived risk during the last days of the Second Indochina War. Relating back to my foundational research questions, I explore what political and cultural factors made Operation Babylift thinkable, and how it came to be seen as a solution to the perceived dangers of the impending Communist victory in South Vietnam.

This chapter argues that the US and UK evacuated Vietnamese children in order to reframe military and political miscalculations for the consumption of their publics as a way to counter narratives of abandoning allies at the end of the Second Indochina War and to replace these abandonment narratives with a rescue that provided cover for their failures in SE Asia. Ultimately, I contend, the purported rescue provided an opportunity through collective memory-making at reflexive self-rescue for the citizen subjects of the US and UK whose governments had, at different times, occupied Vietnam and contributed to the suffering of the Vietnamese people. In their attempts to 'save' Vietnamese children via evacuation, the evacuators compromised appropriate decision-making procedures and jeopardised the wellbeing of the children they purportedly set out to save. While

the hegemonic narrative around Operation Babylift may have fixated on child protection, I argue that it was state interests that were paramount in the decision to evacuate Vietnamese children.

### *Historiography*

By the time of Operation Babylift in April 1975, forced displacement in Vietnam, primarily at the hands of Western military powers, had become normalised. The spectacular film footage of the evacuation panic in Saigon was but the final scene in a long history of forced displacement of Vietnamese by foreign forces that began with the *agrovilles* of the occupying French and continued through the US' Strategic Hamlet Program. As documented in the voluminous historiography on displacement in Vietnam during the Indochina wars, and covered in depth by Busch and Catton, both the *agrovilles* and Strategic Hamlet Program, in efforts to pacify the population and stymie the independence movement, displaced hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese.<sup>5</sup> The British also took part in the planning of forced displacement of Vietnamese civilians, sharing with the French and later the Americans their expertise in population control that they had gained in the Kenyan and Malayan campaigns. British colonial authorities had not long before displaced Kenyans with the New Village System, and Chinese-Malay with the Briggs' Plan.<sup>6</sup>

The US military's involvement in Vietnam began and ended with humanitarian evacuations. In 1954 with British military assistance, the US Navy's Operation Passage to Freedom transported 310,000 Vietnamese, mainly Christians, from the north of the country to the south after the Geneva Accords of 1954 called for the

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<sup>5</sup> P. Busch, "'Killing the 'Vietcong': The British Advisory Mission and the Strategic Hamlet Programme', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 25:1 (2002), 135-162; Philip E. Catton, 'Counter-Insurgency and Nation Building: The Strategic Hamlet Programme in South Vietnam, 1961-1963', *The International History Review*, 21:4 (1999), 918-940.

<sup>6</sup> Joshua R. Goodman, 'Shirking the Briggs Plan: Civilian Resistance to Reform and the Army's Struggle for Control in Malaya, 1950-1952', *the Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 20 February (2021), 1-35. See also Christina Firpo and Margaret Jacobs, 'Taking Children, Ruling Colonies: Child Removal and Colonial Subjugation in Australia, Canada, French Indochina, and the United States, 1870-1950s', *Lincoln Journal of World History*, 29:4 (2019), 529-562; and Karl Hack, 'Detention, Deportation and Resettlement: British Counterinsurgency and Malaya's Rural Chinese, 1948-60', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 43:4 (2015), 611-640.

country's partition.<sup>7</sup> In his work on *Passage to Freedom*, Frankum lays out the political context within which the population exchange took place and goes into great detail about the operational logistics of the operation, giving insight into the possible force projection aims of the US *vis-à-vis* the Soviet and Chinese Communists.<sup>8</sup> Słowiak, in his work on the International Control Commission's charge to oversee the application of the Geneva Accords during the 1954 population exchange, reveals the extent of anti-Communist propaganda campaigns undertaken in the North to encourage participation in the exchange to the South.<sup>9</sup> The Vietnamese whom the US and UK militaries evacuated chose to flee the Communist-controlled north, though only after an intense anti-Communist propaganda campaign that saw the collaboration of France, the US, and the monarchist South Vietnamese government. The US government and media touted this evacuation of Vietnamese - as they would the Hungarians two years later - as freedom-loving people voting with their feet against the tyranny of Communism. In 1975, twenty-one years after Operation Passage to Freedom, US involvement in Vietnam ended the same way it started: with an evacuation. In both the 1954 and 1975 examples, we see the political instrumentalization of humanitarian evacuation: as a way to frame offensive military action in the region as rescue, as a way to project force capabilities against Communist enemies, and, at the end of the Second Indochina War, as a way to redeem a catastrophic loss.

The historiography on Vietnam and its place in the growth of intercountry transnational adoption is abundant as well and, as argued by Oh, Rouleau, and Sachs, is closely linked with American militarism in East Asia.<sup>10</sup> Operation Babylift,

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<sup>7</sup> Ronald B. Frankum, *Operation Passage to Freedom: The United States Navy in Vietnam, 1954-1955*, (Lubbock: Texas Tech University Press, 2007); Sam Vong, "'Assets of War': Strategic Displacements, Population Movements, and the Uses of Refugees during the Vietnam War, 1965-1973", *Journal of American Ethnic History*, 39:3 (2020), 75-100. See also Jarema Słowiak, 'The Role of the International Commission for Supervision and Control in Vietnam in the Population Exchange between Vietnamese States during Years 1954-1955', *Prace Historyczne*, 146:3 (2019), 621-635.

<sup>8</sup> Frankum, *Operation Passage to Freedom: The United States Navy in Vietnam, 1954-1955*.

<sup>9</sup> Jarema Słowiak, 'The Role of the International Commission for Supervision and Control in Vietnam in the Population Exchange between Vietnamese States during Years 1954-1955', *Prace Historyczne*, 146:3 (2019), 621-635

<sup>10</sup> Arissa Oh, 'A New Kind of Missionary Work: Christians, Christian Americanists, and the Adoption of Korean GI Babies, 1955-1961', *Women's Studies Quarterly*, 33:3-4 (2005), 161-188; Arissa Oh, 'From War Waif to Ideal

an evacuation initiated by Western orphanage workers before being commandeered by the US government, was the culmination of at least five years of transnational adoptions of children from Vietnam.<sup>11</sup> Transnational adoption was relatively rare in the 1970s.<sup>12</sup> Organized transnational adoption to the West began after the Korean War. US Christian missionaries in Korea, Harry and Bertha Holt, acting, they said, on a command from God to create an adoption agency, established Holt International Children Services in 1956 to facilitate the adoption of Korean orphans into families in the US.<sup>13</sup> Adoptions of Korean children through Holt Services continued in an *ad hoc* manner until 1961 when intercountry adoption was codified in both US and South Korean immigration law.<sup>14</sup> Oh posits that codification occurred simultaneously so that South Korea could get rid of Amerasian children, for which Korean society's view of racial purity allowed no place, and so that the US could show the world that it was not racist to counter Soviet and North Korean propaganda to that effect. Oh makes this latter claim based on her observation that an exaggerated racism served as a recurrent theme in anti-American propaganda produced by the USSR and North Korea.<sup>15</sup> If this 'race-based evacuation', as Oh called it, did indeed have a directive from the US government to counter Communist propaganda, it is further evidence that evacuation served as an instrument to strengthen American prestige.<sup>16</sup>

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Immigrant: The Cold War Transformation of the Korean Orphan', *Journal of American Ethnic History*, 31:4 (2012), 34-55; Arissa Oh, *To Save the Children of Korea* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015); Brian Rouleau, 'Children Are Hiding in Plain Sight in the History of U.S. Foreign Relations', *Modern American History*, 2 (2019), 367-387; and Dana Sachs, *The Life We Were Given: Operation Babylift, International Adoption, and the Children of War in Vietnam* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2010).

<sup>11</sup> Agency for International Development, *Operation Babylift Report (Emergency Movement of Vietnamese and Cambodian Orphans for Intercountry Adoption, April - June 1975)*, Washington, DC, 1-14. Approximately 2,800 children from South Vietnam were adopted outside the country between 1970 and 1974.

<sup>12</sup> Catherine Ceniza Choy, 'Race at the Center: The History of American Cold War Asian Adoption', *The Journal of American-East Asian Relations*, 16:3 (2009): 163-82.

<sup>13</sup> Catherine Ceniza Choy, 'Race at the Center: The History of American Cold War Asian Adoption'; Tobias Hübinette, 'Korean Adoption History', in Eleana Kim, ed., *Community: Guide to Korea for overseas adopted Koreans* (Overseas Koreans Foundation, 2004); Arissa Oh, 'A New Kind of Missionary Work: Christians, Christian Americanists, and the Adoption of Korean GI Babies, 1955-1961'.

<sup>14</sup> Sue-Je Lee Gage, 'The Amerasian Problem: Blood, Duty, and Race', *International Relations*, 21:1 (2007), 86-102.

<sup>15</sup> Arissa Oh quoted in Traci Tong's, 'How South Korea Became the First Country to Start International Adoptions', *Public Radio International*, 28 August 2016.

<sup>16</sup> Arissa Oh in Traci Tong's, 'How South Korea Became the First Country to Start International Adoptions'.

## Precedents

There were evacuations of civilians during the Korean War, many of them impromptu operations initiated by American servicemen.<sup>17</sup> Two examples - notable due to the number of evacuees - occurred in December of 1950 as Communist forces pushed south towards Seoul. The 'Ship of Miracles' evacuation, purportedly the largest evacuation from land by a single ship, transported approximately 14,000 North Korean civilians to the southern port of Pusan aboard an American Merchant Marine cargo ship, the *SS Meredith Victory*.<sup>18</sup> In his book on the event, Gilbert interviewed participants, both American and Korean, to gather oral histories. In addition to revealing ideological forces at play for both populations, the interviews show how some American participants viewed the 'Christmas miracle' evacuation in relation to Vietnam in 1975: 'We did a better job than they did in Vietnam.'<sup>19</sup> Also in December of 1950 occurred Operation Kiddy Car, when members of the US Air Force stationed in South Korea carried out an unauthorized evacuation of nearly 1,000 Korean children in expectation of an attack on Seoul by North Korean troops.<sup>20</sup> The evacuation was largely the work of US Lieutenant Colonel Russell Blaisdell, a military chaplain who became emotionally invested in the wellbeing of Korean orphans after his time volunteering with them in Seoul and donating some of his personal wealth for their upkeep.<sup>21</sup> Commandeering US military vehicles to transport Korean orphans without US or South Korean permission, Lieutenant Colonel Blaisdell flew nearly 1,000 children and 80 of their Korean caretakers with

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<sup>17</sup> See Arissa Oh, 'A New Kind of Missionary Work: Christians, Christian Americanists, and the Adoption of Korean GI Babies, 1955-1961'.

<sup>18</sup> Bill Gilbert, *Ship of Miracles: 14,000 Lives and One Miraculous Voyage* (Chicago: Triumph Books, 2000).

<sup>19</sup> Gilbert, *Ship of Miracles: 14,000 Lives and One Miraculous Voyage*, page 121.

<sup>20</sup> Patricia Fronek, 'Operation Babylift: advancing intercountry adoption into Australia', *Journal of Australian Studies*, 36:4 (2012), 445-458; Sue-Je Lee Gage, 'The Amerasian Problem: Blood, Duty, and Race', *International Relations*. See also National Museum of the Air Force, 'Operation Kiddy Car', 12 May 2015; and Arissa Oh, 'A New Kind of Missionary Work: Christians, Christian Americanists, and the Adoption of Korean GI Babies, 1955-1961'.

<sup>21</sup> National Museum of the Air Force, 'Operation Kiddy Car', 12 May 2015. US military units often require or encourage service members to volunteer with communities in the vicinity of military bases. As an enlisted airman in the US Air Force during the 1990s, I was required to do this in areas where I was stationed. Rosemary Taylor mentions in her book *Orphans of War* that US soldiers in South Vietnam occasionally volunteered at the orphanages she oversaw and often donated food and supplies for the orphans.

the assistance of a few of his Air Force colleagues from Seoul to the relative safety of the South Korean island of Jeju.<sup>22</sup>

Less than four years after the evacuations initiated by American servicemen in Korea, the US participated in the evacuation of approximately 310,000 Vietnamese civilians who wished to move south of the 17<sup>th</sup> parallel after the signing of the Geneva Accords in July 1954.<sup>23</sup> The Geneva Accords resulted from an international agreement that detailed the resolution of the First Indochina War and the subsequent dismantling of French Indochina. Article 14(d) of the Accords stipulated that ‘Any civilians residing in a district controlled by one party who wish to go and live in the zone assigned to the other party shall be permitted and helped to do so.’<sup>24</sup>

The archival record shows that from as early as August 1954, the UK Foreign Office had been involved in discussions with the US government about population transfers - ‘evacuations’, they called them - between North and South Vietnam.<sup>25</sup> The US Navy had been involved with the evacuations since 17 August 1954, moving Vietnamese civilians by ship from northern South Vietnam to the Saigon area in cooperation with the French military, and had requested the UK’s assistance.<sup>26</sup> Notes from a meeting held in the Foreign Office on 19 August 1954 to discuss the US’ request for assistance mentions that ‘the Admiralty would perhaps accept the job if strong arguments of prestige were involved’.<sup>27</sup> The US initially asked the UK to ‘lift’ 50,000 Vietnamese, though the number was soon reduced to 10,000 after the original estimate of 1.5 million northern Vietnamese expected to seek

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<sup>22</sup> National Museum of the Air Force, ‘Operation Kiddy Car’, 12 May 2015 < <https://www.nationalmuseum.af.mil/Visit/Museum-Exhibits/Fact-Sheets/Display/Article/196362/operation-kiddy-car/> > [accessed 23 June 2022].

<sup>23</sup> Ronald B. Frankum, *Operation Passage to Freedom: The United States Navy in Vietnam, 1954-1955*, (Lubbock: Texas Tech University Press, 2007).

<sup>24</sup> *Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities in Viet-Nam, 20 July 1954* <<https://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/genevacc.htm>> [accessed 23 June 2022].

<sup>25</sup> The National Archives, ADM 1/25561/10, ‘From Saigon to FO’, 15 August 1954.

<sup>26</sup> Richard Wadsworth Lindholm, *Viet-Nam: The First Five Years: An International Symposium* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1959; reprint 2011).

<sup>27</sup> The National Archives, ADM 1/25561/16-17, ‘Refugees in Indochina’, undated handwritten notes positioned between typed letters dated 15 and 21 August 1954.

evacuation to the south turned out to be a gross overestimation on the part of the South Vietnamese government, and French and US militaries.<sup>28</sup>

The UK eventually agreed to commit ships and personnel to support Operation Passage to Freedom. Participation was, in the words of Selwyn Lloyd, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs under Anthony Eden, ‘a purely political gesture delivered though it is in a highly humanitarian fashion.’<sup>29</sup> The reasoning for taking part in the evacuation was twofold: the UK had a responsibility to support the implementation of the articles of the Geneva Accords because it had played a leading role in bringing about the settlement; and the British were keen to show, ‘in view of our interests in Malaya’, that there was an alternative to Communism in SE Asia.<sup>30</sup> July 1956 would see elections in South Vietnam, as stipulated in the Geneva Accords, and Foreign Office officials were determined to do what they could to create a ‘solid south’ that would vote against any Communist influence.<sup>31</sup> ‘Rightly or wrongly,’ it was said in discussion at the Foreign Office, ‘the United Kingdom [...] has a special moral responsibility towards the South Vietnamese’.<sup>32</sup> This purported moral responsibility seems primarily to have been to guide the Vietnamese away from Communism, lest Malaya, a British colony, should also fall.<sup>33</sup>

The British Navy completed two trips during the evacuation, transporting 3,200 civilians from Haiphong to Cap St Jacques on the HMS Warrior.<sup>34</sup> In a letter to Selwyn Lloyd dated 13 September 1954, H.A. Graves of the British legation in Saigon wrote that the evacuation was ‘a token which has no parallel on the Communist side. The fact that three of the great Western democracies [US, UK, France] have lent the exodus their aid has been the subject of favourable comment not only in Vietnam but also in Cambodia and Laos’.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> The National Archives, ADM 1/25561/38, ‘Minute Sheet: Evacuation of North Vietnamese’, 24 August 1954.

<sup>29</sup> The National Archives, ADM 1/25561/35-36, ‘Minute Sheet: Evacuation of Refugees from Northern to Southern Vietnam’, 24 August 1954.

<sup>30</sup> The National Archives, ADM 1/25561/27, ‘The Agreement Reached at Geneva’, 30 August 1954.

<sup>31</sup> The National Archives, ADM 1/25561/27, ‘The Agreement Reached at Geneva’, 30 August 1954.

<sup>32</sup> The National Archives, ADM 1/25561/37, ‘Minute Sheet: Evacuation of North Vietnamese’, 24 August 1954.

<sup>33</sup> The Malayan Emergency was happening at this time, with the Commonwealth armed forces attempting to subdue an insurgency led by the Communist Malayan National Liberation Army.

<sup>34</sup> The National Archives, ADM 1/25561/70, ‘HMS Warrior from British Legation in Saigon’, 13 September 1954.

<sup>35</sup> The National Archives, ADM 1/25561/70, ‘HMS Warrior from British Legation in Saigon’, 13 September 1954.

These archived discussions show that evacuations, airlifts, and population transfers were part of the West's toolkit in Vietnam from at least the early 1950s. With the precedent of population transfers between North and South Vietnam in 1954, evacuation became part of the lived experience of many.<sup>36</sup> To policy and war makers it was an accessible solution with a precedent. To civilians it was yet another imposition that could be forced on them from within or without. Fleeing to and from was a fact of life for many Vietnamese, no matter their station.<sup>37</sup> Declassified UK government documents show a discussion between UK officials on the historical precedent of evacuations supported by the British. A minute sheet from 24 August 1954 states that

'The only case which could be regarded as a precedent to this operation [Passage to Freedom] is the evacuation of certain refugees from Spain during the Civil War in 1937. Those evacuated were, in the first instance, certain select "non-combatant Spaniards of non-proletarian class" and foreigners who had sought refuge in Embassies in Madrid. [...] Repayment was expected, and, over a long course of years, gradually obtained from most of the parent governments of those foreigners involved.'<sup>38</sup>

A discussion from November 1954 found in the records of the UK National Archives at Kew about the political wisdom of 'repatriating' up to 50,000 so-called Annamites living in NE Siam in 1954 due to their openly expressed Communist sympathies shows again that 'evacuations' - or population transfers - were a possible solution in the opinion of policy makers.<sup>39</sup> Fearing a Communist fifth

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<sup>36</sup> There is no agreed upon total number of evacuees who crossed the 17<sup>th</sup> parallel between 1954 and 1955. Estimates vary greatly, from approximately 310,000 to 928,000 people. This disparity is discussed in pages 48-50 of Richard Wadsworth Lindholm's book *Viet-Nam: The First Five Years: An International Symposium* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1959; reprint 2011).

<sup>37</sup> The National Archives, ADM 1/25561/35, 'Minute Sheet: Evacuation of Refugees from Northern to Southern Vietnam', 24 August 1954.

<sup>39</sup> The National Archives, FO 371/112270/33, 'Annamite [sic] refugees in Siam', 1954. The term *Annamite* is not specific enough for me to determine if the community in question was the ethnic Lao community in NE Siam

column in Siam, UK and US officials pressured Bangkok to ‘evacuate’ the Annamites to North Vietnam after the 1954 partition.<sup>40</sup>

By mid-1954, the plight of displaced Vietnamese was entering into mainstream British public consciousness, as evidenced in an appeal printed in the *Manchester Guardian* on 10 September 1954. The appeal, called *Share Our Surplus*, was organized by the New York-based Christian World Service and asked for donations to meet their goal of raising \$7 million to buy and distribute ‘large quantities of butter, milk, and cheese in refugee countries, including Indo-China’.<sup>41</sup> This seems to have been at the start of Vietnam-focused British charity work.<sup>42</sup>

By the late-1960s there were a number of orphanages in South Vietnam being run by Westerners, predominantly those associated with American and Australian religious organizations. Archives of the US Agency for International Development (USAID) show that they were aware of seven orphanages registered with the South Vietnam government who, between 1970 and 1975, were organising adoptions out of Vietnam.<sup>43</sup> In addition to these officially recognised orphanages, there were a few provisional shelters run by Western volunteers, some of whom were self-supporting.<sup>44</sup>

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(present day Isan Province of Thailand) or if they were a smaller ethnic minority with ties to Vietnam and Vietnamese cultures. The Annamite Range runs through Laos, Vietnam, and Cambodia and is home to a number of ethnic minorities. The answer to this question may not tie directly with the topic of humanitarian evacuations but it is one I would like to answer to get a better understanding of what demographic engineering the British may have been contemplating in SE Asia. In other archival records of the period, the British discussed pressuring Siam to cede the ethnically Lao Isan territory to Laos, possibly to win Laos’ favour in an effort to strengthen their leadership’s resistance to increasing Communist influence.

<sup>40</sup> The National Archives, FO 371/112270/36, ‘Annamite refugees in Siam’, 1954. The word ‘evacuate’ is used in these records as a euphemism for population transfer.

<sup>41</sup> The National Archives, FO 371/112271/62, ‘Helping Refugees in Indo-China’, 10 September 1954.

<sup>42</sup> I would like to pursue this thread further to see how and why British civilians undertook Vietnam-focused charity work. It seems that much of it was organized and led by Christian groups, which hints that it was support of the Christian minority in Vietnam that inspired such projects.

<sup>43</sup> Agency for International Development, *Operation Babylift Report (Emergency Movement of Vietnamese and Cambodian Orphans for Intercountry Adoption, April - June 1975)*, Washington, DC, 1-14. The seven agencies were: Friends for All Children, Holt International Children Services, Travelers’ Aid International Social Services of America, Catholic Relief Services, World Vision Relief Organization, Friends of Children of Vietnam, and the Pearl S. Buck Foundation.

<sup>44</sup> Shirley Peck-Barnes, *War Cradle: Vietnam’s Children of War, Operation Babylift – The Untold Story* (Denver: Vintage Pressworks, 2000).

By many accounts, the need was great, as the number of abandoned and deprived children grew along with the duration of the war. The South Vietnamese Ministry of Social Welfare, the government office responsible for the care of South Vietnamese orphans, was unable due to budget and staffing restraints to care for the children on its own. Following the March 1973 withdrawal of the US military and subsequent reduction of aid, the economic situation in South Vietnam became increasingly dire. Adoption agencies attempted to speed up adoption procedures in anticipation of what was thought to be an imminent North Vietnam Communist victory over the South. The number of authorized adoptions of Vietnamese children from South Vietnam to Australia, North America, and Europe increased from 682 in 1973 to 1,362 in 1974.<sup>45</sup>

### Case Study

The Paris Peace Accords, signed on 27 January 1973, marked the official end of direct US military involvement in the Second Indochina War. Provisions of the agreement, however, stipulated that the US would provide military hardware for South Vietnam to defend itself in case of North Vietnamese attack. In addition to these provisions, President Nixon pledged to South Vietnam's President Nguyen Van Thieu that the US would come to the aid of South Vietnam should the North violate the Paris Peace Accords.<sup>46</sup> Nixon's pledge was of little consolation to Thieu who had grown frustrated by the string of Communist victories in battle and by the US' waning military support.<sup>47</sup> To add to the South's sense of abandonment, the US reduced its food and economic aid to South Vietnam after the Paris Accords, which in turn impaired the South Vietnamese Ministry of Social Welfare's ability to function, complicating an already precarious existence for orphanages in the country.<sup>48</sup> South Vietnam's fortunes took another negative turn a few months later

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<sup>45</sup> Agency for International Development, *Operation Babylift Report (Emergency Movement of Vietnamese and Cambodian Orphans for Inter-country Adoption, April - June 1975)*, Washington, DC, pages 1-14.

<sup>46</sup> Henry Kissinger, *Ending the Vietnam War: A History of America's Involvement in and Extrication from the Vietnam War* (New York: Touchstone Books, 2003).

<sup>47</sup> *Last Days in Vietnam*, film, directed by R. Kennedy (American Experience Films, 2014).

<sup>48</sup> Shirley Peck-Barnes, *War Cradle: Vietnam's Children of War, Operation Babylift – The Untold Story*.

following the resignation of President Nixon in August 1974 after he faced the near-certain prospect of impeachment because of the Watergate scandal.

Sensing that the new US administration of President Gerald Ford would not have the Congressional support to re-enter the war in Vietnam should the North break the conditions of the Paris Peace Accords, Communist forces launched an attack on South Vietnam in December 1974.<sup>49</sup> They overran the provincial capital of Phuoc Long, 150 kilometres from Saigon, by early January 1975.<sup>50</sup> The battle at Phuoc Long was the first in the Communists' final military offensive to unify the country under their leadership. The offensive advanced to South Vietnam's Central Highlands, where they overwhelmed the South Vietnamese army (ARVN). What remained of the ARVN in the Central Highlands soon withdrew south under orders to rally at Da Nang, Saigon, and cities farther south.<sup>51</sup> Displaced civilians streamed along south with the soldiers, and on 25 March 1975, when the Communists wrested control of the ancient city of Hue, more displaced people joined the stream south in the hope of finding refuge.

On March 18<sup>th</sup>, one week before the Communist victory at Hue, President Thieu had sent representatives to Washington, DC to make an emergency appeal to Congress for supplemental aid. Despite the vocal support Thieu's request received from US Ambassador Graham Martin, Congress only agreed to a fraction of what Thieu had sought: \$700 million of a requested \$1.45 billion.<sup>52</sup> South Vietnam was unable to cope on its own with the North's offensive and its ensuing chaos of sudden mass displacement. It was a country on the brink of defeat. After their Hue victory, the Communists maintained momentum and continued towards the south and east, concentrating on a push towards Da Nang, the site of a large South Vietnamese airfield and the city where the US troops first landed in 1965.<sup>53</sup> It was around this time that orphanage managers in South Vietnam and supporters

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<sup>49</sup> Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History* (London: Guild Publishing, 1985); Arnold R. Isaacs, *Without Honor: Defeat in Vietnam and Cambodia* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1983; reprint 1998).

<sup>50</sup> *Last Days in Vietnam*, film, directed by R. Kennedy.

<sup>51</sup> *Last Days in Vietnam*, film, directed by R. Kennedy.

<sup>52</sup> Arnold R. Isaacs, *Without Honor: Defeat in Vietnam and Cambodia*.

<sup>53</sup> Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*.

overseas began to search for ways to expedite adoption procedures for orphans with adoptive families waiting overseas; there was not, by this time, any organized discussion among orphanage workers of a large-scale evacuation of children from South Vietnam.<sup>54</sup>

Meanwhile, Da Nang saw a sudden influx on March 25<sup>th</sup> of people fleeing the fighting in Hue, civilians and soldiers alike.<sup>55</sup> The Communist forces had gained control of much of the area north and west of the city, leaving only the coastal highway headed south as a route of escape.<sup>56</sup> Thieu ordered his generals to prepare for a full retreat from Da Nang to Saigon but because of communication and logistical problems the evacuation was delayed.<sup>57</sup> In the chaos, civilians attempting to flee Da Nang clogged the highway, further complicating the military's retreat.

During the same period that the nationalists' offensive was making rapid territorial gains, Communist forces in Cambodia were advancing on Phnom Penh and had blocked all roads and waterways into the capital, disrupting transportation routes and creating an acute food shortage.<sup>58</sup> The US government, who had been supporting the Khmer Republic in the civil war, organised an airlift of food and supplies in response.<sup>59</sup> Because of the restrictions of the 1973 Case-Church Amendment, which prohibited further military action in Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos, the US military was not permitted to conduct such activities in Cambodia and thus could not undertake the airlift themselves. Instead, the US government hired civilian aviation and logistics contractors, including World Airways, which was owned by Ed Daly.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Patrick Ashe, *Dust And Ashes* (online memoir, 1995/updated 2011); Shirley Peck-Barnes, *War Cradle: Vietnam's Children of War*.

<sup>55</sup> Larry Engelmann, *Tears Before the Rain: An Oral History of the Fall of Vietnam* (Boston: Da Capo Press, 1997).

<sup>56</sup> Larry Engelmann, *Tears Before the Rain: An Oral History of the Fall of Vietnam*.

<sup>57</sup> Arnold R. Isaacs, *Without Honor: Defeat in Vietnam and Cambodia*.

<sup>58</sup> David P. Chandler, *The Tragedy of Cambodian History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991).

<sup>59</sup> Arnold R. Isaacs, *Without Honor: Defeat in Vietnam and Cambodia*.

<sup>60</sup> Arnold R. Isaacs, *Without Honor: Defeat in Vietnam and Cambodia*; Timothy P. Carney, 'Stunts, Schemes, & Shenanigans', *Campaigns & Elections*, 28:2 (2007), 42-43; Gloria Emerson, *Winners and Losers: Battles, Retreats, Gains, Losses, and Ruins from a Long War* (London: Random House, 1976); Larry Engelmann, 'Homesick Angel: Last Flight from Da Nang', *Vietnam Magazine*, 24 March 2017, no page number given <<http://www.historynet.com/homesick-angel-last-flight-da-nang.htm>> [accessed on 23 June 2022].

Ed Daly was an American businessman known not only for his aggressive business tactics and bravado, but also for his many charitable acts in support of poor children.<sup>61</sup> Contemporary accounts paint him as a larger-than-life character, a former amateur boxing champion from Chicago's south side who worked his way up from being an air freight booking agent to owning an air freight company by 1950.<sup>62</sup> Daly's World Airways was a major civilian contractor working under the US Military Airlift Command and had been transporting supplies to the US military throughout Asia since 1956.<sup>63</sup> Outside its many offices in the US, World Airways had bases of operation in Cambodia, South Vietnam, Thailand, the Philippines, South Korea, and Japan.<sup>64</sup> According to two sources I have read, World Airways also cooperated with the CIA's clandestine airline Air America during the so-called Secret War in Laos.<sup>65</sup>

While World Airways was participating in the airlifts to the besieged city of Phnom Penh, the US Embassy in Saigon called on US civilian-owned airlines operating in SE Asia to assist with the increasingly desperate situation in Da Nang by evacuating consulate staff, contractors, third country nationals, and their families who had gathered at Da Nang's airport. Daly pulled three of his cargo planes from the airlift in Cambodia to help with the evacuation.<sup>66</sup> The Da Nang operation appears to have been Daly's first participation in an evacuation in South Vietnam, though in 1956 he and World Airways participated in the evacuation of displaced

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<sup>61</sup> Shirley Peck-Barnes, *War Cradle: Vietnam's Children of War*.

<sup>62</sup> Larry Engelmann, *Tears Before the Rain: An Oral History of the Fall of Vietnam*; Shirley Peck-Barnes, *War Cradle: Vietnam's Children of War*.

<sup>63</sup> Shirley Peck-Barnes, *War Cradle: Vietnam's Children of War*.

<sup>64</sup> Joe F. Leeker, 'Air America – Cooperation with Other Airlines', University of Texas at Dallas Special Collections, 24 August 2015  
<<https://www.utdallas.edu/library/specialcollections/hac/cataam/Leeker/history/Cooperation.pdf>> [accessed 23 June 2022].

<sup>65</sup> Joe F. Leeker, 'Air America – Cooperation with Other Airlines'; Joe Hrezo, 'Your Daly Bread Memoirs: My involvement in the final days and the fall of South Vietnam takes a circuitous routing'  
<<http://www.yourdalybread.com/WPage-1.html>> [accessed 23 June 2022]. Joe Hrezo worked for World Airlines from 1969 to 1977. During the evacuations of March and April 1975, Hrezo served as Ed Daly's personal assistant and accompanied him during each flight of this two-month period. Because of this, Hrezo witnessed the evacuations first-hand and participated in many of the discussions that preceded the evacuations. For these reasons, Hrezo's written recollections are valuable as a primary source for researching this case study.

<sup>66</sup> Larry Engelmann, 'World Airways' Audacious Vietnam Baby Airlift', *Vietnam Magazine*, 22 March 2010, no page number given <<http://www.historynet.com/world-airways-audacious-vietnam-baby-airlift.htm>> [accessed on 23 June 2022]; Shirley Peck-Barnes, *War Cradle: Vietnam's Children of War*.

Hungarians during Operation Safe Haven.<sup>67</sup> He himself took part in the two days of the US Embassy-sanctioned operation, from 26 to 27 March.

On 28 March, the US Embassy cancelled all further evacuation flights from Da Nang due to the increasing chaos and violence at the airport, as deserting South Vietnamese soldiers forced their way onboard at gunpoint onto flights meant for civilians.<sup>68</sup> US Ambassador Graham Martin instead ordered evacuation from Da Nang by sea, the US government's 'Option Three' of their emergency evacuation plan for South Vietnam.<sup>69</sup> Daly resisted, arguing with Ambassador Martin about the morality of leaving allies behind at Da Nang airport as the North and its Viet Cong allies advanced on the area.<sup>70</sup> Instead, Daly successfully sought approval from President Thieu to continue the evacuation flights.<sup>71</sup>

Ever the showman, Daly invited US journalists to accompany him and his crew for what would become known as 'the Last Flight out of Da Nang'. Cameras were rolling as the World Airways flight landed at Da Nang and was quickly overwhelmed by hundreds of panic-stricken civilians and ARVN soldiers running towards the plane. Daly, armed with a revolver, stood at the bottom of the plane's stairs attempting to pistol whip men out of the way so that women and children could board. Because of the swarm of ARVN soldiers fighting each other to get on the

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<sup>67</sup> Roger Launius, *Roger Launius's Blog: Ed Daly and the World Airways Experience* <<https://launiusr.wordpress.com/2015/04/03/ed-daly-and-the-world-airways-experience/>> [accessed 23 June 2022].

<sup>68</sup> Larry Engelmann, 'World Airways' Audacious Vietnam Baby Airlift', *Vietnam Magazine*, 22 March 2010; Oakland Aviation Museum, *Last Flight Out of Da Nang* <[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0pKdXEw4d\\_A&index=10&list=PLHMy7NKUFV4FR36XWxu36dlK933P1VJ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0pKdXEw4d_A&index=10&list=PLHMy7NKUFV4FR36XWxu36dlK933P1VJ)> [accessed 23 June 2022]; Shirley Peck-Barnes, *War Cradle: Vietnam's Children of War*.

<sup>69</sup> Defense Attaché Office, 'Final Report on Evacuation of Saigon' <<http://www.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a094492.pdf>> [accessed 23 June 2022]. The US Embassy's emergency evacuation plan for South Vietnam included four options in increasing order of situational severity. Option 1 was by land to seaports where evacuees would be picked up by US Navy ships; Option 2 was by fixed wing aircraft to airstrips and then by bus to seaports to be picked up by US Navy ships; Option 3 was by independent means to small boats at designated places to awaiting US Navy ships out at sea; Option 4 was by helicopter to awaiting US Navy ships. For the evacuation of Saigon on 30 April, an extemporaneous combination of these options was employed, likely as a result of Ambassador Martin's unwillingness to order an earlier evacuation in his effort to avoid showing signs of panic.

<sup>70</sup> Larry Engelmann, 'World Airways' Audacious Vietnam Baby Airlift', *Vietnam Magazine*, 22 March 2010; Shirley Peck-Barnes, *War Cradle: Vietnam's Children of War*.

<sup>71</sup> Larry Engelmann, 'World Airways' Audacious Vietnam Baby Airlift', *Vietnam Magazine*; Shirley Peck-Barnes, *War Cradle: Vietnam's Children of War*.

plane, Daly was not able to evacuate civilians as he intended. Instead he had a dangerously overloaded plane full of armed men desperate to escape the Communist's advance on Da Nang. Some ARVN soldiers left behind on the airfield threw grenades and fired rounds at the plane as it took off from the taxiway, damaging the plane's controls.<sup>72</sup>

The debacle was an embarrassment for US Ambassador Martin who, despite his efforts to avoid any signs of panic, was becoming increasingly desperate and isolated.<sup>73</sup> Daly, however, was undeterred. Just days later on April 2<sup>nd</sup>, wrapped in bandages because of the wounds he sustained during the chaotic flight out of Da Nang, Daly made the pioneer flight of the evacuation that came to be known as Operation Babylift.

Ed Daly's daughter, Charlotte Behrendt, had been working at the Colorado-based Friends for All Children (FFAC), an adoption agency that operated a number of orphanages in South Vietnam.<sup>74</sup> According to information Behrendt gave during a press conference in Oakland, California on 3 April 1975, a manager of one of FFAC's Saigon orphanages contacted Behrendt requesting help in evacuating approximately 400 children.<sup>75</sup> She told Behrendt that adoption procedures for the children had started in various countries outside of South Vietnam but had not been finalized.<sup>76</sup> For this reason, other airlines that FFAC had approached refused to evacuate the children; the potential of a lawsuit likely dissuaded them from participating in the evacuation flight.

FFAC's concern was that the adoptions would not be completed if the Communists came to power in Saigon. They began to look for ways to bring the

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<sup>72</sup> *Last Flight Out of Da Nang*, Oakland Aviation Museum.

<sup>73</sup> Defense Attaché Office, 'Final Report on Evacuation of Saigon'.

<sup>74</sup> Larry Engelmann, 'World Airways' Audacious Vietnam Baby Airlift'; Shirley Peck-Barnes, *War Cradle: Vietnam's Children of War*. Accounts differ as to where Charlotte Behrendt was working at the time and with which organization(s). Shirley Peck-Barnes, author and former volunteer with FFAC, claims in her book *War Cradle* that Behrendt was working in Colorado with FFAC, while former VP of World Airways, Charles Patterson, who was instrumental in the planning of the earliest stages of the evacuation, claimed in an interview with Larry Engelmann that Behrendt was working in Oakland, California with FFAC and Save the Children.

<sup>75</sup> *Last Flight Out of Da Nang*, Oakland Aviation Museum.

<sup>76</sup> Shirley Peck-Barnes, *War Cradle: Vietnam's Children of War*.

children out of South Vietnam before the Communist takeover. Knowing that Behrendt was Daly's daughter, and knowing of his participation in the evacuations from Da Nang, FFAC asked Behrendt to present the idea to her father. Daly agreed to the plan and pledged to cover all costs, including food, medicine, and a medical team to accompany the children during the flight.<sup>77</sup> He had his team prepare one of his cargo planes, fitting it with padding and blankets suitable for the children, from infants to twelve-year-olds.<sup>78</sup> Daly himself, along with World Airways' VP Charles Patterson, met with a 'South Vietnamese minister in charge of exit visas' and got his assurance that all the children would be granted visas.<sup>79</sup>

With Daly's assurance to evacuate the 400 children, FFAC Director Rosemary Taylor approached the government of Australia to get permission for them to stay in Australia temporarily. FFAC's argued that the relatively short flight to Australia would be less of a hardship on the children than flying to the US, and that having a temporary base in Australia would allow the adoptees to travel to the countries of their future adoptive families.<sup>80</sup> Australian Prime Minister Whitlam refused temporary admission for the children slated for adoption in other countries but agreed to evacuating orphans whose adoption procedures for Australia had begun.<sup>81</sup>

What happened next is unclear, but with Australia's rejection, the US was somehow chosen as the destination for the 400 children. Whether FFAC or World Airways sought permission from an office of the US government is not evident in the

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<sup>77</sup> Shirley Peck-Barnes, *War Cradle: Vietnam's Children of War*.

<sup>78</sup> Larry Engelmann, 'World Airways' Audacious Vietnam Baby Airlift'; Joe Hrezo, 'Your Daly Bread Memoirs: My involvement in the final days and the fall of South Vietnam takes a circuitous routing' <<http://www.yourdalybread.com/WPage-1.html>> [accessed 23 June 2022]; Shirley Peck-Barnes, *War Cradle: Vietnam's Children of War*.

<sup>79</sup> Larry Engelmann, 'World Airways' Audacious Vietnam Baby Airlift'. Patterson was interviewed for Engelmann's article and is quoted directly about the exit visas. I have not yet found another source that corroborates this information that Daly received assurances for the granting of exit visas.

<sup>80</sup> Joshua Forkert, 'Orphans of Vietnam: A History of Intercountry Adoption Policy and Practice in Australia, 1968-1975' (PhD thesis, University of Adelaide, South Australia, 2012); Rosemary Taylor, *Orphans of War: Work with the abandoned children of Vietnam 1967-1975* (London: Collins, 1988).

<sup>81</sup> Joshua Forkert, 'Orphans of Vietnam: A History of Intercountry Adoption Policy and Practice in Australia, 1968-1975'; Rosemary Taylor, *Orphans of War: Work with the abandoned children of Vietnam 1967-1975* (London: Collins, 1988). Eventually the Australian Air Force would evacuate approximately 150 children bound for adoption in Australia and allow for an additional approximately 50 infants to be flown to Australia for urgent medical care before being flown elsewhere for adoption.

sources I have researched. The most detailed description I have found of what transpired comes from an interview with Charles Patterson, World Airways Vice President at the time. Daly had ordered him to make the preparations for the first flight. Patterson said of the planning,

‘After talking to the people who ran the charities, I told Daly: ‘We have this stretch DC-8 that has been flying rice to Phnom Penh. It’s in cargo configuration, but it has to be flown back to the U.S. for a maintenance check. Why can’t we put the orphans on it?’ [...] I then organized World Airways people to get an orphan flight off the ground. Daly and I met with the South Vietnamese minister in charge of exit visas, and he assured us that there would be no problem, that the children were authorized to leave Vietnam.’<sup>82</sup>

Patterson’s recollection of events then jumps to how they rented buses in Saigon and used them to transport the children from the orphanages to Tan Son Nhut airport on April 2<sup>nd</sup>. Patterson does not mention, nor did I find a description in any primary or secondary source, if FFAC or World Airways sought permission from the US government to bring the 400 South Vietnamese children into the US. Whether or not they sought Washington’s permission may offer insight into their ethos at the time and reveal with what level of foresight the evacuators were operating. Were FFAC and Ed Daly so immersed in a spontaneous act of charity that they did not consider what legal complications might lay ahead for the evacuees? Were they trying to force the government’s hand?

Whether they sought US government permission or not, the evacuation began on the morning of 2 April 1975. Rosemary Taylor, an Australian social worker who had been volunteering in South Vietnam since 1967, managed her FFAC staff as they dispersed across Saigon in chartered buses to collect the children from the various FFAC-affiliated orphanages. By late morning the first buses arrived at Tan Son Nhut airport.<sup>83</sup> Almost simultaneously, according to eyewitnesses, officials from USAID

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<sup>82</sup> Larry Engelmann, ‘World Airways’ Audacious Vietnam Baby Airlift’, *Vietnam Magazine*, 22 March 2010.

<sup>83</sup> Rosemary Taylor, *Orphans of War: Work with the abandoned children of Vietnam 1967-1975*.

arrived and converged on the plane, demanding to be let onboard to inspect it.<sup>84</sup> Daly grudgingly obliged. After a quick inspection, the USAID inspectors declared the plane unsafe, claiming that it did not meet minimum standards for passenger safety because of a lack of proper toilets and cabin pressurization. They advised Taylor not to take the World Airways plane that was ready and waiting on the taxiway. Instead they offered to provide her with a safer and much larger plane, a C-5 Galaxy, within two days.<sup>85</sup>

Despite Daly's repeated assurance that the cabin was pressurized, Rosemary Taylor accepted USAID's offer and left Daly and his crew sitting in an empty plane at Tan Son Nhut one hour before their scheduled 5pm departure.<sup>86</sup> Daly decided to try and replace the FFAC children. He had his VP Charles Patterson contact other orphanages in Saigon to see if they wanted to take FFAC's place.<sup>87</sup> An organization called Friends of the Children of Vietnam (FCVN), which had split from FFAC after an internal dispute two years earlier, accepted Daly's offer and told him that they could have fifty children ready to go by nightfall.<sup>88</sup> Cherie Clark, the 27-year-old American director of FCVN, and Ross Meador, a nineteen-year-old American volunteer, took the lead on collecting the children.

While Clark and Meador were gathering children and preparing them for the flight to the US, Daly called an impromptu press conference at Tan Son Nhut to express his frustration with US officials in Saigon. He essentially accused them of not having the loyalty or emotional fortitude to help the Vietnamese people in their hour of need.<sup>89</sup> Still indignant about the US' handling of the Da Nang evacuation, Daly shared with the journalists his frank assessment of US government officials in

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<sup>84</sup> Larry Engelmann, 'World Airways' Audacious Vietnam Baby Airlift'; Shirley Peck-Barnes, *War Cradle: Vietnam's Children of War*; Rosemary Taylor, *Orphans of War: Work with the abandoned children of Vietnam 1967-1975*.

<sup>85</sup> Shirley Peck-Barnes, *War Cradle: Vietnam's Children of War, Operation Babylift*; Rosemary Taylor, *Orphans of War: Work with the abandoned children of Vietnam 1967-1975*.

<sup>86</sup> Rosemary Taylor, *Orphans of War: Work with the abandoned children of Vietnam 1967-1975*.

<sup>87</sup> Larry Engelmann, 'World Airways' Audacious Vietnam Baby Airlift', *Vietnam Magazine*.

<sup>88</sup> Ashe, Patrick, *Dust And Ashes* (online memoir, 1995/updated 2011).

<sup>89</sup> Cynthia Gorney, 'King of the Cut-Rate Airways', *The Washington Post*, 25 June 1980

<[https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/lifestyle/1980/06/25/king-of-the-cut-rate-airways/56e3a6cb-adca-4bc9-866f-e382f7df7452/?utm\\_term=.e7fca0c985b0](https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/lifestyle/1980/06/25/king-of-the-cut-rate-airways/56e3a6cb-adca-4bc9-866f-e382f7df7452/?utm_term=.e7fca0c985b0)> [accessed 23 June 2022].

South Vietnam: 'Give the bastards a chance and they'll bring out the adding machines and leave the kids behind'.<sup>90</sup>

There are a few possible explanations for how the depth of animosity developed between Daly and US government officials at this time. Perhaps the most obvious is that Daly's audacious approach to the Da Nang evacuation provoked the ire of US Ambassador Graham Martin, who was determined to avoid any signs of panic on the part of the Americans. Accused by some of foot-dragging when it came to evacuating South Vietnam, Martin himself explained his reasoning while testifying before Congress in 1976:

'Our primary concern was the avoidance of panic. This concern affected all our actions. Closely allied was the concern that we did not so conduct ourselves that our allies, feeling abandoned, would turn on the American presence in our last days. A great deal of coolness was imperative if we were to get all Americans out, if we were to get out the Vietnamese relatives of Americans, and if we were going to get out as many as possible of the Vietnamese to whom it was determined we had a special obligation.'<sup>91</sup>

Charles Patterson, Vice President of World Airways at the time of the evacuation, said in an interview that he believed Ambassador Martin was responsible for attempting to block the World Airways' flight on 2 April 1975: 'Martin was concerned that if that [evacuation flight] happened, he would have problems convincing Americans that South Vietnam was not about to fall. During those

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<sup>90</sup> As quoted in Shirley Peck-Barnes, *War Cradle: Vietnam's Children of War, Operation Babylift*.

<sup>91</sup> *Vietnam-Cambodia Emergency, 1975, Part 3 – Vietnam Evacuation: Testimony of Ambassador Graham A. Martin, Hearing before the Special Subcommittee on Investigations of the Committee on International Relations, House of Representatives, Ninety-Fourth Congress, Second Session (27 January 1976)*. During this testimony, Ambassador Martin also discussed how he himself had researched some of the history of civilian evacuation and how this research factored into his evacuation planning: 'In 1939 I had studied the reasons for the utter chaos of the movement of refugee streams from Paris to Bordeaux. In the early fifties I had a European-wide responsibility which required my continuing participation with EUCOM and SHAPE on contingency plans for evacuation of Americans from Europe. I knew how incredibly complex such an operation could be under completely calm circumstances, and these were certainly unlikely to prevail very long in Saigon unless we took the most extensive precautions to avoid panic.'

chaotic days, Martin tried to project the image that we were going to stand there and that everything was going to work out'.<sup>92</sup>

Another possible explanation for Daly's frustration with the US government was that in the US he had since 1967 been unsuccessfully lobbying the Civil Aeronautics Board (CAB), the government office overseeing all domestic passenger routes, for permission to fly a new coast-to-coast route. Daly's proposal to fly from Newark, New Jersey to Los Angeles, California for less than half the going rate was met with incredulity from the CAB, as well as Daly's competitors.<sup>93</sup> Despite the repeated CAB rejections, Daly continued to lobby for permission to fly the route. On 2 April 1975, the same date as Daly's first evacuation flight of children from Saigon, World Airways lobbyists had a previously scheduled meeting with CAB officials.<sup>94</sup> Perhaps the date was coincidental. Whether coincidence or a masterfully executed public relations tactic by Daly, the CBA eventually granted World Airways permission to fly the coast-to-coast route it had sought for eight years.

In South Vietnam in the early evening of April 2<sup>nd</sup>, Daly, his crew, and the medical team hired by Daly from Saigon's Seventh Day Adventist Hospital sat in anticipation at Tan Son Nhut airport awaiting the arrival of the fifty children from FCVN's orphanages. Less than three hours after Rosemary Taylor and FFAC rejected Daly's offer on USAID's advice, two FCVN vans arrived at the airport with fifty-seven children from their orphanages.<sup>95</sup> Quickly mobilizing this number of children and preparing them for a permanent move from South Vietnam to the US illustrates the desperation the orphanage managers may have felt. The panic Ambassador Martin was trying to avoid was spreading and being acted on despite his efforts.

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<sup>92</sup> Larry Engelmann, 'World Airways' Audacious Vietnam Baby Airlift', *Vietnam Magazine*.

<sup>93</sup> Cynthia Gorney, 'King of the Cut-Rate Airways', *The Washington Post*, 25 June 1980; Timothy P. Carney, 'Stunts, Schemes, & Shenanigans', *Campaigns & Elections*.

<sup>94</sup> Cynthia Gorney, 'King of the Cut-Rate Airways', *The Washington Post*, 25 June 1980; Timothy P. Carney, 'Stunts, Schemes, & Shenanigans', *Campaigns & Elections*.

<sup>95</sup> Patrick Ashe, *Dust And Ashes* (online memoir, 1995/updated 2011).

The adults loaded the children onto the plane but as Daly's crew, the FCVN caretakers, and the Adventist medical team prepared for take-off, the director of Tan Son Nhut airport arrived to tell Daly that Viet Cong guerrillas were surrounding the airport.<sup>96</sup> He withdrew permission for departure and then shut off the runway's lights and cleared the control tower of its staff. Daly walked back to the plane and told his pilots to take off immediately without headlights or navigational lights in order to make a less obvious target for the Viet Cong if they were in fact near the airport.<sup>97</sup> In the darkness, pilot Ken Healy guided the plane to the runway and departed from Tan Son Nhut on the first flight of what would become known as Operation Babylift.

Daly and his team had overcome many obstacles to get the children out of South Vietnam but more lay ahead of them. There were a number of issues still unresolved at the time the plane took flight: entry visas for the children and where to accommodate them being the most pressing. Daly's daughter Charlotte Behrendt, upon receiving word that the flight was airborne with fifty-seven children and was bound for Oakland, California, scrambled to find accommodation. After unsuccessfully seeking assistance from a number of Bay Area orphanages, Behrendt was able to get in contact with a high-ranking US Army officer at the Presidio of San Francisco. A sympathetic Colonel John Kern, Chief Engineer of the US Sixth Army, offered the children and their caretakers full use of Harmon Hall, an Army Reserve Center under his authority.<sup>98</sup> With the Harmon Hall facilities in place, Behrendt set out to delegate duties to volunteers. The Bay Area Health Planning Council became involved and took the helm for the planning of the children's reception and immediate care. Nursing students and US military veterans who had served in

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<sup>96</sup> Patrick Ashe, *Dust And Ashes*; Larry Engelmann, *Tears Before the Rain: An Oral History of the Fall of Vietnam* (Boston: Da Capo Press, 1997); Larry Engelmann, 'World Airways' Audacious Vietnam Baby Airlift', *Vietnam Magazine*; Joe Hrezo, 'Your Daly Bread Memoirs: My involvement in the final days and the fall of South Vietnam takes a circuitous routing'; Shirley Peck-Barnes, *War Cradle: Vietnam's Children of War*.

<sup>97</sup> Larry Engelmann, 'World Airways' Audacious Vietnam Baby Airlift'; Joe Hrezo, 'Your Daly Bread Memoirs: My involvement in the final days and the fall of South Vietnam takes a circuitous routing'.

<sup>98</sup> The Presidio, Operation Babylift: Virtual Tour <<https://www.presidio.gov/officersclub/exhibitions/operationbabylift-virtual-tour>> [accessed 23 June 2022]. This virtual tour contains interviews with participants of OBL. This site is important for this research because it contains a number of first-hand recollections on lesser-reported aspects of OBL, including logistics of reception and care of the first arrivals.

Vietnam rallied to the cause as volunteers, and soon Harmon Hall was transformed into a centre for the children who would arrive within hours.<sup>99</sup> It was a remarkable mobilization, but the issue of entry visas remained.

It is not evident from the record of interviews, memoirs, or second-hand accounts how Daly planned to obtain entry visas for the children or if he had considered it at all. Judging from what he did next, he may have planned an aggressive push via the media to pressure the US government into allowing the children entry and permission to remain. Daly contacted the press while the flight was on a refuelling stop in Yokota, Japan to tell them of his evacuation and invite them to Oakland Airport upon its arrival.<sup>100</sup> When the flight landed in Oakland in the early morning of April 3<sup>rd</sup>, some twenty-five hours after its departure from Saigon, there was a throng of press waiting, many of whom were photographers perched on ladders for a better view. It was a media spectacle. The flamboyant Daly was again in his element, holding court with the assembled press and singing his own praise for evacuating the children ahead of the Communist's advance on South Vietnam. In one swoop, Daly had shattered Ambassador Martin's wish of avoiding any sign of American panic in Vietnam and had upstaged President Ford, whose oft-repeated concern for the Vietnamese people by this time had become hollow. Speaking to the press in time to make that morning's headlines, Daly became a folk hero overnight. Conservative columnist George Will wrote in the *Washington Post* the following day: 'Breathes there an American, with soul so dead, who hasn't to himself said, "Right on, Edward Daly!"'<sup>101</sup>

The evacuation flight was big news and presented Americans an opportunity to soften the pain of their failures in Vietnam. Press coverage of the evacuation was reminiscent of the 1973 return of American POWs after the Paris Peace Accords, with photos conveying a sense of salvation and emancipation. Similar to coverage of

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<sup>99</sup> The Presidio, Operation Babylift: Virtual Tour.

<sup>100</sup> Shirley Peck-Barnes, *War Cradle: Vietnam's Children of War*. Two children disembarked in Japan, deemed by the medical team to be too weak to continue. The US military transported the two children to a US military hospital at Tachikawa, outside Tokyo.

<sup>101</sup> Quoted in 'King of the Cut-Rate Airways', *Washington Post*, 25 June 1980. George Will riffs here on the Sir Walter Scott poem 'The Lay of the Last Minstrel'.

the POWs, journalists photographed the evacuees on the tarmac being greeted with cheers and hugs from those who had come to welcome them, a symbol perhaps of the beneficence of Americans, of their national duty to liberate the oppressed. The media's coverage, largely uncritical in the earliest stage, created meaning for many Americans who had become disaffected by their government's policies toward Vietnam. The coverage gave the public a cause to rally around, and through supporting Daly's evacuation and the evacuated children, it further diffused responsibility and brought the suffering of Vietnamese civilians deeper into the US' public-political consciousness.<sup>102</sup>

President Ford took the opportunity to usurp the goodwill that press coverage of Daly's flight had engendered. The US military had evacuation plans in place for South Vietnam but had been waiting for Ambassador Martin's command to begin. Ed Daly's maverick flight, which had been well received by the media, forced the government's hand. Seeing the enthusiastic response and positive media coverage, President Ford took the opportunity Daly and FCVN had created. In California on a previously scheduled trip to meet with business leaders and play golf, Ford issued a statement at noon Pacific Daylight Time on 3 April that allowed for government sanctioned evacuations of Vietnamese civilians from South Vietnam.<sup>103</sup> The statement, which Ford presented at a press conference in San Diego, is worth quoting at length because it was not only the start of Operation Babylift - though the operation would be named one day later - but it also allowed for other evacuations from South Vietnam to officially begin. Ford's statement read:

'We are seeing a great human tragedy as untold numbers of Vietnamese flee the North Vietnamese onslaught. The United States has been doing and will continue to do its utmost to assist these people. I have directed all available naval ships to stand off Indochina to do whatever is necessary to assist. We have appealed to the United Nations to use its moral influence to permit these innocent people to

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<sup>102</sup> Lilie Chouliaraki, *The Spectatorship of Suffering* (London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2006).

<sup>103</sup> The White House, 'The Daily Diary of President Gerald R. Ford', 1-30 April 1975.

leave, and we call on North Vietnam to permit the movement of refugees to areas of their choice. [...]

‘I have directed that money from a \$2 million special foreign aid children’s fund be made available to fly 2,000 South Vietnamese orphans to the United States as soon as possible. I have also directed American officials in Saigon to act immediately to cut red tape and bureaucratic obstacles preventing these children from coming to the United States. [...] These 2,000 Vietnamese orphans are all in the process of being adopted by American families. This is the least we can do, and we will do much, much more.’<sup>104</sup>

Cutting the red tape initially fell to the Defense Attaché Office (DAO), one of the last vestiges of US government presence in South Vietnam. The DAO established a procedure with the South Vietnam’s Minister of Social Work, Dr Phan Quang Dan, where each orphanage would submit to the DAO a list of names of the children they wished to evacuate. Dr Dan’s office would then issue approval for the emigration of the children before they were allowed to board an evacuation flight.<sup>105</sup>

Why the South Vietnamese government were at first such keen participants in the evacuation is debatable. It is likely they still held hope for emergency aid from the US in the face of the North’s military offensive, which continued to build momentum. Perhaps the South thought that the evacuation of children would bring attention to their plight and swing US Congressional opinion in favour of the South’s request for aid. Shirley Peck-Barnes, a participant in evacuating the children to the US, wrote that South Vietnamese officials called Operation Babylift ‘marvelous propaganda’.<sup>106</sup> The Times newspaper ran an article in the UK on April 7<sup>th</sup> titled ‘Airlift “propaganda plan”’ in which they reported that opponents of South

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<sup>104</sup> President Gerald Ford, ‘April 3, 1975: Statement by the President’, 3 April 1975. Ford’s statement about all the proposed 2,000 orphans being in the adoption process was not accurate. Ford was likely aware of this, as a memo from USAID to the office of the Special Assistant to the President for Human Resources illustrates: ‘Those few [orphans] who do not have families arranged will be placed with families now on waiting lists of the agencies.’ (Reference found in the bibliography: Daniel Parker, ‘Memo for Theodore Marrs, 3 April 1975’.)

<sup>105</sup> Dana Sachs, *The Life We Were Given*; Rosemary Taylor, *Orphans of War*.

<sup>106</sup> As quoted in Shirley Peck-Barnes, *War Cradle: Vietnam’s Children of War*, page 120.

Vietnam's President Thieu released to the media a copy of a letter from Dr Phan Quang Dan to Prime Minister Tran Thien Khiem that described the evacuation of Vietnamese children as having the potential to positively influence the US Congress to give South Vietnam the emergency aid it had been requesting. A translation of the letter that appeared in *The Times* read, 'The departure in large numbers of orphans will cause deep emotion in the world, especially in the United States, and will be favourable to South Vietnam. The US Ambassador will assist me in making sure they leave in large numbers.'<sup>107</sup>

Both the US and South Vietnamese governments, hoping to influence policy, seem to have invested in the evacuation of children for propaganda purposes. The aim was to influence public opinion that then might persuade Congress to rethink its earlier refusal of granting South Vietnam emergency aid. Employing the hackneyed domino theory, which argued that if one country in the region became Communist then others would fall like dominoes, had not worked in influencing Congress, so in desperation a plea for pity with orphans as the object became the last hope for increased aid.

Ed Daly, and the South Vietnamese and US governments were not the only ones who saw potential benefit in participating in the evacuations. On 3 April 1975, the UK newspaper *The Daily Mail* entered the fray when the paper's foreign editor suggested to the editor, David English, that *The Daily Mail* charter its own evacuation flight.<sup>108</sup> English was of the opinion that 'the function of a newspaper is not only to report the news, but to help make it', and so decided the paper would evacuate one hundred fifty orphans from South Vietnam, an act that he thought would put *The Daily Mail* 'on a par with an American president'.<sup>109</sup> Other than increasing readership through sensationalist stories about evacuating orphans and being on par with the President Ford, it is unclear what goals *The Daily Mail* was working to achieve. With the speed at which the newspaper organized an

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<sup>107</sup> Agence France Presse, 'Airlift 'propaganda plan'', *The Times*, 7 April 1975, Overseas Section, page 5.

<sup>108</sup> Roy Greenslade, *Press Gang: How Newspapers Make Profits from Propaganda* (London: Macmillan, 2003).

<sup>109</sup> Excerpt from an interview with David English that took place with the UK Press Gazette on 14 April 1975, as quoted and referenced in Roy Greenslade's, *Press Gang: How Newspapers Make Profits from Propaganda*.

evacuation flight, it is unlikely that English and his foreign editor devoted much time to reflecting on the morality and practicality of such an evacuation.

English announced the Mail's intentions on the front page of its April 4<sup>th</sup> edition under the headline 'The Mail's Mercy Lift'. The article announced that the paper had chartered a Boeing 707 from British Midland Airways and placed it at the disposal of the British adoption agency Project Vietnam Orphans (PVO).<sup>110</sup> The lead article also contained copious praise for the Mail's venture, quoting Liberal and Tory MPs with such commendations as 'this could perhaps be the best airlift since the last war' (Liberal MP Jeremy Thorpe), and 'the Daily Mail have stepped in ahead of the Government and [are] to be warmly congratulated' (Tory MP Jill Knight).<sup>111</sup> Another article, titled 'One Small Raft of Hope', appeared in that day's edition imploring readers to donate money to the cause, which they did generously.<sup>112</sup> Appealing to the sense of panic enveloping South Vietnam at the time, the article read: 'We no longer see military dispositions or political alignments, we see only [...] homeless, helpless. Above all, we see the children. [...] Is there no way we can turn our pity into practical help?'<sup>113</sup>

As the donations poured in, the Mail's team were on their way to Saigon on a 707 carrying medical supplies. English's plan was to ferry in supplies for the orphanages, and have his defence correspondent, Angus McPherson, collect one hundred fifty orphans from the PVO home in Saigon.<sup>114</sup> English claimed that McPherson travelled with an assurance from Roy Jenkins of the Home Office that one hundred fifty orphans would be allowed to enter and remain in the UK.<sup>115</sup> With this assurance and the assistance of British Consul-General in Saigon, Rex Hunt, McPherson travelled to Saigon to collect the children.

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<sup>110</sup> The Daily Mail, 'The Mail's Mercy Airlift', *The Daily Mail*, 4 April 1975, page 1.

<sup>111</sup> The Daily Mail, 'The Mail's Mercy Airlift', *The Daily Mail*, 4 April 1975, page 1.

<sup>112</sup> The Daily Mail, 'One Small Raft of Hope', *The Daily Mail*, 4 April 1975, page 6.

<sup>113</sup> The Daily Mail, 'One Small Raft of Hope', *The Daily Mail*, 4 April 1975, page 6.

<sup>114</sup> Roy Greenslade, 'Bring Me 150 Babies', *The Guardian*, 6 Aug 2001 <<https://www.theguardian.com/media/2001/aug/06/dailymail.mondaymediasection>> [accessed 23 June 2022].

<sup>115</sup> Roy Greenslade, 'Bring Me 150 Babies', *The Guardian*, 6 Aug 2001.

The primary difficulty, he soon discovered, was that PVO was a relatively small organization with fewer orphans than English expected. Finding only sixteen children at the orphanage, McPherson asked the Reverend Patrick Ashe for help in locating more children to evacuate.<sup>116</sup> Ashe contacted another British-run orphanage administered by the Ockenden Venture. Ockenden had a policy of caring for orphans in their home country and had therefore not sought permission for any of the children in their homes to emigrate.<sup>117</sup> But Ockenden's leader, David Tolfree, had become concerned enough for the safety of some of the children after hearing rumours about Communist atrocities against Amerasian and handicapped children that he decided the situation warranted emergency evacuation.<sup>118</sup> Ockenden thus agreed to send the Amerasian and severely handicapped children with the Mail's flight. McPherson still did not have the one hundred fifty children David English had demanded, so McPherson pressed Reverend Ashe for more. Ashe contacted other organizations. *Terre des Hommes* cared for children in Saigon whose adoption procedures had begun in Belgium and Switzerland. They expressed their interest in flying out those children. Ashe also phoned Rosemary Taylor, whose organization, FFAC, had rejected Ed Daly's offer just two days before on USAID's warning that Daly's plane was unsafe.<sup>119</sup> During the call, Taylor informed Ashe of a bombshell.

The first official flight of Operation Babylift had crashed. A Galaxy C-5, the world's largest airplane at the time, had departed Tan Son Nhut airport on the afternoon of 4 April with 328 people on board, nearly 250 of them Vietnamese children, many of them wards of FFAC. The crash killed 172 passengers, 78 of them children.<sup>120</sup> Also on the plane was said to be the records of over one thousand

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<sup>116</sup> Patrick Ashe, *Dust And Ashes*.

<sup>117</sup> Becky Taylor, 'Don't just look for a new pet': the Vietnamese airlift, child refugees and the dangers of toxic humanitarianism', *Patterns of Prejudice*, 52:2-3 (2018), 195-209.

<sup>118</sup> Roy Greenslade, 'Bring Me 150 Babies', *The Guardian*, 6 Aug 2001.

<sup>119</sup> Patrick Ashe, *Dust And Ashes*.

<sup>120</sup> Patrick Ashe, *Dust And Ashes*; Kathleen Ja Sook Bergquist, 'Operation Babylift or Babyabduction? Implications of The Hague Convention on the humanitarian evacuation and 'rescue' of children', *International Social Work*, 52:5 (2009), 621-633; Defense Attaché Office, 'Final Report on Evacuation of Saigon' <<http://www.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a094492.pdf>> [accessed 23 June 2022]; Department of the Air Force, Military Airlift Command, 'Report of Collateral Investigation, C-5A Aircraft Crash, 4 April 1975, Near Saigon, RVN', item number 21890101002 in the Vietnam Center and Archive of Texas Tech University; Dana Sachs, *The Life We Were Given*; Rosemary Taylor, *Orphans of War*; Colonel Dennis 'Bud' Traynor, 'Twelve Minutes Out',

children scheduled to be evacuated during Operation Babylift.<sup>121</sup> This loss of records would soon prove to be an issue of great contention after the children's arrival to the US. The crash, to date the deadliest accident involving a US military aircraft and the largest single loss of US servicewomen, was determined to have been caused by explosive decompression and structural failure.<sup>122</sup> Though there has been no official determination of the exact cause for the explosive decompression, it is widely thought to have been an act of sabotage.<sup>123</sup>

Despite the tragedy of the US government's C-5 crash, Rosemary Taylor committed more children to the Daily Mail's evacuation flight. The children from FFAC-affiliated orphanages brought the number to be evacuated to ninety-nine, well short of the one hundred fifty editor David English ordered McPherson to round up and fly to England. These ninety-nine, along with eighteen adult escorts, boarded the Mail's 707 at 1pm on Saturday, the 6<sup>th</sup> of April. With them on the flight was English, wearing a camouflage jacket emblazoned with the Vietnamese word for 'journalist', who led a television crew that documented the journey.<sup>124</sup>

A large group of volunteers met the group as it arrived at Heathrow at 11:40pm the same day and transported the children to nine London-area hospitals for examinations.<sup>125</sup> According to an internal UK government memo, the British

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*Airlift Tanker Quarterly*, 13:2 (2005), 6-13. The reported number of dead varies between 134 and 180. Vietnamese living near the crash site were reported to have found survivors in rice paddies the following day, some of whom were evacuated later and adopted in the US (as reported by The Daily Mail). Wreckage was strewn over two miles, and it was reported in The Daily Mail, The Times, and the first-hand account of the flight's pilot Colonel Dennis Traynor that US investigators offered cash rewards to anyone who turned in debris from the crash. The ratio of adults to children killed in the crash was likely due to most children being placed in the upstairs area of the C-5 where they were being checked and treated by nurses, while most of the adult escorts had been seated in the lower portion of the plane. The lower portion of the plane was crushed on impact, while the upper portion received relatively little damage.

<sup>121</sup> Shirley Peck-Barnes, *War Cradle: Vietnam's Children of War*; Dana Sachs, *The Life We Were Given*.

<sup>122</sup> Defense Attaché Office, 'Final Report on Evacuation of Saigon' < <http://www.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a094492.pdf> > [accessed 23 June 2022]; Department of the Air Force, Military Airlift Command, 'Report of Collateral Investigation, C-5A Aircraft Crash, 4 April 1975, Near Saigon, RVN', item number 21890101002 in the Vietnam Center and Archive of Texas Tech University; Colonel Dennis 'Bud' Traynor, 'Twelve Minutes Out', *Airlift Tanker Quarterly*.

<sup>123</sup> Shirley Peck-Barnes, *War Cradle: Vietnam's Children of War*; Rosemary Taylor, *Orphans of War*.

<sup>124</sup> Roy Greenslade, 'Bring Me 150 Babies'.

<sup>125</sup> Patrick Ashe, *Dust And Ashes*; TNA HO 376/197/3 States that the Daily Mail flight arrived Heathrow at 23:40 on 6 April with 99 children and 47 adults. Four of these children were bound for adoption in Belgium (and went on 7 April). Sixteen were bound for adoption in France (left on 10 April) and one child to Switzerland (10 April). According to HO 376/197/7B, three children for whom adoption procedures had begun in the UK were

government admitted the children as refugees.<sup>126</sup> A number of children were judged too ill to be discharged straight away. Three died while in hospital. The rest were deemed healthy enough to be discharged and were driven to reception centres owned and managed by the Ockenden Venture. The following morning, adoptive families took home five of the children despite their adoption procedures not being finalized.<sup>127</sup>

Mr. R.A. McDowall of the Department of Health and Social Security advised that leave to enter be granted to all who came on the flight and that a bulk IS form 81 be served to the Ockenden Venture homes where the healthier children would stay. A UK government document titled 'Vietnamese refugees: discussions between Home Office, other government departments and aid agencies about the admission and reception of refugees from Vietnam', 4 April 1975 - 16 August 1977' now held in the National Archives at Kew shows that at the arrival of the Daily Mail's lift there was doubt on the part of charity workers about the benefits and practicality of the evacuation. David Ennals, Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs and former Chairman of the Ockenden Venture, was present at Heathrow when the flight landed and gave his 'private opinion' to R.A. McDowall that 'more benefit could be derived from on-the-spot help rather than uprooting the children to a strange environment.'<sup>128</sup> McDowall himself records his concerns about the operation and its legal ramifications, stating 'there is no way at present [...] of establishing to the satisfaction of British courts that a particular child is truly

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mistakenly evacuated to the US. It is not mentioned what happened to them. In document HO 376/197/3 it is written that 'None of the children had any documentation [...] and, in some cases, even names and approximate ages were not available'.

<sup>126</sup> TNA HO 376/197/1-2, letter from RA McDowall of General Group A, B1 Division, to Mr Fitzgerald on 4 April 1975. This same document discusses the National Chairman of the Round Table offering to raise money in order to charter additional aircraft to 'bring children out of Vietnam'. The National Chairman proposed to do this in collaboration with the British Council for Aid to Refugees, who, it was written, had accepted responsibility for coordinating the lifts. I have not seen further mention of this proposal, nor of any additional chartered flights participating in Babylift in order to bring more children to the UK.

<sup>127</sup> Patrick Ashe, *Dust And Ashes*; BBC On This Day in 1975, "Operation Babylift' Lands in UK", no reprint date given, <[http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/april/6/newsid\\_2522000/2522869.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/april/6/newsid_2522000/2522869.stm)> [accessed 23 June 2022]; Roy Greenslade, 'Bring Me 150 Babies'; National Archives, HO 376/197, 'Vietnamese refugees: discussions between Home Office, other government departments and aid agencies about the admission and reception of refugees from Vietnam', 4 April 1975 – 16 August 1977.

<sup>128</sup> National Archives, HO 376/197/3, 'Vietnamese refugees: discussions between Home Office, other government departments and aid agencies about the admission and reception of refugees from Vietnam', 4 April 1975 – 16 August 1977.

orphaned or, if he is not, that adoption would be with the consent of the parent(s).<sup>129</sup>

Soon after landing, a problem arose about identification of the children. In Saigon, the children's escorts had scrawled numbers on the skin of the infants and toddlers with marker. After the long flight, nurses in England had given the children baths before their identification numbers could be cross-checked with McPherson's manifest and recorded in the hospital's files. No proper documentation had been given to the hospitals on admission, so confusion about each child's identity ensued. Orphanage workers who had travelled as escorts, many of whom did not know the children well enough to remember their names, attempted to explain to hospital officials that the orphanage managers had given the children names after finding them abandoned on Saigon streets or left at orphanages, but this did little to resolve the confusion.<sup>130</sup>

Though the Daily Mail itself and news sources of a similar politically conservative bent lauded the so-called Mercylift, criticism of the evacuation was immediate, albeit mild at first. In the shadow of the Mail's bombastic headlines - 'Rescued from death', 'Why we knew we had to act fast', and 'Why didn't Cabinet act?' - lay restrained criticism from The Daily Telegraph, The Guardian, and The Times.<sup>131</sup> It seemed at first, despite the identification debacle, that the Daily Mail's plea for pity had found a receptive audience in England. Financial donations poured in. Letters expressing a desire to adopt Vietnamese orphans flooded the offices of the Daily Mail, PVO, and the Ockenden Venture.<sup>132</sup> The Mail's emotional appeal had in fact helped to make news, as English had intended, and big news it was. The paper milked the story for days, touting their 'magnificent gesture' across the top border of its layout in the many pages it devoted each day to the unfolding

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<sup>129</sup> National Archives, HO 376/197/3.

<sup>130</sup> Roy Greenslade, *Press Gang: How Newspapers Make Profits from Propaganda*; National Archives, HO 376/197/3.

<sup>131</sup> Daily Mail, 'Rescued from death', *The Daily Mail*, 7 April 1975, page 2; Daily Mail, 'We knew we had to act fast', *The Daily Mail*, 7 April 1975, page 1; Daily Mail, 'Why didn't Cabinet act?', *The Daily Mail*, 7 April 1975, page 4.

<sup>132</sup> Daily Mail, 'Still the money rolls in', *The Daily Mail*, 10 April 1975, page 2.

story.<sup>133</sup> In the top left corner of the border on each page covering the evacuation was a photo, a logo of sorts, of a Vietnamese toddler crying and looking up towards the camera with her arms outstretched, pleading to be picked up.<sup>134</sup> The Mail's reification of suffering for political and economic gain was shamefully obvious in its coverage of itself and the children.

While many of the Mail's competitors wrote reservedly in their assessments of the evacuation, likely apprehensive about upsetting their readership over such an emotional issue, it was the New Statesman's Saigon correspondent Richard West who wrote most frankly. About the Mail's evacuation West wrote, '[It was] the most disgusting sham I have witnessed in nine years in Vietnam. Few people of intelligence believe the stories that if the Communists arrived they would cut off the heads of children sired by Americans'.<sup>135</sup>

Within a few days, criticism spread to the House of Commons where a debate on government aid to Vietnamese refugees was taking place. While Commons largely supported increasing aid for refugees to £1 million, Labour MPs criticized The Daily Mail's evacuation flight. MP Josephine Richardson called it a 'gimmicky publicity stunt' and spoke strongly against any further evacuations of children from South Vietnam.<sup>136</sup> Opinion on the evacuation among MPs seems to have been split largely along party lines.

While debate about the Mail's evacuation flight was taking place in Commons and in the court of public opinion, PVO and Ockenden were overwhelmed with a number of difficult issues. Legally most pressing was the fact that British adoption courts had rejected the blanket approval for overseas adoption that Dr Dan of South Vietnam's Social Welfare Ministry had given them before departure; each child

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<sup>133</sup> Daily Mail, 'The Mail's mercy flight: A magnificent gesture...', *The Daily Mail*, 9 April 1975, page 1.

<sup>134</sup> The Daily Mail used this graphic as the top border of its pages between 5-10 April. Next to the photo of the girl with arms outstretched as if seeking a hug were such slogans as 'Magnificent Response To Mail Appeal', 'Loving Care as the Orphans Fly in', and 'Offers of Help Pour in'.

<sup>135</sup> Quoted in Roy Greenslade's, *Press Gang: How Newspapers Make Profits from Propaganda*.

<sup>136</sup> Alan Young, 'Mercy airlift critic rebuked', *The Daily Mail*, 10 April 1975, page 2.

needed an individual release certificate in order to be adopted in the UK.<sup>137</sup> To this end, Reverend Ashe returned to South Vietnam to obtain them. He brought photos of each child with him.<sup>138</sup> By the time he returned to Saigon, however, Dr Dan had fled. Ashe approached South Vietnam's Ministry of Interior for assistance but instead was informed that the government's quota of 1,400 orphans to be evacuated had been exceeded since 3 April without South Vietnam's approval and that the government would no longer cooperate with the evacuations, though they would not block them.<sup>139</sup> Ashe then visited the director of each orphanage from which the children had come, and they were able to identify each child. Reverend Ashe filled in the certificates with the information the orphanage directors shared but UK law stipulated that they required a counter signature from a government official. In the absence of a fully functioning South Vietnamese government, Ashe was able to compromise with the UK adoption courts and obtain a counter signature from the Vietnamese Head of the Roman Catholic Mission in Saigon.<sup>140</sup>

Conditions for PVO, Ockenden, and the children back in the UK were also becoming more complicated. The Ockenden reception centres in Camberley and Haslemere proved to be underequipped, overcrowded, and lacking in leadership competent enough to handle the needs of the children and the publicity focused on them. Many of the children were severely handicapped and were said not to be receiving the needed care.<sup>141</sup> A number of volunteers complained about the substandard level of care and hygiene at the Ockenden centres.<sup>142</sup> Records from social worker Mrs. Roberts of the Children's Division that are found in the National

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<sup>137</sup> Patrick Ashe, *Dust And Ashes*; National Archives, HO 376/197/3, 'Vietnamese refugees: discussions between Home Office, other government departments and aid agencies about the admission and reception of refugees from Vietnam'.

<sup>138</sup> Patrick Ashe, *Dust And Ashes*.

<sup>139</sup> Patrick Ashe, *Dust And Ashes*. This may be further evidence that the South Vietnamese government only participated in the evacuations with the hope that Congressional financial support would follow soon after. When it did not, South Vietnam officials may have been reluctant to devote any more time to the matter as they themselves likely had more pressing concerns in the face of the nationalists' imminent victory.

<sup>140</sup> Patrick Ashe, *Dust And Ashes*; National Archives, HO 376/197/3.

<sup>141</sup> National Archives, HO 376/197/3.

<sup>142</sup> Ockenden International (Formerly The Ockenden Venture), Refugee Charity Working: Records, Including Papers of Joyce Pearce OBE (1915-1985), Founder, 'Reception and Resettlement of Vietnamese Refugees in UK', *Surrey Archives*

<<http://www.surreyarchives.org.uk/calmview/Record.aspx?src=calmview.catalog&id=7155%2f7>> [accessed 23 June 2022].

Archives at Kew wrote in a report after her visit to the centres that reception centres were ‘chaotic’ and ‘in shambles’.<sup>143</sup>

Toward the end of April, a Vietnamese-speaking volunteer visited Ockenden’s two reception centres. McDowall was somehow informed of her visit. In an internal report about the volunteer’s visit, he wrote:

‘A Vietnamese staff from Pestalozzi [a UK-based charity] had come to talk with the five older boys [...] and had gleaned from two or three of them that they had never been in an orphanage before but had been put on the Airlift by their parents because their parents thought they would be safer in England. Ms. Pearce [Ockenden’s Chairperson] is now wondering how many more of the children arrived in such a way and had in fact families in Vietnam.’<sup>144</sup>

To make matters worse, a dispute arose between PVO and Ockenden over when children awaiting the finalization of adoption procedures would be released to their adoptive families. Ockenden, with the support of the Home Office, maintained that no child would be allowed to move from one of its centres until adoption procedures had been completed to the Home Office’s satisfaction. Internal reports written by Mr. McDowall of the Department of Health and Social Security on 22 April 1975 speak of rumours that PVO had ‘infiltrated’ the Ockenden reception centres in order to gather sensitive information that PVO could use as leverage to get the children on whom they laid claim released to their waiting adoptive families.<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> MH 152/457/2F, ‘Refugees: children from Vietnam accommodated in registered voluntary homes’, 1 January 1975 – 31 December 1975.

<sup>144</sup> MH 152/457/4B, ‘Refugees: children from Vietnam accommodated in registered voluntary homes’, 1 January 1975 – 31 December 1975. A few weeks later, on 14 June, The Times reported under the headline ‘Move for return of orphans to South Vietnam’ that the Ockenden Venture was ‘planning to send two representatives back to Saigon to assess the situation and prepare for the return of the children.’ (News clipping from TNA MH 152/457/20B.) The revelation that some of the children were not orphans may have been the motivation for this visit. I have not come across any additional information on the proposed assessment visit but as far as I know, no child brought to England by the Daily Mail was permanently returned to Vietnam.

<sup>145</sup> MH 152/457/4B, ‘Refugees: children from Vietnam accommodated in registered voluntary homes’, 1 January 1975 – 31 December 1975.

By early July, PVO formally threatened legal action against Ockenden for the custody of twenty-three of the children staying in the Ockenden-run reception centres who had not been placed with their adoptive families.<sup>146</sup> These twenty-three children had been evacuated from PVO-run orphanages in Saigon where their daily routine entailed catechism and regular prayers.<sup>147</sup> In justifying PVO's legal threat, Reverend Ashe stated in an interview with *The Sunday Times*, 'Our children all come from a Christian orphanage. We want them to continue their Christian training - with grace before meals and prayers at bedtime - until they go for adoption into their new homes.'<sup>148</sup>

Because the children had been admitted to the UK as refugees and their adoption paperwork had yet to be finalized, the UK government determined that they were the legal responsibility of the Home Office. The Home Office had contracted the care of the children to the British Council for Aid to Refugees, who in turn had sub-contracted care to Ockenden Venture.<sup>149</sup> In an article titled 'Shockenden Horror' in *Private Eye* magazine, Joyce Pearce, one of the founders of Ockenden Venture, was interviewed and said that 'Ockenden now finds itself acting as an agency for the Government, an unfamiliar role. Just as it is not our normal policy to bring children out of their own country.'<sup>150</sup> It was a messy, convoluted endeavour that had no obvious precedent. Each organisation clumsily attempted to fulfil what they saw as their obligations, with PVO relegated to the periphery, able to act only once the adoption paperwork was completed by government.

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<sup>146</sup> MH 152/457/24A, 'Refugees: children from Vietnam accommodated in registered voluntary homes'.

<sup>147</sup> Patrick Ashe, *Dust And Ashes*.

<sup>148</sup> Alex Finer, 'Tug-of-war children', *The Sunday Times*, 6 July 1975, no page number visible (news clipping found in MH 152/457/35, 'Refugees: children from Vietnam accommodated in registered voluntary homes', 1 January 1975 – 31 December 1975).

<sup>149</sup> Alex Finer, 'Tug-of-war children', *The Sunday Times*, 6 July 1975.

<sup>150</sup> Quote from a news clipping (*Private Eye*, 27 June 1975) found in archive TNA MH 152/457/23A 'Refugees: children from Vietnam accommodated in registered voluntary homes', 1 January 1975 – 31 December 1975. Though *Private Eye* magazine is not an academic source, I am quoting from it here because I have not seen any other interview with an Ockenden representative about the care of the Vietnamese child evacuees housed in their reception centres, and because the article was deemed noteworthy enough to be included in the National Archives records about the Daily Mail's evacuation.

With PVO being with and supporting the children since the orphanages in South Vietnam, they may have felt scorned by the loss of control once the children arrived in the UK. Judging from his own words, Reverend Ashe clearly felt he and PVO knew what was best for the children; staying at the Ockenden homes was not it, so threat of legal action and further public embarrassment for the operation followed. The Sunday Times article described the situation aptly: ‘Operation Mercy Airlift does not yet seem to have brought to an end the problems of even the handful of Vietnamese orphans it was trying to help.’<sup>151</sup> PVO eventually dropped the lawsuit after the Home Office expedited adoption procedures.

Legal complications stemming from Operation Babylift also arose in the US. In November 1975, a class action suit was brought against the government in *Nguyen Da Yen, et al. v. Kissinger* in which lawyers from the Center for Constitutional Rights (CCR) argued that the children’s evacuation and subsequent ‘detention’ in reception centres and adoptive homes was unconstitutional. CCR successfully sought the participation of the provisional government of South Vietnam that had been installed by the North after its victory on 30 April 1975.<sup>152</sup> Together, CCR and South Vietnam sought the children’s return to their birth country.

At the request of the court, the US Immigration and Naturalization Service conducted record checks of 1,830 of the child evacuees and found that 274 of them were not eligible for adoption because of several issues, including falsification of records during the evacuation.<sup>153</sup> The court then issued a ruling that the case could no longer be considered a class action, as some of the children were found to have bona fide records supporting their status as orphans. CCR appealed but the case sat for three years until the Ninth Circuit court reassigned the case to a different panel of judges, indicating another long wait. Because the children had been living with their adoptive families for three years by this time, CCR dropped the lawsuit in the

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<sup>151</sup> Alex Finer, ‘Tug-of-war children’, *The Sunday Times*, 6 July 1975, no page number visible (news clipping found in MH 152/457/35).

<sup>152</sup> *Nguyen Da Yen, et al., Plaintiffs-appellants, Cross-appellees, v. Henry Kissinger, Secretary of State, et al., defendants-appellees, Cross-appellants*, 528 F.2D 1194 (9<sup>th</sup> Cir. 1975) <<https://law.justia.com/cases/federal/appellate-courts/F2/528/1194/178994/>> [accessed 23 June 2022].

<sup>153</sup> *Nguyen Da Yen, et al., Plaintiffs-appellants, Cross-appellees, v. Henry Kissinger, Secretary of State, et al., defendants-appellees, Cross-appellants*, 528 F.2D 1194 (9<sup>th</sup> Cir. 1975).

interest of the children's wellbeing, though CCR lawyers continued to offer information and informal support in the US and Vietnam to those seeking to be reunited.<sup>154</sup>

## Conclusion

After twenty-five years of offensive military action in SE Asia with catastrophic consequences for civilians, the US' last push in Vietnam to 'rescue' civilians seemed at the time to some to be a cynical attempt to assert public relations pressure on Congress to win the military aid President Ford had requested for South Vietnam as the Communist offensive gained momentum. That the lives of thousands of displaced Vietnamese children were being offered on the altar of public opinion made Operation Babylift and the Daily Mail's rogue evacuation all the more unpalatable despite the media framing of the operations as rescue. Public dissent in the US against Babylift by a segment of the population was immediate. On 4 April, one day after the official start of the operation, a group of ethics and religion professors from Stanford and UC Berkeley universities denounced the evacuation as chauvinistic and immoral. 'The only reason for bringing the children here,' they wrote, 'is to salve our conscience.'<sup>155</sup> Writing three weeks later, as the evacuation flights reduced in number, Gloria Emerson, an American journalist who had covered the Second Indochina War since 1956, was more candid in her assessment: 'Operation Babylift became a carnival: tearful, middle-class white women squeezing and kissing dark-eyed children, telling reporters that their new names would be Phyllis and Wendy and David. [...] It is almost forgotten during these excited, evangelical scenes at airports that it is this country that made so many Vietnamese into orphans.'<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>154</sup> Nguyen Da Yen, *et al.*, Plaintiffs-appellants, Cross-appellees, v. Henry Kissinger, Secretary of State, *et al.*, defendants-appellees, Cross-appellants, 528 F.2D 1194 (9<sup>th</sup> Cir. 1975).

<sup>155</sup> Columbia University, Augustus C. Long Library, Archives and Special Collections, Viola W. Bernard Papers, Box 62, Folder 8: *Statement on the Immorality of Bringing South Vietnamese Orphans to the United States*, 4 April 1975.

<sup>156</sup> Gloria Emerson, 'Operation Babylift', *The New Republic*, 26 April 1975, 8-9.

Despite the criticism, the evacuation had social and political utility. It gave a vessel for American and British mainstream newspapers to reproduce a perception of their governments and, in the American case, their servicemen as caring and compassionate. This chapter has shown that the media played a crucial role as mediator of the public's understanding of the evacuations in which they served to propagate what could be considered 'moral' discourse for Operation Babylift and the Daily Mail's 'mercy lift'. Media coverage of the evacuation and its public response helped create a cultural phenomenon by which nationalist semiotic codes, such as that of the redeemer nation and the land of liberty, were reinforced, and through which citizens of the aggressor-rescuer state could find a self-reflexive rescue from their crimes of complicity in their nation's war mongering.

Operation Babylift and the Mail's project contributed to another chapter in a long story of transnational adoptions from Vietnam in which well-intentioned Western volunteers dedicated themselves to what they regarded as protecting the most innocent victims of war. These people, however charitable and patriotic in motive, were tools in a propaganda effort undertaken by more powerful actors, including not only states but also the media. The children and volunteers were used as a mask of a professed dedication to human rights and individual freedom on the eve of the Communist victory in Vietnam after a brutal twenty-year war. The US government attempted to shirk its responsibility for the catastrophe it created in SE Asia by spinning a rescue narrative that interpellated its citizens to protect the evacuated children, obscuring its own role in producing the problem in question and in so doing extorting moral capital. The volunteers' reception and care of the evacuated children also carried with it a duty on the volunteers to uphold national prestige, especially in the case of the US. Whether they were conscious of this duty inherent in the hegemon's call or not, their participation buttressed their government's narrative. The sensationalist news coverage of Babylift and the Mail's lift, which, judging from the overwhelming offers of support that flooded newspapers covering the evacuations, influenced a great number of the public and offered an opportunity for readers residing a world away from the violence in Vietnam to 'connect' with the evacuated children. Much of the media's approach in

the earliest days of the evacuation was imbued with a sense of elation, as if it were a deliverance from and a triumph over evil. The equation of ‘anti-Communist equals deserving refugee’ had pervaded much of the US’ and UK’s immigration policies and public opinion since the end of World War II; Vietnam was no different in that regard. Add to this the innocence of the evacuated orphans, and a result among the public was a reflexive identification with the evacuees. With this came a sense of solidarity and a desire to ease their suffering. These political and social factors combined with the established practice of civilian evacuation seen throughout the US’ military involvement in Korea and Vietnam, as illustrated in this chapter’s introduction, set a trajectory in which evacuation was utilised as a solution to the perceived dangers of a Communist victory in the South.

President Ford commandeered the evacuation process initiated by Ed Daly and FFAC, and then, after officially declaring the start of Operation Babylift, used it as a rhetorical tactic to convince the public of the US’ still lofty intentions despite abandoning South Vietnam at the eleventh hour. Ford’s government may have used the evacuation as a heuristic technique to resolve the confusion of US involvement in Vietnam and the shame of its defeat by Communist forces. If language is the ‘primary domain of ideology’, and ideology the ‘prime means of manufacturing consent’, reframing the hasty US withdrawal using a discourse of rescue, mercy, and redemption was of paramount importance in salvaging what credibility remained of the US after the Second Indochina War.<sup>157</sup> The US government and its supporters used the evacuation as cover for their disastrous failure in SE Asia.

There can be those who take an alternative view and interpret the evacuation as being driven primarily by a human response of care to the cruelty of war and thus downplay or dismiss the power relations at work.<sup>158</sup> I recognise that what caused the perceived need to evacuate the children - *i.e.*, the immense devastation of the Second Indochina War and the Nationalists’ impending victory in April 1975

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<sup>157</sup> Norman Fairclough, *Language and Power* (New York: Longman Inc., 1994).

<sup>158</sup> See Patrick Ashe, *Dust And Ashes*; Shirley Peck-Barnes, *War Cradle: Vietnam’s Children of War*; Dana Sachs, *The Life We Were Given*; and Rosemary Taylor, *Orphans of War*.

against the militaries of the invading states that wrought that devastation on Vietnam - was a messy set of wicked problems, complex and interconnected challenges that demanded solutions. As written previously, I do acknowledge that many of the individual volunteer participants in the evacuation were inspired by a humanitarian sentiment to 'save' the children. On more macro political and military policy levels, there can certainly be interpretations contrary to mine as to why the US government commandeered what became known as Operation Babylift. Because my approach is a critical history of state-led evacuation, I focus on limited ideological and military motives: national prestige, relations of domination and force between 'rescuer' and 'rescued', and the legitimating function of language used in rescue narratives.<sup>159</sup> This thesis tackles these issues while acknowledging the existence of mixed motives.

This chapter has aimed to extend the scholarship on Operation Babylift and the Mail's lift by placing them within a genealogy of humanitarian evacuation and examining them within a wider historical frame. Studying these evacuation projects further contributes to our understanding of how governments and their collaborating ideological state apparatuses, in times of turmoil, can commandeer grassroots humanitarian acts and frame them in ways that signal national virtue, propping up existing ideological and political structures.

Operation Babylift proved the US' inadequacy at the time as the defender of freedom and individual liberty it claimed to be.<sup>160</sup> In a rush to appear benevolent and dutiful, the US government compromised appropriate decision-making procedures and may have violated its own adoption policies, jeopardising, among other things, the wellbeing of the children they purportedly set out to save. For many brought out of Vietnam as children during the evacuation, Babylift continues to be a source of confusion around identity and belonging. To Sumeia Williams, a

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<sup>159</sup> The concept of the legitimating function of language is from Nicolas J. Wheeler, *Saving Strangers: Humanitarian Intervention in International Society*, page 9. See also Duncan S.A. Bell, 'Language, legitimacy, and the project of critique', *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political*, 27:3 (2002); and Quentin Skinner, 'Language and Social Change', in J. Tully (ed.) *Meaning and Context: Quentin Skinner and his Critics* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1988).

<sup>160</sup> Richard Nixon, *Address to the Nation on the Situation in Southeast Asia*, 30 April 1970.

Vietnamese orphan adopted and raised in a small Texas town after being evacuated from Saigon, the experience left her feeling like ‘a living souvenir’. In her blog *Ethnically Incorrect Daughter*, she writes: ‘I float between feeling saved and feeling kidnapped, between gratitude and resentment’.<sup>161</sup> Babylift and the Mail’s lift brought many people together in service intended to be charitable at a time of intense suffering and widespread displacement. Whether they were of benefit to those most in need continues to be debated.

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<sup>161</sup> Sumeia Williams, ‘Ethnically Incorrect Daughter’ blog, <<https://ethnicallyincorrect.wordpress.com/about-ethnically-incorrect/>> [accessed 23 June 2022].

## Chapter 4: Evacuation of Kosovars from Macedonia, 1999

### Introduction

My final case study examines the 1999 evacuation of Kosovar refugees from Macedonia. UNHCR named the operation the Humanitarian Evacuation Programme (HEP), which was the first official use of this term. Though it may have been the first to officially apply the term, I contend in the following chapter that this evacuation was similar in its political and military objectives to earlier evacuations in which the US and UK played planning roles. While acknowledging the existence of mixed motives of the evacuating states, I argue that this evacuation was similar in its political and military objectives to earlier evacuations in which the US and UK played lead planning and implementation roles despite the hegemonic narrative's emphasis on protecting the human rights of the refugees. The HEP was a burden-sharing project intended to reframe military and political miscalculations. It also helped to support the continued independence of the newly created independent state of Macedonia, in a manner similar to the 1956 evacuation of Hungarians from Austria as that newly independent country struggled to establish itself in the community of Liberal states.

I chose the HEP as a case study in my examination of the history of humanitarian evacuation on the assumption that it was a paradigmatic case because of its novel use of the term and because, until the Afghanistan evacuation of 2021, it had been the last major civilian evacuation in which either the US or UK played a lead role in evacuating civilians of other nationalities. Early assumptions led me to think that the end of the Cold War changed international relations so profoundly that state-led humanitarian evacuation had lost its political utility, that the practice no longer served a purpose as a performance in support of a hegemon's rescue narrative or as a display of force projection. Though the 2021 evacuation from Afghanistan challenges - and possibly disproves - these assumptions, it was with these ideas in 2020 that I entered my research on the Humanitarian Evacuation Programme.

This chapter considers the US and UK's political and military objectives in relation to earlier civilian evacuations and investigates how the politically precarious position of the newly created independent state of Macedonia factored in the decision to evacuate Kosovar refugees who had sought refuge there. I ask what geopolitical import Macedonia may have had to NATO in general, and to the US and UK in particular, and how this may have influenced decision-making with regards to third country evacuation. Also under examination is how earlier instances of internal civilian evacuation during the Balkan wars may have set a trajectory in which evacuation was utilised as a solution during the Kosovo crisis. Relating back to my foundational research questions, I explore what political and cultural factors made the HEP thinkable, how it came to be seen as a solution, and what logistical techniques made it possible.

The HEP occurred in 1999 at the end of the approximately ten-year period that is widely considered by scholars to be a turning point from relief-based to rights-based humanitarianism.<sup>1</sup> I kept this in mind as I analysed the discourse around the HEP and considered if the HEP's narrative, as propagated by the US and UK governments, focused on the protection of human rights of displaced Kosovars rather than on their relief and rescue. While the narrative around HEP may have focused on the protection of rights, in this chapter I aim to show that, above all (like the three previous case studies), it was state interests that were paramount in the US and UK's decisions to evacuate Kosovar refugees from Macedonia and not the rights of the evacuees. The 'assertive humanitarianism' of the Blair and Clinton administrations in the late-1990s facilitated NATO's dressing up of its bombing campaign against the Yugoslav government in an exceptionalist rhetoric that justified its violence through the invocation of minority and human rights.<sup>2</sup> Such logic of emergency afforded the

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<sup>1</sup> Peter Gatrell, *Making of the Modern Refugee* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), page 8; Helen Ouyang, Michael VanRooyen, and Sofia Gruskin, 'The Sphere Project: Next Steps in Moving Toward a Rights-Based Approach to Humanitarian Assistance', *Prehospital and Disaster Medicine*, 24:3 (2009), 147–152; Advanced Training Program on Humanitarian Action, *Human Rights in Humanitarian Action and Development Cooperation and the Implications of Rights-Based Approaches in the Field* (2013).

<sup>2</sup> For more see F. K. Abiew, 'Assessing Humanitarian Intervention in the Post-Cold War Period: Sources of Consensus', *International Relations*, 29:2 (1998), 61-90

US and UK exceptional derogation from international law for the fulfilment of their state interests.<sup>3</sup>

EU states had initially been wary of devising a response to the displacement of Kosovars that could trigger further irregular migration from the Balkans. It was, however, the US' insistence of a wider evacuation program that changed the field of play and cultivated an atmosphere in which states tried to out-humanitarian each other. This atmosphere of competitive humanitarianism led to a blurring of humanitarian and political agendas. As a UNHCR evaluation team later put it, 'the refugees [...] became too important to be left to UNHCR.'<sup>4</sup> International media coverage of tens of thousands of ensiled Kosovar refugees exposed to the elements in a muddy field just over the Macedonian border created strong incentives for states to perform their humanitarian-ness if they were to win public support for the NATO bombing campaign.

At the end of the evacuation 'pipeline', considering the destinations of the evacuees, the lack of civic engagement among the British or American publics in receiving the evacuees is a unique aspect of the HEP when compared to our earlier case studies. This may have been due to the narrative of NATO member states that the mission was primarily to protect the right of safe return for Kosovars and/or possibly due to the lack of a production of affinity between Kosovar evacuees and American and British publics on the part of their governments and media. I explore this further in the case study that follows.

The HEP may have contributed to a renewal of NATO, whose first military operation in forty-six years was against the Yugoslav government.<sup>5</sup> It also benefitted the US and UK. One of the outcomes of NATO's offensive - of which, I argue, the HEP was a part - against the Yugoslavian government was the acceleration of that state's

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<sup>3</sup> For more see Andrea Betti, 'The right and the smart thing to do?' The Clinton administration and the social construction of emergency in the Kosovo crisis', *The International Journal of Human Rights*, 22:3 (2018), 446-469.

<sup>4</sup> UNHCR Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit, *The Kosovo Refugee Crisis: an independent evaluation of UNHCR's emergency preparedness and response*, EPAU/2000/001, (2000), page 10.

<sup>5</sup> Daalder and O'Hanlon, *Winning Ugly: NATO's War to Save Kosovo* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2001).

disintegration. This in turn bolstered American and British interests in the region *vis-à-vis* Russia with, among other things, the creation of Camp Bondsteel, a major military base in Kosovo still in operation, and the eventual accession to NATO of four former Yugoslav states. While the HEP may have bolstered NATO, it bruised the reputation of UNHCR by deliberately impeding its work and then publicly faulting it for a slow response, again demonstrating that it was state interests that were paramount in British and American decisions to evacuate refugees from Macedonia, not their rights or humanitarian relief.

This chapter argues that NATO, led by the US and UK, evacuated displaced Kosovar civilians in order to reframe military and political miscalculations for the consumption of their publics to win support for the NATO offensive, to bolster American and British interests in the region *vis-à-vis* Russia, and to allow NATO the use of Macedonia for military purposes, including the option to stage ground troops in their campaign against the Yugoslav military.

### *Historiography*

Here I place the HEP into historical context by reviewing the work of scholars who have written on the Kosovo conflict. While there has been a great deal of scholarly work published about the conflict, there is a paucity of work that focuses on the evacuation programme itself. Here I consider work on both NATO's intervention and the HEP.

I started my research on the HEP by reading secondary sources on military and diplomatic aspects of the Kosovo war, primarily on humanitarian intervention. It is NATO's 1999 attack on Yugoslav forces during the Kosovo war that perhaps best exemplifies the ongoing debate on whether foreign military intervention can be justified with international standards or if state sovereignty trumps international enforcement of human rights norms. A central aspect to the debate revolves around the constraints of customary international law on states and to what extent they can use - and justify - coercive military action during interventions. There is a rich

body of literature on this topic, with several scholars focusing on the 1999 Kosovo war.

Wheeler, whose research includes the ethics of force in international society, takes a solidarist approach to humanitarian intervention his work.<sup>6</sup> He argues that if states function outside the constraints of customary law and harm innocents, foreign intervention is necessary. This view builds on Kantian concepts of fostering peace between states within an international juridico-political normative framework to which all states must be subjected.<sup>7</sup> Wheeler's work on NATO's use of force in Kosovo focuses on the significance of NATO acting militarily without UN Security Council (UNSC) authorisation, and how claims of acting on humanitarian grounds facilitated a general acceptance of NATO's bombing campaign against the Yugoslav government. In contrast, Gibbs's work on Kosovo takes an approach that is more critical of states using the pretext of humanitarian action to support military intervention.<sup>8</sup> He argues that humanitarian intervention often only exacerbates human suffering through the increase of state violence and that this was evidenced clearly in the case of Kosovo. Critiquing the lopsided power dynamics intrinsic in interventions, Gibbs writes that the 'humanitarian intervention paradigm requires US hegemony.'<sup>9</sup> We see this requirement of US hegemony in humanitarian evacuations as well, certainly in the previous three case studies, as they required the reach of empire to transport evacuees. Few modern states other than the US and UK have had the capacity to handle the global logistical challenges inherent in

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<sup>6</sup> Nicolas J. Wheeler, *Saving Strangers: Humanitarian Intervention in International Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002). For more on the debates regarding the Kosovo humanitarian intervention, see: Noam Chomsky, *The New Military Humanism: Lessons from Kosovo*; I.H. Daalder & M.E. O'Hanlon, *Winning Ugly: NATO's War to Save Kosovo*; O. Daddow, "'Tony's War'? Blair, Kosovo and the Interventionist Impulse in British Foreign Policy', *International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs)*, 85:3 (2009), 547-560; D. Fassin and M. Pandolfi (eds.), *Contemporary States of Emergency: The Politics of Military and Humanitarian Interventions*; Jef Huysmans, 'Shape-Shifting NATO: Humanitarian Action and the Kosovo Refugee Crisis', *Review of International Studies*, 28:3 (2002), 599-618; and Steven Wheatley, 'The Foreign Affairs Select Committee Report on Kosovo: NATO and Humanitarian Intervention', *Journal of Conflict and Security Law*, 5:2 (2000), 261-273.

<sup>7</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch* (New York: Cosimo Classics, 1795/2005), Section 1.

<sup>8</sup> David N. Gibbs, *First Do No Harm: Humanitarian Intervention and the Destruction of Yugoslavia* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2011).

<sup>9</sup> Gibbs, *First Do No Harm*, page 7.

mass evacuation of civilians. Illiberal states, such as those of the Eastern Bloc during the Cold War, did not devise or lead humanitarian evacuation projects.<sup>10</sup>

Questions around hegemony and legitimacy as they relate to the Kosovo intervention are explored in Head's *Justifying Violence*.<sup>11</sup> Expanding on Habermas' work on communicative action and discourse ethics, Head argues that legitimacy does not rest solely on moral and legal bases, but that it must also carry an 'ethics of communication'.<sup>12</sup> Understanding how and why states distort communication, Head writes, 'secures critical purchase over the empirical practices through which states and other actors make claims to legitimacy.'<sup>13</sup> Betti writes relatedly on the US' social construction of emergency in the Kosovo war, arguing that domestic debates on international norms, such as intervention, shape state responses in crises.<sup>14</sup> Both Head and Betti contend that the legitimacy of actors and the viability of norms depend on if states perceive them as compatible with their values and interests. This concept is especially useful for this case study as it helps us understand how and why NATO worked to justify its military intervention and frame itself as acting legitimately. This chapter explores how the first official use of the term *humanitarian evacuation* helped the US and UK justify their bombing in Kosovo to domestic and international audiences.

Moving from scholarly work on questions of legitimacy and governance as they relate to the Kosovo intervention, I now look at historical research on the experience of displaced Kosovars who were evacuated and resettled abroad as refugees. Much of this work has been undertaken by public health scholars, with considerations of both physical and mental health. The work of Macpherson, *et al.*

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<sup>10</sup> The USSR participated in the republican-led evacuations of Spanish children from Spain to the USSR during the Spanish Civil War but did not plan or lead them. See Karl D. Quall, *Stalin's Niños: Educating Spanish Civil War Refugee Children in the Soviet Union, 1937-1952* (London: University of Toronto Press, 2020). Other than the Spanish evacuation, Communist states did not participate in evacuation of non-Soviet civilians. Why they did not warrants future study.

<sup>11</sup> Naomi Head, *Justifying violence: Communicative ethics and the use of force in Kosovo* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012).

<sup>12</sup> Head, *Justifying violence*, page vii.

<sup>13</sup> Head, *Justifying violence*, page 190.

<sup>14</sup> Andrea Betti, 'The right and the smart thing to do?' The Clinton administration and the social construction of emergency in the Kosovo crisis', *The International Journal of Human Rights*, 22:3 (2018), 446-469.

examines the evacuee's place within the system of the International Organisation for Migration's (IOM) healthcare management during the Humanitarian Evacuation Programme with the aim of informing future crisis response, uncritically praising the role of NGO-led healthcare in the Kosovo relief operation.<sup>15</sup> Carr, however, critically examines the government reception of Kosovar refugees evacuated to Australia, giving attention to how the Australian government controlled the evacuees' access to certain aspects of healthcare.<sup>16</sup> This aspect of refugee care links to Pupavac's notion of therapeutic governance, which considers the Western-imposed mental health interventions that focused on displaced Kosovars in the aftermath of the war. She argues that such projects serve as a 'new mode of external therapeutic governance' that can be viewed as a form of cultural imperialism.<sup>17</sup>

Considering the legalistic and bureaucratic aspects of resettling Kosovar evacuees in the UK, Bloch takes an approach that compares the experiences of Kosovar evacuees to Kosovars who travelled independently to the UK to request asylum at a port of entry.<sup>18</sup> She concludes that the rescue narrative surrounding the evacuation paved the way for more robust services for the evacuees during reception, while the proactive asylum seekers faced much greater legal challenges put in place by existing UK immigration policy. Here again we see an evacuating state utilizing a provisional state of exception to deal with a political exigency.

The question of how the memory and meaning of the Humanitarian Evacuation Programme is constructed and instrumentalized brings us to the last set

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<sup>15</sup> Douglas W. MacPherson, Jacqueline E.M. Weekers, Thomas F. O'Rourke, Cecilia Stiles, Brian D. Gushulak, 'Health of Displaced Albanian Kosovars in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia: Fit to Travel and Health Outcomes Assessment', *Prehospital and Disaster Medicine*, 17:2 (2002), 53-58. For more on the Kosovars and aspects of public health in the evacuation, see: J. Ashton, 'Balkan briefing (part 5). Seeking refuge (Macedonia, 9-25 June 1999): the changing needs of humanitarian aid in the face of the peace', *Epidemiol Community Health*, 54 (2000), 469-472; and Sram and Ward, 'Balkan briefing (part 4). Kosovo refugees in the North West region of the United Kingdom', *Epidemiol Community Health*, 54 (2000), 314-317.

<sup>16</sup> Robert A. Carr, 'The Kosovar refugees: the experience of providing temporary safe haven in Australia', PhD thesis, University of Wollongong, 2011.

<sup>17</sup> Vanessa Pupavac, 'Pathologizing Populations and Colonizing Minds: International Psychosocial Programs in Kosovo', *Alternatives*, 27 (2002), page 490. See also V. Pupavac, 'Therapeutic Governance: Psycho-social Intervention and Trauma Risk Management', *Disasters* 25:4 (2001), 358- 372.

<sup>18</sup> Alice Bloch, 'Kosovan refugees in the UK: The Rolls Royce or rickshaw', *Forced Migration Review*, August 1999:5, 24-26.

of readings on the historiography of the HEP. The political instrumentalization of the US and UK's humanitarian evacuations happens most profoundly in retrospect. It is in memory where it is most useful for the hegemon, for it is in memory that ideology can most vividly call upon the rescue narrative as proof of the evacuator's good intentions and benevolence.

Scholars of memory studies and political psychology have examined the Kosovo war and its aftermath to find insight on the consequences of what Boduszyński and Pavlaković call 'cultures of victory'.<sup>19</sup> In the case of Kosovo, the authors argue that hegemonic memory can provide a foundational legitimacy for the new state, while simultaneously creating a memory politics that excludes those not within the Kosovan narrative of victory.<sup>20</sup> Though the authors are careful not to link or 'confuse' foundational legitimacy with foundational myths, that is precisely what Ingimundarson does in his article on the reconstruction of ethnic Albanian national identity in post-war Kosovo, demonstrating a link between the foundational myths of the independence struggle against the Ottomans with the independence struggle against the Serbs.<sup>21</sup> While there is memory studies scholarship on the Kosovo war that focuses on the effects in Kosovar and Serb populations, there is none that I have found that consider the importance of memory of the NATO invasion or HEP for the US or UK. In the sections that follow I build on Boduszyński and Pavlaković's concept of 'cultures of victory' and apply it to the experiences of the US and UK in Kosovo.

In my research I have come across very few evacuee accounts of the HEP: one memoir that focuses on a Kosovar family's ordeal of being displaced by Serb

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<sup>19</sup> Mieczysław P. Boduszyński and Vjeran Pavlaković, 'Cultures of Victory and the Political Consequences of Foundational Legitimacy in Croatia and Kosovo', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 54:4 (2019), 799-824.

<sup>20</sup> Boduszyński and Pavlaković, 'Cultures of Victory and the Political Consequences of Foundational Legitimacy in Croatia and Kosovo', page 799.

<sup>21</sup> Boduszyński and Pavlaković, 'Cultures of Victory and the Political Consequences of Foundational Legitimacy in Croatia and Kosovo', page 823; Valur Ingimundarson, 'The Politics of Memory and the Reconstruction of Albanian National Identity in Postwar Kosovo', *History & Memory*, 19:1 (2007), page 117. See also: Bekim Baliqi, 'Contested war remembrance and ethno-political identities in Kosovo', *Nationalities Papers*, 46:3 (2018), 471-483.

militias, and one online reference to an exhibition in London in 2000 that featured the work of Kosovar child evacuees.

The thesis will move now from the historiography of work related to the Humanitarian Evacuation Programme and NATO's intervention to humanitarian evacuations that preceded the HEP. Before delving into the Kosovo case study, I take a brief look at evacuations of civilians that occurred between the last case study on Operation Babylift in 1975 and the start of 1999's HEP.

### *Precedents*

Here I look at evacuations that preceded the HEP, both globally and within the former Yugoslavia. I do this to gain an understanding of the use of civilian evacuation as a practice by states and NGOs in order to consider if general thought and cultural production affected the practice. In other words, I ask what, if any, was the influence of the precedents of evacuation that may have constrained thought and action when it came to decision-making on further evacuations.

It was the state of Israel that conducted the greatest number of evacuations during the period between the 1975 evacuation from Vietnam and 1999's HEP. There were three evacuations to Israel between 1984 and 1991.<sup>22</sup> These evacuations were part of the state-building project in which the Israeli government transported Ethiopian Jews from Ethiopia and Sudan to boost the settler population in occupied Palestine. The evacuations were a strategy of demographic warfare against non-Jews in the new state.

In 1994, a number of NGOs operating in Rwanda during the genocide arranged for the evacuation of hundreds of unaccompanied children to Burundi and,

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<sup>22</sup> For more see T. Parfitt, *Operation Moses: The Story of the Exodus of the Falasha Jews from Ethiopia* (London: Weidenfeld, 1985); A. Poskanzer, *Ethiopian Exodus* (Jerusalem: Gefen Publishing House, 2000); G. Shimon, *Mossad Exodus: The Daring Undercover Rescue of the Lost Jewish Tribe* (Jerusalem: Gefen Publishing House, 2007).

for the most seriously injured, to Europe for medical treatment.<sup>23</sup> So rapid and disorderly were the Rwandan evacuations that the UN issued a joint statement urging all NGOs to follow at minimum the guidelines in UNHCR's 1992 booklet 'Evacuation of Children from Conflict Areas'.<sup>24</sup> Of primary concern, they stressed, was that all evacuated children be registered with an authority as 'unaccompanied' rather than 'orphaned', for, the statement reads, 'past experiences in similar situations have shown that many, if not most, alleged orphans have living parents.'<sup>25</sup> This statement shows a historical awareness of evacuations on the part of the UN.<sup>26</sup>

The last international evacuation of civilians between 1975 and 1999 that my research uncovered was the 1996 evacuation of US-aligned Kurdish militia fighters, Kurdish USAID workers contracted under the US-led Operation Provide Comfort, and their immediate families. In what was dubbed Operation Pacific Haven, the US military evacuated approximately 6,000 Kurds from northern Iraq to Andersen Air Force base in Guam for months-long processing, and then to the continental US for resettlement.<sup>27</sup> The US initiated the evacuation at the height of the Iraqi Kurdish Civil War, and after a failed CIA-led attempt to assassinate Iraqi President Saddam Hussein in which US-aligned Kurdish leaders were complicit.<sup>28</sup> US media coverage of the evacuation did not include narratives of rescue or the protection of human

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<sup>23</sup> Lindsey Hilsum, 'Children flee to Burundi camps', *The Guardian*, 5 July 1994, < <https://www.theguardian.com/world/1994/jul/05/rwanda.fromthearchive> > [accessed 23 June 2022]. The majority of the child evacuees were eventually repatriated, some at the insistence of Rwandan President Paul Kagame. Some children, however, were adopted in Italy, which refused the Rwandan government's requests. See BBC News, 'Rwandan children to stay in Italy', 14 November 2000, < <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/1023936.stm> > [accessed 23 June 2022].

<sup>24</sup> United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, International Committee of the Red Cross, United Nations Children's Fund, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, *Joint Statement on the Evacuation of Unaccompanied Children from Rwanda*, 27 June 1994.

<sup>25</sup> United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, *Joint Statement on the Evacuation of Unaccompanied Children from Rwanda*, 27 June 1994.

<sup>26</sup> It also shows the UN's openness to states of exception when it writes in the same joint statement: 'Due to the imminent threat to life, procedures normally applied cannot always be respected.' United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, *Joint Statement on the Evacuation of Unaccompanied Children from Rwanda*, 27 June 1994.

<sup>27</sup> Robert W. Jones, 'A Second Chance: Operation Pacific Haven', *Veritas (Journal of Army Special Operations History)*, 4:3 (2008). I include this popular and biased source because there is no scholarly work published on Operation Pacific Haven. I have not found related archival documents online. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic I have not been able to search for documents in person.

<sup>28</sup> Kenneth M. Pollack, *The Threatening Storm: The Case for Invading Iraq*, (New York City: Random House, 2002).

rights. Coverage focused instead on the evacuation's role in the larger context of Operation Provide Comfort, a series of US military operations whose purported aim was to defend US-aligned Kurdish parties in Iraq against the Iraqi federal government.

The early 1990s saw a number of relatively small civilian evacuations from and within Bosnia during the course of the civil war. Operation Irma in 1993 exemplifies the international evacuations in that it focused on transporting children injured in Serb attacks on Sarajevo to treatment abroad, mostly to the UK.<sup>29</sup> In addition to the international evacuations, UNHCR staff organised in-country evacuations, sometimes playing fast and loose with even their own protection guidelines. Some local evacuations involved spur of the moment decisions for UNHCR staff to transport villagers in anticipation of a Serb offensive. These evacuations were occasionally transactional, in that the Yugoslav military and ethnic Serb militias agreed to the evacuations in exchange for the release of Serb prisoners held elsewhere.<sup>30</sup> In effect, UNHCR helped ethnically clear areas of non-Serbs, an important objective for the Yugoslav military (JNA/VRS) and its aligned militia, the Bosnian Serb Army (BSA). The UN's High Commissioner for Refugees, Sadako Ogata, was aware of this conundrum: 'To what extent do we persuade people to remain where they are when that could well jeopardise their lives and liberties? On the other hand, if we help them to move, do we not become an accomplice to "ethnic cleansing"?'<sup>31</sup>

Evacuation played a role in UNHCR's attempts at civilian protection during the secessionist wars in Yugoslavia, most markedly in Bosnia. This was the case not only because specific ethnic groups were targeted for attack and expulsion, but also because EU countries were focused on containing the conflict and irregular migration

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<sup>29</sup> BBC News, 'Wounded Bosnian girl flown to UK', < [http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/august/9/newsid\\_2528000/2528483.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/august/9/newsid_2528000/2528483.stm) > [accessed 23 June 2022]; UPI, 'Britain Launches "Operation Irma" to evacuate Bosnian wounded', < <https://www.upi.com/Archives/1993/08/13/Britain-launches-Operation-Irma-to-evacuate-Bosnian-wounded/3779745214400/> > [accessed 23 June 2022].

<sup>30</sup> Charli R. Carpenter, *Innocent Women and Children: Gender, Norms and the Protection of Civilians* (London: Routledge, 2006), page 138.

<sup>31</sup> United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, *State of the World's Refugees* (Geneva: UNHCR, 2000), page 222.

by ‘helping people where they were’, which could in effect limit the number of displaced people seeking asylum in Western Europe and the UK.<sup>32</sup> As the Bosnia war raged and NATO states were initially unable to stop the violence, evacuations also became a way for the UN to appear to be doing something in the light of intense media attention on the conflict. UNHCR’s evacuations and humanitarian response in general were also linked to the military presence of the UN Protection Force (UNPROFOR) in the Balkans.<sup>33</sup> Without an active accompanying humanitarian response, UNPROFOR’s peacekeeping mission would have been weakened along with its credibility. In the absence of political or military solutions, I claim that evacuation symbolised - or performed - an effort of civilian protection.

The Bosnian evacuations took place in a wider context of forced displacement undertaken by all warring parties but most notably by the Yugoslav military and its allied Serb militias. While it might be a reach to claim that evacuation was normalised in the Balkans by the time of the Kosovo war, it was a common practice that shows us a lineage to NATO’s evacuation of displaced Kosovars from Macedonia. The pervasive atmosphere of forced displacement in Yugoslavia in the 1990s affected areas of government policy, as well as public memory and general thought, which in turn likely constrained thought and action in relation to 1999’s Humanitarian Evacuation Programme.

## Case Study

With the end of the Bosnian war resulting in the newly independent state of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovan separatists increased their agitation for secession from what was left of Yugoslavia. The separatist Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) stepped up attacks on Serb civilians and police in the region, with Serb forces at

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<sup>32</sup> Larry Minear, Jeffrey Clark, Roberta Cohen, Dennis Gallagher, Iain Guest and Thomas Weiss, *Humanitarian Action in the Former Yugoslavia: the UN’s role 1991-1993* (Providence: Thomas Watson Institute for International Studies, 1994), page 6; and Carpenter, *‘Innocent Women and Children’: Gender, Norms and the Protection of Civilians*, page 139.

<sup>33</sup> K. Young, ‘UNHCR and ICRC in the former Yugoslavia: Bosnia -Herzegovina’, *International Review of the Red Cross*, 83:843 (2001), 781-805.

times responding with indiscriminate violence against Kosovar civilians. By early 1998, the Serbian counter-insurgency response appeared to be guided by an aim of expelling non-Serb civilians from their homes in an overall effort to gain more territory for Belgrade in any future negotiations.

The conflict continued to escalate into January 1999 when, alongside a NATO statement on the same day that authorised the bombing of Yugoslav targets, a list of non-negotiable principles were issued at the Rambouillet Conference in France to the warring parties by the Contact Group, an informal organisation of six Western states.<sup>34</sup> Despite the extraordinary impositions on Yugoslav sovereignty the proposal stipulated, the Yugoslav parliament voted unanimously to agree to all but one of the non-negotiable principles; they rejected the demand that Belgrade allow NATO forces as peacekeepers in Kosovo. Instead, Belgrade requested a peacekeeping mission led by the UN. The Contact Group, except for Russia, rejected this concession, and thus set the path for the NATO invasion. This refusal to compromise on the one principle was viewed by many critics as an incitement against Belgrade.

In the lead up to NATO's bombing campaign against Yugoslavia, UK and US government officials pressed the narrative of protecting the Kosovars' human rights while obscuring the details of their demands on the Yugoslav government in the Rambouillet Accords.<sup>35</sup> Their approach to the public relations campaign created a dichotomy in the public consciousness between Serb atrocities and NATO's professed obligation to protect human rights in the region. NATO's fundamental justification for attacking the Yugoslav military and its allied Serb militias in Kosovo was to protect the ethnic Albanian Kosovans from forced displacement. In the use of this justification we see a hypocrisy on the part of the US and UK regarding separatist movements in former Yugoslavian states, specifically the ethnic-based attacks on

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<sup>34</sup> North Atlantic Council, 'Statement by the North Atlantic Council on Kosovo', 30 January 1999; Marc Weller, 'The Rambouillet Conference on Kosovo', *International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs)*, 75:2 (1999), 211-251.

<sup>35</sup> Eric Herring, 'From Rambouillet to the Kosovo Accords: NATO's War against Serbia and its Aftermath', *The International Journal of Human Rights*, 4:2-3 (2000); Peter Schwarz, 'Rambouillet Accord Proposed NATO Occupation of all Yugoslavia', *Peace Research*, 31:2 (1999), 24-27. For an opposing view see Alex Bellamy, 'Reconsidering Rambouillet', *Contemporary Security Policy*, 22:1 (2001), 31-56.

Serbs committed by Croat and Bosniak forces.<sup>36</sup> The British and American support for the Kosovo independence movement in the former Yugoslavia accelerated the dismantling of the multi-ethnic state.

It was not only the US and UK's insistence on describing the conflict in terms of human rights and a humanitarian sentiment that paved the way for intervention, UNHCR's emphasis on media attention for its exceptional activities in Bosnia played a role as well. UNHCR's work in Bosnia entailed a number of civilian evacuations, oftentimes haphazardly undertaken by mid-level Protection Officers in the field without support from Geneva and not in accordance with UNHCR's own guidelines. Bosnia was also the first crisis in which UNHCR's work dealt primarily with war-affected persons *in situ* instead of displaced persons who had fled across a border.<sup>37</sup> These exceptional approaches in Bosnia together with the high media profile that UNHCR had cultivated for itself may have led to impractical expectations of a response in Kosovo from UNHCR.

As we will see, NATO pressured UNHCR into evacuating displaced Kosovars from Macedonia. UNHCR faltered in its initial assessment of flows of displacement and had a series of miscalculations that led them to a slow and inadequate response in the earliest days of the displacement.<sup>38</sup> These mistakes relegated UNHCR to a situationally subordinate role with NATO as the effective lead in the response, unwillingly allowing NATO and its public information machinery more leverage in the public sphere, and thus more authority in governing the response. The situation forced a dilemma on Ogata and UNHCR: 'My challenge would be to define clearly and absorb NATO's logistical support, which we needed, without letting UNHCR's

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<sup>36</sup> See Amnesty International, *Behind a Wall of Silence: Prosecution of War Crimes in Croatia*, (London: Amnesty Int. Publications, 2010); Raymond Bonner, 'War Crimes Panel finds Croat troops "cleansed" the Serbs', *New York Times*, 21 March 1999; and Human Rights Watch's report 'Croatia: Impunity for Abuses Committed during "Operation Storm" and the Denial of the Right of Refugees to Return to the Krajina', *Human Rights Watch Report*, 8:13(D), August 1996.

<sup>37</sup> K. Young, 'UNHCR and ICRC in the former Yugoslavia: Bosnia -Herzegovina', *International Review of the Red Cross*, 83:843 (2001), 781-805.

<sup>38</sup> High Commissioner Ogata wrote in her memoir that UNHCR's response to the Kosovar displacement was criticised because the organisation 'lacked sufficient and visible presence' during the initial phase of the displacement to Macedonia. (Ogata, *The Turbulent Decade: Confronting the Refugee Crises of the 1990s*, page 145.) Macedonian Prime Minister Georgievski's assessment of UNHCR's response was more direct: 'All this time we have been trying to get the UNHCR to take care of the refugees. The problem is they are not doing anything'. Quoted in van Selm's, *Kosovo's Refugees in the European Union*, page 213.

image and activities be swallowed by NATO's much larger operation.'<sup>39</sup> This lack of clear distinction between military and humanitarian agendas became a lasting characteristic of the Kosovo intervention.

After the failure to reach an agreement at Rambouillet, and despite the fact that NATO did not seek the UN Security Council's approval, NATO began its 78-day offensive against the Yugoslav military on 24 March 1999. The attack's immediate effect on the Kosovars was a rise in their displacement.<sup>40</sup> Serbian soldiers and aligned militias intensified their attacks on civilians and forced them out of parts of Kosovo. Within forty-eight hours of NATO's first airstrikes, 62,000 Kosovars fled south over the border to Albania, while approximately 29,000 fled to Macedonia and 27,000 to Montenegro.<sup>41</sup> Humanitarian agencies had anticipated the primary refugee flow would lead to Albania, where many of the agencies, including UNHCR, had warehoused supplies in preparation.<sup>42</sup> The inflow of Kosovars to Macedonia and Montenegro caught the agencies flat-footed.

The outflow of displaced Kosovars to Macedonia was acutely problematic because of the ethnic makeup of Macedonia. With its Slav majority and ethnic Albanian minority, a sudden inflow of ethnic Albanian Kosovars had the potential to spark another conflagration. The influx could alter the delicate ethno-political balance in Macedonia and escalate violence in the region. This, the Macedonian government argued publicly, would certainly be the case if the refugees were allowed to stay.

Macedonian security forces ensiled the refugees in a vast empty field near the border crossing at the town of Blace, allowing none to leave while also halting

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<sup>39</sup> Ogata, *The Turbulent Decade: Confronting the Refugee Crises of the 1990s*, page 152.

<sup>40</sup> Apart from the initial rise in number of Kosovars fleeing immediately after NATO's first airstrikes on 24 March, there was no clear correlation between NATO strikes and increase in refugee flows into neighbouring states. A report published by the American Association for the Advancement of Science found that 'the timing between bombing and refugee outflow varied widely.' P. Ball, *Policy or Panic?: The Flight of Ethnic Albanians from Kosovo, March – May 1999*, Report from the American Association for the Advancement of Science (2000), page 12.

<sup>41</sup> P. Ball, *Policy or Panic?: The Flight of Ethnic Albanians from Kosovo, March – May 1999*, Report from the American Association for the Advancement of Science (2000), page 12.

<sup>42</sup> Ogata, *The Turbulent Decade*, page 145.

the inflow at the border. Within hours the steady inflow bottled up in the field, with tens of thousands of desperate Kosovars huddled in the rain and mud awaiting assistance. The international media soon arrived to cover the debacle. The media coverage of the misery at Blace captured the world's attention, producing the images that became representative of the displacement. Meanwhile, the refugee movement into Albania went largely unreported by the media, though the sheer numbers were much higher than those who fled into Macedonia.<sup>43</sup> The flow into Montenegro - which has a politically precarious ethnic makeup similar to Macedonia's - also went largely unreported. Neither country seems to have sequestered the refugees like the Macedonian government did, and thus did not have scenes of suffering that could rival those at Blace. Macedonian officials seized on the media's coverage, amplifying the negative publicity to persuade, at first, the US to evacuate some of the displaced. Despite an initial rejection, days later the US agreed in principle to Macedonian demands for evacuation once it became clear to the US that Macedonia's delicate ethno-political balance was at risk because of the inflow.<sup>44</sup> The US in turn pressured UNHCR to organise an evacuation programme.

While the international media's focus on the suffering at Blace and the subsequent public protestation by Macedonian officials influenced NATO's decision making regarding the refugee response, we must also recall here the US' overtures to Macedonia in the months preceding the airstrikes. In late 1997 and early 1998, the US Secretary of Defense met several times with the Macedonian Defence Minister to discuss closer military ties between the two states and the establishment of a NATO base in Macedonia.<sup>45</sup> NATO also held a seven-day military training exercise in Macedonia with member states in September 1998.<sup>46</sup> These

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<sup>43</sup> P. Ball, *Policy or Panic?: The Flight of Ethnic Albanians from Kosovo, March – May 1999*, Report from the American Association for the Advancement of Science (2000).

<sup>44</sup> UNHCR Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit, *The Kosovo Refugee Crisis: an independent evaluation of UNHCR's emergency preparedness and response*.

<sup>45</sup> US Department of Defense, Press Release, 4/6/1999; and T. Noctiummes and J.P. Page, 'Appendix: War in Yugoslavia: Preparatory manipulations—human Rights, diplomacy, the KLA', *Socialism and Democracy*, 13:2 (1999), page 90.

<sup>46</sup> NATO, 'Exercise Cooperative Best Effort 98', 3 September 1998, < <https://www.nato.int/ims/1998/i98-012e.htm> > [accessed 23 June 2022]. Scholars have written about NATO's plans to use Macedonia to stage a

developments gave Macedonia leverage over NATO and UNHCR. With the conditions at Blace worsening and with relief agencies able to do little while more refugees were herded into the muddy field without food, water or sanitation facilities, the Macedonian government went on a media offensive to elude direct blame for its non-entrance policy. Prime Minister Georgievski put the onus on Europe and UNHCR: ‘How many [refugees] do we have to take to satisfy Europe and for the Kosovo people to say thank you? All this time we have been trying to get the UNHCR to take care of the refugees. The problem is they are not doing anything.’<sup>47</sup> This derision was meant to provoke UNHCR into action.

A ‘burden sharing’ agreement, devised by the US, was agreed upon with the intention of resolving the impasse and easing the immediate suffering. Despite UNHCR’s resistance, it was decided that some refugees at Blace would be transported to Albania to join other Kosovar refugees there, while an additional number would be evacuated outside the region for temporary asylum.<sup>48</sup> With this agreement on 3 April, a brigade of British engineers operating under NATO command began constructing two camps just south of the field in Blace. The agreement stipulated that after the camps were constructed the border would be opened to allow in more refugees who would then be processed and evacuated.<sup>49</sup>

By all accounts, UNHCR entered this agreement reluctantly; the agreement went against UNHCR’s principles of first asylum and of facilitating voluntary repatriation. Moving Kosovars outside the region would impede any future attempt to facilitate their voluntary return to Kosovo. Many UNHCR Protection staff who worked on the HEP expressed frustration with what they saw as the HEP’s undermining of UNHCR’s first asylum policy.<sup>50</sup> The regional representative for UNHCR in Washington, DC, Karen Abuzayd, said the evacuation was ‘an operation

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ground assault on Yugoslav forces, though none have cited official sources for this information, nor have I found official sources that mention it.

<sup>47</sup> As quoted in J. van Selm, ed., *Kosovo’s Refugees in the European Union*, page 213.

<sup>48</sup> M. Barutciski and A. Suhrke, ‘Innovation in Protection and Burden-sharing’, *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 14:2 (2001), page 96.

<sup>49</sup> UNHCR Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit, *The Kosovo Refugee Crisis: an independent evaluation of UNHCR’s emergency preparedness and response*, EPAU/2000/001, February 2000.

<sup>50</sup> Ogata, *The Turbulent Decade: Confronting the Refugee Crises of the 1990s*, page 152

we [UNHCR] have entered into reluctantly, but we are trying to save refugees and save Macedonia from collapse.’<sup>51</sup> UNHCR was not left with much choice, however, as Macedonia had already contracted with certain NATO member states to deliver humanitarian relief in other areas of Macedonia, where states such as Italy and Greece had begun building their own refugee camps and administering aid. This was almost certainly done as alibi to the ‘humanitarian-ness’ of NATO’s intervention. This commandeering by state militaries of humanitarian relief was deeply problematic for UNHCR. As High Commissioner Sadako Ogata later wrote in her memoir: ‘NATO’s aggressive media campaign was overshadowing UNHCR’s. I thought that the time was ripe for UNHCR to take back the refugee operation and prove and maintain the civilian character of refugee camps.’<sup>52</sup> Despite UNHCR’s intention to ‘take back the refugee operation’ from NATO, it was compelled by circumstance to request assistance from NATO’s Civil Emergency Planning Department for help in processing Kosovars for evacuation.<sup>53</sup>

As NATO member states were engaged in bilateral humanitarian relief efforts without guidance from NATO or UNHCR, the Macedonian government was diversifying as well, making agreements - brokered by the US but independent of UNHCR and NATO - with Albania and Turkey to temporarily ‘transfer’ Kosovar refugees there in what became known as the Humanitarian Transfer Programme (HTP).<sup>54</sup> As more displaced Kosovars fled into Macedonia, the array of relief operations were in danger of becoming discordant. Amnesty International sent in researchers to gauge the human rights climate and found that most Kosovars were reluctant to be transferred to Albania or Turkey, and that some of those who had

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<sup>51</sup> M. Burney, ‘Kosovo Refugees Land in New Jersey’, Associated Press, 5 May 1999  
< <https://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/inatl/daily/may99/ftdix05.htm> > [accessed 23 June 2022].

<sup>52</sup> Ogata, *The Turbulent Decade*, page 151.

<sup>53</sup> Ogata, *The Turbulent Decade*, page 149; UNHCR Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit, *The Kosovo Refugee Crisis: an independent evaluation of UNHCR’s emergency preparedness and response*, EPAU/2000/001, February 2000.

<sup>54</sup> Amnesty International, *Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia: Humanitarian Evacuation and the International Response to Refugees from Kosovo*, June 1999, AI Index: EUR 65/05/99.

been transferred had been treated abusively.<sup>55</sup> Despite these issues, the US, acting bilaterally with Macedonia, paid for the transfer flights from Macedonia to Turkey.<sup>56</sup>

With NATO airstrikes and refugee outflows continuing unabated, UNHCR was obliged - or possibly coerced by NATO - to try to consolidate what programmes it could. An emergency meeting of the Humanitarian Issues Working Group on 6 April was able to produce guidelines for the HEP, encouraging Macedonia to continue to allow entrance to those seeking refuge within its borders while discouraging a continuance of the HTP in the way it had been operating.<sup>57</sup> UNHCR took planning control of both programmes, with collaboration from ICRC and IOM.

With the approval of EU ministers after an 8 April emergency meeting in Luxembourg, Western Europe was decided to be the focus of the evacuation efforts.<sup>58</sup> The logic was that the evacuees should be accommodated relatively close to Kosovo in the event that the security situation there improved and allowed them to return to their homes. A figure of 70,000 from the estimated total of 95,000 who had fled into Macedonia was agreed for the number of persons to be evacuated.<sup>59</sup> This represented a fraction of all refugees in the region considering that by early April approximately 321,000 had fled into Albania, and a further 33,000 into Montenegro.<sup>60</sup> These figures attest to the political utility of the HEP, in that it was the evacuation of a relatively small percentage of displaced that allowed NATO the use of Macedonia as a staging ground and served to support NATO's purported humanitarian intention.

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<sup>55</sup> Amnesty International, *Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia: Humanitarian Evacuation and the International Response to Refugees from Kosovo*, June 1999.

<sup>56</sup> UNHCR Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit, *The Kosovo Refugee Crisis: an independent evaluation of UNHCR's emergency preparedness and response*, EPAU/2000/001, February 2000.

<sup>57</sup> Ogata, *The Turbulent Decade*, page 151.

<sup>58</sup> UNHCR Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit, *The Kosovo Refugee Crisis: an independent evaluation of UNHCR's emergency preparedness and response*, EPAU/2000/001, February 2000.

<sup>59</sup> Ogata, *The Turbulent Decade*, page 152.

<sup>60</sup> P. Ball, *Policy or Panic?: The Flight of Ethnic Albanians from Kosovo, March – May 1999*, Report from the American Association for the Advancement of Science (2000), page 61.

Registration for evacuation initially took place in the two camps, Stankovec I and II, which had been hastily built near the Blace border crossing by a British engineering unit operating under NATO command on 3 April, the same day UNHCR formally requested NATO's assistance.<sup>61</sup> To try to keep pace with new arrivals into Macedonia, initial registration was done at Blace from where the displaced would either be transported to one of the camps or, in fewer cases, would travel independently to the home of a Macedonian family who had offered accommodation.<sup>62</sup> Initially, camp registration was separate from the registration process for the HEP. These processes were combined by late April, with both interviews conducted simultaneously in-camp from where the data collected would be taken to another location nearby for entry into a computerised database.<sup>63</sup> Information stored in this database, such as family composition and vulnerability criteria, was what the programme used for evacuation criteria and decision-making, though some states, like the UK and US, applied their own selection criteria.<sup>64</sup> This application of states' criteria independent of UNHCR's vulnerability standards further undermined the UN.

Guidelines developed by UNHCR under pressure from the US during the initial phase of the evacuation highlight the hasty atmosphere in which the operation developed: 'Given the exceptional nature of the humanitarian evacuation and the limited resources in the field to receive the large refugee influx, the registration system has been simplified to collect only the essential information to facilitate the voluntary humanitarian evacuation'.<sup>65</sup> The simplification of the registration system meant that no security vetting and only a cursory refugee status determination were undertaken. This demonstrates again the tendency of governments and their

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<sup>61</sup> UNHCR Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit, *The Kosovo Refugee Crisis: an independent evaluation of UNHCR's emergency preparedness and response*, February 2000.

<sup>62</sup> A. Qorri, personal communication (telephone), 4 October 2020. This information was told to me during an informal conversation with a friend who, along with their immediate family, was a participant in the HEP and was evacuated to the US.

<sup>63</sup> Amnesty International, *Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia: Humanitarian Evacuation and the International Response to Refugees from Kosovo (An update to Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia: The Protection of Kosovo Albanian Refugees)*, June 1999, AI Index: EUR 65/05/99.

<sup>64</sup> Amnesty International, *Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia: Humanitarian Evacuation and the International Response to Refugees from Kosovo*.

<sup>65</sup> United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, *Updated UNHCR Guidelines for the Humanitarian Evacuation Programme of Kosovar Refugees in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, 11 May 1999, page 4.

collaborating organisations to employ exceptions when suitable. Only weeks before displaced Kosovars in Macedonia were being selected for evacuation on the grounds of a broadly defined vulnerability, rejected Kosovar asylum seekers were being deported from the Western European countries where they had sought safety from the same persecution brought upon them in Kosovo.<sup>66</sup> The deportations were paused at the height of the conflict during NATO's bombing campaign. The rejections, which High Commissioner Ogata estimated numbered approximately 150,000, beg the question of how the evacuation to Western states could be called humanitarian while many of the same states were rejecting asylum applications from displaced Kosovars with similar - if not identical - fears of persecution.<sup>67</sup> These problematic political issues, however, were not allowed to impede the evacuation. The defining features of any evacuation are the speed and size of the operation. As such, efficiency trumps all other concerns in such situations.

HEP flights began on 6 April.<sup>68</sup> By mid-May, UNHCR had secured the cooperation of at least seventeen countries, though many had agreed only to the principle of temporary asylum.<sup>69</sup> Some states, like the US, publicly offered a specific number of slots, while others, like the UK, did not specify the number of evacuees they would accept. IOM arranged initial charter flights from Skopje to Athens, from where the evacuees were transported by commercial airlines to destinations in the West. As departures increased and the Skopje airport was operating at capacity, IOM chartered buses to drive the evacuees to the international airport in Thessaloniki.

While HEP departures were increasing, the Humanitarian Transfer Programme, which offered to transport registered Kosovar refugees from the camps in Macedonia to temporary asylum in Albania or Turkey, had few volunteers. By early-May this had caused another bottleneck at the border crossing; the flow of displaced into Macedonia was outpacing the HEP/HTP outflow. Three more regional

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<sup>66</sup> A. Bloch, 'Kosovan refugees in the UK: The Rolls Royce or rickshaw', *Forced Migration Review*, August 1999:5, 24-26.

<sup>67</sup> Ogata, *The Turbulent Decade*, page 165.

<sup>68</sup> International Organization for Migration, *Providing shelter abroad*; ICRC, 'Joint Federation/ICRC Situation Report: Crisis in the Balkans – Situation Report No. 34', 24 May 1999.

<sup>69</sup> ICRC, 'Joint Federation/ICRC Situation Report: Crisis in the Balkans – Situation Report No. 34'.

states agreed to accept evacuees, increasing the number of states participating in the HEP to twenty.<sup>70</sup> This helped keep outflow in pace with inflow but also led to an increase of requests from potential evacuees for specific destinations, namely the UK, US, Canada, and Germany, while participating SE European states like Romania, Slovenia, and Croatia received far fewer evacuees than they had agreed to accept.<sup>71</sup> Further adding to the confusion of the evacuation procedures, some European states arranged flights bilaterally with the Macedonian government, foregoing both UNHCR's and IOM's assistance. Thus, it is difficult to ascertain the exact number evacuated from Macedonia during this time, though UNHCR estimates that approximately 90,000 were evacuated, with about 60,000 of those evacuated under the administration of UNHCR's HEP/HTP.<sup>72</sup>

UNHCR and participating states were responsible for selecting persons for evacuation. First selection was based primarily on vulnerability criteria established by UNHCR, though some governments applied their own selection criteria instead of or in addition to UNHCR's.<sup>73</sup> Priority was given to those residing in Stankovec II, though no primary documents explain why this decision was made or if Stankovec II housed those with particular vulnerabilities, except to say that 'priority should be given to refugees in camps who are enduring the most difficult conditions'.<sup>74</sup> IOM doctors then examined selected evacuees for medical conditions and fitness to fly. Staff alerted persons approved for evacuation via notice boards in-camp, posting no later than the night prior to travel. IOM staff contacted the immigration ministries of receiving states no fewer than four days in advance.<sup>75</sup> IOM, with subcontracted surge support from the Norwegian Refugee Council, were also responsible for the

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<sup>70</sup> International Organization for Migration, *Providing shelter abroad*.

<sup>71</sup> International Organization for Migration, *Providing shelter abroad*.

<sup>72</sup> International Organization for Migration, *Providing shelter abroad*.

<sup>73</sup> Amnesty International, *Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia: Humanitarian Evacuation and the International Response to Refugees from Kosovo (An update to Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia: The Protection of Kosovo Albanian Refugees)*, June 1999, AI Index: EUR 65/05/99; International Organization for Migration, *Providing shelter abroad: The IOM/UNHCR Humanitarian Evacuation Programme*.

<sup>74</sup> United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, *Updated UNHCR Guidelines for the Humanitarian Evacuation Programme of Kosovar Refugees in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, 11 May 1999, point 5.1.

<sup>75</sup> Amnesty International, *Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia: Humanitarian Evacuation and the International Response to Refugees from Kosovo (An update to Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia: The Protection of Kosovo Albanian Refugees)*, June 1999, AI Index: EUR 65/05/99.

delivery of travel documents and flight manifests.<sup>76</sup> UNHCR guidelines for the HEP state that ‘countries have the choice of either using their own national carriers or IOM.’<sup>77</sup> No evidence shows that any military aircraft was used to fly out evacuees, so it may have been that only commercial and chartered IOM flights were used in the evacuation.

At the height of the operation in mid-May, the HEP was evacuating roughly 2,000 persons a day on as many as eleven flights from airports in Greece and Macedonia.<sup>78</sup> During the same period, the number of Kosovars who had fled to Albania increased to approximately 431,000, while Macedonia was accommodating just over half that figure, with roughly 234,000 Kosovar refugees registered there with UNHCR.<sup>79</sup> While support does seem to have been given to Albania from NATO states, UNHCR, and its implementing partners, it was not at the robust level that Macedonia received. Was this because Albania was not as strategically important to NATO as Macedonia? Was it due to Macedonia’s precarious ethnopolitical climate? Was it because of Macedonia’s initial media press during which they criticised NATO and UNHCR and demanded action? All of these reasons seem to have played their part in the decision to focus the bulk of the humanitarian response on Macedonia despite the fact that fewer refugees sought safety there.

The UK participated in the HEP by offering temporary asylum to Kosovar evacuees, which was an initial twelve-month exceptional leave to remain status with the right to work, as well as the right to public funds.<sup>80</sup> The government prioritised those with family links in the UK.<sup>81</sup> This policy was unusual considering

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<sup>76</sup> United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, *Updated UNHCR Guidelines for the Humanitarian Evacuation Programme of Kosovar Refugees in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, 11 May 1999.

<sup>77</sup> United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, *Updated UNHCR Guidelines for the Humanitarian Evacuation Programme of Kosovar Refugees in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, 11 May 1999, point 11.

<sup>78</sup> International Organization for Migration, *Providing shelter abroad: The IOM/UNHCR Humanitarian Evacuation Programme from FYR of Macedonia*, 1 July 1999.

<sup>79</sup> Amnesty International, *Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia: Humanitarian Evacuation and the International Response to Refugees from Kosovo*; International Organization for Migration, *Providing shelter abroad*.

<sup>80</sup> A. Gray, ‘Refugees Arrive Home in Kosovo’, *The Daily Telegraph*, 19 April 2000.

<sup>81</sup> Amnesty International, *Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia: Humanitarian Evacuation and the International Response to Refugees from Kosovo*.

that the UK had been rejecting asylum applications from displaced Kosovars in the UK in the months preceding NATO's 1999 attack.<sup>82</sup> The logic of this is unclear to me, especially considering how other participating states, such as Germany, had a policy of evacuating only Kosovars who did *not* have family links in that state. British Parliamentarians debated the policy in early-June 1999 as the HEP was taking place. Labour MP Jack Straw argued that he supported the HEP but had taken a strict stance on asylum applications within the UK because he believed that UNHCR's abbreviated refugee status determination for the HEP was somehow better able to identify who met the 1951 Convention's criteria than the UK's asylum decision process.<sup>83</sup>

The UK agreed to participate in the HEP but did not specify the number they were willing to accept. The first plane carrying evacuees to the UK landed at Leeds airport on 25 April 1999.<sup>84</sup> By the end of the evacuation, the UK had admitted 4,346 Kosovars into the country, resettling them with exceptional leave to remain status.<sup>85</sup> It was the first government-led programme to transport refugees into the UK since the 'Ugandan Asians' operation in 1972.<sup>86</sup> The Home Office took the lead in the resettlement, with the Refugee Council as collaborating partner responsible for the direct service aspects of resettlement.

The US Department of Defense named the two stages of the evacuation to the US: the transportation stage was Operation Provide Refuge, while the reception was named Operation Open Arms. The state is the implied hero in both. These names illustrate the self-reflexive rescue attempt for the aggressor, an attempt to redirect public attention from the violence wrought by the NATO attack to focus on the humanitarian evacuation.

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<sup>82</sup> Bloch, 'Kosovan refugees in the UK: The Rolls Royce or rickshaw'.

<sup>83</sup> Bloch, 'Kosovan refugees in the UK: The Rolls Royce or rickshaw'.

<sup>84</sup> Bloch, 'Kosovan refugees in the UK: The Rolls Royce or rickshaw', page 26.

<sup>85</sup> A. Gray, 'Refugees Arrive Home in Kosovo', *The Daily Telegraph*, 19 April 2000; International Organization for Migration, *Providing shelter abroad*; I. Sram and D. Ward, 'Balkan briefing (part 4). Kosovo refugees in the North West region of the United Kingdom'.

<sup>86</sup> I. Sram and D. Ward, 'Balkan briefing (part 4)'. The 1975 evacuation of South Vietnamese was not initiated or led by the UK government; it was a venture of the Daily Mail newspaper.

The first HEP flight to the US landed at McGuire Air Force Base in New Jersey on 5 May 1999 with 453 Kosovar refugees onboard.<sup>87</sup> The military then bused them to a processing centre housed on the grounds of Fort Dix.<sup>88</sup> At Fort Dix's new Welcome Center, First Lady Hillary Clinton greeted the new arrivals, telling them and the gathered reporters that 'the American people are very sad and very angry at what has been happening to you in the last weeks and months. Our hearts and our prayers have been with you and now we want to show you our homes are open to you too.'<sup>89</sup> Afterward, US Army staff led the refugees to a warehouse where they sifted through used clothing donated by local residents at the urging of Wrightstown Mayor Jozsef Farago, a Hungary-born man who himself had been evacuated to the US in 1956.<sup>90</sup>

The Kosovars' reception in the US displayed - as a New York Times reporter phrased it - a 'certain sensitivity to both the refugees and to public relations.'<sup>91</sup> Army officers who received the press proudly pointed out the base's recreational facilities that were available for the refugees' use: a miniature golf course, a swimming pool, and a go-cart track.<sup>92</sup> In addition to the important recreational infrastructure of the Welcome Center, officials also made a point to stress to the media that refugees would be offered mental health counselling.<sup>93</sup> This is the first instance of mental health support being offered to evacuees of which I am aware.

Despite the self-congratulatory news coverage of America's participation in the HEP, reporters repeatedly slipped in the message that the refuge the US offered was intended to be temporary. Why nearly every news article about the HEP

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<sup>87</sup> International Organization for Migration, *Providing shelter abroad*; D. Mullen, 'Hillary greets Kosovar refugees in NJ', *UPI*, 5 May 1999.

<sup>88</sup> J. Huston, *The Sins of War: Army Logistics, 1775-1953* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1970), page 346. Fort Dix is currently (October 2021) being used to accommodate nearly 10,000 Afghan evacuees while they are processed for resettlement in the US. See J. Walsh, 'How many Afghan refugees are coming to NJ? New report lays out housing plan', *Cherry Hill Courier-Post*, 26 August 2021.

<sup>89</sup> As quoted in D. Mullen, 'Hillary greets Kosovar refugees in NJ', *UPI*, 5 May 1999.

<sup>90</sup> D.J. Schemo, 'At Fort Dix, a New Ellis Island Embraces Kosovo's Refugees', *The New York Times*, 9 May 1999; G. Truchman, 'First Kosovo refugees arrive in US', *CNN*, 5 May 1999.

<sup>91</sup> D.J. Schemo, 'At Fort Dix, a New Ellis Island Embraces Kosovo's Refugees', *The New York Times*, 9 May 1999.

<sup>92</sup> G. Truchman, 'First Kosovo refugees arrive in US', *CNN*, 5 May 1999.

<sup>93</sup> P. Cole, '453 Kosovo Refugees Arrive in US', *Chicago Tribune*, 6 May 1999.

stressed this point I do not know. The reality was that the US was admitting the evacuees under the legal status of *refugee*, which paved the way to full citizenship within five years.<sup>94</sup> The evacuees had the right to return home should they wish, just as any other person resettled as a refugee. The reason why the US media stressed the impermanence of the Kosovars' refuge in America may have been because the US government claimed that the aim of the NATO airstrikes was to ensure that the Kosovars could safely return to and live in their homes. Offering permanent resettlement in the US may have run counter to that narrative.

As more evacuees arrived in the US, the military opened other processing centres. While the staff at Fort Dix was scheduled, at peak, to process through 2,000 evacuees per week, the US Army Reserve Command took over operations and opened another Welcome Center at Fort McPherson in Georgia. The two centres processed the majority of the 13,989 evacuees admitted to the US during the HEP out of a presidential determination of 20,000 evacuee slots.<sup>95</sup> While the US military provided the lead during the in-processing, the Department of Health and Human Services led the placement and direct support services once the refugees had been cleared for entry. While some evacuees had relatives in the US with whom they were reunited, the majority needed the support of local refugee resettlement agencies and were thus assigned to one of the local affiliates of the US' voluntary refugee agencies who subcontract through the federal government.<sup>96</sup> ICRC also collaborated, setting up a tracing system for evacuees to find missing relatives.<sup>97</sup>

The US, unlike most of the participating states, allowed for the evacuees to settle permanently there. While some European states and Australia eventually

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<sup>94</sup> Cole, '453 Kosovo Refugees Arrive in US', *Chicago Tribune*, 6 May 1999; International Organization for Migration, *Providing shelter abroad: The IOM/UNHCR Humanitarian Evacuation Programme from FYR of Macedonia*, 1 July 1999.

<sup>95</sup> Congressional Research Service, 'History of Use of U.S. Military Bases to House Immigrants and Refugees', 26 July 2018.

<sup>96</sup> A. Qorri, personal communication (telephone), 4 October 2020. This information was told to me during an informal conversation with a friend who, along with their immediate family, was a participant in the HEP and was evacuated to the US. A. Qorri and I were co-workers at a local refugee resettlement agency that had provided reception and placement services for Kosovar evacuees in 1999, four years before I started working there.

<sup>97</sup> Cole, '453 Kosovo Refugees Arrive in US', *Chicago Tribune*, 6 May 1999.

repatriated most, if not all, of the evacuees they admitted, the US granted the Kosovars the opportunity to become full citizens after five years living in the US.<sup>98</sup> When Yugoslav forces withdrew from Kosovo on 10 June 1999 to be replaced by NATO troops, UNHCR created a go-and-see campaign for refugees in the region and evacuees abroad to return to their hometowns in Kosovo to assess the security situation and determine the feasibility of return.<sup>99</sup> The majority of Kosovars evacuated to the US stayed, while approximately 2,500 chose to return to Kosovo.<sup>100</sup>

It is difficult to ascertain exact numbers of evacuees considering the bilateral agreements that some states had with Macedonia before the start of the Humanitarian Evacuation Programme. IOM and UNHCR are the only two organisations I have found that give exact figures for evacuated Kosovars. Their official HEP numbers put the US as the country with the highest number of admissions at 8,739, while the UK figure was 4,253.<sup>101</sup> Though the total number for those evacuated to all twenty participating states is elusive, it seems that it did not reach the ceiling of 135,000 slots for which UNHCR had made agreements.<sup>102</sup>

Yugoslav troops withdrew from Kosovo on 10 June 1999 and NATO's Kosovo Force (KFOR) entered the following day. Tens of thousands of Kosovar refugees began their return home. UNHCR estimates that within three days, over 100,000 had repatriated. By the end of the month, UNHCR and IOM had organised transportation for the repatriation of 332,000 Kosovars from neighbouring countries.<sup>103</sup> The HEP was suspended on 30 June. Scheduled flights to the US

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<sup>98</sup> Carr, 'The Kosovar refugees: the experience of providing temporary safe haven in Australia', PhD thesis, University of Wollongong, 2011.

<sup>99</sup> Ogata, *The Turbulent Decade*; A. Qorri, personal communication (telephone), 4 October 2020.

<sup>100</sup> Carr, 'The Kosovar refugees: the experience of providing temporary safe haven in Australia'.

<sup>101</sup> International Organization for Migration, *Providing shelter abroad*.

<sup>102</sup> Amnesty International, *Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia: Humanitarian Evacuation and the International Response to Refugees from Kosovo (An update to Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia: The Protection of Kosovo Albanian Refugees)*, June 1999; Burney, 'Kosovo Refugees Land in New Jersey', Associated Press, 5 May 1999; and Ogata, *The Turbulent Decade*.

<sup>103</sup> IOM, *Kosovo Emergency Update*, 28 June 1999.

organised by IOM continued for a short time until they too were suspended due to a high percentage of no-shows.<sup>104</sup>

## Conclusion

In this chapter I have shown how the HEP was similar in its political and military objectives to earlier evacuations in which the US and UK played lead planning and implementation roles. The HEP was a burden-sharing project intended to reframe military and political miscalculations, and to allow for NATO to continue using Macedonia as a base for military operations, including the option to stage ground troops. The HEP also helped to support the continued independence of the newly created independent state of Macedonia, in a manner similar to the 1956 evacuation of Hungarians from Austria as that newly independent country struggled to establish itself in the community of Liberal states. In both case studies, the US and UK used evacuation to relieve the political pressure experienced by the host states under the strain of the sudden arrival of tens of thousands of forcibly displaced persons in a wider milieu of tense international relations between Liberal and illiberal states. These political factors in the case of Kosovo and Macedonia combined with the established practice of civilian evacuation seen throughout the Balkan wars of the 1990s, as illustrated in this chapter's introduction, set a trajectory in which evacuation was utilised as a solution during the Kosovo crisis.

The HEP was unique from earlier evacuations, however, in that it occurred during the wider turn from relief-based to rights-based humanitarianism. The narrative of the HEP as promoted by the US and UK governments was more focused on the right of repatriation for the Kosovars than on a reductionist rescue narrative as seen in the case studies on Hungarians and Vietnamese. While the narratives for these two groups relied on notions of rescue and 'bringing in', the narrative around

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<sup>104</sup> IOM, *Kosovo Emergency Update*, 28 June 1999. This information was corroborated by A. Qorri, who told me that some family members of theirs had been scheduled for an evacuation flight to the US but chose not to board because they had been offered jobs with the US government at what would become Camp Bondsteel in Kosovo.

the Kosovars was focused on providing temporary refuge so that NATO could create conditions under which the refugees could safely return to their homes in Kosovo. In this way, the framing of the HEP was unique from earlier case studies. Like the three previous case studies, however, it was also a narrative of safeguarding minority rights from tyranny.

The HEP contributed to a renewed NATO, whose first military operations in forty-six years were against the government in Belgrade and remain so until today, as KFOR currently operates in Kosovo.<sup>105</sup> While the HEP bolstered NATO, it bruised the reputation of UNHCR. By its own account, UNHCR was underprepared for the influx of displaced into Macedonia. The rapidly changing and precarious situation in Macedonia combined with UNHCR's initial reluctance to evacuate refugees to third countries and the US' aggressive diplomacy approach relegated UNHCR to a diminished coordinating role in the response. The bilateral agreements for humanitarian response were part of the competitive atmosphere in which states vied for international media attention. While specific states and NATO may have earned respect in some quarters of public opinion, the competitive climate damaged UNHCR's reputation. The undermining of UNHCR's protection role by the US and NATO may have had knock-on effects for future refugee emergencies. It certainly highlights the tendency to place the interests of states above the rights of refugees.

The parallel operation of the HEP and HTP further highlights that the interest of states was paramount in the response. Despite UNHCR's initial insistence for evacuation within the region so that the refugees could return home at the earliest opportunity, and despite Western European states initially supporting regional temporary transfer, the media's coverage of the suffering at Blace and elsewhere during NATO's bombing campaign created incentives for states to *perform* their humanitarian-ness. The intended message may have been to demonstrate each state's commitment to the principle of burden-sharing by admitting refugees under

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<sup>105</sup> Daalder and O'Hanlon, *Winning Ugly: NATO's War to Save Kosovo* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2001).

the HEP. It was also a way to deflect the charge that it was NATO's campaign that caused the exodus in the first place. EU states had initially been wary of devising a response that could trigger more irregular migration from the Balkans, but it was the US' eventual insistence of a wider third country evacuation program that moved the goalposts and cultivated an atmosphere in which states tried to out-humanitarian each other. It was a high-stakes situation in which the reputation of NATO members states and the future of NATO were on the line. This competitive atmosphere led to a blurring of humanitarian and political agendas. NATO was intent on demonstrating to the world its stated commitment to protect the Kosovars; the very reason, it claimed, for its intervention. This objective became even more pressing after several NATO strikes unintentionally killed civilians. The HEP served NATO as a strategy of military diplomacy to establish a forward position in Macedonia in anticipation of a ground assault while simultaneously serving as an act of humanitarian atonement.

The logic to evacuate or transfer the refugees from Macedonia was indeed justifiable when considered from the perspectives of the Macedonian government and NATO states. Much like Austria in 1956, Macedonia was a newly independent state trying to establish its position in the international community. The sudden arrival of hundreds of thousands of forcibly displaced made that process more perilous. In Macedonia, with its delicate ethno-political balance, any long-term settlement of ethnic Albanian refugees from Kosovo could become the catalyst for another conflagration in the region. This would not have served the interests of any party. As evidenced by the US' bilateral negotiations with Macedonia beginning in 1998 to build a military base in the country, and with the joint military exercise there with NATO in September 1998, it is clear that the US - and by extension NATO - had designs on the region. Though the US did not build a base in Macedonia, it did build Camp Bondsteel in southern Kosovo, thirty kilometres from the border with Macedonia at Blace. Construction began in June 1999, the same month that Yugoslav troops withdrew from Kosovo. Camp Bondsteel, ostensibly under NATO command, has repeatedly been alleged to be a US black site for covert operations, including the rendition of terrorism suspects. As of the writing of this chapter, it is

being used to hold Afghan evacuees who have not passed security clearance for the final leg of their intended evacuation to the US.<sup>106</sup>

NATO states led by the US seem to have intended that the HEP be interpreted by their publics as humanitarian in nature, though this was in fact not the whole story. The diplomatic and military logics of the evacuation, however, would have been a much harder public sell. In this way, as a UNHCR-commissioned review of the HEP/HTP phrased it, ‘the refugees [...] became too important to be left to UNHCR.’<sup>107</sup> NATO, despite mistakenly killing approximately five hundred Kosovars, needed its treatment of the refugees to be perceived as exceedingly humane, which is one of the reasons why the HTP and a proposed ‘humanitarian corridor’ to transport refugees over land from Macedonia to Albania did not end up featuring prominently in the response. The optics these operations presented were not adequate for the public relations aspect of the task at hand. Instead, the HEP allowed for narratives of the UK’s ‘Rolls Royce reception’ of evacuees and a ‘new Ellis Island’ embracing evacuees in the US.<sup>108</sup> And for a war fought almost exclusively from altitude, the HEP provided a human element for the media covering the intervention.

The HEP guidelines, developed by UNHCR under pressure mainly from the US, stated the operation’s intention was primarily to facilitate the eventual return of refugees to Kosovo. As such, it was intended that priority be given to evacuation to European states.<sup>109</sup> Despite this, the US accepted the highest number of HEP evacuees. If we set aside the possibility of a pure American benevolence in this

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<sup>106</sup> For more on Bondsteel as a black site see The Guardian, ‘Secret prisons: Obama’s order to close “black sites”’, 23 January 2009; Spiegel International, ‘Everyone Knew What Was Going On in Bondsteel’ (interview with Alvaro Gil-Robles, former Council of Europe’s Commissioner for Human Rights), 5 December 2005; and T.R. Mockaitis, ‘Reluctant Partners: Civil-Military Cooperation in Kosovo’, *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, 15:2 (2004), 38-69. For more on Afghan evacuees held at Bondsteel see The Independent, ‘Secrecy shrouds Afghan refugees sent by US to base in Kosovo’, 23 October 2021.

<sup>107</sup> UNHCR Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit, *The Kosovo Refugee Crisis: an independent evaluation of UNHCR’s emergency preparedness and response*, EPAU/2000/001, February 2000, page 10.

<sup>108</sup> A. Bloch, ‘Kosovan refugees in the UK: the Rolls Royce or rickshaw’, *Forced Migration Review*, August 1999:5, 24-26; D.J. Schemo, ‘At Fort Dix, a New Ellis Island Embraces Kosovo’s Refugees’, *The New York Times*, 9 May 1999.

<sup>109</sup> UNHCR, *Updated UNHCR Guidelines for the Humanitarian Evacuation Programme of Kosovar Refugees in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, 11 May 1999, Principle 4.

matter, we must ask if the number of evacuees admitted is indicative of regional stakes at play for the US.

The HEP did allow US and UK officials greater license to stress the purported moral imperative for NATO airstrikes against what remained of Yugoslavia. The invocation of international norms based on morality allowed for national interests to be dressed up in an exceptionalist concept of a NATO-led ‘assertive humanitarianism’ that was touted by the administrations of both Clinton and Blair.<sup>110</sup> This amorphous concept was applied in Kosovo under the guise of minority rights, which in effect accelerated the dissolution of Yugoslavia and secured American and British interests in the Balkans *vis-à-vis* Russia. The selectivity of the application of assertive humanitarianism is well exemplified in the minutes of evidence from the UK’s Select Committee on Defence’s examination of witness Lord Gilbert on the issue of NATO’s intervention in Kosovo. It is worth quoting at length:

[Lord Gilbert] ‘I think certain people were spoiling for a fight in NATO at that time. [...] I think the terms put to Milosevic at Rambouillet were absolutely intolerable; how could he possibly accept them? It was quite deliberate. That does not excuse an awful lot of other things, but we were at a point when some people felt that something had to be done, so you just provoked a fight. [...] I think [the British government’s press conferences] were extremely informative and they were watched throughout Europe, in the chanceries of Europe [and] in Washington. We were the only country doing it. It was a masterpiece by the British Government. I think that was where we did extremely well regardless of whether you endorse every last thing that was said.’<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> A. Betti, ‘The right and the smart thing to do?’ *The Clinton administration and the social construction of emergency in the Kosovo crisis*, *The International Journal of Human Rights*, 22:3 (2018), 446-469. For more on the concept of assertive humanitarianism see also J. Dumbrell, ‘Was There a Clinton Doctrine? President Clinton’s Foreign Policy Reconsidered’, *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, 13 (2002), 43-56; and J. Ralph, *Defending the Society of States: Why America Opposes the International Criminal Court and its Vision of World Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

<sup>111</sup> Select Committee on Defence, Minutes of Evidence: Examination of witness Rt Hon Lord Gilbert (Questions 1080 - 1092), 20 June 2000.

We see here the flexibility of interpretation that the logic of emergency affords a hegemon within a discourse framed on 'assertive humanitarianism'. Such an approach allows for exceptional derogation from international law for the fulfilment of state interests.<sup>112</sup>

An aspect of the HEP that is unique when compared to our earlier case studies is that there seems to have been little civic engagement among the American or British publics in receiving the evacuees. There were no community organisations that welcomed evacuees with fanfare, nor did the media's attention hold long enough for human interest stories on the Kosovars' integration into American or British society. In the UK this could be explained by the oft repeated official narrative that the evacuees' leave to remain in Britain was meant to be temporary. Though this temporary asylum aspect was less stressed in the US narrative, it too may have been implied in that the whole purpose for the intervention was that the Kosovars could return safely to their homes in Kosovo. Media attention on the Kosovars' integration into British or American life may have run counter to these hegemonic narratives. Perhaps more importantly, the militaries of the US and UK had acted as humanitarians in Kosovo. They had defeated the enemy of the innocent Kosovars, so the narrative goes. Though evacuated to twenty states around the globe, Belgrade's defeat allowed them to return home in safety if they chose to. The HEP, in this way, was a victory, an effective political instrumentalization of humanitarianism.

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<sup>112</sup> For more see A. Betti, "'The right and the smart thing to do?'".

## Conclusion of Thesis

In this thesis I have shown how humanitarian evacuation came to be viewed as a solution to problems of civilian protection during crises in the period from five years before the beginning of the Cold War to ten years after its end, and how the US and UK instrumentalized evacuation to further their geostrategic goals. While recognizing mixed motives, this thesis has shown how the US and UK have at times used evacuation as a marginally humanitarian means to a *realpolitik* geopolitical end. The practice has been used by the British and American governments as a *quid pro quo*, as in the case of the evacuation of Polish civilians from the USSR in exchange for the mass conscription of Poles for the Allied war effort; as a means to embarrass the Soviets in the wake of the Hungarian Uprising and show the superiority of Liberalism; as a way to counter narratives of abandoning allies at the end of the Vietnam War and replace them with the performance of a rescue; and as a humanitarian alibi to the NATO invasion and subsequent occupation of Yugoslavia. Civilian evacuation has been part of the US' and UK's humanitarian self-representation throughout the latter half of the twentieth century, albeit in different ways depending on the geostrategic goals of each undertaking. The case studies illustrated how state-led humanitarian evacuations were often collaborative undertakings with repressive (military) and ideological (charities, media, etc.) state apparatuses working together.

I examined evacuation from a communications perspective to understand the ways in which certain evacuations became cultural phenomena that embodied national aspirations for Britons and Americans. I investigated how the military can act as a 'rhetorical vessel'<sup>1</sup> from which are extracted cultural ideals, and how, in this aspirational mixing of humanitarian impulse and nationalistic militarism, it can be seen that the practice of evacuating foreign civilians during crises caused by one's own nation has created a pervasive atmosphere of repeated political self-reflexive rescue. Such a repeated practice produces a limitation of choices that is likely to affect future responses to evacuation contingencies, as well as public

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<sup>1</sup> Elizabeth C. Hirschman, 'Social contract theory and the semiotics of guns in America', *Social Semiotics*, 24:5 (2014), page 541.

memory. This pervasive atmosphere is constraining in thought and action, and obscures structural barriers to a less militaristic approach to international relations for the US and UK.

Besides the communications perspective in examining the history of state-led humanitarian evacuations, this thesis has also considered more immediate practical material factors for what has made humanitarian evacuations thinkable. The case study of the Poles' evacuation, for example, demonstrates that evacuation projects can arise from transactional *quid pro quo* exchanges. In the face of Axis aggression, the Allies needed more soldiers. The evacuation from the USSR was a burden-sharing undertaking that helped bring USSR, UK, US, and the Polish government-in-exile closer to defeating the German military. After the war, with the subsequent global resettlement of Polish evacuees who refused to return home to live under a Communist government, the Poles filled labour needs in their host lands, especially in the UK with the Polish Resettlement Scheme.<sup>2</sup> The evacuation is an early example of a collaborative civil-military undertaking that was inspired and partially planned by a civilian that was then taken control of by the UK military with later assistance from the US. By easing the USSR's financial and material burdens of upkeep of Polish prisoners and orphans in Soviet custody, the evacuation bolstered the fledgling Anglo-Soviet alliance. This exchange of troops for humanitarian assistance can be viewed as an example of the tensions that often exist between emancipation and domination in humanitarian acts. The UK government devoted a substantial amount of financial, material, and logistical support to the evacuation of Poles and their subsequent resettlement across the globe but did so on the condition, in agreement with the Soviets, that Polish troops serve under Allied command. Thus, the UK acted self-servingly under the demands of war. Though this exchange of evacuation of Polish civilians for conscription of Poles of fighting age was not a wholly altruistic expression of the UK's and US' humanity, it should not detract from their governments' efforts to protect the Poles from further suffering at the hands of the Soviets.

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<sup>2</sup> Wieslaw Rogalski, *The Polish Resettlement Corps 1946-1949: Britain's Polish Forces* (Warwick: Helion and Company Ltd, 2019).

This thesis has also considered the place of national prestige as a factor for what may have made evacuations thinkable. In the case study of the Hungarians' evacuation, I argue that what made it thinkable for the evacuating states was Cold War posturing and brinkmanship between Liberal and Communist blocs. National prestige was an important factor among others in the US' and UK's decisions to evacuate Hungarian refugees from Austria, both in increasing their own prestige and in damaging the Soviets'. The US-supported provocations and propaganda that preceded the uprising were intended to embarrass the Soviets and weaken their national prestige by indirectly prompting Soviet oppression of Hungarian popular dissent. This, I have argued, was an overstep and miscalculation on the part of the US, and the evacuation was utilised as cover and self-exculpation for their mistakes. The US' participation in the Hungarian evacuation can be seen as a mitigation of any potential charge of complicity in provoking or at least prolonging the uprising. In the narratives of the US and UK governments, as well as their mainstream medias, the evacuation served as alibi, an affirmation of the Liberal West's commitment to defending those behind the Iron Curtain who fought for their freedom against Communist tyranny.

This evacuation resulted from a series of mistakes on the parts of the UK and US that resulted in a wicked problem. The diplomatic and military missteps of 1956 occurred at the height of the Cold War. The UK's calamitous invasion of Egypt embarrassed not only itself, but also the Liberal West who promoted themselves as non-belligerent defenders of national sovereignty in contrast to an expanding Soviet empire. For the US, its underestimation of Soviet reaction to its propaganda in Hungary was an error that indirectly contributed to the displacement of Hungarians after the Soviets quashed the uprising. The evacuation served the US and UK as an opportunity to reframe the Soviet invasion as an unprovoked, unadulterated Communist aggression on a people yearning for freedom. In the US, showing one's support for the Hungarian 'freedom fighters' and their struggle against Communist tyranny became a cultural phenomenon. This communicative act bolstered Western symbols and institutions.

From a historical perspective, perhaps the most remarkable aspect of the Hungarian displacement was the emergency response. It was the first international effort to evacuate and resettle such a large number of refugees in such a short time. It set a paradigm for burden-sharing and refugee resettlement. Techniques of processing first used during the Hungarians' resettlement are still in use, evidence that the Hungarian evacuation helped create the blueprint for today's resettlement regime.<sup>3</sup> It was also the first time that machine learning was attempted to facilitate resettlement.

Operation Babylift, the thesis has shown, was a chapter in the history of international child adoptions that is inextricably linked with US militarism in Asia. This history of Americans adopting Asian children displaced and orphaned by the US military's actions is part of what made 1975's Operation Babylift thinkable. It was also, I argue, a handy expiation for the US of their military's deficiencies and transgressions in the region over the course of two decades of involvement. The evacuation served a social and political utility for the US, acting as a form of influence at the levels of personhood and nationhood in that it served as a self-reflexive rescue and helped Americans and the US absolve itself for itself. Well-intentioned volunteers dedicated themselves to what they saw as the protection of the most innocent victims of war. The violence they were rescuing children from was largely wrought by the Americans' own government, but hegemonic rescue narratives allow little room for such nuance. These well-intentioned volunteers, though charitable and perhaps even patriotic in motive, were used as tools in a propaganda effort undertaken by more powerful actors, including not only their government but the media as well, wherein the children and volunteers were used as evidence of a professed dedication to human rights and freedom. While I do not deny the good intentions of the volunteers who participated, this chapter focuses on the more macro level of ideology, and US and UK militarism in Asia.

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<sup>3</sup> Marjoleine Zieck, 'The 1956 Hungarian Refugee Emergency, an Early and Instructive Case of Resettlement', *Amsterdam Law Forum*, 5:2 (2013), 45-63.

The US government's democratisation - or less euphemistically, 'palming off' - of responsibility that came from the volunteers' reception and care of the evacuated children also carried with it an implicit duty on the volunteers to defend US national prestige. Whether they were conscious of this duty or not, they contributed to their government's narrative of rescuing victims of Communism and supposedly liberating them by bringing them further into the American fold. The notion that 'anti-Communist equals deserving refugee' had pervaded much of the US' immigration policy and public opinion since the end of World War II. The Vietnamese were no different in this way and their evacuation paralleled that of the Hungarians in this regard. Add to this the innocence of the evacuated orphans and the result among the American public was a reflexive identification with the evacuees. With this came a sense of solidarity and a desire to ease their suffering.

In the US, President Ford commandeered the initial evacuation and used it as a rhetorical tactic to convince the world of the US' still lofty intentions. Ford's government used the evacuation as a heuristic technique to help resolve the confusion of US involvement in Vietnam and the shame of its defeat. With language being ideology's primary domain, and ideology being the vehicle for manufacturing consent, reframing the US withdrawal using a discourse of pathos was important in salvaging what credibility remained of the US after the Second Indochina War.<sup>4</sup> The US government and its supporters used the evacuation as cover for the West's failures in SE Asia. They compromised appropriate decision-making procedures, which jeopardised the wellbeing of the children they purportedly set out to save.

During NATO's war on Yugoslavia and the subsequent Humanitarian Evacuation Program can be seen a similarity with the Polish case study in that a driving factor for the decision to evacuate was military strategy. It may have also helped to support the continued independence of the newly created independent state of Macedonia in a manner similar to the 1956 evacuation of Hungarians from Austria. In addition to ensuring the use of Macedonian land for NATO as a base for

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<sup>4</sup> Norman Fairclough, *Language and Power* (New York: Longman Inc., 1994).

operations, the HEP was also a burden-sharing project intended to reframe military and political miscalculations. In this way the case is similar to the evacuations of Hungarians and Vietnamese in that the evacuation helped to draw attention away from more complex structural questions of British and American militarism. These political factors in the case of Kosovo and Macedonia combined with the established practice of civilian evacuation seen throughout the Balkan wars of the 1990s set a trajectory in which evacuation was utilised as a solution during the Kosovo crisis. These are the factors that made the HEP thinkable.

The HEP was unique from earlier evacuations, however, in that the narrative as promoted by the US and UK governments was focused more on the right of repatriation for the Kosovars than on a rescue narrative as seen in other case studies. The narrative around the Kosovars was focused on providing temporary refuge so that NATO could create conditions under which the refugees could safely return to their homes in Kosovo. In this way, the framing of the HEP was unique from earlier case studies.

Though humanitarian evacuations are primarily contingent in that they are subject to elements of the context in which they occur, antecedent conditions have limited the range of options that could be considered acceptable responses in such circumstances. This thesis has looked at the historical causation of the US' and UK's use of humanitarian evacuation during the period in which the practice was most widely and often employed. The case studies have shown that there have historically been two main aspects of evacuations in which the US and UK have participated: the coercive and the ideological. These are not exclusive of each other. Coercive meaning that evacuations that may appear humanitarian in nature are in fact another aspect of displacement in crises, where displacement becomes normalised to the extent that mass evacuation is viewed by some to be an acceptable solution. Planned displacement has been a tool in the war kit of the US and UK since at least WWII, and certainly in crises in peripheral, former colonial states. Ideological meaning that evacuation has been used to win 'hearts and minds' of some segments of the war-affected population as a performance of

solidarity (for lack of a better term) and to gather public support and prestige for the evacuator nation.

The media coverage of the Hungarian, Vietnamese, and Kosovar evacuations provided positive publicity for both the British and American governments. Certainly with the Hungarian evacuation but less so with the Vietnamese and Kosovar, the mainstream media in both the US and UK reproduced a perception of the governments as caring and compassionate, as defenders of liberty in the face of tyrannical aggression. This thesis has shown that the media played a crucial role as mediator of the public's understanding of the evacuations in which they served to propagate what could be considered 'moral' discourse for the state's humanitarian projects and in effect separated 'correct' from 'incorrect' views. This narrowing of discourse in relation to evacuations helped reinforce the state's narratives, mixing morality and patriotism to create pressure to agree and, in turn, consent.

Questions about deservingness and political utility remain for me. For example, there is no evidence that either the US or the UK governments evacuated Africans. The only mention I have found of Africans being evacuated are of flights from Biafra by private means with collaboration of some European NGOs during the Nigerian civil war and of Rwandan orphans being haphazardly evacuated to Burundi from where many of the children were 'spirited overseas for adoption [...] without any formalities' by individual aid workers.<sup>5</sup> Neither evacuation was covered widely by Western media at the time nor has been celebrated since. The evacuation from Biafra (to Gabon and Côte d'Ivoire) created a political dispute within Africa at the time when it was uncovered. The Nigerian government successfully demanded the children be returned. It was only when they were repatriated by aid agencies that the media was summoned to cover the project.<sup>6</sup> It is the only instance I have found of an evacuation happening covertly and the repatriation of evacuees being

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<sup>5</sup> Quote from Lindsey Hilsum, 'Children flee to Burundi camps', *The Guardian*, 5 July 1994; On Biafra, see Bonny Ibhawoh, 'Refugees, Evacuees, and Repatriates: Biafran Children, UNHCR, and the Politics of International Humanitarianism in the Nigerian Civil War', *African Studies Review*, 63:3 (2020), 568–592. For more on Rwandan evacuations, see BBC News, 'Rwandan children to stay in Italy', 14 November 2000.

<sup>6</sup> Ibhawoh, 'Refugees, Evacuees, and Repatriates: Biafran Children, UNHCR, and the Politics of International Humanitarianism in the Nigerian Civil War'.

celebrated. This is further proof, I contend, that state governments and their militaries evacuate only those who in their estimation are useful for the state's geostrategic goals.

The case studies show that evacuees are deserving by association with the hegemon, the evacuator. So, is political utility the only factor that makes a group deserving of evacuation by the US or UK governments? There are no examples, I contend, of state-led evacuations involving the UK or US in which the subject evacuees are 'unlike' their rescuers in some way. In the case studies we see three examples of groups of Europeans being evacuated, while the South Vietnamese evacuees could be deemed deserving by association considering their two decades of collaboration with the US. 2021's 'Operation Ark' evacuation, initiated by animal charity founder Paul 'Pen' Farthing and approved by UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson, is a recent example of evacuating those who have been deemed deserving by association, or perhaps deserving because of their political innocence; non-human animals under the care of a UK charity in Afghanistan took priority over humans whose vulnerability was somehow considered by the British government to be less acute than cats and dogs.<sup>7</sup>

This thesis has focused on civilian evacuations undertaken by militaries because such large movements of people cannot be done without military logistical support. The reach of the American and British militaries made these mass evacuations practicable. We have seen examples of private citizens initiating evacuations, but it remains that large-scale evacuations are impracticable without support from a military force. Though the civilian humanitarian impulse may be considered a driving factor in each case, no international mass movement of the evacuees would have been possible without the British and American militaries. In

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<sup>7</sup> BBC, 'Boris Johnson authorised Afghan animal evacuation, leaked email suggests', 26 January 2022 < <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-60143279> > [accessed 23 June 2022]; UK Parliament Committees, 'Written evidence submitted by Raphael Marshall (AFG0052)' < <https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/43225/html/> > [accessed 23 June 2022].

this way we can conclude that rapid, large-scale, international humanitarian evacuations were facilitated by the reach of empire and the strength of the US and UK militaries.

As for NGOs becoming involved in state-led evacuations as collaborators with militaries, assuming the individuals who comprise these organisations are motivated by humanitarian sentiment, they must also see the operational logic of cooperating with the military on such large-scale mass evacuations, and thus may willingly allow themselves to become elements in the larger geopolitical schemes of government. From a deontological perspective, I argue that what drives these volunteers and charity workers in their sense of duty to serve evacuees is not necessarily the veracity of their government's claims around intentions but an aspiration towards a lofty sense of morality that is divorced from politics, though simultaneously, for some, patriotic. Humanitarianism is assumed by many to be above politics and therefore anti-political. Patriotism, especially in the US, is a component of cultural hegemony that is also considered by many to be above politics. This moral fantasy for the citizen participant of mixing the humanitarian impulse and patriotism allows the evacuator state to delegate its guilt for displacing distant others to its citizen participants of the evacuation project in a way that facilitates their performance of their patriotic duty; a two-for-one sale on atonement and nationalism. For the NGOs and charities of which these citizens comprise, concern over organisational self-perpetuation is certainly a driving factor as well, and thus collaborating with the evacuator in 'rescuing' its own victims becomes a type of symbiotic Faustian bargain.

Much scholarship on the history of humanitarianism and of humanitarian intervention has argued that the West's new world order with the politics of rescue at its core was a recent (1990s) development. I contend that by studying the history of humanitarian evacuation this thesis has shown that the beginnings of this turn can be discerned from much earlier, that the practice of evacuating foreign civilians was a fundamental factor in the Western shift towards a world order that was assertively humanitarian.

Recent work about humanitarianism is primarily focused on individual actors, whereas international relations literature has focused on state actors. My thesis is situated at the overlap of these foci, *i.e.*, the nexus of humanitarianism and militarism. In this way, my thesis makes an original contribution to the literatures of humanitarianism and international relations. The thesis speaks to those interested in histories of humanitarianism, humanitarian intervention, national prestige, and critical refugee studies.

In researching these case studies, I have increased my own understanding of the political and cultural factors that make government-led humanitarian evacuation thinkable and what roles evacuation has played as an instrument of geopolitics. The study has helped me to gain a clearer view of the ‘paradox of emancipation and domination’ in state-led humanitarian acts, and how evacuation fits into a wider history of forced displacement.<sup>8</sup> It has also provided me a window into what may compel citizens to participate in their country’s evacuation projects. With this thesis it is my hope that we can reach a fuller understanding of how humanitarian evacuation played a consequential role in the turn to ‘assertive humanitarianism’ and of how the practice came to be widespread in practice today.

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<sup>8</sup> Michael Barnett, *Empire of Humanity: A History of Humanitarianism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011), page 11.

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## Appendix A: Timeline of state-led humanitarian evacuations

Date(s)	Name of op.	Evacuator(s)	Evacuee group(s)– number(s)	Conflict	From/to	Tran	Notes
1915	Musa Dagh evacuation	French Navy	Displaced Armenians-4,000 (est.)	Armenian genocide	Musa Dagh, Ottoman Empire/ Port Said, Egypt	Sea	
1921	Cilicia evacuation	French military	Displaced Armenians (majority), with ‘Mesopotamians’ and ‘Assyro-chaldéens’ - 30,000 (est.)	Franco-Turkish War	Cilicia, Ottoman Empire/ Syria, Cyprus, Lebanon	Sea, land (train)	
1922	Smyrna evacuation	Decentralized; ships of the US, UK, Greece, and France navies; and a Japanese freighter	Displaced Ottoman Christians: Greek and Armenian- 50,000-350,000 (est.)	Greco-Turkish War, ‘Burning of Smyrna’	Zone of Smyrna, Anatolia (modern-day Izmir, Türkiye)/various ports throughout the region	Sea	American YMCA employee Asa Jennings is credited with organizing the evacuation of many endangered civilians.
1934–1945; 1938– 1940 (two undertakings listed together here)	Evacuation of Jewish children from Europe; ‘Kindertransport’ (name for evac to UK specifically)	Decentralized NGOs: German Jewish Children’s Aid; UK gvt	Jewish children from Europe- 10,000 (est. to UK); 1,000 (est. to Europe, US)	WWII (rise anti-Jewish violence in Germany)	Nazi-occupied Europe/UK (majority), Belgium, France, the Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland, US	Land, sea, air	

	between 1938-1940)						
1937-1938	Spanish children to USSR / Spanish children to UK	Decentralized	Spanish children-7,000 (est.)	Spanish Civil War	Spain/USSR (3,000), UK (4,000)	Sea	
1939-1944	British children evacuated overseas	Decentralized: travel agency Thomas Cook; US Committee for the Care of European Children; Children's Overseas Reception Board (UK); private endeavours: religious orgs; companies	British children 16 and under-12,800 (total est.): 3,000 (US); 6,500 (Canada); 1,300 (Australia); 500 (New Zealand); and 1,500 (South Africa)	WWII	UK/ US, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa	Air, sea	
1940-1945	French & Belgian Children evacuated to Switzerland	Swiss NGOs	French & Belgian children-60,000 (est.)	WWII	France & Belgium/ Switzerland	Land	
1942-1948	Poles evacuated from USSR	Polish gvt in exile; US; UK; USSR	Poles, mainly women and children, displaced to USSR by Soviets during 1939 invasion-48,000 (est.)	WWII	USSR/20 states total	Land, sea	
1945	'White Buses'	Norwegian, Danish, and Swedish gvts and NGOs; collaboration of	Prisoners of German gvt, primarily Scandinavian-15,345 total: 7,795	End of WWII	German-run concentration camps, then to Lübeck, Germany for staging for onward travel/	Land, sea	

		some German officials	Norwegian and Danes; 7,550 of other nationalities		Home countries of released prisoners.		
1949-1950	'Operation on Wings of Eagles', aka 'Operation Magic Carpet'	Israeli gvt, World Zionist Organisation, American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, US and UK militaries and private airlines	Jews: Yemenite, Djiboutian, Eritrean, Saudi Arabian-51,000 (est.) (47,000 Yemeni; 1,500 Adeni; 500 Djiboutian and Eritrean; 2,000 Saudi)	Anti-Jewish rioting in the region	Yemen, Aden Protectorate, Djibouti, Eritrea, Saudi Arabia/Israel	Air	Collaboration from UK and US transport planes (380 flights); private US airlines
1950	'Operation Kiddy Car'	US military personnel (not acting officially)	964 Korean children from an orphanage with 80 Korean staff	Korean War	Seoul, Korea/ Jeju Island, Korea	Air	
1950	'The Ship of Miracles'	US Merchant Marines	North Korean civilians-14,000 (est.)	Korean War	Hungnam, Korea/ Pusan, Korea	Sea	Aboard one ship, the <i>SS Meredith Victory</i>
1951-1952	'Operation Ezra and Nehemiah'	Israeli gvt, American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, Near East Transport Company; Alaska Airlines, Cyprus	Iraqi Jews-125,000 (est.)	Anti-Jewish violence in Iraq	Iraq/Israel	Air, sea	
1954-1955	'Operation Passage to Freedom' (US gvt name of	French, US, UK gvts and navies	Vietnamese, primarily Catholics, who wished to emigrate from the north to the non-	End of First Indochina War	Communist North Vietnam/ Non-communist South Vietnam	Sea	

	multi-national operation)		Communist south after partition- 310,000 (est.)				
1956-1957	'Operation Safe Haven'	US, UK, UNHCR, French Red Cross, ICEM (IOM)	Displaced Hungarians- 167,000 (est.)	Hungarian Revolution	Hungary, W. Germany/ 37 states total	Air, sea	
1960-1962	'Operation Pedro Pan'	US gvt (CIA), Catholic Welfare Bureau in the US, the W. Henry Smith Travel Agency	Cuban unaccompanied minors-14,000 (est.)	Wake of Cuban Revolution	Cuba/US	Air	This operation is an outlier considering its relatively slow process when compared to other evacuations.
1961	'Operation Mural'	Israeli gvt (Mossad), Jewish Agency	Moroccan-Jewish children-530 (est.)	No conflict (last anti-Jewish riot in Morocco before operation was in 1948.)	Morocco/Israel	Air, sea	Outlier. There was no conflict from which subjects were evacuated. Nation-building undertaking.
1961-1964	'Operation Yachin'	Israel gvt (Mossad), Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society	Moroccan Jews- 97,000 (est.)	No conflict	Morocco/Israel	Air, sea	Outlier. HIAS and the Israeli gvt paid the gvt of Morocco per head for each Jewish 'evacuee'.
1965-1973	'Camarioca Lift' (sea) / 'Freedom Flights' (air)	By US-Cuba agreement. Transportation was decentralized.	Cubans wishing to emigrate to the US- 265,297 (official US number)	No conflict; change of Cuban gvt	Cuba/US	Air, sea	Outlier.

1975	'Operation Babylift'	Orphanage workers; head of American airline; UK newspaper; US magazine, then taken over by US gvt; minor participation by Australian military	South Vietnamese children (many incorrectly assumed to be orphans)-2,547 (est.)	End of Second Indochina War	South Vietnam/ US, UK, France, Belgium, Switzerland, Australia	Air	
1975	'Operation Frequent Wind' and 'Operation New Life' (1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> phases of evacuation; named by US gvt)	US gvt	South Vietnamese aligned with the US or who feared Communist victory-130,000 (est.)	End of Second Indochina War	South Vietnam/US	Air, sea	
1975	'Operation Eagle Pull'	US gvt	Cambodians who had collaborated with US forces-450 (est.)	End of Cambodian Civil War	Phnom Penh/US	Air, sea	
1984-1985	Operations Moses/Sheba/ Joshua (overlapping operations)	Israel (IDF), United Jewish Appeal, US (CIA)	Ethiopian Jews-8,000 first evac/500+ during US-led Operation Joshua (est.)	Ethiopian civil war and famine	Sudan (refugee camps and staging camps)/Israel	Air	Also involved Sudan's Secret Police; US Coordinator for Refugee Affairs
1991	'Operation Solomon'	Israel, Jewish Agency for Israel, US	Ethiopian Jews-14,325 (est.)	Destabilization of Ethiopian gvt	Ethiopia/Israel	Land, Air	Also involved The American Association of Ethiopian Jews; and US diplomats based in Africa.

1993	'Operation Irma'	Primarily UK gvt, with assistance from gvts of Sweden, Italy, US, Ireland	Bosnian children with medical needs; wounded Bosnian adults-100-300 (est.)	Bosnian War	Bosnia/UK, US, Sweden, Italy, Ireland	Air	
1996-1997	'Operation Quick Transit' and 'Operation Pacific Haven' (first and second stages of same evacuation)	US gvt, Turkish gvt cooperation	Iraqi Kurds aligned with the US and their families-7,000 (est.)	Iraqi Kurdish Civil War	Iraq/Turkey, Guam, and then to the US	Air	
1999	'Humanitarian Evacuation Programme'	Gvts of Macedonia, US, UK, UNHCR/IOM	Displaced Kosovar Albanians-96,000 (est.)	Kosovo War	Macedonia, Albania/US; UK; Australia; Canada; European states (28 states total)	Land, air	
2021	'Operation Allies Refuge' and 'Operation Allies Welcome' (1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> phases of evacuation, named by US gvt)	Initiated and primarily led by US gvt with collaboration of 42 states; and private endeavors.	Afghans-120,000-180,000 (est.)	End of US war in Afghanistan	Afghanistan/estimates up to 98 countries accepted Afghan evacuees (no rigorous, centralized data)	Air	

#### Notes:

IOM, UNHCR, ICRC and numerous other organisations have conducted evacuations without the direct assistance of state governments. Such evacuations are not included here as they fall outside the focus of this thesis.

Also not included are hostage rescue operations and evacuations of overseas gvt workers and their families. Though it could be argued that there are connections with humanitarian evacuation, they are outside the focus of this thesis.

Some gvts have conducted non-combatant evacuations in which the focus was their own citizens, but civilians of other nationalities were evacuated incidentally, often as spouses/relatives of citizens of the evacuating state. These evacuations are also not included in the list as they fall outside the focus of state-led humanitarian evacuation.

## Appendix B: Timeline of population transfers/exchanges, mass deportations, and partitions of the 20<sup>th</sup> century

- Note: This list is not exhaustive. Not included are examples of states solely internally displacing their own citizens. Also not included are examples of settler colonialist projects that began before the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Date(s)	Name/conflict	Group(s) - estimated number(s)
1915-1917	Armenian Genocide	Ethnic Armenians, Syriac, and Greek Orthodox expelled from Ottoman Empire - 1.4 million
1916-1934	Ottoman and Turkish deportations of Kurds	Ethnic Kurds expelled from autochthonous lands, both internally and externally - 700,000-1 million
1919-1923	Greek-Bulgarian Transfer	Ethnic Greeks from southern Bulgaria - 37,000; ethnic Bulgarians from Greek Macedonia and Thrace - 150,000
1923-1924	Greece-Turkey Population Exchange	Christians of various ethnicities from Turkey and Muslims of various ethnicities from Greece exchanged- 1.6 million
1926-1952	Stalinist policies against specific groups in the USSR	Various, including: 1926 deportation of ethnic Chinese (12,000-40,000); 1930 deportations of Poles from occupied Poland (300-5000,000); 1940 deportations from occupied territories in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Moldavia (140,000-300,000). These were external movements. A greater number of international forced movements occurred under Stalin's policies.
1929-1939	Deportations from the US during the Great Depression	Ethnic Mexicans, 40-60% of whom were US citizens, deported from the US by gvt directive - 400,000-2 million
1939-1945	German atrocities in WWII	<i>Lebensraum</i> ; <i>Endlösung</i> ; Invasion of Poland; camps system. Germany undertook the planned displacement of many millions during this period. The ideological and material reasons for this essentially connect with the German concept of settler colonialism <i>Lebensraum</i> - difficult to estimate
1940	Treaty of Craiova	100,000 ethnic Romanians 'exchanged' to Bulgaria from Romania, while 60,000 ethnic Bulgarians 'exchanged' from Romania to Bulgaria.

1941-1945	WWII in Independent State of Croatia; Atrocities against ethnic Serbs	Ethnic Serbs expelled from Croatia - 300,000
1941-1945	WWII in Kingdom of Yugoslavia - Chetnik atrocities against non-Serbs	Non-Serbs expelled from Kingdom of Yugoslavia - Estimates vary greatly, from tens to hundreds of thousands displaced.
1941-1980	Displacement of Jews from Muslim-majority countries	Jews displaced from Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Morocco, Tunisia, and Yemen - 650,000-900,000
1942	Deportation of ethnic German, Italian, and Japanese from Latin America to the US	4,058 ethnic German, 288 ethnic Italians, and 2,264 ethnic Japanese citizens of 19 Latin American countries deported, at the US gvt's behest, to internment camps in the US. Post WWII, some repatriated, some deported farther still.
1942-1946	Deportation of ethnic Japanese from the US to Japan	Ethnic Japanese, some US citizens - numbers of deportees (as opposed to internees) is difficult to ascertain.
1942-1949	Deportation of ethnic Japanese from Canada to Japan	Ethnic Japanese, some Canadian citizens deported to Japan at the end of WWII - 10,000
1943-1960	Istrian-Dalmatian Exodus	Ethnic Italians, along with ethnic Slovenes, Croats, and Romanian coerced to leave Yugoslavia - 300,000
1944-1950	Expulsions of ethnic Germans	Ethnic Germans in Eastern Europe and USSR deported - 12-14 million
1945-1948	Czechoslovak-Hungarian population exchange	72,000 ethnic Slovaks from Hungary to Czechoslovakia; 100,000 ethnic Hungarians from Czechoslovakia to Hungary
1947	Partition of India	14.5-20 million coerced/exchanged to leave to live among co-religionists
1947-ongoing	Zionist expulsion of Palestinians	Non-Jewish Palestinians expelled upon creation and expansion of Israel - 6.6-7 million

1954	'Operation Wetback'	US gvt ordered deportation of ethnic Mexicans in the US - 1.3 million
1968-1973	British gvt expulsion of Chagossians	Inhabitants of the Chagos Archipelago - 2,000
1969-2003	Expulsion of Kurds from Iraq	Feyli Kurds expelled from Iraq to Iran - 300,000
1975	'Voluntary Exchange of Population Agreement'	Ethnic Greek and Turkish Cypriots coerced to move after bilateral agreement - 210,000
1975	'Black March', expulsion of Moroccans from Algeria	Algerian gvt ordered immediate expulsion of all Moroccans - 350,000
1988-1994	First Nagorno-Karabakh War	Expulsion and 'ethnic cleansing' committed by all sides: 230,000 ethnic Armenians expelled from Azerbaijan; 800,000 ethnic Azerbaijanis from Armenia and Karabakh
1989	So-called 'Big Excursion'	Coerced gvt expulsion of Muslim Bulgarians during religio-nationalist 'Revival Process' - 360,000
1990-1991	Palestinian mass deportation from Kuwait	Ethnic Palestinians deported from Kuwait after PLO sided with Iraq - 200,000-300,000
1991-2001	Ethnic cleansing, deportations, transfers, and related during the Yugoslav Wars	Non-Serbs from Bosnia and Herzegovina - 870,000-950,000; non-Serbs, mostly ethnic Albanians, from Kosovo - 700,000; Serbs and Roma from Kosovo - 200,000
2022	Russian invasion of Ukraine	Ukrainians forcibly displaced into Russia by Russian military forces - 400,000