

3.1 The Humanitarian Appeal

Research into contemporary philanthropy corroborates the importance of direct solicitations for raising charitable contributions.¹ How successful relief organisations are in generating capital and gathering resources depends largely on their appeals and fundraising activities. Other beneficial factors for fundraising, such as trust in the organisation or commitment to particular aid schemes, are often also the result of direct appeals or pleas for assistance in documents such as organisation flyers or annual reports.²

During the representation of needs and agency on behalf of others, humanitarian paradoxes may arise.³ Calls for aid try to maximise philanthropic success by narratives and visuals that typically express the moral views of those making the appeal and what they presume may motivate potential donors. On the one hand, humanitarian agents point to need, worthiness, and entitlement, and on the other, they cite compassion, obligation, and interest, thus tailoring their message to different audiences and media formats. Scholars have proposed a variety of classifications for these aid schemes, based on ideal types, general patterns, or genres of appeals.⁴ Analyses tend to overlap with

¹ René Bekkers and Pamala Wiepking, 'A Literature Review of Empirical Studies of Philanthropy: Eight Mechanisms That Drive Charitable Giving', *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 40, no. 5 (2011): 928, 931; Beth Breeze and Wendy A. Scaife, 'Encouraging Generosity: The Practice and Organization of Fundraising across Nations', in *Palgrave Handbook of Global Philanthropy*, eds Pamala Wiepking and Femida Handy (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 570–96. On trust and commitment, see Adrian Sargeant and Stephen Lee, 'Trust and Relationship Commitment in the United Kingdom Voluntary Sector: Determinants of Donor Behavior', *Psychology & Marketing* 21, no. 8 (2004): 613–35.

² Per-Anders Forstorp, 'Fundraising Discourse and the Commodification of the Other', *Business Ethics* 16, no. 3 (2007): 286–301; Vijay K. Bhatia, 'Generic Patterns in Fundraising Discourse', *New Direction for Philanthropic Fundraising* 22 (1998): 101.

³ Chouliaraki, *Ironic Spectator*, 54.

⁴ Anne Vestergaard, 'Humanitarian Appeal and the Paradox of Power', *Critical Discourse Studies* 10, no. 4 (2013): 445; Bhatia, 'Generic Patterns', 100; Jeffrey Flynn, 'Philosophers, Historians, and Suffering Strangers', *Moving the Social* no. 57 (2017): 139; Forstorp, 'Fundraising Discourse', 292–4.

regard to the content and underlying strategy.⁵ Key features of appeals during the last 200 years have been ‘reductivist messages’ and visually based emotional representations.⁶ They use ‘incitement’ (or diagnostic frames), employing facts, definitions, and legitimation of the cause; and ‘enticement’ (or motivational frames), stirring up emotions, marshalling reasons to take action, and evoking images of deserving recipients.⁷

Jeffrey Flynn has proposed two ideal types that may be useful in analysing the moral economy of food aid. The first, which he calls the ‘suffering stranger appeal’, imposes a causal relation on distant suffering by telling donors that they have the *means* to alleviate misery. The responsibility to help derives here in a Singerian sense from the ability to help. By contrast, the less frequently deployed ‘causal contribution appeal’ confronts donors with their complicity and creates a moral obligation for reparation (rather than aid) by disclosing a *causal* responsibility for distant suffering. Thus, the former approach motivates ‘those who are capable’, while the latter addresses ‘those who are culpable’.⁸

Irrational Donors and Rational Fundraisers

Economic theories have not been good at explaining why people would make voluntary contributions for the well-being of strangers. The presumption that rational individuals make purposeful choices does not seem to apply to the humanitarian sector. It is an area where individual donors may not actively seek out charitable causes, but do tend to respond to appeals for aid.

Extensive research on donor behaviour shows that the decision to contribute, the amount, the cause, and the organisation chosen are seldom based on rational economic considerations, such as ‘How can one save as many lives as possible with as little money as possible?’. Rather than pondering ideas of effective altruism, donors tend to be influenced by psychological numbing, such as the proportion dominance effect. When asked, people usually say they prefer to save 90 per cent of 1,000 endangered people, rather than 0.1 per cent of 1,000,000 – although 100 more would survive in the latter case.⁹ They also

⁵ However, those analyses generally rely on empirical material from the recent past. Some exceptions are Fehrenbach, ‘Children and Other Civilians’, and Dal Lago and O’Sullivan, ‘Introduction’.

⁶ Mervi Pantti and Minttu Tikka, ‘Cosmopolitan Empathy and User-Generated Disaster Appeal Videos on YouTube’, in *Internet and Emotions*, eds Tova Benski and Eran Fisher (New York: Routledge, 2014), 178–92; Dal Lago and O’Sullivan, ‘Introduction’, 6.

⁷ Vestergaard, ‘Humanitarian Appeal’, 447; Mahood and Satzewich, ‘Save the Children Fund’, 56–7.

⁸ Flynn, ‘Philosophers, Historians, and Suffering Strangers’, 151 (quotations), 139.

⁹ David Fetherstonhaugh, Paul Slovic, Stephen Johnson, and James Friedrich, ‘Insensitivity to the Value of Human Life: A Study of Psychophysical Numbing’, *Journal of Risk and Uncertainty* 14, no. 3 (1997): 285.

favour actions helping a single individual rather than intervening on behalf of a group, and they prefer a known beneficiary over an anonymous one – the so-called identifiable victim effect.¹⁰ This effect occurs following minor de-anonymisation and is especially important if the person in need belongs to a potentially adversarial group.¹¹

Some patterns are especially evident from an analysis of famine relief. First, it is easier to raise money for sudden emergencies.¹² The initial days and weeks after the news of a disaster reaches the general public are usually the most successful. However, donations decrease as a relief situation becomes chronic. The amount of publicity given to crises and the donor expectations aroused also shape aid choices of emergency agencies.¹³ Second, the identification of alleged perpetrators and the suspicion that a catastrophe is man-made reduces the willingness of donors to contribute, compared to disasters conceived of as ‘natural’.¹⁴ It is, therefore, in the interest of humanitarian organisations and their beneficiaries to conceal possible human causes of famine.¹⁵ Third, research shows that perceived distance correlates negatively with donations. The slogan ‘charity begins at home’ not only expresses parochial or national sentiments regarding who has a greater claim to assistance, but also reflects the widespread expectation that charitable donations will have a greater impact on nearby recipients.¹⁶ However, humanitarian organisations can

¹⁰ Paul Slovic, ‘If I Look at the Mass I Will Never Act: Psychic Numbing and Genocide’, in *Emotions and Risky Technologies*, ed. Sabine Roeser (Dordrecht: Springer, 2010), 37–59; Dorina Hysenbelli, Enrico Rubaltelli, and Rino Rumiati, ‘Others’ Opinions Count, but Not All of Them: Anchoring to Ingroup versus Outgroup Members’ Behavior in Charitable Giving’, *Judgment and Decision Making* 8, no. 6 (2013): 678–90; Seoung Lee and Thomas Hugh Feeley, ‘The Identifiable Victim Effect: A Meta-analytic Review’, *Social Influence* 11, no. 3 (2016): 199–215.

¹¹ Deborah Small and George Loewenstein, ‘Helping a Victim or Helping the Victim: Altruism and Identifiability’, *Journal of Risk and Uncertainty* 26 (2003): 5–16; Ilana Ritov and Tehila Kogut, ‘Ally or Adversary: The Effect of Identifiability in Inter-group Conflict Situations’, *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes* 116, no. 1 (2011): 96–103. See also Tehila Kogut and Ilana Ritov, ‘The “Identified Victim Effect”: An Identified Group, or Just a Single Individual?’, *Journal of Behavioral Decision Making* 18, no. 3 (2005): 157–67.

¹² Epstein, ‘Crisis Mentality’; Hanna Zagefka and Trevor James, ‘The Psychology of Charitable Donations to Disaster Victims and Beyond’, *Social Issues and Policy Review* 9, no. 1 (2015): 168–9. Relief organisations have addressed this problem long ago. See Eglantyne Jebb, ‘A History of the Save the Children Fund’, *The Record* 3, no. 1 (1922).

¹³ Redfield, *Life in Crisis*, 172.

¹⁴ Trevor James and Hanna Zagefka, ‘The Effects of Group Memberships of Victims and Perpetrators in Humanly Caused Disasters on Charitable Donations to Victims’, *Journal Applied Social Psychology* 47, no. 8 (2017): 448.

¹⁵ Zagefka and James, ‘The Psychology of Charitable Donations’, 163; de Waal, *Mass Starvation*, 124.

¹⁶ Maferima Touré-Tillery and Aleyet Fishbach, ‘Too Far to Help: The Effect of Perceived Distance on the Expected Impact and Likelihood of Charitable Action’, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 112, no. 6 (2017): 860. The authors term this ‘closeness-equals-strength-of-effect’ metaphor.

counter the latter view by mounting customised appeals.¹⁷ This is especially important as the willingness to rely on a charitable organisation's discretion increases with the distance from the population in need; that is, the further away a sufferer is, the greater the acceptance of a humanitarian broker, who otherwise might be deemed unnecessary, to supply aid.¹⁸ Fourth, there is an in-group effect that prioritises helping members of one's own social, ethnic, religious, or national group.¹⁹ Nevertheless, the primacy of the in-group depends on perceptions. Thus, humanitarian organisations may try to create or enlarge in-groups (e.g., children, coreligionists, or people with regional ties), aligning them with the respective cause. In this way, those who formerly were outsiders are admitted to the donor's in-group through the back door.²⁰ By making the self-interest of donors or their in-groups central to a campaign, an organisation can exploit the in-group effect indirectly, even where direct beneficiaries are perceived as outsiders.

As a consequence of these factors, not all disasters result in calls for aid, while other emergencies may result in donations that exceed the basic needs on the ground. Aid supplies depend on funding raised by the effective communication of a humanitarian cause to the public. Ideally, this is done in ways that not only evoke personal emotions, but also result in social concern and a sense of financial obligation.²¹ In order to accomplish such a goal, relief organisations and fundraisers must incorporate strategies identified by research and experience.²² Thus, fundraising is an activity that aligns moral and economic rationales: human suffering and the 'intentions and actions of the donor are commodified', and the altruistic act of giving is 'imbued with

¹⁷ Touré-Tillery and Fishbach, 'Too Far to Help', 861.

¹⁸ Danit Ein-Gar and Liat Levontin, 'Giving from a Distance: Putting the Charitable Organization at the Center of the Donation Appeal', *Journal of Consumer Psychology* 23, no. 2 (2013): 197–211.

¹⁹ Zagefka and James, 'The Psychology of Charitable Donations', 173. This preference has recently been explained by feelings of responsibility, rather than empathy. See Arvid Erlandsson, Frederik Björklund, and Martin Bäckström, 'Emotional Reactions, Perceived Impact and Perceived Responsibility Mediate the Identifiable Victim Effect, Proportion Dominance Effect and In-Group Effect, Respectively', *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes* 127 (2015): 1–14.

²⁰ Mika Aaltola, 'Theoretical Departures to Disasters and Emergencies', in *The Politics and Policies of Relief, Aid and Reconstruction: Contrasting Approaches to Disasters and Emergencies*, ed. Fulvio Attina (Houndmills: Palgrave, 2012), 75.

²¹ Taithe, 'Cold Calculation', 88. See also Jonathan Benthall, *Disasters, Relief and the Media* (London: Tauris, 1993), 27.

²² Contemporary non-profit organisations use scientific guidebooks to adapt to these psychological mechanisms. For a recent example, see Evan C. Parker, *Altruism, Empathy and Efficacy: The Science behind Engaging Your Supporters* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University, 2018), available at <http://csic.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Altruism-Empathy-and-Efficacy-The-Science-Behind-Engaging-Supporters-1.29.18.pdf> (accessed 29 June 2019).

innovative business models'.²³ The discrete logic of 'the good project', by which aid organisations link donor publics with selected groups of recipients, gains ascendancy, and determines the formatting and merchandising of particular humanitarian causes.²⁴ This leads to conflicts within the moral economy. It also entails criticism, as the resulting fundraising practices may collide with changing humanitarian principles, especially idealistic notions of how and where humanitarian work should be done.

Moral Economy Dilemmas

It is a troublesome dilemma that successful fundraising strategies may be ethically problematic and imperil the moral integrity of the organisation and its beneficiaries. The imaginary presented in some humanitarian campaigns, however effective it might be, has been accused of being founded on a 'pornography of pain'.²⁵ The trade-off between emotional appeals with a high financial return and adhering to high moral standards has also been described as a conflict of aesthetics and ethics.²⁶ It mirrors the general humanitarian schism between the stereotyped figure of the cold-blooded calculating professional and the compassionate but inefficient grass-roots activist.

Reductionist and paternalistic practices, such as the use of heart-rending images of a woeful child to stimulate compassion, raise the issue of the dignity of would-be beneficiaries upon the conscience of humanitarians who seek to link distressed populations with donors in a manner that is both ethical and efficacious.²⁷ While the use of certain essentialising images that contrast with Western plenty may serve the immediate goal of generating donations, it can inhibit the formation of deeper commitments and sustained patterns of collective action.²⁸ When celebrities speak on behalf of humanitarian causes, there is a similar risk that they may 'steal the show' from those who need help. In this way, some strategies that raise large sums for the most dire situations may hamper long-term change and increase the likelihood that aid will be needed again in the future.

A paradox of the moral economy is that often the most pressing calls for donations are those proclaiming a beneficiary's entitlement and the obligation of the benefactor to provide aid, factors that appear inconsistent with the

²³ Forstorp, 'Fundraising Discourse', 299, 286. ²⁴ Krause, *Good Project*.

²⁵ Karen Halttunen, 'Humanitarianism and the Pornography of Pain in Anglo-American Culture', *American Historical Review* 100, no. 2 (1995): 303–34; Janice Nathanson, 'The Pornography of Poverty: Reframing the Discourse of International Aid's Representations of Starving Children', *Canadian Journal of Communication* 38, no. 1 (2013): 103–20.

²⁶ Vestergaard, 'Humanitarian Appeal', 445.

²⁷ Rubenstein, *Between Samaritans and States*, 86; Käpylä and Kennedy, 'Cruel to Care?', 259, 267, 272, 277.

²⁸ Boltanski, *Distant Suffering*, 189.

voluntarist character of humanitarianism.²⁹ Such moral commitment appeals seek to create correlates with the request for government intervention, and therefore entail a measure of charitable self-abrogation. However, the dividing line for the individual donor and public agencies remains that between de facto choice and legal obligation. As long as moral judgement precedes compulsory legislation, the concept of humanitarianism continues to make sense. Michael Walzer has argued that humanitarianism is a ‘two-in-one enterprise’, based on both charity and justice – on the supererogatory kindness that acknowledges a moral duty to strangers.³⁰ From the point of view of social psychology, charitable giving resembles the medieval purchase of indulgences, ‘paying taxes to God’.³¹ Today many humanitarian organisations have adopted a vocabulary of justice and entitlements that symbolically empowers beneficiaries.³² However, rather than seeking to establish global justice by the redistribution of the necessities of life among the world’s citizens, this practice shows that from their non-governmental perspective, such organisations find utility in drawing on a strong aid narrative.³³

3.2 Empire, Faith, and Kinship: Ireland

In the closing days of 1846, newspapers across England published a Cork magistrate’s eyewitness account of famine in Ireland that was a revelation for the public. The open letter was addressed to the duke of Wellington and described the horror of hundreds of living skeletons in Skibbereen, a small town west of Cork that became notorious for its plight (see Figure 3.1). Even the *Times*, an organ with little sympathy for Irish suffering and critical towards voluntary contributions, printed the piece in its Christmas Eve edition. The letter included an indirect aid appeal to those who could send relief by urging that ignoring the desperate situation of the Irish would see them fail before ‘the Judge of all the earth’. Moreover, calling upon Wellington to help rescue the land of his birth and not abandon his compatriots who had lost their lives for the empire, the magistrate urged him to bring Ireland’s plight before Queen Victoria and thus secure for himself the inscription ‘Servata Hibernia’ upon his

²⁹ See Henry Shue, ‘Morality, Politics, and Humanitarian Assistance’, in *The Moral Nation: Humanitarianism and U.S. Foreign Policy Today*, eds Bruce Nichols and Gil Loescher (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989), 14–16; Michael Walzer, ‘On Humanitarianism: Is Helping Others Charity, or Duty, or Both?’, *Foreign Affairs* 90, no. 4 (2011): 69.

³⁰ Walzer, ‘On Humanitarianism’, 80.

³¹ Memo by marketing psychologist Ernest Dichter in 1955, quoted in Heike Wieters, *The NGO CARE and Food Aid from America, 1945–80: ‘Showered with Kindness?’* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017), 116. See also Bekkers and Wiekping, ‘Literature Review’, 939.

³² Vestergaard, ‘Humanitarian Appeal’, 464.

³³ Julia Lindström, *The Moral Economy of Aid: Discourse Analysis of Swedish Fundraising for the Somalia Famine of 2011–2012* (Huddinge: Södertörn University, 2016).



Figure 3.1 Funeral at Skibbereen, *London Illustrated News*, 30 Jan. 1847. Engraving from a sketch by H. Smyth. This image is reproduced courtesy of the National Library of Ireland

tomb. Wellington was to invoke the queen's female sense of decency, and let the published letter's account of destitution and nakedness encourage her to command that aid no longer be withheld.³⁴ The letter illustrates that the gendered perception of emergencies and the addressees of calls for aid has not changed over time. Other direct appeals to the queen petitioned her 'as a woman' and 'a mother'.³⁵ They all mirrored the widespread notion in Ireland of being entitled to aid from Britain, and minor sums were immediately sent to the Cork magistrate for distribution.³⁶ However, according to one Irish calculation, their country was entitled to thirty million pounds, a sum greater than that spent for ending slavery, as Irish distress was said to exceed that of the blacks.³⁷

Imperial Relief

The comparatively broad acknowledgement of Irish suffering in the press at the time of the open letter coincided with the preparation of the major

³⁴ Open letter by Nicholas Cummins to the duke of Wellington, 17 Dec. 1846, first printed in the *Cork Examiner*, 21 Dec., reprinted in London by the *Standard*, 22 Dec., and by the *Times*, 24 Dec.; subsequently reprinted many times in the UK and abroad. See also Woodham-Smith, *Great Hunger*, 162–3.

³⁵ E.g., 'Skibbereen', the *Cork Examiner*, 18 Jan. 1847.

³⁶ The *Cork Examiner*, 30 Dec. 1846.

³⁷ 'Appalling State of West Carbery', *Southern Reporter and Cork Commercial Courier* [hereafter *Southern Reporter*], 19 Jan. 1847. For another strong claim of entitlement, see 'Verdict of Wilful Murder against Lord John Russell [Prime Minister of England], and Sir Randolph Routh', *Southern Reporter*, 23 Jan. 1847.

extra-governmental aid effort, the creation of the British Relief Association (BRA).³⁸ The BRA was a voluntary effort closely related to the government, but its origin and the deliberate exclusion of its beneficiaries from the aid narrative have not been examined. A deputation of the interdenominational Relief Committee of Skibbereen, sent to London in December 1846, took the first initiative, rather than English residents.³⁹ The Irish representatives consisted of protestant ministers Richard B. Townsend and Charles Caulfield, who were granted a meeting with the home secretary and with Charles Trevelyan, the permanent secretary of the treasury and the principal figure in government relief to Ireland. At their first meeting, the Irish deputies felt that they were treated as ‘insignificant individuals’; they were then granted a second meeting. Nevertheless, the letter they received a few days later declared that their request for a queen’s letter was premature and suggested the alternative of private Irish, as well as English, charity.⁴⁰

Such a response was not simply an abdication of responsibility: Trevelyan’s evangelical morals, while hostile to state intervention, were more receptive to voluntary efforts. Three days after the first meeting with the deputies, he recommended a general English subscription supervised by officials to supplement what he believed were ‘the necessary deficiencies of our Government Relief’.⁴¹ Another motivation was the desire to pass the verdict of God and history, despite alleged Irish misbehaviour.⁴² This dutiful attitude is indicative of the widespread contempt for what was perceived as ‘Irish apathy and abuse’. Trevelyan’s belief that ‘further horrifying accounts’ were needed to promote the subscription indicates the dismissive attitude towards reports from Ireland of which there was no lack.⁴³ At another meeting, the deputies were

³⁸ On the comparatively favourable public opinion at the time, see Peter Gray, ‘“The Great British Famine of 1845 to 1850”?: Ireland, the UK and Peripherality in Famine Relief and Philanthropy’, in *Famines in European Economic History: The Last Great European Famines Reconsidered*, eds Declan Curran, Lubomyr Luciuk, and Andrew G. Newby (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015), 90–1.

³⁹ Some authors have mentioned the deputation in passing. See Gray, *Famine, Land and Politics*, 257; Peter Gray, ‘National Humiliation and the Great Hunger: Fast and Famine in 1847’, *Irish Historical Studies* 32, no. 126 (2000): 197; Terri Kearney and Philip O’Regan, *Skibbereen: The Famine Story* (Skibbereen: Macalla, 2015).

⁴⁰ ‘Skibbereen Relief Committee: The Deputation to England’, *Southern Reporter*, 2 Jan. 1847; Grey to deputies, 9 Dec. 1846, The National Archives, London (hereafter TNA(UK)), Home Office (hereafter HO) 122/19. The letter was printed in the *Standard*, 21 Dec. 1846, and elsewhere.

⁴¹ Trevelyan to Routh, 5 Dec. 1846, *Correspondence from July, 1846, to January, 1847, Relating to the Measures Adopted for the Relief of Distress in Ireland* (hereafter *Correspondence I*) (London: Clowes and Sons, 1847), 332. On Trevelyan’s principal affinity to voluntary action, see Gray, *Famine, Land and Politics*, 257.

⁴² Trevelyan to Labouchere, 15 Dec. 1846, The Robinson Library, Newcastle University (hereafter RLN), Trevelyan Papers (hereafter TP), CET 18, vol. X.

⁴³ Trevelyan to Labouchere, 19 Dec. 1846, RLN, TP, CET 18, vol. X.

made to feel 'as if they were the first men in the land' and were advised how to go about raising private charity.⁴⁴

Townsend and Caulfield favoured a public fundraising event that would also rebut English misconceptions about Ireland. Although they were now treated respectfully, they could not obtain the backing of individuals needed for such an undertaking. This outcome was influenced by the deputies' contact officer, who thwarted their call for support behind their backs.⁴⁵ In their report they state 'it was by little and little the real nature of our position as a deputation opened upon us'. The contact officer ultimately made it clear that a public meeting was 'utterly impracticable', as it was likely to engender political controversy and damage the Irish cause. He promised that the addressees of the deputation 'would work the matter themselves' and would raise a subscription far exceeding the expectations of the two representatives. Thus, committing their 'begging-box into hands most influential at present in the Kingdom', Townsend and Caulfield returned to Ireland.⁴⁶ The *Times* explained the deputation's failure by maintaining that, rather than robbing their own deserving poor and supporting conspiracy, agitation, and possibly arms and secession, the English people preferred 'to bestow their charity where they can direct its application' and 'secure both benefit to the recipient, and something like gratitude to the giver'.⁴⁷

Thus, the London establishment designed its own fundraising campaign. The queen's offer of £1,000 (an amount equal to that already pledged by several financial magnates) was refused as 'it wasn't enough'.⁴⁸ Scotland, where people in some areas were also suffering, was added to the cause in a last-minute manoeuvre to provide a rationale for the queen to double her contribution.⁴⁹ This boosted the legitimacy of the humanitarian enterprise, although, according to a later allotment formula, it implied that one-sixth of the funds collected were diverted from Ireland.⁵⁰ A prominent committee ran the relief effort as an all-British campaign, primarily by means of repeated advertisements in major newspapers and two queen's letters issued in January and October 1847.

The campaign's first appeal to the public included a statement on objectives and a list of donors, headed by the queen, and also noted a contribution by the 'Children and Servants of a Family in the Country'. As customary in

⁴⁴ 'Skibbereen Relief Committee'.

⁴⁵ Stephen Spring Rice to Lionel de Rothschild, 17 Dec. 1846, Rothschild Archive, London, Private Correspondence Sunday, 1814–1913, XI/109/58B.

⁴⁶ 'Skibbereen Relief Committee'. ⁴⁷ Editorial, *Times*, 8 Jan. 1847.

⁴⁸ Prime Minister Russell to Spring Rice, 1 Jan. 1847, with annotation, National Library of Ireland (hereafter NLI), Monteagle Papers (hereafter MP), 13, 397/5.

⁴⁹ Grey to Wood, 4 Jan. 1847, Borthwick Institute, University of York, Halifax/A4/58.

⁵⁰ British Relief Association, Minute Book, 61 (16 Jan. 1847), NLI, MS 2022.

nineteenth-century fundraising, accounting elements were prominent through the documentation of subscriptions, but the appeal also indicated restrictions in the appropriation of aid. It was to consist only of provisions, not cash, targeted at individuals with no employable male relative, and was to entail some work by the recipient in return, wherever practicable. The appeal was based on 'the strong conviction that there are a large number of benevolent persons fully acquainted with the distress, and ready to bestow their bounty whenever a channel is presented to them through which it may be applied, and secured as far as possible from the danger of being abused'. In addition to the BRA's passive self-image as a strictly controlled channel, it was announced that donors were able to contribute in kind and that earmarking for any particular district would be strictly observed.⁵¹

Subsequent advertisements were commonly accounting summaries, with indirect appeals in the form of a list of subscribing social peers. The BRA prominently cited the chairman of the East India Company and the governor of the Bank of England as auditors; itemised provisions shipped to various Irish ports; explained the principles of distribution and monitoring procedures; and listed exceptional instances in which small sums of money were granted for further distribution.⁵² Later advertisements included mention of the extreme distress witnessed by agents of the BRA, or limited themselves to printing lists of subscribers and the names of committee members and auditors.⁵³ More explicit appeals also continued. In a typical one, the committee expressed its hope that the liberality of the British people would enable them 'in some degree' to continue mitigating 'the horrors of a calamity, the extent and severity of which . . . it is hardly possible to over-picture'.⁵⁴

Another framework for appeals was provided by a queen's letter authorising church collections in support of the BRA's fundraising. It was directed to Anglican bishops in their provinces, thereby prompting them to 'effectually excite their parishioners to a liberal contribution'.⁵⁵ The letter was read from the pulpit in the first months of 1847, accompanied by sermons promoting the cause of relief. The government also declared 24 March a national day of fasting and 'humiliation'. A number of sermons were published and raised additional funds by offering arguments to encourage giving. Following the royal proclamation of a national fast day, many 'famine' sermons were delivered urging the nation to atone for its collective sins. However, the sense that Ireland, although part of the UK, was a peculiar country suppressed British

⁵¹ *Times*, 6 Jan. 1847; *Daily News*, 6 Jan. 1847; *Morning Post*, 6 Jan. 1847.

⁵² *Times*, 4 Feb. 1847.

⁵³ *Daily News*, 16 Feb. 1847; *Daily News*, 21 Apr. 1847; *Times*, 3 June 1847.

⁵⁴ *Daily News*, 5 Mar. 1847; *Times*, 6 Mar. 1847.

⁵⁵ 'The Queen's Letter', *Times*, 22 Jan. 1847.

contributions. The paltry, somewhat hostile response to the queen's second letter, issued in connection with an improvised national day of thanksgiving, made this especially obvious.⁵⁶

The Irish and English affiliation could be clearly seen in the armed forces. The Irish Relief Fund in Calcutta had been the first attempt of its kind in the British Empire, outside of Ireland itself. At a time of heavy losses in the conquest of India, the fund's secretary declared that the Irish were those 'who "clear the road" in the battle' – that is, comrades-in-arms whose hearts should be comforted by care for their families and friends at home.⁵⁷ A newspaper article cautioned that recent battlefield casualties would mean that fewer remittances would be flowing to Ireland, something that a community effort could mitigate.⁵⁸

At the first public meeting of the fund on 2 January 1846, the Catholic archbishop of Calcutta, despite propaganda for cohesion, took it upon himself to refute the condescending remarks of other committee members by pointing to centuries of English injustice and maladministration that had reduced Ireland 'habitually to the condition of a pauper' (see Figure 3.2). He reminded those present that the gospel said donors should make recipients feel that they were receiving charity from 'equals before God', and that gratitude was a pre-eminent trait of the Irish character. Apart from addressing bilateral relations, the meeting represented the subscription as an opportunity – in response to the British administration of relief in India – 'for the wealthy natives of this country to show that they were not behind Europeans in this exercise of beneficence'.⁵⁹ The Calcutta Relief fund continued its work in the following years by sending substantial sums to the BRA and other relief organisations.

The activism in their homeland at the time prompted UK citizens in a number of cities abroad to organise collections among themselves and within the society that they lived in, with varying success. In Hamburg, six individuals called for the support of Europe-at-large for their campaign, suggesting a particular duty was owed to their compatriots, and expressing confidence that the local public would join their effort. The collection raised £450, but a German newspaper derided the call from a different moral economy perspective: 'Do the wealthy Brits also want to burden us with their country's destitution? They have instigated it; let them remedy it.'⁶⁰ A charity concert

⁵⁶ Gray, 'National Humiliation', 198, 203–5, 211–12.

⁵⁷ 'Public Meeting: Distress in Ireland', *Bengal Catholic Herald*, 10 Jan. 1846.

⁵⁸ 'The Late Battles near the Sutledge, and the Irish Relief Fund', *Bengal Catholic Herald*, 17 Jan. 1846.

⁵⁹ 'Public Meeting: Distress in Ireland', *Bengal Catholic Herald*, 10 Jan. 1846.

⁶⁰ Quotation from *Kölnische Zeitung*, dated 15 Jan., in 'Freie Städte', *Fränkischer Merkur*, 23 Jan. 1847. Collection results from *Report of the Proceedings of the General Central Relief*



Figure 3.2 English benevolence for Ireland, *Punch*, 17 Oct. 1846. Drawing by Richard Doyle. Photo by Rischgitz, Hulton Archive, courtesy of Getty Images

organised in the English church in Hamburg did not attract many people and received a very poor review.⁶¹ Meanwhile, at a public concert in London, Jenny Lind's fee for an opera season was said to be £12,000 plus travel and lodging, something that made another German newspaper exclaim with moral economic indignation, 'And all this, while Ireland starves!'⁶²

Committee for All Ireland from Its Formation on the 29th December, 1846, to the 31st December, 1847 (Dublin: Browne, 1848), 10.

⁶¹ 'Nachrichten', *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung*, 7 Apr. 1847.

⁶² 'Auswärtiges', *Augsburger Anzeigenblatt*, 10 May 1847.

Catholic Relief

In Catholic circles, Ireland was referred to as the Islands of Saints. It was seen as having provided invaluable historical services to religion, literature, and the advancement of England.⁶³ The priest of a Liverpool church, whose background included ties to Ireland, proposed a more aggressive request for relief. He declared that England owed Ireland a great deal for the misery brought about by centuries of tyranny and oppression, and that the Irish had a claim on the gratitude of English Catholics for their successful battle for religious emancipation – something that lifted their coreligionists in the UK up from being ‘a proscribed and degraded class’.⁶⁴ Moreover, Catholic charity was aroused in opposition to what they saw as the ‘black charity’ of the proselytising Special Fund for the Spiritual Exigencies of Ireland. This fund provided relief for those willing to undergo religious conversion, appealing for donations by suggesting that ‘the Gospel is, more readily than heretofore, now received from hands which have willingly administered relief to . . . temporal necessities’.⁶⁵ In view of its timing in mid-October 1846, the first explicitly Protestant relief activity seems to have come about in reaction to Catholic efforts.⁶⁶

Catholic fundraising in England was generally conciliatory, ecumenical, and careful not to alienate the Protestant majority. At the beginning of October 1846, Irish expatriates in London created a network of district committees for Irish relief that also lobbied the government to compel Irish landlords to be more loyal to their homeland. While the network’s central committee passed all proceeds on to the four archbishops of Ireland, a Catholic magazine emphasised that Protestants, Jews, and Englishmen were among the donors and activists.⁶⁷ Catholic clergymen from Ireland became speakers at fundraising events, such as one held at the City Lecture Theatre in London.⁶⁸ Another preacher from Ireland delivered charity sermons in churches at Leamington Priors and London. Speaking in Christian rather than Catholic terms, he warned that the ‘distressed fellow-creatures in the Sister Country’ might be the ‘future selves’ of his audience, depending on the extent of others’ goodwill. He claimed that charity was ‘blessed in proportion as it blesses’ and that the duty of giving was advocated by nature, reason, and God, the neglect of which

⁶³ ‘State of the Country’, *Tablet*, 17 Apr. 1847.

⁶⁴ ‘Collection at St. Joseph’s’, *Liverpool Mercury*, 5 Feb. 1847.

⁶⁵ ‘The New Reformation’, *Tablet*, 9 Jan. 1847; ‘Ireland – An Appeal’, *Morning Herald*, 4 Jan. 1847; ‘Ireland – An Appeal’, *Times*, 5 Jan. 1847. For religiously motivated counter-charity, see ‘English Subscriptions for the Relief of Irish Distress’, *Tablet*, 17 July 1847.

⁶⁶ ‘National Club – Famine in Ireland’, *Standard*, 17 Oct. 1846; Letter to the Editor, *Evening Mail*, 19 Oct. 1846.

⁶⁷ ‘Distress in Ireland’, *Morning Advertiser*, 6 Oct. 1846; ‘London Relief of Irish Famine’, *New Weekly Catholic Magazine*, 14 Nov. 1846.

⁶⁸ ‘Distress in Ireland’, *Morning Post*, 12 Oct. 1846.

would be 'the forerunner of eternal damnation'. On the Day of Judgement, he declared, benevolent works would insure generous donors 'a portion of that same mercy which they were that day called upon to exercise towards their famishing fellow-creatures'.⁶⁹ A later newspaper advertisement asked all to 'remember that Salvation is denied to those who do not feed the Starving according to their ability'.⁷⁰

Around the time that the BRA was set up, Fredric Lucas, editor of the *Tablet*, in an article entitled 'The National Christmas Famine', asked what he and his readers could do about the starvation in Ireland. Being a Quaker convert, Lucas suggested that the Society of Friends had 'borrowed from the Catholics of other days an example which we ought to be ashamed not to follow'. As he put it, Christ was perishing for want in Irish cabins, and the Catholic code of morality entailed an obligation of charity at the same time that the 'penalty of hell' awaited those who failed to perform their appointed task.⁷¹ From then on, the *Tablet* became 'the repository of Irish grievances and of Irish sufferings' in England – that is, the primary outlet for aid appeals from the Irish clergy.⁷²

By the end of 1846, the vicar apostolic (bishop) of London issued a pastoral epistle with instructions for celebrating the jubilee of the commencing papacy of Pius IX. He ordered that an appeal be made in London chapels for the purpose of relieving distress in Ireland as well as in the respective congregation – the collection to be divided into equal portions.⁷³ Criticism of the bishop's coupling of charity abroad and at home made him revise his instructions so that the sum raised was solely devoted to Irish relief.⁷⁴

Episcopal collections were held throughout England and Wales, often on a weekly basis until Easter to enable poor parishioners to contribute greater aggregate sums. One pastoral made it clear that the present Irish suffering 'has never been equalled in the memory of any one of our generation', and called for 'generous sacrifices for its alleviation'.⁷⁵ The bishop of Yorkshire had personally witnessed the distress in Ireland and urged the claims of 'our famishing Brethren' upon the charity of his flock, asking rhetorically where those not sufficiently attentive to the cries of the hungry expected to stand 'on the great accounting day'.⁷⁶ In a subsequent call, he pleaded for additional alms, warning that God was fully capable of afflicting England in the same

⁶⁹ 'Famine in Ireland', *Leamington Spa Courier*, 31 Oct. 1846.

⁷⁰ 'Famishing Irish and Scotch', *Bristol Mercury*, 30 Jan. 1847.

⁷¹ 'The National Christmas Famine', *Tablet*, 26 Dec. 1846.

⁷² Letter to the Editor, *Tablet*, 17 Apr. 1847. ⁷³ 'The Famine in Ireland', *Times*, 4 Jan. 1847.

⁷⁴ 'The Famine', *Tablet*, 9 Jan. 1847.

⁷⁵ Francis Mostyn, 19 Jan. 1847, Ushaw College Library (hereafter UshCL), Durham, Vicariate/Diocesan Papers, UC/P32/231b.

⁷⁶ 'Pastoral of the Bishop of Trachis', 12 Jan., *Tablet*, 23 Jan. 1847.

manner as Ireland.⁷⁷ In a like manner, another bishop's pastoral cautioned that the time had come 'for each one to measure out with that measure wherewith he desires that it be meted to him again'. It emphasised that those affected by the famine deserved aid not merely as fellow creatures and subjects of the same empire, but also as parishioners 'closely knit together with us in religious communion'.⁷⁸

Descriptions of the distress in Skibbereen, and the British home secretary's letter endorsing private charity in England to the deputies of that town, were reprinted in France and Italy.⁷⁹ As a result, philosopher Antonio Rosmini, an early advocate of 'social justice' and founder of the Institute of Charity, was spurred into action. Even before the general British campaign started, he requested one of his missionaries in England to initiate a collection for Irish relief, citing God's recompensing moral economy. He himself issued an appeal in Northern Italy that raised £556 by the end of 1847.⁸⁰

The first transnational call from a Catholic institution was issued by the Society of St Vincent de Paul (SVP) through its president, Jules Gossin (see Figure 3.3). Upon receipt of various letters and documents from Ireland, the SVP council general had ordered its local branches (conferences) to raise funds for the clients of the ten Irish conferences. The appeal declared that the principle of self-subsistence for local chapters was untenable in view of the extraordinary calamity, and urged the society's members to give generously and quickly as 'death does not wait'.⁸¹ The Dutch national council began its ensuing appeal by reminding members of the Irish saints who had evangelised the Netherlands, suggesting there was a 'religious debt to pay'.⁸²

The most authoritative call for Irish relief came from the newly inaugurated Pope Pius IX in his second encyclical, issued on 25 March 1847. Addressing prelates all over the world, he invoked the Catholic tradition of alms-giving for Christians in need, quoting the moral economy of church

⁷⁷ 'English Subscriptions for Irish Distress', *Tablet*, 27 Feb. 1847.

⁷⁸ 'Pastoral Letter of the Right Rev. Thomas Bishop of Combyopolis', *Tablet*, 23 Jan. 1847.

⁷⁹ 'Irlande', *L'Ami de la religion*, 26 Dec. 1846; 'Le notizie che si ricevono dall' Irlanda', *Gazzetta Piemontese*, 29 Dec. 1846; Grey to deputies, 9 Dec. 1846, in *Journal des débats*, 24 Dec. 1846; *La Presse*, 24 Dec. 1846; *Gazzetta Piemontese*, 30 Dec. 1846.

⁸⁰ Rosmini to Giambattista Pagani, 31 Dec. 1846, in Antonio Rosmini-Serbati, *Opere: Epistolario, part 1, vol. 2* (Turin: Paravia, 1857), 273–4. The first appeal was published in *Gazzetta Piemontese*, 19 Jan. 1847. We are indebted to Francesco Zavatti's forthcoming article 'Charity as Social Justice: Antonio Rosmini and the Great Irish Famine'.

⁸¹ SVP appeal, 2 Feb. 1847, Vatican Secret Archives (hereafter VSA), Rome, Secretary of State (hereafter SoS), 1848, rubr. 241, fasc. 2, 87v. For letters from Ireland, see 'Extraits de divers renseignements', *ibid.*, 88r–90r. For further background, see *The Circular of the President General of the 21st November, 1846, to which is appended the Letter of the President of the Council of Ireland of 9th February, 1847* (Dublin: Clarke, 1847), 22–3.

⁸² 'N^o. 40', *De Tijd*, 20 Feb. 1847.



Figure 3.3 Jules Gossin (1789–1855). Daguerreotype, 1844.
Image reproduced courtesy of National Library of Sweden

father St Ambrose: ‘Christians should learn to use money in looking not for their own goods but for Christ’s, so that Christ in turn may look after them.’ Pius IX mentioned his own Irish relief efforts, warned of the worsening calamity, and suggested that Ireland particularly deserved aid for its loyalty to Rome and its missionary engagement around the world. He proclaimed a triduum (three days) of public prayer for suffering Ireland, with an indulgence of seven years granted as a reward for attendees, and exhorted all Catholics to give alms for relief.⁸³

A total of 30,000 copies of the encyclical were printed and within a month distributed all over the world by the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith.⁸⁴ It was further reproduced by the Catholic press and hierarchy. For example, the Central district (the future Diocese of Birmingham) made 150 copies of the encyclical, which was to be read at all churches together with a pastoral epistle from the bishop.⁸⁵ When it was sent to the Irish bishops, the encyclical was accompanied by a letter that in general terms complied with the wish of Prime Minister Russell that the pope praise the

⁸³ Pius IX, ‘Praedecessores nostros’, in *The Papal Encyclicals, vol. 1: 1740–1878*, ed. Claudia Carlen (Raleigh: Pierian, 1990), 285–6.

⁸⁴ ‘Rom’, *Schweizerische Kirchenzeitung*, 30 Apr. 1847.

⁸⁵ Cash Book (1843–7), 15 Apr. 1847, Diocesan Archives, Birmingham, DF3; Pastoral, 3 May 1847, *ibid.*, B1027.

Irish clergy for their conduct during the famine and ask them to trust the government and its relief efforts.⁸⁶

While the encyclical was heeded in many places, it was ignored or depreciated in others. The Austrian emperor, for example, decreed that only the sections on prayer and indulgences be communicated to the faithful, not allowing systematic collections that benefitted foreigners. When the issue was discussed in autumn 1847, the time for relief was considered past, and the extent of American contributions served as a further argument against the need to solicit funds.⁸⁷ In the diocese of Brixen, church collections were made nevertheless, but they were announced incidentally and were only conducted on a voluntary basis.⁸⁸

In St Gallen, a Swiss town named after an Irish monk, where distress in the local bishop's own parish caused him to leave it to the discretion of the wealthy to contribute to Irish relief, the sum of 4,325 francs (£170) was collected.⁸⁹ The prevailing opinion among Catholics abroad was expressed by a Swiss newspaper, which stated that 'England has a very heavy – and the primary – duty of Irish relief.' However, the paper, continued, 'we may not now ask what duties England has to Ireland, but rather the duties we Catholic Christians from Switzerland must fulfil to aid that unfortunate country'. As in the case of the Dutch, obligations to Ireland were acknowledged for its role in Christianising Germany and Switzerland.⁹⁰

An Irish bishop thanked the pope for his initiative as 'well calculated to inspire the people with hope and to fill the Clergy with confidence'.⁹¹ Pius IX had been drawn to the issue of Irish relief when Paul Cullen, rector of the Pontifical Irish College, urged Catholics not to fall behind the generosity of Protestants in Rome.⁹² UK residents of the Holy City held a fundraising meeting on 13 January 1847, at which the rector was represented by a deputy who suggested that 'the collection [be made] general through the city'; Cullen

⁸⁶ Pius IX to Murray, 10 Apr. 1847, in Peadar MacSuibhne, *Paul Cullen and His Contemporaries*, vol. 1 (Naas: Leinster Leader, 1961), 296–7. For background, see Viale-Prelà to Gizzi, 14 Mar. 1847, VSA, SoS, 1848, rub. 241, fasc 2, 37–41; James P. Flint, *Great Britain and the Holy See: The Diplomatic Relations Question 1846–1852* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2003), 27–30.

⁸⁷ Provincial government for Tyrol and Vorarlberg to Diocese of Brixen, 17 Sept. 1847, Diocesan Archives, Brixen, Consistorial Records 1847/no. 22599/3710 Geistlich.

⁸⁸ Diocese of Brixen to provincial government for Tyrol and Vorarlberg, 24 Sept. 1847, *ibid.*, no. 2752; Diocese of Brixen to deanary of Brixen, 29 Oct. 1847, *ibid.* (no number).

⁸⁹ 'St. Gallen', *Schweizerische Kirchenzeitung*, 12 June 1847; 'L'année dernière', *L'Ami de la religion*, 5 Feb. 1848.

⁹⁰ 'Was kann und soll die Schweiz für Irland thun?', *Schweizerische Kirchenzeitung*, 15 May 1847.

⁹¹ Cantwell to Pius IX, 8 June 1847, Pontifical Irish College (hereafter PIC), Archive, Rome, Cullen Papers (hereafter CUL), CUL/NC/4/1847/34.

⁹² Undated draft Cullen to Fransoni, PIC, CUL/NC/3/1/7.

was also elected to the committee.⁹³ It was announced that the pope would contribute 1,000 Scudi (£213), and that he ordered a solemn triduum in one of the local churches from 24 to 26 January, with sermons in Italian, English, and French, to elicit donations for relief. Pius IX expressed ‘the deep pain which it had given him to hear of the suffering state of Ireland’ and ‘regretted that his power of contributing to her relief was not more in proportion to his good wishes’.⁹⁴ Cullen, who was eager that Rome distinguish herself and show the world ‘that she is not only the centre of faith, but also the soul of charity’, explained that the papal donation was ‘a very large sum for one who has so many calls to respond to’ and suggested that a thousand dollars from the pope was ‘more than a hundred thousand from the queen of England’.⁹⁵ In a fundraising pamphlet in the Italian language that appears to have been published on behalf of the Rome committee of UK citizens, Cullen claimed it was general knowledge that the English government had failed to provide sufficient relief.⁹⁶ He later described the underlying significance of the pope’s encyclical as ‘a standing testimony against the misrule of England’.⁹⁷ A contemporary witness commended Cullen’s sermon during the triduum as impressive.⁹⁸

Acclaimed pulpit orator Gioacchino Ventura held the triduum’s main sermon in Italian. He suggested that the spirit of charity was the bond uniting all Catholics, but that the Irish people also had particular merits, had suffered extraordinarily, and had conducted themselves admirably, making them deserving of his audience’s best sympathies. Hence, he

conjured all his hearers in the name of humanity, virtue, love of country, and above all of religion, to aid by their contributions, and by their most fervent prayers to rescue from starvation a people, which was a model to all the countries in the world, for their social virtues, their patriotism, their fidelity to constituted authority, and above all for their attachment to the Catholic Faith, their practice of its holy duties, and their zeal in propagating it.⁹⁹

⁹³ Correspondence from Rome, 14 Jan., *Daily News*, 29 Jan. 1847; ‘Destitute Irish’, *Roman Advertiser*, 16 Jan. 1847. For a more complicated, but opaque, account of developments in Rome, see ‘Subscriptions for Irish Destitution in Rome’, *Dublin Evening Post*, 16 Feb. 1847.

⁹⁴ Journal of John Scandrett Harford, Bristol Record Office (quotations); Cullen to Murray, 14 Jan. 1847, Diocesan Archives, Dublin (hereafter DAD), Murray Papers (hereafter MP), 34/9/229; Kirby to Murray, 18 Jan. 1847, *ibid.*, 34/9/230. In Jan. 1847, 4.7 scudi was equivalent to £1. See Frasoni to Murray, 30 Jan. 1847, *ibid.*, 32/3/159.

⁹⁵ Cullen to Murray, 14 Jan. 1847, DAD, MP, 34/9/229; Cullen to Slattery, 14 Jan. 1847, Slattery Papers (hereafter SP), Diocesan Archives, Cashel (hereafter DAC), 1847/10 (all documents from this collection on NLI microfilm); Cullen to Murray, 30 Jan. 1847, DAD, MP, 34/9/231.

⁹⁶ *Breve notizia dell’ attuale carestia in Irlanda* (Rome: Memicanti, 1847), 4. From the context, it appears that Cullen was the mastermind behind the pamphlet, although this was not the Vatican publication that previous research has assumed.

⁹⁷ Cullen to Slattery, 28 Apr. 1847, SP, DAC, 1847/35.

⁹⁸ John Minter Morgan, *A Tour through Switzerland and Italy in the Years 1846–47: In Letters to a Clergyman* (London: Longman, 1851), 112.

⁹⁹ ‘Italy – Rome’, *Tablet*, 20 Feb. 1847.

Ventura framed the welcome contributions by English and Irish Protestants in Rome as ‘an emanation of Catholic charity’, inherited from the spirit of their forefathers or inspired by the surrounding Catholic atmosphere. He hoped that what appeared to be Irish acquiesce in starving to death in union with the disposition of Christ would ‘ascend as a holocaust of reconciliation to the throne of the Most High, to draw down on England not the justice and indignation which liar crimes deserve, but conversion to the true faith, grace, mercy, and salvation’. The colourful report on the effects of the sermon, with its surrounding choreography of church rituals for a time of famine and an appeal by alumni of the Pontefical Irish College, included the observation that ‘the very beggars with tears in their eyes emptied the contents of their poor purses into the hands of the collectors’.¹⁰⁰

Rome’s example was followed in some Italian bishoprics even before the pope’s encyclical was issued. Thus, a pastoral letter from the town of Jesi argued that Christian charity being universal, the obligation towards brothers of faith was all the more stringent; that the modern principle of association was a force for good; and that the rational and enlightened spirit embodied in public opinion contributed to the denouncement of selfish behaviour. The Jesi pastoral underscored the possibility that the local populace might some day find themselves in need of such aid, and so charity shown to Ireland might be insurance against such a calamity befalling their own selves. It also claimed that God rewarded ‘good works with great interest, giving eternal glory as the recompense of the most trifling acts of beneficence’.¹⁰¹

Apart from church collections, committees in Rome and Florence launched fundraising events such as society balls and an aid concert. One socially conscious woman even organised a lottery for a valuable painting.¹⁰² The pope himself provided an autograph letter and a rosary of agates that were exhibited at a bank in London and raffled off for the relief of Irish famine hungry. However, the £61 realised fell short of the £100 that the organisers had hoped for, and critics accused the event of ‘dispensing the spiritual graces, of which the Pope claims to be the depository’.¹⁰³

The idea of famine relief as an undertaking for the entire Catholic world originated with Gossin at a point in time before the SVP’s general

¹⁰⁰ Ibid. See also ‘Foreign and Colonial Intelligence’, *Tablet*, 13 Feb. 1847; on the Irish alumni’s appeal, see ‘Kirchenstaat’, *Katholische Blätter aus Tirol*, 15 Feb. 1847.

¹⁰¹ ‘Colonial and Foreign Intelligence’, *Tablet*, 13 Mar. 1847.

¹⁰² *Roman Advertiser*, 13 Feb. & 13 Mar. 1847.

¹⁰³ ‘Foreign and Colonial Intelligence’, *English Review* 8, no. 15, 233–56, 252, n. 1. Regarding expected and realised sums, see ‘Pope Pius IX. and the Irish’, *Times*, 14 June 1847; Fitzmaurice to Murray (no date), DAD, MP, 33/6/42.

appeal, and the Holy See acknowledged the SVP's role in bringing the encyclical about.¹⁰⁴ Gossin was the driving force behind a petition signed by 197 prominent Frenchmen, including mathematician Augustin-Louis Cauchy, publisher and politician Count Charles de Montalembert, and political analyst Alexis de Tocqueville. Dated 6 January 1847, it called on the pope to launch a 'new crusade, although a completely peaceful crusade, a crusade of charity, of prayer, and of good deeds' for suffering Ireland and for persecuted Christians of the Lebanon as well. By May, when the archbishop of Paris implemented the famine encyclical, a subscription was opened under his auspices.¹⁰⁵ The committee's public appeal described it as 'a truly national and French enterprise' that would attract everyone, without distinction of party or creed. The appeal stated that high food prices were responsible for the campaign's slow start, but insisted that French economic hardship could not compare with the suffering of the Irish.¹⁰⁶ However, the minister of justice protested against unauthorised publication of the encyclical and reminded the French clergy of the requirement of obtaining permission to do so.¹⁰⁷

The bishop of Marseilles had already issued a pastoral epistle on 24 February that drew an analogy between the Irish and the early Christians, who, during the Roman Empire, adhered to their faith even under torture. He also argued that Catholic beneficence was particularly called for in light of the active proselytism in Ireland; and, as in the pastoral from Jesi, he suggested that a universal plea for charity was even more incumbent on his coreligionists when those who were suffering belonged to 'the great Catholic family'.¹⁰⁸ Following the encyclical, at least twenty-one French bishops published pastoral letters. Despite differences in form and content, their message was one: 'The Irish are starving and need your help.' An analysis sees a deliberate choice of shocking examples, but also notes the 'almost throwaway fashion' in which the famine is presented. The arguments put forward were similar to those of English and Italian clerics, but some French pastorals also suggested that famine relief

¹⁰⁴ Bruno Belhoste, *Augustin-Louis Cauchy: A Biography* (New York: Springer, 1991), 189; James Gerard Martin, 'The Society of St. Vincent de Paul as an Emerging Social Phenomenon in Mid-nineteenth Century Ireland' (MA thesis, National College of Industrial Relations, 1993), 135; Copy of letter from Cardinal Gizzi to Gossin, 15 Apr. 1847, DAD, MP, 32/3/164 (reprinted in the *Cork Examiner*, 19 May 1847, and other newspapers).

¹⁰⁵ Petition, 6 Jan. 1847, VSA, SoS, 1848, rubr. 241, fasc. 2, 25–9 (missing the last seventy-three signatures). The printed version of the appeal (with all signatures) was dated 17 Jan. and published together with the pope's encyclical and a pastoral letter by the archbishop. See *Comité de secours*. On Gossin's role, see Martin, 'The Society of St. Vincent De Paul', 143.

¹⁰⁶ Appeal of 27 May, in *L'Ami de la religion*, 10 June 1847.

¹⁰⁷ 'Paris', *L'Ami de la religion*, 1 July 1847.

¹⁰⁸ 'France: French Sympathy for Ireland', *Tablet*, 20 Mar. 1847.

offered a high moral ground vis-à-vis the English, or that it otherwise served the self-image of France as *le grande nation*.¹⁰⁹

Despite the fact that French collections for Ireland were generally church organised, they were ultimately coordinated by the voluntary Comité de secours pour l'Irlande. Laymen took a prominent role in the effort because of the contemporary distress prevailing in France. It was regarded as 'a matter of Prudence not to expose the clergy to be reproached by the people of neglecting their fellow Country men, and of manifesting their solicitude for strangers'.¹¹⁰ However, the Irish were no strangers to the French Catholic elite – they were their idealised model of Catholic spirituality.¹¹¹

US Relief

Catholic appeals in the New World resembled those of the Old, but at times had clearer political references and more compelling language. For example, John Bernard Fitzpatrick, bishop of Boston, stated in a pastoral that Ireland no longer lamented her lost liberties nor the union with Great Britain, bewailing instead the dying of her children. According to him, 'our own home; or at least . . . the home of our loved fathers and friends' required extraordinary charity, something that made any discussion of responsibilities of the UK parliament or Irish landlords immaterial. This engendered the bishop's conviction that 'not one will fail to act nobly and generously his part, or to fulfil to the extent of his means what we do not hesitate to call a sacred duty'.¹¹²

Irish communities were the driving force for famine relief in North America. In addition to Catholics, those communities included Protestants and had much to gain by reaching out to a wider public. The resulting fundraising rhetoric outlined an impartial, national campaign that resembled the one in France. North American society, however, was more diverse. It was made up of large groups of Irish immigrants with a vested interest in their country of origin, alongside a Protestant majority with no particular religious affinity to Ireland. The situation in Canada was akin to that of the USA, but contained a stronger Catholic element and had the British Empire as an additional bond.

¹⁰⁹ Grace Neville, "'Il y a des larmes dans leurs chiffres': French Famine Relief for Ireland, 1847–84', *Revue Française de Civilisation Britannique* 19, no. 2 (2014): 69, 71–2. The analysis refers to the seventeen pastorals archived in the NLI. For an analysis of the Italian pastorals, see Francesco Zavatti, 'Appealing Locally for Transnational Humanitarian Aid: Italian Bishops and the Great Irish Famine', *Quellen und Forschungen aus italienischen Archiven und Bibliotheken* 99 (2019): 313–39.

¹¹⁰ Abbé Moriarty to Murray, 27 Feb. 1847, DAD, MP, 32/3/88.

¹¹¹ Seamus Deane, 'Catholicism, Republicanism and Race: Ireland in Nineteenth-century French Thought', in *Paris – Capital of Irish Culture: France, Ireland and the Republic, 1798–1916*, eds Pierre Joannon and Kevin Whelan (Dublin: Four Courts, 2017), 110–29.

¹¹² 'Relief for Ireland', *Boston Pilot*, 13 Feb. 1847.

Nonetheless, a satirical journal in Montreal derided the Irish predominance in relief committees by publishing a fictional list of miniscule contributions, all coming from members of one family clan.¹¹³

It has hitherto been accepted that Irish relief was a national US effort, without scrutinising who was involved. It has not been considered that downplaying social disparities between donors is a common humanitarian propaganda strategy, although the emphasis on particularly deserving beneficiaries frequently surfaces amid an overall universalist rhetoric. For example, a speech that Henry Clay delivered at a New Orleans town meeting in 1847 invoked a humanitarian imperative irrespective of colour, religion, and civilisation. After a tribute to universalism, Clay explained at length that the meeting did not concern any distant country, but a nation ‘which is so identified with our own, as to be almost part and parcel of ours, bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh’.¹¹⁴

President Polk’s threat to veto US government aid to Ireland for constitutional reasons thwarted a plan that had been developed with reference to Americans being an ‘offspring’ of the Irish.¹¹⁵ However, civil society responded positively to a convention in Washington on 9 February 1847, chaired by Polk’s vice-president. A member of Congress from each of the twenty-nine states was appointed an honorary vice-president of the meeting, which recommended that fundraising committees be set up throughout the USA. A lengthy appeal was issued to the public, cautiously mentioning that there were hundreds of famine victims, explaining the hardships in Europe, and the efforts made by the British. The Cork magistrate’s letter to Wellington was cited, as well as correspondence from the West Cork region addressed to the ‘Ladies of America’.

Although the Washington appeal spoke of ‘a sister nation’ to which one of the speakers suggested the USA owed ‘a deep debt of gratitude’, and which according to another was well blended into the American ‘blood’, the overall approach and message were universal. Robert Dale Owen, congressman and son of the British social reformer, exemplifies this with an appeal that anticipated Singer’s argument on the insignificance of distance whenever there is knowledge of need. Other voices suggested that the financial boom in the USA at the time (which was in stark contrast to bad harvests and economic depression across Europe), and the demand for labour and settlers, facilitated the framing of Irish relief as a broader cause. The meeting concluded with the

¹¹³ ‘The Pottypans of Gaspe’, *Satirist* 1, no. 2 (1847): 8.

¹¹⁴ Henry Clay, ‘Appeal for Ireland’, in *The American Common-School Reader and Speaker*, eds John Goldsberry and William Russell (Boston: Tappan, Whittemore, and Mason, 1850), 350–1.

¹¹⁵ Ann Mary Chapman Coleman, ed. *The Life of John J. Crittenden, with Selections from His Correspondence and Speeches, vol. 1* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1871), 288. For background, see Curti, *American Philanthropy Abroad*, 43–50.

adoption of a resolution moved by an Irishman, thanking those involved in the gathering and, by extension, the American nation, and indicating an elaborate humanitarian choreography.¹¹⁶

Despite the advancement of famine relief as a national cause, the case of the Philadelphia Irish Relief Committee, which, according to a recent study, typified “universal America” where class, ethnicity, and religious denomination did not matter,¹¹⁷ indicates the need for critical review. The first relief committee in November 1846 was practically an organ of the Hibernian Society for the Relief of Emigrants from Ireland, although it figured as a group of ‘gentlemen’ who addressed ‘fellow citizens’ in Philadelphia and the south-western region of the USA. By February 1847, in order to extend its reach beyond the ethnic ghetto in more than words, the committee broadened its membership. However, the majority of members of the executive committee for the city of Philadelphia still belonged to the Hibernian Society. Others bore Irish names. Yet another called attention to ‘the claim of the Irish people upon us, from blood association, and the influence of the many domestic ties’. The committee resolved that its papers be placed in charge of the Hibernian Society and, in its final report, noted that its relief efforts had not been confined to people of Irish descent – a truism that downplayed the centrality of the ethnic community in the campaign.¹¹⁸

The Philadelphia Committee, with its published report and the extensive documentation of its networking within the city’s Irish community’s elite, is easily verifiable with regard to its social basis. It suggests that the case of the similarly named Irish Relief Committee, which was organised by the Hibernian Society of Charleston, was not the exception researchers have claimed, but may rather have been typical of relief initiatives for Ireland.¹¹⁹

The first foreign effort mounted in the USA to assist Ireland was initiated by John W. James, the president of the Boston Repeal Association, on 25 November 1845. He proposed a subscription among members of the organisation ‘for their suffering brethren, which would, when sent forward, not only do much to relieve their distress, but also redound to their own credit’.¹²⁰ The resulting Irish ‘community effort’ was based on collections in churches, at a public meeting, and private subscriptions. However, since it was linked to the

¹¹⁶ ‘Public Meeting for the Relief of the Suffering Poor in Ireland’, *National Era*, 18 Feb. 1847.

¹¹⁷ Strum, ‘Pennsylvania’, 295.

¹¹⁸ *Report of the General Executive Committee of the City and County of Philadelphia ... to Provide Means to Relieve the Sufferings in Ireland* (Philadelphia: Crissy and Markley, 1847), 5–10, 16, 18, 23–4, 34; John H. Campbell, *History of the Friendly Sons of St. Patrick and of the Hibernian Society for the Relief of Emigrants from Ireland* (Philadelphia: Hibernian Society, 1892).

¹¹⁹ Strum, ‘South Carolina’, 151.

¹²⁰ T. Mooney, ‘Enthusiastic Meeting of the Boston Appeal Association’, *Boston Pilot*, 29 Nov. 1845.

movement for the repeal of the Act of Union between Great Britain and Ireland, this aid effort and its association with the demand for Irish autonomy came into conflict with political priorities.¹²¹ In the years that followed, the Boston Repeal Association continued to collect funds for Ireland, but it combined providing food aid and the shipment of arms for the insurgency of ‘Young Ireland’.¹²² The repeal movement had branches throughout the USA that it also mobilised for famine relief in other areas.¹²³

By 7 February 1847, after the Catholic clergy of Boston had established a committee that became the Relief Association for Ireland, a broad circle of sponsors from that city disseminated an address on Irish relief by means of the newly introduced electric telegraph. It reportedly made a strong impression on the country.¹²⁴ Various calls led to the formation of the broader New England Relief Committee one week later. The appeals urged the public to provide relief regardless of the causes of famine. They emphasised suspicions that the reports from Ireland may have been exaggerated were untrue.¹²⁵ During a time of US aggression against Mexico, a Protestant minister declared that the sight of relief ships ‘under the white flag of peace and mercy’ would be a ‘nobler spectacle’ than that of battleships, and said that aiding Ireland would make war with the UK psychologically unlikely.¹²⁶ An examination of contemporary speech acts shows that they highlighted notions of Christian duty, idealistic humanitarianism (sometimes from an internationalist perspective), and a belief in the obligation of sharing America’s abundance. Some voiced uneasiness over profiting from the European food shortage or the Mexican War, seeing an opportunity to improve British–American relations. An instance of Irish aid for New England in the seventeenth century was recalled. As in the case of other US relief efforts, it appears that the sense of common purpose that was evoked had a value of its own for a much divided community.¹²⁷ At the same time, the strong Irish presence in Boston, despite being poorly integrated, was a significant factor. A major facilitator of the Boston civic effort was of the opinion that the Great Irish Famine represented a unique charitable cause because its stories

¹²¹ Henry A. Crosby Forbes and Henry Lee, *Massachusetts Help to Ireland during the Great Famine* (Milton: Captain Robert Bennet Forbes House, 1967), 1–5.

¹²² Luther S. Cushing, ed. ‘Patrick Murray & Another vs. Terence McHugh [etc.]’, in *Reports of Cases Argued and Determined in the Supreme Judicial Court of Massachusetts, vol. 9* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1858), 158–63. See also Anelise Hanson ShROUT, “‘Distressing News from Ireland’: The Famine, the News and International Philanthropy” (PhD dissertation, New York University, 2013), 168.

¹²³ Strum, ‘Jersey Ship’, 5.

¹²⁴ George Potter, *To the Golden Door: The Story of the Irish in Ireland and America* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1960), 457.

¹²⁵ Forbes and Lee, *Massachusetts Help*, 11–17.

¹²⁶ ‘Relief for Ireland’, *Boston Daily Advertiser*, 16 Feb. 1847.

¹²⁷ Forbes and Lee, *Massachusetts Help*, 22–5.

came 'so directly from the Irish around us, who themselves contributed all they could to relieve their relations in the old country'.¹²⁸

In New York, where people of Irish descent made up a quarter of the population, the first Irish relief committee was formed in December 1846, mostly by members of the ethnic community with affinities to the Democratic party. A broader General Relief Committee coalesced by February 1847. It included, among others of Irish background, the Quaker Jacob Harvey, who conducted public relations that raised famine awareness throughout the USA and resulted in funds that were generally forwarded to the Society of Friends in Dublin. The Irish-born Catholic bishop of New York joined forces with the general committee, serving as a speaker and, in an ecumenical gesture, transferring the collections from his diocese to the Society of Friends as well. Despite a considerable Irish presence among the committee members, its founder and chairman, Myndert van Schaick, did not have a family connection to Ireland. Ultimately, the committee represented a broad group of businessmen and prominent individuals with links to shipping interests and to the Commissioners of Emigration (i.e., immigration) of the State of New York.¹²⁹

During the 1840s, a period of rising food prices and mounting freight rates, the transportation of emigrants was a business that lowered the overall cost of conveying American goods to European markets. One of the most active members of the New York committee was the treasurer of the Irish Emigrant Society of that city. Harvey, who was among the commissioners of emigration, envisioned a solution to the Irish subsistence crisis through populating the American West: 'The more people we can bring over, the better for all parties.'¹³⁰ Van Schaick concluded a public speech somewhat obscurely with the hope that 'the Irish people would adopt the American system of Common School education, or something similar to it, which would enable them to take care of themselves in future'.¹³¹ The committee's appeal to the public distilled the economic fundamentals down to a single line 'What is death to Ireland is but augmented fortune to America; and we are actually fattening on the starvation of another people.' The appeal raised the cry that four million people were on the verge of starvation resulting from a famine that was not caused by improvidence or vice. A triad of charity, civilisation, and Christianity was

¹²⁸ Sarah Forbes Hughes, ed. *Letters and Recollections of John Murray Forbes, vol. 1* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1899), 121. On the lack of integration, see Thomas H. O'Connor, *Fitzpatrick's Boston 1846–1866* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1984), 83.

¹²⁹ See also John Ridge, 'The Great Hunger in New York', *New York Irish History* 9 (1995): 7–8; Enda Delaney, 'Ireland's Great Famine: A Transnational History', in *Transnational Perspectives in Modern Irish History*, ed. Niall Whelehan (New York: Routledge, 2015), 111.

¹³⁰ *Transactions*, 256. ¹³¹ 'Relief for Ireland', *New York Herald*, 16 Feb. 1847.

invoked, along with the plea that 'Every dollar that you give, may save a human being from starvation!'¹³²

US celebrity peace crusader Elihu Burritt made a similar appeal in one of his 'Olive Leaf' broadsheets to the American people. Reprinted by US newspapers, it claimed that 'A penny a day will save a human life.' (For his audience at home, he translated the phrase as 'two cents' worth of Indian meal'.)¹³³ Burritt also travelled to the scenes of misery, reporting on what he found in another 'Olive Leaf' that circulated across the USA and England.¹³⁴ He described people in the terminal stages of starvation, and added political observations comparing the dire labour situation in Ireland with 'the curse of slavery'.¹³⁵ For his British audience, he published a pamphlet detailing three days of horror he experienced in Skibbereen in February 1847. A prominent Quaker wrote the pamphlet's foreword and called for a moral economy for Ireland equivalent to that of England. He based his appeal on the Irish people's entitlement to 'support from the land and other fixed property' which entitlement, in times of distress, superseded any landlord's or creditor's demand for rent or interest.¹³⁶ However, he did not go so far as to suggest that there was a moral economy that included Ireland as an equal among the other members of the UK.

3.3 Altruism, Self-interest, and Solidarity: Soviet Russia

Although it was known for months that a famine threatened parts of Soviet Russia in 1921, it was Maxim Gorky's appeal in July of that year that first brought the famine to the world's attention. In contrast to many other famines, relief was triggered by a representative of the afflicted country requesting help for himself and his compatriots. It was a 'deputy appeal' in the sense that Gorky lent his voice to the Bolshevik government, which after long reluctance had decided to accept foreign aid. To make the call more acceptable to the West (and perhaps also to avoid humiliation), the Russian leadership signalled their 'surrender' through a non-communist international celebrity. Lenin and the People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs, Chicherin, only launched their

¹³² *Aid to Ireland: Report of the General Relief Committee of the City of New York Organized February 10th, 1847* (New York: General Irish Relief Committee, 1848), 147–8.

¹³³ Elihu Burritt, 'An Olive Leaf for the American People', Feb. 1847; reprinted in the *Boston Daily Advertiser*, 25 Feb. 1847. On his celebrity status, see Melissa Fegan, *Literature and the Irish Famine 1845–1919* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2002), 93, n. 68.

¹³⁴ Elihu Burritt, 'An Olive Leaf for the American People: One Word More for Poor Ireland', *Christian Citizen*, 20 Mar. 1847.

¹³⁵ Neil Hogan, *The Cry of the Famishing: Ireland, Connecticut and the Potato Famine* (East Haven: Connecticut Irish-American Historical Society, 1998), 42, 44.

¹³⁶ Joseph Sturge in Elihu Burritt, *A Journal of a Visit of Three Days to Skibbereen, and Its Neighbourhood* (London: Gilpin, 1847), iv.

own, somewhat different, appeals weeks later. Accordingly, Gorky did not speak in the name of the government, but rather for the Russian people. Stressing their cultural significance, he wrote 'Gloomy days have come for the country of Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky, Meneleyev, Pavlov, Mussergsky, Glinka and other world-prized men and I venture to trust that the cultured European and American people, understanding the tragedy of the Russian people, will immediately succor with bread and medicines.'¹³⁷

While initially stating that the famine was caused by nature, thereby relieving the government of responsibility, Gorky also blamed 'the damnable war and its victors' vengeance' for the conditions, thus suggesting an unsettled debt on the side of the West. Gorky developed this thought further by demanding aid especially from 'those who, during the ignominious war, so passionately preached fratricidal hatred', although he did not point to a specific country or group. Finally, when he characterised the famine to Western philanthropists as a 'splendid opportunity to demonstrate the vitality of humanitarianism', it was with a tinge of sarcasm, although he apologised immediately for his 'involuntary bitterness'. He concluded by asking 'all honest European and American people for prompt aid to the Russian people'.

During the following months, Gorky's appeal was reprinted in newspapers abroad and used in the campaigns of various relief organisations. It was the starting point of an international relief campaign. For example, while the Save the Children Fund (SCF) magazine *The Record* had barely mentioned conditions in Russia until then, the famine dominated its headlines and those of other relief organisations' publications, such as the *Bulletin* of the American Relief Administration (ARA), for the next one and a half years. Dozens of smaller aid agencies, committees, and individuals, along with journalists, did their best to keep the Russian famine in the public eye.

Funding Approaches

After the ARA and Nansen's International Committee for Russian Relief (ICRR) had signed treaties with the Soviet government, their affiliated organisations promulgated appeals in a multitude of leaflets, letters, and newspaper advertisements. There was some cooperation among them, such as the All-British Appeal, but often they competed for donations. The SCF addressed people from all walks of life through advertisements placed in mass media, whereas other organisations focused on specific groups. Thus, the Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) called upon American Jews, the Volga Relief Society (VRS) solicited Americans of Russian-German origin, the Berlin-based

¹³⁷ 'Maxim Gorky's Appeal to the American People', *ARA Bulletin* 2, no. 16, Sept. 1921, 2.

Workers' Relief International (WIR) and their US auxiliary, the Friends of Soviet Russia (FSR), appealed to the working class, and religious groups solicited their own members. In addition, a great number of individuals founded voluntary committees that collected donations from acquaintances or colleagues.

The ARA, as a US umbrella organisation, never made any public appeals. Before the Riga treaties were signed, Hoover was already determined to oppose appealing to the public, as had been done in relief work for Central Europe in 1920.¹³⁸ He was convinced that US citizens should not be asked for help again, as their charitable generosity was exhausted. The slogan 'charity begins at home' gained momentum, especially as relief for 'Red Russia' was the object.¹³⁹ As an ARA staff member put it, Hoover 'has dreaded seeking, or encouraging others to seek, financial support for people outside our own country during a period when so many of our own people are unemployed'.¹⁴⁰ Another reason for the ARA not launching a public appeal was to avoid discussions and counter claims that they feared might endanger the whole operation.¹⁴¹

These considerations were paralleled by doubts concerning the profitability and practicality of public appeals.¹⁴² In contrast to other organisations, the ARA aimed to fight the famine in its entirety. From the start, Hoover was certain that the Russian operation was 'entirely beyond the resources of all the available private charity' and needed substantial governmental support.¹⁴³ He considered it a better strategy to ask Congress for a larger sum than to hope for thousands of small donations. However, while rejecting a public appeal, the ARA turned to long-standing supporters and primarily solicited their major donors.¹⁴⁴ The ARA also established its own press department, which supplied journalists in the USA and correspondents in Russia with press material, instead of paying for advertisements.¹⁴⁵

The fundraising campaigns of organisations affiliated with the ARA felt the impact of this strategy.¹⁴⁶ After Congress had granted US\$20 million to the ARA, other relief organisations were asked why the public was still being appealed to for donations, and whether the government contribution would not

¹³⁸ 'The European Relief Council Is Recalled, Mr. Hoover's Statement', *ARA Bulletin* 2, no. 16, 1 Sept. 1921, 11.

¹³⁹ Patenaude, *Big Show*, 142. ¹⁴⁰ ARA to Morris Gest, 31 Mar. 1922, ARA, reel 500.

¹⁴¹ Hoover to Burns, 29 Jan. 1923, in Fisher, *The Famine in Soviet Russia*, 533–7, and Hoover to Burns, 6 Feb. 1923, *ibid.*, 539. On 'counter claims', see Mahood and Satzewich, 'Save the Children Fund', 68–78.

¹⁴² Draft to Mitchel, unsigned (London), 27 Apr. 1922, ARA, reel 499.

¹⁴³ Hoover to Ador (IRC), 9 Aug. 1921, *ARA Bulletin* 2, no. 16, 1 Sept. 1921, 5–7.

¹⁴⁴ See Hoover to Baker, 16 Nov. 1921, ARA, reel 11. The database contained 200,000–300,000 names. See Page to Herter, 20 Sept. 1922, ARA, reel 389.

¹⁴⁵ Baker to Hoover, 8 July 1922, ARA, reel 549. ¹⁴⁶ Fisher, *Famine in Soviet Russia*, 165

be 'sufficient for the necessary work'.¹⁴⁷ For smaller organisations that did not receive governmental funding, the crowding out tendency of public funding and Hoover's reservations posed a serious problem.¹⁴⁸ Hoover had not only refused to back an appeal, but at the turn of 1921/2, publicly announced that there was hardly any need for additional grain donations, as the Russian infrastructure could not cope with more than the ARA was already supplying. Some Quakers regarded this as conscious sabotage, and the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) sought to make Hoover retract his statement.¹⁴⁹

Morally Worthy Recipients

Advocating and justifying relief for the population of a foreign country was far from uncontroversial after the Great War, but in the case of Russia, nearly all organisations (apart from some pro-communist groups) faced an even greater challenge: raising money for a foreign power with a hostile ideology. After all, during the Russian civil war, most Western states had openly supported the Whites in their fight against the Reds.¹⁵⁰ Many saw communism not merely as an alternative political system, but as a disease spreading chaos and threatening civilisation, especially as Western media had provided their readers with sensationalistic stories about Bolshevik horrors.¹⁵¹

Many politicians, some members of the press, and Russian emigrant organisations criticised relief efforts as aiding the Soviet government.¹⁵² In order to create 'morally worthy victims', aid organisations tried to draw a distinction between Russian citizens and the Bolshevik government.¹⁵³ They had to 'make people realise that these Russian children, starving and dying, are essentially the same as our own', as *The Record* put it.¹⁵⁴ Accordingly, ordinary Russians were portrayed as 'brave, simple, splendid folk' who carried out relief work as best they could and were no Bolsheviks.¹⁵⁵ Hoover himself stated on several occasions that the Russian people could not be blamed, nor should they suffer, for the mistakes of their government.¹⁵⁶

¹⁴⁷ White to Baker, 28 Oct. 1921, ARA, reel 500. See also Rickard to Hoover, 16 Dec. 1921, ARA, reel 115, and Tapley to Hoover, 9 Dec. 1921, ARA, reel 504.

¹⁴⁸ Patenaude, *Big Show*, 140–1. ¹⁴⁹ McFadden and Gorfinkel, *Constructive Spirit*, 73.

¹⁵⁰ Vogt, *Nansens Kamp*, 56–8. ¹⁵¹ Patenaude, *Big Show*, 8.

¹⁵² For opposition to the ARA, see e.g., Fisher, *Famine in Soviet Russia*, 149. For the SCF, see Mahood and Satzewich, 'Save the Children Fund', and Breen, 'Saving Enemy Children'. For a similar Norwegian case, see Carl Emil Vogt, "'Først vore egne!" Da Aftenposten saboterte Nansens nødhjelp til Russland', *Historisk Tidsskrift* 108, no. 1 (2008): 29–59.

¹⁵³ Mahood and Satzewich, 'Save the Children Fund', 64.

¹⁵⁴ F. A. Mc Kenzie, 'Little Mother – The Heart of a Russian Child', *The Record* 2, no. 15 (1922).

¹⁵⁵ Philip Gibbs, 'Russia's Hungry Christmas', *The Record* 2, no. 7 (1921).

¹⁵⁶ Hoover to Rickard, 14 Nov. 1922; Telegram, draft by Hoover, 16 Nov. 1922. Both ARA, reel 389.

However, even if those starving were Bolsheviks, many humanitarians were convinced that political considerations must not play a role in alleviating a famine. Nansen rhetorically asked his critics whether it would be worth letting twenty million people starve to death in order to avoid strengthening the Soviet regime.¹⁵⁷ SCF co-founder Jebb even admitted that relief tended to benefit the Soviet government because the ‘indirect result of relief is to . . . stabilise the existing order’, but like Nansen she asked whether this would be reason enough to let millions of Russian children die.¹⁵⁸ An article in *The Record* at the time argued that ‘it is a detestable and frigid charity that refuses to stretch out a hand to save those who differ in politics or religion from itself’. Nevertheless, the criticism had an effect, and many appeals concentrated initially on the least controversial group, Russian children. As the article stated, those children are ‘no more Bolshevik than you and I are’.¹⁵⁹ Both the SCF and the ARA kept emphasising that all food would reach the children, that no Red Army soldier would profit thereby, and that those on the ground providing relief would immediately leave the country if the smallest part of the aid was diverted from the children.¹⁶⁰

In addition, relief organisations, except for communist ones, largely avoided speculation about the causes of the famine. If reasons for the famine were discussed at all, it was described as a natural catastrophe that came to the Russian people ‘not through their fault or the fault of others’.¹⁶¹ Possible human factors, such as Soviet policies or the blockade imposed by the Western Powers, were brushed aside to avoid controversy.¹⁶² In one of the few cases where the question of guilt was mentioned in *The Record*, the author tried to create a balanced picture in which both sides were to blame:

While it may be true that misgovernment has aggravated the effects of the famine, it must be remembered that it is primarily due to the war, the blockade and the drought of last year, for which the Russian people are in no way responsible, and in any case this furnishes no ground for allowing the population to die while we carefully apportion the blame for their death.¹⁶³

This narrative absolving the Russian government of blame was necessary as co-operation with Russian authorities was essential for relief work to succeed. In order to describe the Russians – even communists – as deserving beneficiaries, Russian institutions were praised for their willingness to co-operate

¹⁵⁷ Nansen, cited in Cabanes, *Great War*, 194.

¹⁵⁸ Cited in Clare Mulley, *The Woman Who Saved the Children: A Biography of Eglantyne Jebb, Founder of Save the Children* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2009), 291.

¹⁵⁹ Mc Kenzie, ‘Little Mother’.

¹⁶⁰ ‘Politics and Charity’, *The Record* 2, no. 2 (1921); Philip Gibbs, ‘Russia’s Hungry Christmas’, *The Record* 2, no. 7 (1921); Telegram, draft by Hoover, 16. Nov. 1922, ARA, reel 389.

¹⁶¹ Mc Kenzie, ‘Little Mother’.

¹⁶² Mahood and Satzewich, ‘Save the Children Fund’, 60.

¹⁶³ ‘The Fruit of the Tree’, *The Record* 2, no. 17 (1922).

and conflicts were downplayed. In addition, it was underlined that the Russians had not passively submitted to their fate, but that the government and the population heroically fought the famine. ARA, SCF, the Quakers, and especially the WIR emphasised Russian relief efforts and their co-operative spirit in articles and appeals. Well-organised children's hospitals, the exemplary work of Russian volunteers and employees, domestic fundraising efforts, the distribution of crop seeds by the government, and similar Russian initiatives were highlighted to Western audiences.¹⁶⁴ Internally, however, criticisms about the lack of Russian assistance, their inadequate work ethic, and a cumbersome bureaucracy were widespread, especially within the ARA.¹⁶⁵

Mixed Emotions: Children, Horrors, and Holidays

By 1920, children had become the 'quintessential humanitarian subject' and 'descriptions and depictions of children's bodies were closely linked to humanitarian appeals' (see Figures 3.4, and 3.5).¹⁶⁶ The innocent child as a victim had become a humanitarian means to an end, as it exemplified both the horrors of wars and catastrophes as well as the hope for a better future.¹⁶⁷ Consequently, not only the SCF, but the ARA and affiliated organisations, as well as several Red Cross societies, spoke exclusively about children in their first public commitments and appeals. A European campaign by artists and writers, supported by the WIR and Nansen, ran under the slogan 'For Our Little Russian Brothers', and even the FSR asked its audience to answer 'the cry of children whose fathers died by bullets supplied to the counter-revolutionary . . . by American, British and French imperialists'.¹⁶⁸

To evoke maximum feelings of pity, descriptions of needy children were often embellished with hyperbole. For example, children were said to have 'hands like claws' and 'only their big dark, wondering eyes give any indication of the childish beauty gone forever'.¹⁶⁹ An early SCF report depicted the

¹⁶⁴ Mahood and Satzewich, 'Save the Children Fund', 64–5; Edward Fuller, 'Real Life in Russia (part 2, Saratov)', *The Record* 2, no. 5 (1921); 'How Russia Helps Herself', *The Record* 2, no. 4 (1921); 'The Russian Famine – Mr. Laurence Webster's experience', *The Record* 2, no. 3 (1921); 'Work of the International Russian Relief Committee', 4; 'The ARA Russian Operation at Glance', paper by Communication Division, 9 May 1923, ARA, reel 548; Hoover to Harding, 9 Feb. 1922, in Fisher, *Famine in Soviet Russia*, 543–7, 545.

¹⁶⁵ See, e.g., Quinn to New York, 28 Dec. 1922, ARA, reel 496; Brown to Rickard, 14 Mar. 1922, ARA, reel 548; ARA report titled 'Troubles', undated (probably late 1922), signed HHF, ARA, reel 496; Patenaude, *Big Show*, 565–7.

¹⁶⁶ Gill, 'Rational Administration', 26; Kind-Kovács, 'Great War', 38.

¹⁶⁷ Kind-Kovács, 'Great War'; Marshall, 'Construction of Children'; Weidling, 'From Sentiment to Science'.

¹⁶⁸ Bienz, *Für unsere Kleinen Russischen Brüder* (in French: *Pour nos petits frères russes*); FSR pamphlet 'They Are Knocking at Your Door', ARA, reel 115.

¹⁶⁹ 'News from Relief Areas', *The Record* 2, no. 5 (1921).



Figure 3.4 *Russia Restituenda* (Russia Must Recover), 1922.

Poster by Czech artist Alfons Maria Mucha. Used as a plea to help starving Russian children. Courtesy of Buyenlarge/Getty Images

situation in a children's home as follows: 'Little cots each containing a little shrivelled form, its eyes staring out of a head which seemed nothing more than skin stretched tightly over a skull, with a little mouth that gasped out a mute appeal for help, as a fish gasps for breath when taken out of water.'¹⁷⁰

Texts like these led to criticism that the SCF was making 'capital out of popular emotions'. However, an article in *The Record* readily conceded that this was the intention. Helping others, the author claimed, was a primitive instinct and charities in general, and the SCF especially, capitalised on this instinct.¹⁷¹ Individuals and groups from Russia used this strategy as well, and thrust themselves upon their Western addressees with descriptions of cannibalism, suicide, and murder, hoping this would open their hearts and purses.¹⁷²

¹⁷⁰ Edward Fuller, 'Real Life in Russia (part 2, Saratov)', *The Record* 2, no. 5 (1921).

¹⁷¹ 'The New Charity', *The Record* 2, no. 8 (1922).

¹⁷² Tzaritzin Union of School Teachers to ARA, undated, ARA, reel 499.



Figure 3.5 Screenshot of the pamphlet *Jewish Life Here and There – Some Pictures and a Few Facts* by the Federation of Ukrainian Jews, London, 1922.

American Relief Administration Russian operational records, Box 92, Folder 3, Hoover Institution Archives

Photos and postcards, often depicting children in dire need, were widely circulated, mostly with a calculated shock effect.¹⁷³ In articles and pamphlets, pictures of children were also used to illustrate a before–after development, a humanitarian strategy that was already some decades old, showing the effects of the feeding programme, as well as providing a here–there contrast between children in the West and in Russia (see Figure 3.5).¹⁷⁴ For the SCF, campaigning and propaganda were embedded in public relations programmes and often designed by mass media experts. The cornerstones of effective communication were ‘originality in announcements, designs, speeches’, ‘simplicity and clearness’, and constant repetition. As in the advertising industry, it was considered

¹⁷³ For an example, see ‘Les deux étapes de la faim’, a postcard photograph of two starving children, probably taken by Nansen himself, part of a larger set issued to raise funds, available at upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/0/05/Fridtjof_Nansen%2C_Les_deux_étapes_de_la_faim_%281922%29.jpg (accessed 29 July 2019). Other examples are in Patenaude, *Big Show*, 324–7. The FSR also used Nansen’s pictures. See *The Russian Famine [Pictures – Appeals]* (New York: FSR, c. 1922, hereafter cited as FSR, *Pictures – Appeals*) and *Matrix Service* (New York: FSR, c. 1922).

¹⁷⁴ For the history of this visual strategy, see Fehrenbach, ‘Children and Other Civilians’, 179.

'necessary to strike the same nail and to strike for a long time in order to drive it in deeply into the consciousness of the unknowing crowd'.¹⁷⁵

However, it was realised at the time that the adoption of business methods could raise ethical problems. An article by the noted author and playwright Israel Zangwill ridiculed this development by presenting charity slogans like 'Try our cheap charity – Certified pyre', 'Ten thousand war orphans – guaranteed genuine', and 'Good deeds at a unique discount'.¹⁷⁶ Ruth Fry, head of the Friends' Emergency and War Victims Relief Committee (FEWVRC), viewed the increasing influence of public relations techniques on the humanitarian sector sceptically. For Quakers, she suggested, 'relief is propaganda'. However, as this propaganda was a reflection of fieldwork rather than a public relations effort, it remained 'free from the sting and stigma it would have had, had it been undertaken of set purpose'.¹⁷⁷ Fry's moral concerns seem to have had little practical impact: like the SCF, the FEWVRC hired publicity staff and acknowledged the correlation between advertising expenditures and income.¹⁷⁸

Like the SCF, the ARA knew that providing businesslike relief was not enough to win public goodwill, and that propaganda had to deal with 'human suffering ... as emotional arguments have greater carrying power ... than scientific or statistical analysis'.¹⁷⁹ The ARA press department was, therefore, eager to receive usable information from the famine front.¹⁸⁰

The medium of film became part of the campaign, and the SCF, ARA, ICRR, Quakers, and FSR produced films or documentary clips that were shown to a broader public and during fundraising events.¹⁸¹ However, it seems that the SCF alone was wholeheartedly convinced by the medium. They

¹⁷⁵ 'The International Movement', *The Record* 1, no. 10 (1921). The article originally appeared in the ISCU journal *Feuilles de Propagande*, no. 3, 30 Mar. 1921.

¹⁷⁶ Israel Zangwill, 'Bargains in Beneficence', *The Record* 1, no. 14 (1921).

¹⁷⁷ Ruth Fry, 'The Relation of Relief to Propaganda', *Friends' Quarterly Examiner* 57 (1923): 322–35.

¹⁷⁸ Kelly, *British Humanitarian Activity*, 194–5.

¹⁷⁹ Fisher to Rickard, 1 July 1922, ARA, reel 549.

¹⁸⁰ Mayer to Wilkinson, 9 May 1922, ARA, reel 549.

¹⁸¹ Both the ARA and the Red Cross had some experience with this medium by the 1920s. See Cabanes, *Great War*, 220; Daniel Palmieri, 'Humanitarianism on the Screen: The ICRC Films, 1921–1965', in *Humanitarianism & Media, 1900 to the Present*, ed. Johannes Paulmann (New York: Berghahn, 2019), 90–106. The SCF film was called *Famine: A Glimpse of the Misery in the Province of Saratov*, or in other versions simply *The Russian Famine of 1921*. See Leaflet for Famine Movie, undated, SCF, reel 33, and Cabanes, *Great War*, 221. The material was also modified and used by the ICRR and Soviet authorities. The film is partially available at <https://avarchives.icrc.org/Film/5449> (accessed 29 June 2019). For the Quaker film *New Worlds for the Old: Quaker Relief in Stricken Europe*, see Minutes of meeting of executive, Buzuluk, 27 Oct. 1922, FEWVRC 7/3/1/1. The FSR film was entitled *Russia through the Shadows*. See Charles Evan Hughes to Hoover, 7 Feb. 1923, and FSR to Department of Education, Ohio, 3 Jan. 1923; both ARA, reel 115.

adopted the motto 'Seeing Is Believing' and put great efforts into promoting their famine movie. An article in *The Record* suggested that the film aroused 'emotions akin to those engendered by an autopsy' among members of the audience. Moreover, the camera provided 'incontrovertible evidence of the ravages of the famine' and proved all those who had denied its death toll and criticised the work of the SCF wrong. Those who nevertheless still doubted were said to be 'deliberately condemning them [the children] to death'.¹⁸² However, the direct financial return of the famine film was disappointing, and the SCF admitted that at many screenings only a handful of viewers were present.¹⁸³ The ARA, on the other hand, remained sceptical regarding the effectiveness of films as a fundraising tool. Its director general, Edgar Rickard, pointed out that 'the history of our film ventures, starting with Belgium relief, have as far as I know produced nothing but anxiety'.¹⁸⁴

The coverage of the famine was especially evident during Christmas and Easter, when headlines full of pathos dominated the newspapers.¹⁸⁵ Holiday drives often included here-and-there comparisons, contrasting Western abundance with Russian deprivation (see also Figure 3.5): 'As I look into the crowded shops [in London] I think of thousands of villages, very silent in a snow-covered land, where there will be no Christmas feast but only the moaning of the peasant families sitting at empty boards or lying down to die. Some of these I saw a week or two ago must now be dead.'¹⁸⁶ Even the ARA, otherwise reluctant to issue any kind of appeal, took the opportunity to encourage US citizens to buy food remittances as Christmas gifts. The organisers hoped doing so would widen the donor community, as 'the actual saving of lives at Christmas will appeal to many charitable Americans having no relatives or friends in Russia'.¹⁸⁷

In the end, not even the communist FSR could afford to refrain from mounting an appeal. Among other things, it organised a 'Nation-Wide Holiday Drive',¹⁸⁸ sold Christmas stamps, and organised a campaign called 'A Million Meals for a Million Russian Orphans This Christmas' to collect one million

¹⁸² 'Seeing Is Believing'. See also Kurasawa, 'Making of Humanitarian Visual Icons', 79.

¹⁸³ 'The Famine Film and the Future of Europe', *The Record* 2, no. 12 (1922).

¹⁸⁴ Rickard to Herter, 7 Apr. 1922, ARA, reel 549. See also Bertrand Patenaude, 'Shooting the Bolsheviks', *Hoover's Digest*, no. 2 (2012), available at www.hoover.org/research/shooting-bolsheviks (accessed 29 June 2019).

¹⁸⁵ Breen, 'Saving Enemy Children', 227; 'Can You Listen Unmoved to the Easter Death Dirge of Starving Children?', *Glasgow Herald*, 13 Apr. 1922.

¹⁸⁶ 'Russia's Hungry Christmas', *The Record* 2, no. 7 (1921).

¹⁸⁷ Cablegram from Haskell to Head Office, 8 Dec. 1921, ARA, reel 389. See also redraft of letter to contributors to the ARA by Hoover, undated (probably mid-Dec. 1921), ARA, reel 389, and Hoover's Appeal to the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America, 2 Dec. 1921, ARA, reel 11.

¹⁸⁸ FSR, 'Nation-Wide Holiday Drive for the Famine Stricken of Soviet Russia, 15 Dec. 1921 – 1 Jan. 1922', ARA, reel 115.

dimes, representing an equal number of meals, for which every donor received a 'handsome certificate'.¹⁸⁹ Despite many similarities, the slogans used by communist organisations sometimes differed from those of other agencies. Even during holiday campaigns, they did not fail to refer to the international class struggle: 'At Christmas, profiteers buy pearl necklaces for their mistresses, but the class conscious worker makes a gift of food for his starving Russian comrades.'¹⁹⁰ In addition, socialist holidays, like the anniversary of the October Revolution, were used to advantage for fundraising purposes.¹⁹¹

Self-interest as a Fundraising Strategy

Another way of coping with the 'helping the enemy' dilemma was to minimise the altruistic dimension of relief and stress that national and individual self-interest was served by helping Soviet Russia. Nansen justified Norway's governmental aid in a statement to the Assembly of the League of Nations in Geneva by suggesting Russian relief would contribute to the economic stabilisation of war-ridden Europe. In the end, he alleged, it was not 'humanitarian sentiment' but 'cold economic importance' that determined the Norwegian government's actions in this question.¹⁹² A conference organised by the International Committee of the Red Cross in Berlin in December 1921 passed a resolution embodying a similar notion, namely, that the world economy depended on the restoration of Russian markets and production.¹⁹³

Hoover was an outspoken anti-Bolshevik, but since the ARA relied on public funding, he emphasised US self-interest as being served by famine relief, which he described as an 'act of economic soundness'.¹⁹⁴ When lobbying for congressional funding, he argued that buying grain would stabilise the market and thereby help US farmers. 'Helping ourselves helps others' was President Warren Harding's summary of this idea in a speech on Russian relief in December 1921.¹⁹⁵ However, this strategy allowed Russian leaders to understate the altruistic dimension of Western help and their own debt of

¹⁸⁹ 'FSR Activities', *Soviet Russia* 7, no. 11 (1922).

¹⁹⁰ 'Famine Relief by the Workers', *Soviet Russia* 6, no. 4 (1922).

¹⁹¹ FSR, *The Russian Famine: Forty Facts* (New York: FSR, c. 1922), 4.

¹⁹² *League of Nations, Official Journal*, Aug. 1922, Annex 385. Statement presented to the Council 22 July 1922 by Representative of Norwegian Government.

¹⁹³ 'Un appel de la conférence internationale de Berlin, 4 Dec. 1921', *Société Russe de la Croix-Rouge Bulletin*, no. 5, 15 Dec. 1921.

¹⁹⁴ Hoover's testimony before the Senate Foreign Relation Committee, Dec. 1922, as cited by Patenaude, *Big Show*, 638.

¹⁹⁵ 'President Talks to Restore Normal Basis', *Wall Street Journal*, 7 Dec. 1921. On the debate in Congress see Barry Riley, *The Political History of American Food Aid: An Uneasy Benevolence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 63–7.

gratitude, depicting food aid as a capitalist endeavour.¹⁹⁶ When the humanitarian enterprise in Soviet Russia reached its peak in 1922, Leon Trotsky stated that ‘philanthropy is tied to business, to enterprises, to interests – if not today, then tomorrow’.¹⁹⁷ Trotsky’s depiction of humanitarian aid as donor driven is shared by many modern commentators.¹⁹⁸

Even relief organisations with a more cosmopolitan and altruistic profile, like the SCF, used economic reasoning in their campaign, arguing that if Russia were to enter world markets again, unemployment at home would be reduced.¹⁹⁹ Relief for Russia therefore appeared as ‘an investment rather than an expenditure’, and it was further claimed that ‘no [other] investment would bring so great a return’.²⁰⁰ Although pursuing spiritual aims, the Papal Relief Mission was in a way also investment-oriented. Current research confirms the claims of contemporary critics that its efforts were guided by the hope of reclaiming ground it had lost to the Orthodox Church, rather than simply by benevolence as such.²⁰¹

To critics wary of stabilising an enemy regime, Hoover replied that the ARA campaign was not about helping a Bolshevik country, but about helping a country that anticipated a regime change in the near future. The relief campaign would contribute to this by securing the good will of the Russian people. Hoover believed that relief for Soviet Russia was the most effective way to halt the ‘Bolshevik disease’ from spreading into Europe, and perhaps even heal Russia herself of it. US relief would enhance democracy and give the USA an advantage over Europe in future competition for untouched Russian markets.²⁰² For Hoover, in the long run, gratitude and the resulting moral credit was a political means to an end, which is why the ARA took measures to ensure that recipients knew their food came from the USA.

The rhetoric urging the West to counter the spread of a disease was also meant literally. Labour MP George Nicoll Barnes, in a parliamentary debate about British governmental aid, warned that ‘disease stalked behind hunger and cold’, it being the government’s responsibility ‘to stop that westward march’.²⁰³ The SCF reminded its compatriots that ignoring the famine was not an option, as ‘even Britain’s geographical insularity would not preserve her

¹⁹⁶ ‘The Famine and the International Situation, Material for Agitators by the Central Agitation Commission to Combat the Famine of the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party’, undated translation by the ARA (probably Sept. 1921), ARA, reel 14; ‘On the Volga’, translation of an article in *Izvestia*, 11 Aug. 1922, *ibid*.

¹⁹⁷ As cited by Patenaude, *Big Show*, 639.

¹⁹⁸ Vaux, *Selfish Altruist*; de Waal, *Famine Crimes*.

¹⁹⁹ ‘British Unemployed and Starving Russians’, *The Record* 2, no. 19 (1922).

²⁰⁰ ‘Work and Doles’, *The Record* 2, no. 19 (1922) (first quotation); ‘In Parliament’, *The Record* 2, no. 14 (1922) (second quotation). See also Meredith Atkinson, ‘Impressions that Remain – A Glimpse of Russia’s Agony’, *The Record* 2, no. 13 (1922).

²⁰¹ Gribble, ‘Cooperation and Conflict’, 652; Trythall, ‘Russia’s Misfortune’, 79–80.

²⁰² Gribble, ‘Cooperation and Conflict’, 341. ²⁰³ ‘In Parliament’.

from the possibility of a scourge analogous to the Black Death of the fourteenth century'.²⁰⁴ The German Red Cross likewise justified providing relief to Soviet Russia so that a cholera epidemic might not spread to German territory. Consequently, its efforts were concentrated on medical relief.²⁰⁵

Motivating and legitimising famine relief on the basis of self-interest caused a sense of unease, especially in the SCF and among the Quakers. Hoover was also warned by a US senator to 'not dilute our generosity with any selfish purposes'.²⁰⁶ A major article in *The Record* stated that it was depressing to read constant appeals to economic self-interest. It might well be 'that men are unemployed in England because Saratov is starving', but if we let the Russians perish, the author argued, we will suffer greater losses than potential economic markets: 'then we shall be killing our own humanity within us, and we shall soon show the signs of it in increasing brutality, in social misery and in personal desolation'. Such reasoning downplayed empathy for the hungry and stressed psychological well-being of the donors. The crucial issue was no longer that millions were dying, but that 'others are willing to let them die'. A people who would let this happen were seen as 'morally doomed'.²⁰⁷ The images of starving Russians, a fundraiser warned, would pursue those unwilling to give 'like a remorse' for the rest of their lives.²⁰⁸

This change of perspective towards the donor also prevailed when relief agencies invoked a nation's reputation. Some organisations, like the Imperial War Relief Fund (IWRF), employed a nationalist rhetoric in which altruism was presented as a genuinely British trait. In such a context, even donations benefitting former enemies could be exalted as acts of true patriotism, demonstrating the nobility of the British race.²⁰⁹ Similarly, the ARA suggested to its donors that their aid was carrying 'American ideals' to the Russians.²¹⁰

For smaller nations, participation in international relief offered an opportunity to demonstrate their sovereignty and gain foreign prestige.²¹¹ Lord Robert Cecil of the IWRF considered it humiliating that Britain was being surpassed, not only by the USA, but by her former colonies, Canada and New Zealand, when it came to providing government funds for Russian relief. In like manner, the German Red Cross observed that Germany could hardly stand by while the whole civilised world was sending relief.²¹² Afterwards,

²⁰⁴ 'Eyes ... but See Not', *The Record* 2, no. 9 (1922).

²⁰⁵ Braskén, *International Workers' Relief*, 35; Wolfgang U. Eckart, 'Nach bestem Vermögen tatkräftige Hilfe leisten', *Ruperto Carola* 3 (1999).

²⁰⁶ As cited by Patenaude, *Big Show*, 638.

²⁰⁷ 'The Famine Film and the Future of Europe', *The Record* 2, no. 12 (1922). See also 'Russia's Hungry Christmas', *The Record* 2, no. 7 (1921).

²⁰⁸ Cited in Kurasawa, 'Making of Humanitarian Visual Icons', 69.

²⁰⁹ Baughan, 'Imperial War Relief Fund'.

²¹⁰ Stutesman to Sutter, 1 June 1922, ARA, reel 502; Stutesman to Rev. George Batt, 31 Aug. 1922, ARA, reel 502.

²¹¹ Baughan, 'Imperial War Relief Fund'. ²¹² Braskén, *International Workers' Relief*, 35.

that country's commitment would be praised as illustrative of the 'German willingness to make sacrifices'.²¹³

The SCF showed that an impartial and international agenda did not rule out patriotic orientation, and it agreed with the IWRP that voluntary relief organisations had taken the lead for Britain in Russia. A visitor to the famine region stated in *The Record* that the SCF was upholding British esteem while the government did nothing. Viewing SCF's accomplishments filled him 'with pride in the British race'. The same spirit that made the British people such great colonisers of Australia, Canada, and New Zealand, he continued, was now enabling them 'to colonize in another sense the frozen steppes of Russia'.²¹⁴ Liberal MP Isaac Foot even invoked a military analogy by referring to SCF and the Quakers as quasi-imperial troops: 'I understand that in time of war the first concern is for the outposts. I ask the Government to consider whether we have not in Saratov an outpost, which ought to be assisted, and it will be a shameful humiliation if we withdraw our forces.'²¹⁵ Accordingly, the All-British Appeal, in which the SCF, the FEWVRC, and the IWRP participated, claimed that donating was a 'national duty' as 'our honour as a nation is involved'.²¹⁶ Even the FSR responded to what amounted to a contest over a nation's reputation. In a letter appealing for donations to support children's homes in Russia, the FSR urged that since similar homes were already being financed by Dutch and German workers, American labourers, with their higher salaries, should be able to do the same.²¹⁷

In general, relief organisations attempted to blend altruistic and pragmatic motivation in order to draw in large groups of potential donors. Helping children was teaching them how 'to love Britain', the claim went. Someday, *The Record* suggested, when these children become grown-ups with political influence, they will remember that it was the British people who helped them.²¹⁸ Lord Weardale, chairman of the Executive Committee of the SCF, cited individual suffering and drew a still broader picture: 'Children are the raw material of the League of Nations and while we care for the individual sufferer . . . it is rather as a potential father of the race, a citizen of the future, that we seek to save him.' For Weardale, SCF's work was 'constructive as well as palliative'.²¹⁹

²¹³ Peter Mühlens, *Die Russische Hunger- und Seuchenkatastrophe in den Jahren 1921–22* (Springer: Berlin, 1923), iv.

²¹⁴ 'Anglijski kuchnia', *The Record* 2, no. 14 (1922). ²¹⁵ 'In Parliament'.

²¹⁶ Benjamin Robertson, *The Famine in Russia: Report* (London: The Russian Famine Relief Fund, 1922), 14.

²¹⁷ 'Soviet Russia Calls', FSR, s.a., ARA, reel 115.

²¹⁸ 'Politics and Charity', *The Record* 2, no. 2 (1921); Mahood and Satzewich, 'Save the Children Fund', 8.

²¹⁹ Lord Weardale, 'The To-Morrow of Society', *The Record* 1, no. 3 (1920).

The JDC had similar ideas about influencing societal developments and earmarked a portion of their aid for Russian doctors. Lewis Strauss, who had previously worked for Hoover, insisted in a letter to the ARA that recipients should be informed that aid came from a Jewish organisation, as 'it may create a certain amount of good will among a cultured and intelligent group of Russians toward their Jewish fellow citizens'.²²⁰

Sometimes the narrative anticipating a positive future if aid were provided was complemented by dystopian horror scenarios of help denied. Matching Hoover's argument that communism was caused by desperation and famine, Weardale pointed out to a critic that hunger promotes hatred, and that letting enemy children starve and degenerate would only harm British interests in the long run.²²¹ A Jewish-American relief organisation asked rhetorically whether famine survivors should be 'left to grow into a race of demoniac men and women, burning with hatred, replete with the instinct of savagery, cherishing only revenge, rebellion and fear'.²²² Thus, feeding Russian children, the SCF argued, was 'warding off the otherwise inevitable revenge'.²²³

Obligation to Give

'You must give!! Thousands will freeze and starve to death unless you help right now!!'²²⁴ This appeal launched by the FSR, with its deadly alternative, entails a strong obligation. The line between requesting and demanding donations is blurred. Relief organisations have often stretched such limits. Suggesting a moral obligation to give while simultaneously making people feel guilty has always been a fundraising technique. Detailed descriptions of harm, misery, disease, and individual suffering, combined with the insinuation of direct or indirect responsibility, seek to morally force potential donors to act and make it hard for them to remain passive.

Even before the Russian operation began, Zangwill had pointed out that 'charity is a cloak to cover sins' – a cloak bitterly needed, as Western actions and inactions had doomed millions of children to die. The money being donated at the time, he wrote, was for that reason 'not so much alms as blood money', similar to the restitution that archaic religious codes required for murder. However, as this modern form of blood money was paid voluntarily, it might erase the crimes of the past and lead to the reconciliation of peoples.²²⁵

²²⁰ Strauss, JDC, to Page, 16 Dec. 1921, ARA, reel 500.

²²¹ Lord Weardale, undated (probably autumn 1920), SCF, reel 30.

²²² 'Some Pictures and a Few Facts', undated, ARA, reel 115.

²²³ Zangwill, 'Bargains in Beneficence'.²²⁴ FSR, 'Nation-Wide Holiday Drive'.

²²⁵ Zangwill, 'Bargains in Beneficence'.

The purported obligation to give arose in many cases from religious or ethnic kinship between donors and beneficiaries. The London-based Federation of Ukrainian Jews (FUJ) urged its members to donate (successfully, as the ARA noted) by stressing ‘These are *your* people, bound to you by the sacred bonds of blood and faith, and you must assume the responsibility of helping them!’²²⁶ Swedish collections for compatriots in Ukrainian Gammalsvenskby, Mennonite relief for coreligionists in Russia, German Red Cross campaigns for Volga German settlements, and Turkish donations for Crimean Muslims were motivated by similar arguments.²²⁷ However, exploiting the in-group mechanism was not limited to ethnic and religious communities. For example, in March 1922, Russian Boy Scouts urged their US counterparts ‘to demonstrate their fidelity to the Boy Scouts law’ by sending food.²²⁸ Many group appeals from Russia were similarly based on solidarity and directed towards foreigners with the same occupation.

Obligations could also be created in other ways. The SCF’s kitchen system, which was the instrumentality of their food provision in Russia, was in part developed to ensure the continuous influx of money. The maintenance of their own distribution structure was supposed to bind donors to a concrete aid project over a longer period and thereby generate more permanent funding.²²⁹ Individuals, groups, local SCF committees, private companies, and schools who contributed £100 or more had feeding kitchens in Russia named after them. In addition, donor’s names and amounts were published in *The Record* under the banner ‘The Hundred Pound Roll of Honour’.²³⁰ Donors received information from *their* kitchen, such as photos, numbers of children fed, the amount and kinds of food distributed, and individual stories. The system created personal bonds and the feeling that a particular kitchen depended on a specific donor, rather than on general relief. Advertisements stated that 100 children could be fed for twenty weeks on £100. A letter was generally sent to donors before the period covered by their contribution was about to

²²⁶ FUJ appeal ‘Spare Them a Garment’, ARA, reel 115.

²²⁷ Documents regarding Gammalsvenskby are available at www.gammalsvenskby.se/NSoderblom1932.htm (accessed 29 June 2018); P.C. Hiebert and Orié O. Miller, *Feeding the Hungry: Russian Famine 1919–1925, American Mennonite Relief Operations under the Auspices of Mennonite Central Committee* (Scottsdale, PA: Mennonite Central Committee, 1929); Paul Weindling, *Epidemics and Genocide in Eastern Europe, 1890–1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 173–8; Hakan Kirişli, ‘The Famine of 1921–22 in the Crimea and the Volga Basin and the Relief from Turkey’, *Middle Eastern Studies* 39, no. 1 (2003): 37–88.

²²⁸ Beloretzk Boy Scouts to Boy Scouts of America, 9 Mar. 1922, ARA, reel 498.

²²⁹ ‘Cheap Publicity’, *The Record* 2, no. 5 (1921).

²³⁰ See for example, ‘Links with Saratov – The Hundred Pound Roll of Honour’, *The Record* 2, no. 8 (1922), and *The Record* 2, no. 10 (1922). Installment plans were also offered (see ‘A Suggestion to Public Schools’, *The Record* 2, no. 9 (1922), and ‘SCF Kitchen Contact Scheme’, *Daily Telegraph*, 25 Nov. 1921).

end. A draft of this letter (which was probably not used) literally put children's lives in the donor's hands:

The amount you subscribed for the maintenance of a kitchen in Saratov has now run out. For twenty weeks 100 children have received a nourishing meal daily by your gift. . . . I am writing to ask whether you would find it possible to keep your kitchen open for a further period. If we cannot continue to feed the children preserved so far from an otherwise inevitable death from starvation they will certainly die.²³¹

The addressee was not left with much choice. In a later internal document, an SCF fundraiser confessed that she had told donors 'the money they have previously spent will have been wasted, unless they can make a further effort', an argument that was also used during campaigns in mid- and late 1922.²³² Hence, an initial donation was nurtured into a moral obligation to give more, suddenly placing someone who had previously donated under greater moral pressure to contribute than a person who had given nothing. However, the SCF soon realised that this was a problematic approach. The formulation was modified in a second draft in which the donor was invited to renew the commitment, but also assured that, in any case, the SCF would do its 'utmost to find new supporters who will carry on your kitchen'.²³³

Professional fundraising entailed costs, a fact that was often withheld from the public, although it sometimes became part of the appeal itself. An FSR solicitation opened with the declaration that the cost of writing and sending this letter was the equivalent of two meals for a Russian child. If they ignored the letter, addressees were chided for having 'taken away from a tattered little hungry orphan two nourishing meals'. Consequently, the least one could do was to reimburse the FSR for its costs, that is, make a small donation, for 'surely it shall not be said that you deprive any starving child of food'.²³⁴

Individuals used similar tactics in appealing for aid. In April 1922, a Russian teacher wrote to the ARA, asking for a loan or donation. Among other things, he offered to pay in collectible Russian stamps, some of which he enclosed. He probably hoped that ignoring the letter would be difficult for the addressee, who would feel a certain obligation upon receiving it. He wrote that he knew the ARA could not deal with individuals when millions were starving, but nevertheless expressed hope for 'a small exception'.²³⁵ The sender, who had made every effort to prevent his letter from getting lost in the flood of appeals,

²³¹ Draft of a form letter, undated, SCF, reel 30.

²³² SCF, reel 30; 'To-day and To-morrow in Russia', *The Record* 2, no. 20 (1922).

²³³ 'Draft letter for expiring kitchens (2nd edition), 24 Apr. 1922', SCF, reel 30.

²³⁴ FSR, appeal letter, undated, ARA reel 115.

²³⁵ Konovaloff to ARA, Apr. 1922, ARA, reel 500.

was successful, as a member of the ARA staff personally paid for five food parcels that were sent to him.²³⁶

The moral obligation to give could also be inferred from prior actions. When unsuccessfully lobbying for £500,000 in government aid, MP Isaac Foot reminded his colleagues that Britain had spent £100 million for war in Russia, but was now refusing to supply ‘one two-hundredth part of that sum to sustain these people, most of them whom are frail women and weak children’.²³⁷ The communist FSR used a similar approach when calculating that the ‘exploiting class’ invested the ‘stupendous sum of \$260,680,000,000 to kill fifteen million men, to cripple twenty million more, and to ruin Europe industrially’, equaling ‘2,606 times the amount of money required to save the 20,000,000 famine stricken Russians’.²³⁸ Previous deeds could also work in a positive way, as when in February 1922 the Polish government wanted to show Hoover its ‘deep gratitude’ for ARA relief in previous years by opening up the port of Gdansk and transporting up to 15,000 t of relief goods per month from there to the Russian border free of charge.²³⁹

Solidarity, Not Charity

The situation for communist organisations like the WIR and the FSR differed from that of other relief organisations, as it implied an unprecedented interplay of humanitarianism and international class politics.²⁴⁰ As a result, it was Lenin’s ‘Appeal to the International Proletariat’ of 6 August 1921, rather than Gorky’s letter to the American and European people three weeks earlier, that initiated relief efforts and led directly to the establishment of the WIR and its national chapters. Lenin blamed Western states for having caused the famine and accused them of ‘planning a fresh campaign, intervention, and counter-revolutionary conspiracies’.²⁴¹

For this reason, he only asked industrial workers and small farmers for help. WIR appeals consequently invoked workers’ solidarity (see Figure 3.6) and were framed as part of an international class struggle. A campaign in France, for example, ran under the slogan ‘We have worked all our life for our capitalist masters. Let us work one day [per month] for the benefit of our brothers dying on the Volga’.²⁴²

²³⁶ ‘I am willing to risk 50 dollars on this correspondent.’ Julius H. Barnes to Dailey, 28 Apr. 1922, ARA, reel 500.

²³⁷ ‘In Parliament’.²³⁸ FSR, *Pictures – Appeals*, 11.

²³⁹ ARA press release, 8 Feb. 1922, ARA, reel 548.

²⁴⁰ Braskén, *International Workers’ Relief*, 39.

²⁴¹ Lenin’s appeal is reproduced at www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1921/aug/02.htm (accessed 29 June 2019).

²⁴² ‘Famine Relief by the Workers’.

*A Ural Diary**Fifteen Cents***SOVIET RUSSIA**

Semi-Monthly Official Organ of the Friends of Soviet Russia

Vol. VII

August 15, 1922

No. 4



TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE		PAGE
FROM A URAL DIARY, by A. A. Heller.....	98	PROVISIONS FOR PROPERTY RELATIONS.....	111
HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TRIAL, by Karl Rudick	101	ENFORCERS, by Stepanik.....	112
WORKERS AND INTELLECTUALS ON TRIAL.....	104	TWO ESCAPES, by Stepanik.....	115
THE TAX IN KIND DURING 1922, by S. Altov.....	105	FACTS AND FANCIES.....	120
CONSTRUCTION AND FAMINE IN RUSSIA, by Max Beck	106	AID FOR THE FAMINE-STRIKEN, by A. Vinokurov	123
THE VICE-PRESIDENT, by Charles Recht.....	108	PRIVATE PROPERTY IN RUSSIA, by I. Brandenburg- sky and A. Goidshuf.....	124
AN EMIGRÉ VICINETTE, by David Owen.....	109	BOOKS REVIEWED	126
		RELIEF CONTRIBUTIONS, JULY 15-31.....	126

Issued Twice a Month at 201 West 12th St., New York. Edited and Published by Jacob Wittner Hartmann. Subscription Rate: \$2.50 per annum.
Entered as second class matter January 29, 1921, at the Post Office at New York, N. Y., under the Act of March 3, 1879.

Figure 3.6 Cover of Friends of Soviet Russia publication with lithograph *Helpf Russland* (Help Russia) by Käthe Kollwitz, *Soviet Russia*, 15 Aug. 1922.

Original from University of California, Google-digitised, public domain

Nevertheless, although they differed in content and vocabulary, appeals by the FSR and WIR show many similarities regarding general motivational techniques to those of non-socialist organisations. Their campaigns suggested that workers' donations would serve their own self-interest, because Soviet Russia was not an ethnic nation, but a state based on class affiliation. In this context, class was equated with kinship and Russians were described as 'blood of your blood because

they belong to your class'.²⁴³ Fighting the famine would not only help Russians, but would destroy the hopes of the global bourgeoisie. FSR appeals suggested that whatever US workers would do for their Russian comrades today, the latter would reciprocate tomorrow. Moreover, as Russian workers had fought and died in the October Revolution for the 'ultimate freedom of all workers from wage-slavery', an unpaid debt existed that created an obligation to give on the side of workers elsewhere, and a claim to solidarity on the side of Russian workers.²⁴⁴

Like the SCF, the FSR encouraged activists to launch fundraising collections on their own, and detailed instructions were given on how to proceed when approaching potential donors.²⁴⁵ Similarly, the mainstream slogan in such solicitation was that 'The future is built upon children.' In the case of the FSR, however, donations were sought to make sure that the coming generations would defend the world's first communist state against its enemies. Thus, the FSR was dealing far less diplomatically with the guilt question than other aid agencies; it openly blamed the West for exploiting the calamity, if not for causing it, by refusing Russia credit. Moreover, in accordance with the ideology of class struggle, it was stated that famine orphans 'suffer today because famine-relief was withheld by the greedy billionaires and millionaires of the world'.²⁴⁶

The focus on children was believed to attract donors outside of the realm of communist organisations.²⁴⁷ Those organisations also copied bourgeois fundraising innovations, like the adoption scheme of the SCF. Clubs, associations, or employees of a factory could take a specific child under their wing. As in the case of the SCF, lasting bonds between donors and children were envisioned through an exchange of letters and photographs.²⁴⁸ A special feature of the WIR campaigns was the participation of artists and celebrities, who supported fundraising activities in different ways. Among them were Käthe Kollwitz (who contributed a famous lithograph, see Figure 3.6), Selma Lagerlöf, Albert Einstein, Henri Barbusse, George Bernard Shaw, Anatole France, and Martin Andersen Nexø.

Campaigning in WIR publications shifted in spring 1922 from soliciting emergency relief to a development approach (see Figure 4.6).²⁴⁹ A first step of reconstruction aid was the delivery of machines and tools, partly purchased with donations, partly collected in kind, as during the International Tool Collection Week in May 1922. Appeals claimed that 'the cry for bread, the struggle for bare existence is being drowned in the cry for production, for

²⁴³ FSR, 'Nation-Wide Holiday Drive'.

²⁴⁴ FSR, *Pictures – Appeals*, 9. See also Braskén, *International Workers' Relief*, 45 and Eugene V. Debs, 'An Appeal for Contributions for Russian Famine Relief', *Soviet Russia* 6, no. 6 (1922).

²⁴⁵ FSR letter to 'comrades', 5 Dec. 1921, ARA, reel 115. ²⁴⁶ 'Soviet Russia Calls'.

²⁴⁷ Braskén, *International Workers' Relief*, 51.

²⁴⁸ 'Help Children of Soviet Russia', *Soviet Russia* 7, no. 7 (1922); 'FSR activities'.

²⁴⁹ Braskén, *International Workers' Relief*, 60.

working capacity, for labor!’²⁵⁰ It was argued that ‘food and clothing can only alleviate the suffering engendered by the famine, but they cannot exterminate the roots of famine in Russia’.²⁵¹

The FSR regarded ‘capitalist charity’ as a counter-revolutionary means to ‘smother Soviet Russia and re-establish the reign of the over-lords’.²⁵² As Braskén points out, from a communist relief organisation’s point of view, it was essential to describe Western efforts as inadequate or as a Trojan horse (or both) in order to make the international proletariat consider its own sacrifices justified.²⁵³

Direct Appeals from Russians

When in October 1921 the ARA introduced its food remittance programme (see Figure 4.4), which allowed donors to supply friends and relatives in Russia with food parcels worth US\$10, relief workers in Russia immediately began distributing appeal forms to be filled in and sent to addressees in the West. This created a situation in which prospective beneficiaries were given the opportunity to contact potential donors directly, thus giving them a chance to affect their own destiny. It contrasted greatly with other famines, where the famine-affected often appear voiceless. Thus, the machinery of organised humanitarianism was supplemented by an ad hoc element of recipient expression.

The first-hand appeals of Soviet citizens to the West vary in form and style, as well as in the background and strategies of their authors. Among the applicants were desperate individuals with starving families asking strangers for help, representatives of villages begging for food rations, and ethnic and religious groups (such as communities of Volga Germans or Orthodox parishes) that specifically applied to their brothers and sisters in blood and faith.²⁵⁴ Most appeals, however, flowed between those linked by occupation. For example, teachers of a school, members of an orchestra, or staff of a hospital wrote to their counterparts in the USA directly or asked the ARA to assume the role of ‘philanthropic matchmaker’ and pass their appeals on to suitable parties.

However, successful match-ups between groups who made appeals and donors were the exception rather than the rule. The report of a successful pairing between a Russian training school for nurses and the Nurses’ Home of the Presbyterian Hospital in New York came about after ‘passing many

²⁵⁰ ‘International Tool Collection Week’, *Soviet Russia* 6, no. 9 (1922). See also Braskén, *International Workers’ Relief*, 61. The original appeal was drafted by WIR chief Willi Münzenberg, *International Press Correspondence* 2, no. 13, 17 Feb. 1922, 96.

²⁵¹ FSR, *The Russian Famine: One Year of Relief Work* (New York, FSR, c. 1922).

²⁵² FSR, ‘Nation-Wide Holiday Drive’.²⁵³ Braskén, *International Workers’ Relief*, 45.

²⁵⁴ Shapishnikov to ARA, 6 Mar. 1922 (original in Russian), ARA, reel 11; Eutemeier on behalf of Basilev Volost (peasant community) to ARA, 9 Jan. 1922, ARA, reel 499; Kummerl on behalf of 1,500 Volga Germans to the editor of the *New York Herald*, 20 Jan. 1922, ARA, reel 498.

hundreds of such supplications to prospective benefactors in the USA with no apparent result'. For an ARA official in London, it was therefore 'a distinct pleasure to learn, that out of the multitudinous appeals dispatched from Europe . . . one, at least, has awakened the sympathies'.²⁵⁵

In New York, ARA secretary Page was less enthusiastic and complained that the 'great number of pathetic appeals' that came in every day were bound to result in 'the establishment of hundreds of little campaigns' that neither served the ARA nor the starving people. The mere fact that the appeals arrived in New York created 'a certain obligation' towards the senders, he bemoaned.²⁵⁶ But the flood of appeals could not be stemmed. By the end of May 1922, Page's attitude had turned fatalistic: 'I wish we had a plan for clearing up these appeals from Russia, but we haven't.'²⁵⁷ Half a year later, he admitted that while few of the appeals could be used for publicity, the majority were simply filed. With resignation he added, 'I hate to be quite as cold-blooded as that.'²⁵⁸

Academics were the principal applicants because they had the skills to write and submit appeals, something that farmers and workers rarely were capable of doing. In many cases, private appeals were the last resort for teachers, librarians, and scientists, as they had limited access to the general feeding programme. Moreover, the ARA considered the Russian intelligentsia, in a broad sense, as particularly worth support, because they could help spread a positive image of the USA and articulate Russian gratitude. Haskell, the ARA director in Moscow, reported that this group was encouraged to send appeals to the USA with the hope of facilitating relief that was outside of Soviet control. Some major donations, for example by the Commonwealth Fund and the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial Fund, were earmarked for the Russian intelligentsia. However, these attempts were slowed down or forestalled when Soviet officials objected to such a specific distribution.²⁵⁹

Group appeals usually created or referred to alleged common ground. Attempts to establish a relationship with distant strangers were primarily based on similar educations or professions. References to universal humanity – often applied in individual letters – were of minor importance. Consequently, recipients were addressed as colleagues and told about working conditions and

²⁵⁵ Dailey to Supervisor Nurses Home Presbyterian Hospital, 2 May 1922; Dailey to London office, 15 June 1922; Myers to New York, 17 July 1922, all ARA, reel 500. In this specific case, US\$772 was collected for the Russian colleagues, an outcome far beyond expectations.

²⁵⁶ Page to Herter, 12 Apr. 1922, ARA, reel 498. See also Draft to Mitchel, unsigned (London), 27 Apr. 1922, ARA, reel 499.

²⁵⁷ Page to Colton, 24 May 1922, ARA, reel 499.

²⁵⁸ Page to Rickards, 18 Oct. 1922, ARA, reel 498.

²⁵⁹ Haskell and Quinn to London, 3 Apr. 1922, ARA, reel 499. See Patenaude, *Big Show*, 178–9, and Rickard to Herter, 28 Aug. 1922, ARA, reel 500. The food remittance programme offered an alternative.

supplies. Doctors depicted the situation of the local health service, academics described the state of affairs in their university, and so on.

Despite the variety of such appeals, certain patterns and elements frequently recurred. A common feature was the promise to repay what was given at some future time, whether with money, by working for the ARA (with obvious motives), or at least with eternal gratitude. A group of Volga Germans made 'the sacred promise' to pay back any debt as soon as possible by assisting other victims, and the Corporation of Dentists from Ufa, who had sent an appeal to colleagues in Chicago, considered it their 'moral duty to refund the value of the food packages' at a later date.²⁶⁰ Others offered a factual, often intellectual, *quid pro quo*. For example, a biologist from Moscow sent two scientific articles as payment for a food draft, while two mineralogists from Petrograd offered their research results on building stone materials from the Onega Lake region in exchange.²⁶¹

Perhaps applicants hoped to increase their chances of success by offering to settle their debt, although their use of such phrasing may be understood as a symbolic act. At the same time, this approach was important for the applicants' self-image. No matter how desperate they may have been, they often showed strong aversion to being seen as beggars or recipients of charity. A teacher from Tarsk wrote that he expected 'least of all to be an object of philanthropy', and a group of scholars from Kazan University would only accept help 'as long as they could hope of repaying it'.²⁶² An applicant from Odessa confronted his humiliation directly: 'You see, Gentlemen, it is very hard to get used to be a pauper. . . After a life full of work, of initiative, I am a beggar.'²⁶³

The applicants themselves, as well as ARA officials, saw such expressions as indicative of a particular form of Russian pride. For example, in their appeal to colleagues in New York, a group of typists from Ufa explained that the intelligentsia of Russia does not have the habit of begging for help – something only the existential threat of starvation made them do.²⁶⁴ An ARA memorandum noted that Russian academics rarely asked for help from abroad and

²⁶⁰ Kummerl to the editor of the *New York Herald*, 20 Jan. 1922 (original in German), ARA, reel 498; Corporation of Ufa dentists to the dentists of Chicago, 2 Feb. 1922, ARA, reel 498.

²⁶¹ Efimoff, Moscow University, to ARA, 17 July 1922, ARA, reel 500; Niskovsky to ARA, undated (summer 1922), ARA, reel 11.

²⁶² Shapishnikov to ARA, 6 Mar. 1922 (original in Russian), ARA, reel 11; Oriental Academy, Kasan University to 'Scholars of the USA', undated (probably Jan./Feb. 1922), ARA, reel 500. Similar formulations occurred in many other appeals, see, e.g., Members of Legal Profession in Odessa to New York Law Association, 24 Apr. 1922, ARA, reel 11; Telephone Workers of Viasniki to ARA, 8 Mar. 1922, *ibid*.

²⁶³ Fabrikant to ARA Odessa, 24 Mar. 1923, ARA, reel 12.

²⁶⁴ The typewriter girls of the ARA Ufa to the typewriter girls and women of New York, 13 Oct. 1922, ARA, reel 11.

would generally rather suffer than beg for assistance.²⁶⁵ In letters accompanying Russian appeals, potential donors were asked to imagine how much pride it cost the writers to beg for help.²⁶⁶ When the Boy Scouts of Theodosia (Crimea) asked the Boy Scouts of America for ‘literature of scoutism’ and used uniforms, their timidity was deciphered by the ARA, and it was pointed out to the US recipients of their request that ‘these boys were likely in great need of food’.²⁶⁷

3.4 Television, Shame, and Global Humanity: Ethiopia

A BBC television news report on 23 October 1984 was the appeal that launched the large-scale international aid mobilisation for those afflicted by famine in Ethiopia. In the media-driven humanitarianism of the late twentieth century, ‘an emergency begins and ends when the BBC says so’, noted one commentator.²⁶⁸ The public’s response had been muted as a result of poor television and press coverage earlier that year, and by October a UK Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC) appeal that had raised some £9 million was on the point of closing down.²⁶⁹ At a time when charitable appeals on European radio and television were highly regulated, collaborating with media outlets provided valuable opportunities for voluntary organisations to communicate news of disasters to a wider public.²⁷⁰ As a result, many aid agencies had come to depend on the 6 o’clock news as a major fund raiser.²⁷¹

Michael Buerk and Mohamed Amin produced the BBC’s report that day with the assistance of Oxfam and World Vision (see Figure 3.7). The seven-minute piece – unusually long for a single news item – primarily focused on the Korem relief camp in northern Ethiopia. Save the Children had established a supplementary feeding programme there in March 1984, financially supported by the European Economic Community (EEC), and Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) was providing health care. A graphic film by Amin showed bodies being laid out for burial, malnourished babies being weighed, and in one segment a three-year-old dying while being filmed. Panoramic shots followed people running across the plain when rumours of a grain shipment

²⁶⁵ Memorandum: Special Funds for Relief of Individual Cases of Suffering among the Professionals in Russia, undated, ARA, reel 500.

²⁶⁶ John Ellingston to the members of Yale University, 30 Mar. 1922, ARA, reel 499.

²⁶⁷ George B. Baker to Boy Scouts of America, 20 July 1922, ARA, reel 498.

²⁶⁸ IIED, *African Emergency*, 39.

²⁶⁹ DEC Famine in Africa Sitrep 1, 13 July 1984, CA 4/A/16.

²⁷⁰ In the UK, for example, charities were not allowed to purchase advertising space on commercial television until 1989. See Andrew Jones, ‘The Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC) and the Humanitarian Industry in Britain, 1963–85’, *Twentieth Century British History* 26, no. 4 (2015): 573–601.

²⁷¹ IIED, *African Emergency*, 272–3; de Waal, *Famine Crimes*, 84.



Figure 3.7 Mohamed Amin (wearing hat) and Michael Buerk (in white suit) with their news team and Ethiopian children, 26 Oct. 1984. Courtesy of Camerapix/Mohamed Amin Archive

triggered a stampede. Buerk's voice-over spoke of a 'biblical famine, now, in the twentieth century'. The broadcast highlighted the discrepancy between the aid that was needed (food) and the only relief the camp could offer (medical care and clothing). The camera zoomed in as a starving Ethiopian put on a donated suit jacket, many times too big for him, highlighting the absurdity of distributing cast-offs of well-fed Westerners instead of food. In a direct appeal from the camp, Brigitte Vasset of MSF lamented, 'I don't know what we are doing here. If there is no food, the medical treatment is a nonsense.'²⁷²

As a result of Amin's compelling footage and Buerk's powerful narration, set against a background of abundant harvests in Europe, the film had a global impact, whereas earlier coverage had been largely ignored.²⁷³ It was shown worldwide by 425 broadcasting stations, unlike the much smaller number to which the BBC's famine reports in July had been syndicated.²⁷⁴ In the USA, the NBC network broadcast a three-minute version using Amin's footage, which was still lengthy coverage of a foreign news story so close to a US

²⁷² Vasset on BBC News, 23 Oct. 1984; Médecins Sans Frontières, *Rapport D'Activite 1984*, May 1985, 9.

²⁷³ For a more detailed discussion, see Franks, *Reporting Disasters*, ch. 1.

²⁷⁴ Penrose, 'Before and After', 154; Philo, 'From Buerk to Band Aid', 121.

presidential election. A second report by Buerk, which provided greater detail on the ongoing civil war, was shown by the BBC on 24 October, but by then the story had been picked up by other broadcasters and the print media, and the connections between the civil war and the famine were largely lost in the ensuing coverage.²⁷⁵ Renewed attacks by the Ethiopian government on central Tigray in late October 1984 became known as the 'Silent Offensive' because of the lack of attention in both the Ethiopian and international media.²⁷⁶

Then, on 25 October, Peter Gill's film *Bitter Harvest* was televised across the UK.²⁷⁷ The documentary exposed the contrast between the famine and the European harvest more explicitly than Buerk's report. It opened with scenes showing mountainous piles of grain and posed the straightforward question: 'Why don't we give our unwanted food to save the lives of those who need it?' The film interspersed footage of autumn harvest festivals being celebrated in churches throughout Europe with video of Ethiopian relief camps, and featured interviews with staff at MSF, Oxfam, and Save the Children. A British farmer observed on camera that allocating excess grain to famine relief was not only the morally right thing to do, but that 'in longer-term self-interest, [there is] a real value in making sure that people who are hungry are fed'.²⁷⁸ Such moral and economic incentives became topics of public debate in Europe and the USA.²⁷⁹ A *War on Want* report summed up the incredulity of the public in the late twentieth century when it asked, 'How is it possible to *film* people dying and send the pictures back by satellite, yet still [be] impossible to bring them the food and the medicines to keep them alive?'²⁸⁰

Television news and documentaries conveyed updated appeals for aid in late 1984, reigniting waning interest in the famine and sparking an influx of unsolicited charitable donations. The US-based relief organisation CARE suggested it was the BBC footage that finally legitimised the claims of Ethiopia on the American public.²⁸¹ Buerk, who saw his reports on the famine as appeals for aid, later confirmed that he downplayed the impact of the civil war over fears that he might prevent people 'from coughing up

²⁷⁵ Franks, *Reporting Disasters*, 101. ²⁷⁶ Article 19, *Starving in Silence*, 111.

²⁷⁷ The film's release by Thames Television had been delayed by a technicians' strike, some of whom nevertheless worked for free to finish the editing. Advertising revenue from the broadcast was donated to Oxfam and Save the Children. 'Strikers Call It off Just to Show Disaster Film', *Daily Mail*, 25 Oct. 1984, 24; Oxfam, 'Ethiopia Bulletin No. 13', 29 Oct. 1984, 3, MS Oxfam COM2/6/11.

²⁷⁸ Thames Television, TV EYE 'Bitter Harvest', 25 Oct. 1984.

²⁷⁹ Oxfam, Newsletter, Nov. 1984, MS Oxfam APL/3/5/3; Mark Luetchford and Peter Burns, *Waging the War on Want* (London: War on Want, 2003), 127; 'Bröd och Bensin', *Dagens Nyheter*, 13 Oct. 1984.

²⁸⁰ George Galloway, 'General Secretary's Report', in *War on Want Annual Report 1984-5* (London: War on Want, 1985), 1.

²⁸¹ IIED, *African Emergency*, 272.

their money'.²⁸² The film's immediate impact can be seen by looking at Oxfam UK's income. Oxfam had raised a respectable £51,149 from its appeal for 'Famine in Ethiopia' through September 1984. However, this sum was dwarfed by the £600,000 in unsolicited public donations it received in the five days after the film was aired on the BBC.²⁸³ In Canada, a similar response to the newscast about famine in Ethiopia led one commentator to note, 'People in High River [in Alberta, Canada] don't read FAO reports. They do watch television.'²⁸⁴ Other broadcasters were encouraged to explore the famine in a series of documentaries and news reports.²⁸⁵

In several instances, the Ethiopian government criticised aid appeals that showed conditions in their country, but did not earmark the resulting funds specifically for Ethiopian relief.²⁸⁶ On the other hand, voluntary organisations recognised that media attention concentrating only on Ethiopia might detract from other severely affected African nations. As CARE noted, 'the challenge is to utilize current media awareness, but not to have our fundraising efforts be dictated by its emphasis'.²⁸⁷ In the UK, the unanticipated influx of donations resulted in some conflict among voluntary organisations. The five members of the DEC were accused by others of unfairly monopolising airtime. Although War on Want (a DEC founder member) left the alliance in 1979, it and other groups continued to seek an allocation of funds for famine relief in Africa through 1984, although this attempt was rebuffed.²⁸⁸

The television broadcasts brought about an increase in media coverage across all platforms. In the UK, the popular press increasingly took the lead from television, and tabloid newspaper column inches devoted to the famine increased from 50 in the first three weeks of October to 1,200 in the last ten days of that month.²⁸⁹ Newspaper editorials urged an international response, while feature stories detailed relief work and provided instructions on how to donate.²⁹⁰

²⁸² Michael Buerk, as cited in Daniel Wolf, 'What Happened to the F***ing Money?', *The Spectator*, 23 Oct. 2004, 12–13.

²⁸³ Oxfam, 'Ethiopia Bulletin No. 13', 29 Oct. 1984, 3. MS Oxfam COM2/6/11.

²⁸⁴ Morrison, *Aid and Ebb Tide*, 234.

²⁸⁵ See, for example, Food and Trucks and Rock 'n' Roll; Alter Ciné, *Songs of the Next Harvest*, directed by Yvan Patry.

²⁸⁶ Vaux, 'Ethiopian Famine 1984', 21.

²⁸⁷ 'Care: The Campaign for Africa: Memo to Regional Directors 903', 15 Nov. 1984, CARE 1120/17.

²⁸⁸ Galloway to Pouncey, 17 Jul. 1984, CA 4/A/16; DEC Secretariat Telex, 17 Jan. 1985, CA 4/A/16. Despite mounting criticism, it was not until 1997 that the DEC was reformed and its membership expanded.

²⁸⁹ Figures from Magistad, in Philo, 'From Buerk to Band Aid', 109.

²⁹⁰ Comment, *Daily Mail*, 25 Oct. 1984; 'Where to Contribute to Aid the Ethiopians', *New York Times*, 27 Oct. 1984; 'Famine in Ethiopia – How You Can Help', *Daily Mail*, 25 Oct. 1984; Monica Almgren, 'Organisationer som söker hjälpa de svältande', *Svenska Dagbladet*, 27 Oct. 1984.

The Stockholm newspaper, *Aftonbladet*, for example, included the story of an Ethiopian girl saved by Rädada Barnen (Save the Children, Sweden), followed by a listing of the bank account details for three voluntary organisations.²⁹¹ British tabloid rivalries helped to promote the story of the famine.²⁹² The *Daily Mirror* launched its own appeal and by 5 November had raised over £600,000 to fund its own ‘mercy flights’ to Ethiopia.²⁹³ Some Western media outlets also alerted readers to the blatant hypocrisy of the Ethiopian Marxist government that would let its people starve while ordering a ‘boat-load of booze’ – half a million bottles of Scottish whisky – to celebrate its ten years in power.²⁹⁴ This notorious episode also found its way into generally pro-Ethiopian English-language newspapers in Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, and Tanzania.²⁹⁵

The public response to the famine included thousands of letters from private individuals to voluntary organisations, the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission, United Nation (UN) agencies, and newsrooms in the days and weeks following the broadcasts.²⁹⁶ Letters received by the BBC, including many from children, were read out on air or posted in the television studios. In much of this correspondence, themes of shame and guilt dominate, with the looming food mountains of Europe an ever-present backdrop.²⁹⁷ The invidious contrast between the commodities of everyday Western life – abundant food, alcohol, cigarettes, and consumer goods – and the situation faced by people in Ethiopia was drawn out by many, who often described their own personal sacrifices.²⁹⁸ One woman from the USA wrote to say that seeing the scenes on television ‘left a big lump in my throat, sitting down to a big Thanksgiving meal, knowing there are many starving’. Another reported that the famine had finally led her to quit smoking and to direct the money to relief: ‘I think of that starving child who needs the money a lot worse than I need those cigarettes.’²⁹⁹

After October 1984, media coverage of the famine focused as much on such individual acts of giving as on questions of relief.³⁰⁰ A *New York Times* article included stories of two little girls each pledging their US\$5 allowance, a

²⁹¹ Maria Torshall, ‘Räddad från svälten’, *Aftonbladet*, 23 Nov. 1984.

²⁹² Nick Cater, ‘The Hungry Media’, *Ten-8*, no. 10 (1985): 2–4.

²⁹³ ‘How You Can Help’, *Daily Mirror*, 25 Oct. 1984; ‘Your Goodwill – Their Grief’, *Daily Mirror*, 5 Nov. 1984; Alistair Campbell, ‘Mirror to the Rescue’, *Daily Mirror*, 27 Oct. 1984.

²⁹⁴ Robert Porter and Andrew McEwen, ‘Storm over Ethiopian Whisky Ship’, *Daily Mail*, 27 Oct. 1984; ‘Comment: The Famine and the Folly’, *Daily Mail*, 27 Oct. 1984.

²⁹⁵ Hébert, ‘Feed the World’, 37. ²⁹⁶ Giorgis, *Red Tears*, 205.

²⁹⁷ ‘Ethiopia: We Must Act Now: Letters’, *Daily Mail*, 30 Oct. 1984; David Nattrass, ‘Letters to the Editor’, *Guardian*, 26 Oct. 1984.

²⁹⁸ Oxfam, ‘Ethiopia Bulletin No. 14’, 6 Nov. 1984, 3. MS Oxfam COM2/6/11.

²⁹⁹ Giorgis, *Red Tears*, 205.

³⁰⁰ Cheryl Lousley, ‘“With Love from Band Aid”: Sentimental Exchange, Affective Economies, and Popular Globalism’, *Emotion, Space, and Society* 10 (2014): 10.

Vietnamese man who wanted to repay UNICEF for helping resettle him in the USA, and a baker who arrived at an organisation's office with a large box of coins collected by his children.³⁰¹ These sentimental giving narratives involved ordinary, relatively powerless people. The point in circulating such stories, as cultural theorist Cheryl Lousley suggests, was not only to celebrate the pleasure of acting as a benefactor, but to 'reveal and perpetuate a tremendous affective investment in famine relief'.³⁰² Such emotional investment, characteristic of expressive humanitarianism, helps explain the popular enthusiasm behind the new, more participatory forms of famine relief that peaked in the mid-1980s, and that are in some ways at odds with the long-standing fundraising techniques utilised by many agencies.

Voluntary Organisations' Appeals

Although the immediate public response to the television news footage from Ethiopia was unanticipated, the fundraising sections of relief organisations around the world moved quickly to capitalise on it through press and billboard advertising, direct mail campaigns, and other appeals. However, after the high level of spontaneous donations for famine relief in October, some agencies cut back on public appeals because they already had more money than they could responsibly spend.³⁰³

Reviewing the fundraising advertisements placed in newspapers and magazines in the USA, UK, Italy, and Sweden, along with the campaigns of selected aid agencies, reveals common strategies.³⁰⁴ The most prevalent technique in 1984–5 seems to have been to emphasise the magnitude of the crisis in Ethiopia and stress its unprecedented nature.³⁰⁵ Hyperbolic language was routinely deployed in press advertisements. World Vision referred to the 'most devastating human crisis of our time' and the American Red Cross (ARC) to 'the worst drought in history'.³⁰⁶ Similarly, an Oxfam direct mailing piece in

³⁰¹ Joseph Berger, 'Offers of Aid for Stricken Ethiopia Are Pouring into Relief Agencies', *New York Times*, 28 Oct. 1984.

³⁰² Lousley, 'With Love from Band Aid', 12. ³⁰³ IIED, *African Emergency*, 271.

³⁰⁴ In the UK, the archives of the following national newspapers (daily or Sunday) were examined: *Daily Telegraph*, *Daily Mail*, *Guardian*, *Observer*, *Times*, *Sunday Times*, *Listener*. The tabloids *Daily Mirror*, *Daily Express*, and *Daily Star* did not carry fundraising advertisements from famine relief charities. Sweden's two largest daily papers, *Dagens Nyheter* and *Svenska Dagbladet*, and the two main evening papers, *Aftonbladet* and *Expressen*, were analysed. For Italy, the main national papers reviewed were *Corriere della sera*, *La Repubblica*, *La Stampa*, *L'Unità*, and *il Manifesto*. For the USA, searches were conducted using ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

³⁰⁵ Oxfam advertisement, 'Emergency in Ethiopia S.O.S.', *Daily Telegraph*, 27 Oct. 1984; 'Famine in Africa Appeal', DEC advertisement, *Times*, 20 July 1984.

³⁰⁶ 'Ethiopia', World Vision advertisement, *Washington Post*, 25 Nov. 1984; 'I'm Picking up the Tab', ARC advertisement, *Boston Globe*, 20 Jan. 1985; Ethiopian organisations' advertisement in *Expressen*, 3 Nov. 1984.

November 1984 stated that 'Ethiopia is the largest disaster situation we have ever faced'.³⁰⁷

For the most part, aid agencies avoided confronting the Cold War complexities of the famine, including Ethiopia's civil war and concerns over sending aid to a Soviet-backed regime. Many advertisements followed Buerk's depoliticised description of a 'biblical famine', emphasising the failure of rains and crops.³⁰⁸ By the mid-1980s, relief organisations were well-practiced in using discretion in choosing what they would stress in fundraising appeals; they had become adept at uncoupling the humanitarian relief of suffering from the geopolitical realities.³⁰⁹ However, some organisations, including Oxfam and War on Want, did mention the conflict, and sought to draw attention to the failure of many Western governments to commit aid. War on Want hired a well-known advertising agency with links to the Labour party to develop a hard-hitting campaign on famine in Ethiopia, alongside South Africa, Nicaragua, and the 'Third World' debt crisis. The Ethiopia poster stated that crops 'are being destroyed by another plague' and showed Derg military jets, depicted as a swarm of locusts, above a war-torn landscape.³¹⁰

As in previous campaigns, aid agencies tried to distinguish between the innocent victims of famine and the unpalatable Marxist regime in Ethiopia by emphasising that aid was mainly targeted at women (specifically mothers) and children. Although relatively few advertisements appearing in print media contained images, those that did generally depicted a group of children or a mother and child.³¹¹ The images of vulnerable children reinforced the televised pictures of the famine that were replayed throughout the October and November of 1984.³¹² Save the Children's press advertisements suggested that it would be far less painful for readers to reach for their cheque books than to watch children starve on television.³¹³ By autumn 1985, a year after the famine story first appeared, Oxfam addressed potential donors as ironic spectators, asking them if they were 'fed up with pictures of famine on television?'.³¹⁴

³⁰⁷ Direct mail letter, 26 Nov. 1984, MS Ox APL3/6/6.

³⁰⁸ 'Ethiopia Famine Disaster', Help the Aged, advertisement, *Times*, 31 Oct. 1984; 'Du har väl inte glömt att vattna blommorna älskling', *Dagens Nyheter*, 1 Dec. 1984.

³⁰⁹ Maggie Black, *A Cause for Our Times: Oxfam: The First 50 Years* (Oxford: Oxfam, 1992), 245.

³¹⁰ Luetchford and Burns, *Waging the War on Want*, 142–3.

³¹¹ Oxfam Posters, MS Oxfam COM1/8/75/1–2; 'It's Not just Ethiopia that's Drying up', Unicef UK advertisement, *Daily Telegraph*, 2 Nov. 1984.

³¹² 'Ethiopia: Please Help Us Now!', Oxfam advertisement, *Daily Telegraph*, 2 Nov. 1984; World Vision, *Times*, 25 Oct. 1984.

³¹³ 'Which Is More Painful?', Save the Children advertisement, *Daily Telegraph*, 27 Oct. 1984; 'Christmas Appeal', Save the Children advertisement, *Daily Mail*, 1 Dec. 1984; War on Want advertisement, *Daily Mail*, 5 Nov. 1985; 'Emergency in Ethiopia S.O.S.', Oxfam advertisement, *Daily Telegraph*, 27 Oct. 1984.

³¹⁴ 'Fed up with Pictures of Famine on Television?', *Times*, 12 Nov. 1985.

The use of photographs was frequently discussed internally by aid agencies. War on Want was among the few organisations to publicly criticise the spreading of such ‘helpless and powerless’ images, and instead published a series of positive scenes from Eritrea in its own newsletter.³¹⁵

Another technique in press appeals was to stress the aid agency’s record of service to Ethiopia and its ability to provide immediate famine relief. The organisation’s accomplishments in Ethiopia were emphasised in direct mail appeals and advertisements that included extensive data on relief camps, numbers of nurses and aid workers, and quantities of food already shipped.³¹⁶ Such accounting-oriented advertising implied that not all relief organisations could draw on the same knowledge and expertise.³¹⁷ The US-based Catholic Relief Services (CRS), for example, boasted it had already been working in Ethiopia for ten years, and with the famine emergency for sixteen months.³¹⁸ Oxfam America, while it could claim no such history in Ethiopia, proudly stated that it could draw on similar experiences of relief work in Bangladesh and Kampuchea.³¹⁹ These claims were part of a process of establishing trust between the aid agency and potential donors, assuring the latter that their money would directly go where it was most needed, and would be administered by competent teams.

The need to foster trust was sometimes higher in the case of umbrella organisations or coalitions of voluntary agencies that were often less familiar to ordinary donors. In November 1984, the US-based coalition InterAction, placed a full-page advertisement in twelve major newspapers, seeking donations that would ‘end hunger’ in Africa.³²⁰ The ads made much of the importance of collaborative work, declaring ‘The experts are ready – For the first time ever, America’s private voluntary organizations have joined in a powerful coalition, 60 of which are already working in Africa.’³²¹ This was a common strategy worldwide, but especially in Canada, Australia, and Western Europe. In Sweden, a joint appeal by six ‘Ethiopia organisations’ referred to their ‘necessary connections and many years of experience’ in relief work.³²²

³¹⁵ ‘Images of the Poor’, *War on Want News*, winter 1984/5, 7.

³¹⁶ ‘Christian Aid Christmas Appeal’, *Daily Telegraph*, 24 Dec. 1984; Action Aid advertisement, *Daily Mail*, 15 Nov. 1984; Oxfam America advertisement, ‘To Save a People’, *New York Times*, 2 Dec. 1984; Oxfam direct mail letter, 26 Nov. 1984, MS Oxfam APL3/6/6.

³¹⁷ British Red Cross advertisement, ‘Ethiopia: A Great Human Tragedy’, *Daily Telegraph*, 27 Oct. 1984; Swedish Red Cross, ‘Leylas och Alis alla kor har dött. Men de har tre barn kvar’, *Aftonbladet*, 30 Nov. 1984.

³¹⁸ ‘Thank You’, Catholic Relief Services advertisement, *Los Angeles Times*, 4 Nov. 1984.

³¹⁹ Oxfam America advertisement, *New York Times*, 2 Dec. 1984.

³²⁰ *Monday Developments*, 19 Nov. 1984, vol. 2, no. 24.

³²¹ Interaction advertisement, *New York Times*, 18 Nov. 1984.

³²² Ethiopia organisations advertisement in *Expressen*, 3 Nov. 1984. The participating organisations included the Swedish Red Cross, Rädda Barnen, Lutherhjälpen, Evangeliska Fosterlandsstiftelsen, Svenska Kyrkans Mission, and the Swedish Pentecostal Movement.

Since the late 1970s, aid organisations working on behalf of their own secessionist liberation fronts had sought to make direct appeals to the West. They did this in an attempt to avoid widespread reluctance on the part of most donor governments to provide aid to areas outside of the control of the government of Ethiopia. The Eritrean Relief Association (ERA), established in 1975, and the Relief Society of Tigray (REST), founded in 1978, believed that public opinion could be mobilised with the help of a network of overseas support committees to counter Western government policy.³²³ Advertisements placed by these groups in late 1984 alerted prospective donors that two million people living outside government-controlled areas were facing famine.³²⁴ REST's support committee in the UK, for example, stated its credentials as 'the only indigenous humanitarian agency' working in Tigray during a decade of war and four years of drought, and the only group that could guarantee aid would reach starving Tigrayans.³²⁵ Emphasising the humanitarian record of REST and ERA, while simultaneously downplaying connections with their respective military forces, was an attempt to legitimise these organisations through their association with various intermediaries, including the Sudan-based Emergency Relief Desk (ERD), an ecumenical consortium engaged in cross-border relief operations, that channelled aid to rebel-held areas.³²⁶ There was also significant fundraising among global Jewish communities, particularly in the USA, in support of Operation Moses, the secret airlift of thousands of Ethiopian Jews to Israel.³²⁷

At the end of 1984, many appeals were explicitly linked to Christmas, with donors being urged to spread a little goodwill.³²⁸ This followed long-established patterns of linking fundraising to religious holidays. Christmas had been a key date on the fundraising calendar in the USA and Europe since at least the 1860s. Such appeals were especially lucrative for Christian Aid, whose headquarters was processing £70,000 a day in donations around Christmas 1984.³²⁹ The holiday prompted a diverse range of appeals that went beyond references to the biblical story and the need to think of others. Solicitations for Ethiopia at this time were framed in morally provocative and challenging terms. In the UK, Help the Aged ran a mock 'shopping days' til Christmas' countdown in a number of newspapers throughout

³²³ Duffield and Prendergast, *Without Troops*, 25–6.

³²⁴ 'Classified Ad 128', *Guardian*, 31 Oct. 1984.

³²⁵ REST UK Support Committee advertisement, 'The Famine in Tigray', *Times*, 9 Nov. 1984, 30; 'Help Tigrayans', *Guardian*, 6 Feb. 1985.

³²⁶ Duffield and Prendergast, *Without Troops*, 6.

³²⁷ Tudor Parfitt, *Operation Moses: The Story of the Exodus of the Falasha Jews from Ethiopia* (London: Wiedenfield and Nicolson, 1985), 103–4.

³²⁸ Save the Children advertisement, 'Christmas Appeal', *Daily Mail*, 1 Dec. 1984.

³²⁹ *Christian Aid Information*, 2 Nov. 1984, CA 4/A/32/1; 'What Ethiopia Has Meant to the Africa Section', CA 4/A/32/1. See 'Christian Aid Christmas Appeal', *Daily Telegraph*, 24 Dec. 1984.

December, marking '15 dying days' til Christmas', and so on.³³⁰ YCare International printed a picture of an emaciated child with a spoon four-course Christmas menu listing grass, weeds, berries, and dirty water.³³¹ An ARC campaign asked people to stop and think the next time they paid for a restaurant meal, and to 'pick up the tab' for someone who really needed it this Christmas.³³²

The strategy of 'praising the donor' reflects the notion that aid is essentially donor-driven. As David Williams writes, 'Aid to Africa is about "us", not "them."'³³³ Advertisements and articles repeatedly referred to the generous, concerned, caring public in Sweden, Britain, or the USA, and thanked donors while urging them to give again.³³⁴ Help the Aged's November 1984 appeal for Ethiopia was placed in all the major UK newspapers as an advance 'thank you letter' to the generous readers of each paper.³³⁵ The strategy wanted to make donors feel part of a special group and increase the likelihood that they would donate more. The ARC described Americans as 'the most generous people in the history of mankind'.³³⁶ Similarly, CARE's direct mail campaign for famine in Africa addressed supporters as 'caring Americans' who 'share a belief in the value of human beings, whoever and wherever they are'.³³⁷ This marketing approach was in contrast to CARE's newspaper ads, where emotive language was avoided in favour of recounting the organisation's track record in relief work.³³⁸ The relatively few appeals that were made to the general public in Italy praised the country's generosity as resulting in part from the recent memory of poverty at home.³³⁹

Oxfam thanked its supporters for having contributed earlier, but also pleaded for more and it chastised undecided potential donors: 'None of us has the excuse that a small contribution will achieve nothing.' However, the organisation expressed its concern that long-term development work would suffer as a result of diverting attention to emergency relief unless some donors

³³⁰ Help the Aged advertisement, '15 Dying Days to Christmas', *Daily Mail*, 10 Dec. 1985.

³³¹ YCare International, 'His Four-Course Christmas Lunch', *Times*, 24 Dec. 1984.

³³² 'I'm Picking up the Tab', American Red Cross advertisement, *Boston Globe*, 20 Jan. 1985.

³³³ David Williams, 'Review Article: Aid as Autobiography', *Journal of the International African Institute* 72, no. 1 (2002): 150–63.

³³⁴ Oxfam advertisement, 'Emergency in Ethiopia S.O.S', *Daily Telegraph*, 27 Oct. 1984; Oxfam advertisement, 'The Two Things You Can Do for Ethiopia', *Daily Telegraph*, 20 Dec. 1984; Catholic Relief Services advertisement, 'Thank You', *Los Angeles Times*, 4 Nov. 1984; Maria Torshall, 'Räddad från svälten', *Aftonbladet*, 23 Nov. 1984.

³³⁵ Help the Aged advertisement, 'A Thank You to the Readers', *Daily Mail*, 3 Nov. 1984.

³³⁶ Joyce Gemperlein, '\$70 Million Sought for Famine Aid', *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 11 Dec. 1984.

³³⁷ CARE direct mail letter, CARE 199, Folder 'Ethiopia Drought Famine Relief 1984–5'.

³³⁸ CARE advertisements, 'Campaign for Africa', *Boston Globe*, 9 Dec. 1984; 'Campaign for Africa: The Need Continues', *New York Times*, 10 Feb. 1985.

³³⁹ G. Barbiellini Amidei, 'Una tassa per la vita', *Corriere della sera*, 31 Dec. 1984.

gave unrestricted funds, in addition to the famine appeals.³⁴⁰ The Swedish Red Cross likewise urged people to share their wealth, deploying moral economic language by stating ‘It is not a matter of buying yourself free from a bad conscience. You are investing in life.’³⁴¹ A billboard advertising campaign in Sweden asked passers-by to remember ‘Ethiopia is starving. What are you doing?’³⁴²

Another strategy was to try to engage potential donors in wider campaigning and advocacy work on hunger, aid, and development.³⁴³ War on Want, for example, mounted an effort to secure ‘safe passage’ for relief supplies to Eritrea and Tigray, and used its newspaper advertisements to encourage readers to lobby politicians on this issue. In direct mailings and newspaper ads, Oxfam asked supporters to join its ‘Hungry for Change’ campaign, launched in October 1984 by a cross-party line-up of politicians, journalists, church leaders, and celebrities. Two hundred ‘Hungry for Change’ local groups were formed, and thousands took part in a weekend fast in November 1984.³⁴⁴ In the same month, Oxfam led a group of other organisations in promoting a ‘Famine in Africa’ petition directed at the British government.³⁴⁵ People were encouraged to cut the petition from the newspaper and solicit signatures from family and friends. When it was submitted to UK Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher in March 1985, over 760,000 had signed it.³⁴⁶ The group of six ‘Ethiopia organisations’ in Sweden published a similar appeal demanding government action.³⁴⁷

In the competitive charity marketplace, the primary purpose of newspaper advertisements was to convince would-be donors that they should choose one particular organisation over another. In the UK, charity shops located on almost every high street were significant local sites from which direct appeals were made to the British public in the days before television or Internet advertising.³⁴⁸ Leading overseas aid charities like Oxfam and Save the Children had hundreds of shops each – an important network of collection points for revenue ranging from children’s pocket money to the proceeds of local

³⁴⁰ Direct mail letter, 26 Nov. 1984, MS Ox APL3/6/6.

³⁴¹ Swedish Red Cross, ‘Leylas och Alis’.

³⁴² *Svenska röda korsets Årsbok 1984* (Stockholm: Svenska röda korset, 1985), 48.

³⁴³ Oxfam advertisement, ‘The Two Things You Can Do for Ethiopia’, *Daily Telegraph*, 20 Dec. 1984; War on Want advertisement, *Daily Mail*, 5 Nov. 1985; Oxfam advertisement, ‘Can You Give Thirst Aid?’, *Times*, 23 May 1985; Swedish Red Cross, ‘Leylas och Alis’.

³⁴⁴ Black, *Cause for Our Times*, 261–2.

³⁴⁵ ‘Africa Famine Petition’, *Guardian*, 16 Nov. 1984; ‘Famine in Africa Petition’, Oxfam PRG 2/3/1/8.

³⁴⁶ Michael Simmons, ‘Cash Flow Turns into a Torrent’, *Guardian*, 22 Mar. 1985.

³⁴⁷ Björn Erik Rosin, ‘1000 dör varje dag av svält i Etiopien’, *Svenska Dagbladet*, 26 Oct. 1984.

³⁴⁸ Jessica Field, ‘Consumption in lieu of Membership: Reconfiguring Popular Charitable Action in Post–World War II Britain’, *Voluntas* 27, no. 2 (2016): 979–97.

events. Large appeal posters produced by Oxfam for display in shop windows used arresting red-black-and-white images of women and children to urge passers-by to enter the shop and 'give £1 or more TODAY' to the famine fund.³⁴⁹ 'Keep the change for Ethiopia' became a common catchphrase in Save the Children's shops.³⁵⁰

Voluntary organisations adopted a different approach when using direct mail campaigns to address supporters or lists of 'warm' contacts. Such appeals were generally longer in format and in language directed at individuals. As relief appeals continued throughout 1985 and into 1986, advertisers had to contact donors repeatedly and persuade them to give again and again, while also trying to recruit new donors. For example, a UNICEF UK advertisement in July 1985 urged those who read it, 'Don't stop caring now – we are so close.'³⁵¹

Are We the World? Celebrities and Participative Fundraising

Although celebrity activism had played a role during earlier relief efforts, it assumed increased significance at the time of expressive humanitarianism. It reached its peak in 1984–5 when Band Aid managed to capitalise on popular enthusiasm and inspire imitators around the world. Musicians and celebrities began to initiate fundraising activities in October 1984. In Sweden, musician David Bradish rapidly put together a televised fundraising gala for November 1984 under the banner 'People Who Care', raising half a million Swedish kronor, which he followed up with a series of initiatives throughout 1985.³⁵² Similarly, Bob Geldof set out to raise a few hundred thousand pounds by writing and recording a charity single. Geldof later justified his personal response to the news in moral economic terms: sending money did not seem enough of a response to the pictures he had seen because to 'expiate yourself truly of any complicity in this evil meant you had to give something of yourself'.³⁵³ Band Aid was, therefore, 'never a charitable impulse, it was a moral imperative'.³⁵⁴ Geldof's approach was to translate his emotion into popular music, attracting a large audience and a powerful support base.³⁵⁵

Celebrity humanitarians like Geldof and Bradish have been seen as bridges between Western audiences and distant tragedies; the celebrity is 'a focus for

³⁴⁹ Oxfam Posters, MS COM 1/8/75/1–2.

³⁵⁰ *Save the Children Annual Report, 1984–1985* (London: Save the Children, 1985), 24.

³⁵¹ UNICEF UK advertisement, 'Africa's Fast Food Problem', *Times*, 13 July 1985.

³⁵² Arne Söderlund, 'Jag hamnade på . . .', *Dagens Nyheter*, 6 Nov. 1984; Gunnar Berghcrantz, 'Lill och Hasse drog in halv miljon till svältoffren', *Aftonbladet*, 6 Nov. 1984; Sofie Rolf, 'Nu finns det svensk musik för Etiopien', *Aftonbladet*, 11 Feb. 1985.

³⁵³ Bob Geldof with Paul Valley, *Is That It?* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1986), 215–17.

³⁵⁴ Banga, *Reducing People's Vulnerability*, 1.

³⁵⁵ Frances Westley, 'Bob Geldof and Live Aid: The Affective Side of Global Social Innovation', *Human Relations* 40, no. 10 (1991): 1020.

empathy, an emotional interpreter'.³⁵⁶ Further, the celebrity personifies 'an altruistic disposition' in which all can share.³⁵⁷ Although there had been earlier charity singles – notably the 1971 song 'Bangladesh' by George Harrison – none had experienced such success. At the time, therefore, the explosive rise of the song written by Geldof and Midge Ure and recorded by a super-group in November 1984 took everyone by surprise.³⁵⁸ 'Do They Know It's Christmas?' became the fastest selling single of all time in the UK and went straight to number one on the charts. By January six million copies had been sold and the song had raised £8 million. The record became a focus for public outrage at the international community's inaction at a time of abundant harvests.³⁵⁹

Like many of the aid agencies' fundraising appeals, the song spread a compelling message of common humanity, and its repeated chorus of 'Feed the world/Let them know it's Christmas time' contained a simple but seemingly irresistible call to action.³⁶⁰ The name Band Aid reflected the idea that this effort 'would be like putting a tiny plaster on a wound that required twelve stitches'.³⁶¹ The success of the recording reflected widespread desire on the part of many sections of the British public to do something that would put a halt to the pictures of children dying on television. The contrast of 'us' and 'them', so evident in letters from individuals, was central to the emotive lyrics of the song, which reminded the public that they should 'thank God it's them instead of you'. Reflecting on the organisation's slogan, 'With Love from Band Aid', Lousley observes that Geldof's project can be understood as part of a 'popular culture of sentimental exchange' in which donating to famine relief is positioned as a gesture of love, and famine relief images, stories, tears, gifts, and money are exchanged and circulated.³⁶²

Band Aid's success was followed by the ambitious Live Aid concerts held on both sides of the Atlantic and elsewhere on 13 July 1985. They were watched by over 1.5 billion people on television and raised US\$80 million for the Band Aid Trust.³⁶³ Of this total, US\$25 million came from the USA, where the independent Live Aid Foundation was established to allocate funds. Apart from ticket and merchandise sales, sponsorship, television rights, and mailed contributions, new banking technology enabled credit card donations to be made by telephone during the show in certain countries.³⁶⁴ Geldof infamously interrupted the announcer, who was in the midst of giving details for

³⁵⁶ de Waal, 'Humanitarian Carnival', 44.

³⁵⁷ Lillie Chouliaraki, 'The Theatricality of Humanitarianism: A Critique of Celebrity Advocacy', *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 9, no. 1 (2012): 1–21.

³⁵⁸ Caroline Moorehead, 'Geldof and the Givers', *New Society*, 18 Oct. 1985, 99–101.

³⁵⁹ Banga, *Reducing People's Vulnerability*, 1.

³⁶⁰ Bel Mooney, 'Why Did We Give So Much?', *Listener*, 19 Dec. 1985, 42.

³⁶¹ Banga, *Reducing People's Vulnerability*, 1. ³⁶² Lousley, 'With Love from Band Aid'.

³⁶³ Band Aid, *With Love*, 4. ³⁶⁴ IIED, *African Emergency Relief*, 211.

postal donations, to exclaim 'Let's fuck the address, let's get the [phone] numbers, for that's how we're gonna get it [money]'.³⁶⁵ Swedish public television broadcast sixteen hours of Live Aid but was criticised for not organising a call centre to accept telephone donations.³⁶⁶ Funds raised by the telethon in various countries were generally remitted to local organisations, including MSF in France and the Red Cross in Thailand.

It was said that Live Aid 'conveyed a sense of political action without recourse to politicians'.³⁶⁷ In one memorable segment, the news footage of the Korem relief camps was used as background to the performance of a rock song by The Cars, the suffering of those projected onto the screens 'sublimated' for the audience. Geldof argued at the time that anything he did was morally justified because the horrors of the famine had made it immune to political argument. In subsequent years, the apparent universal solidarity of Live Aid has been widely critiqued as a depoliticising response to the catastrophe that has defined the ways in which the West has conceptualised Africa ever since.³⁶⁸ The Band Aid Trust did seek to make political capital out of the concerts, however, citing the decision of the UK development minister that the emergency airlift in Ethiopia would continue as a direct result of Live Aid.³⁶⁹

Although the scale and marketing success of Band Aid and Live Aid has tended to overshadow smaller scale initiatives outside the Anglo-American world, celebrity involvement in fundraising in 1984–5 was more diverse and international than retrospective analyses have suggested. There were expressive, emotionally laden initiatives by celebrities, politicians, and public individuals in many countries. In Sweden, figures from the world of sports and fine arts became involved. Athlete Ricky Bruch, for example, organised a series of events, held a fast over Christmas 1984, and lobbied the government for tax relief on charity.³⁷⁰ In Italy, seventy members of the Radical party threatened to go on hunger strike until Christmas if the government refused to pass a law giving aid to Ethiopia.³⁷¹

Across Europe, several celebrity-endorsed spectacles were held, with widespread television and media coverage and sales of merchandise. A 'One for Africa' day of action organised by the national television and radio networks in the Netherlands in November 1984 raised the equivalent of US\$24 million; a

³⁶⁵ Geldof's words have passed into legend as 'Give us your fucking money!', although this is not what he said.

³⁶⁶ Eva Häggman, 'Varför fick inte vi också ge pengar?', *Aftonbladet*, 14 July 1985; Sakari Pitkänen, 'Hela Sverige ville hjälpa', *Expressen*, 14 July 1985.

³⁶⁷ Franks, *Reporting Disasters*, 76. ³⁶⁸ Chouliaraki, *Ironic Spectator*, 122–4.

³⁶⁹ Food and Trucks and Rock 'n' Roll.

³⁷⁰ Anders Medin, 'Ricky spolar julen – startar jätteinsamling för Etiopien', *Aftonbladet*, 23 Dec. 1984, 9.

³⁷¹ Giovanni Negri, 'Noi dibattiamo e l'Etiopia muore', *Corriere della sera*, 11 Dec. 1984.

survey found that the television broadcast had been watched by two-thirds of the population over the age of 15 years. However, there was also criticism of an apparent disconnect between some of the performances and the subject of famine.³⁷² On 23 January 1985, the Federal Republic of Germany held a fundraising marathon known as *Ein Tag für Afrika* (A Day for Africa) that raised 125 million marks (around US\$40 million) to be shared by more than a dozen German voluntary agencies (see Figure 3.8).³⁷³ After Italian media complained about the absence of their country's artists at Live Aid, noting sarcastically that Italy had been outperformed 'even by Yugoslavia', a benefit concert for Ethiopia was held in Verona in August 1985.³⁷⁴ However, involvement in star-studded events could also backfire. In August 1985, the secretary general of the Swedish Red Cross categorised as 'grotesque' a charity gala that sought to raise money through a luxury dinner linked to the opening of a new nightclub.³⁷⁵

By the summer of 1985, the success of the Band Aid single had inspired the production of at least twenty other charity singles around the world.³⁷⁶ Unlike Band Aid, most of these identified specific aid agencies from the outset as beneficiaries. 'We Are the World' was put together by US music impresarios Harry Belafonte and Ken Kragen, influenced both by Band Aid and the memory of singer and hunger activist Harry Chapin. The single, written by Michael Jackson and Lionel Richie, was released in April 1985 and was quickly followed by an album.³⁷⁷ Its sponsor, the United Support of Artists for Africa organisation (USA for Africa), was incorporated in January 1985, and by December 1987 had raised US\$58 million for famine relief and long-term development work in Africa. Like the British recording, this song's lyrics drew on the theme of common humanity, urging that this was a time 'when the world must come together as one'. The song also contained the notion of empowerment, that ordinary Americans could make a difference by donating, and that by so doing they would be 'saving their own lives', as the chorus maintained. A film made about the recording emphasised the 'choice we're

³⁷² Letter to Lady Marre, 17 Jan. 1985; BBC Written Archives; Richard W. Solberg, *Miracle in Ethiopia: A Partnership Response to Famine* (New York: Friendship Press, 1991), 72. Additional information provided by Pamala Wiekking.

³⁷³ 'Stau und Rückstau', *Der Spiegel*, 8 Apr. 1985, 28–9; 'Hungerhilfe: Schokolade für Zuckerkrankte?', *Der Spiegel*, 21 Jan. 1985, 88–99. Agencies included Caritas, Misereor (German Catholic Bishops' Organisation for Development Cooperation), Diakonisches Werk, Brot für die Welt, Welthungerhilfe, German Red Cross, and fourteen smaller agencies.

³⁷⁴ Gino Castaldo, 'Il Mondo e un Villaggio', *La Repubblica*, 14 July 1985; 'Nell' Arena di Verona un Concerto per l' Etiopia', *La Repubblica*, 4 Aug. 1985.

³⁷⁵ Stefan Bokström and Otto Sjöberg, 'Högsta basen tar avstånd från gala för Röda Korset', *Expressen*, 13 Aug. 1985.

³⁷⁶ Food and Trucks and Rock 'n' Roll.

³⁷⁷ USA for Africa, *Memories and Reflections: USA for Africa's Experiences and Practice: The First 20 Years* (s.l.: USA for Africa, [2005]).



Figure 3.8 Danish singer Gitte Haenning (left) with German actress Edith Hancke at the recording of the *Ein Tag für Afrika* television fundraiser, 23 Jan. 1985.

Photo by Peter Bischoff, reproduced courtesy of Getty Images

making' and contained direct appeals from Jane Fonda and Lionel Ritchie. The song inspired further participatory activities on a number of fronts. It was played on 8,000 radio stations in twenty-five countries on Good Friday 1985, and was said to have made the world 'momentarily a neighbourhood of concern'.³⁷⁸

The double French A-side single 'Starvation' and 'Tam Tam pour l'Ethiophe', which had been in the planning before the Band Aid song, raised money directly for MSF, Oxfam, and War on Want (see Figure 3.9). In contrast to 'Do They Know It's Christmas?', the recording included many Black artists – some from African countries singing in French and a number of African languages. It was less commercially successful than either its British or US counterparts.³⁷⁹ Many of the other singles allocated a small proportion of the funds that they generated to domestic charities dealing with hunger and poverty. In France, a group known as Chanteurs sans Frontières recorded a song entitled 'Ethiophe' that raised 23 million francs, 90 per cent of which went to MSF and the rest to the charity Restos du Coeur. The Canadian song

³⁷⁸ 'We Are the World: The Story Behind the Song', directed by Tom Trbovich, 1985.

³⁷⁹ Robinson, 'Putting the Charity'.

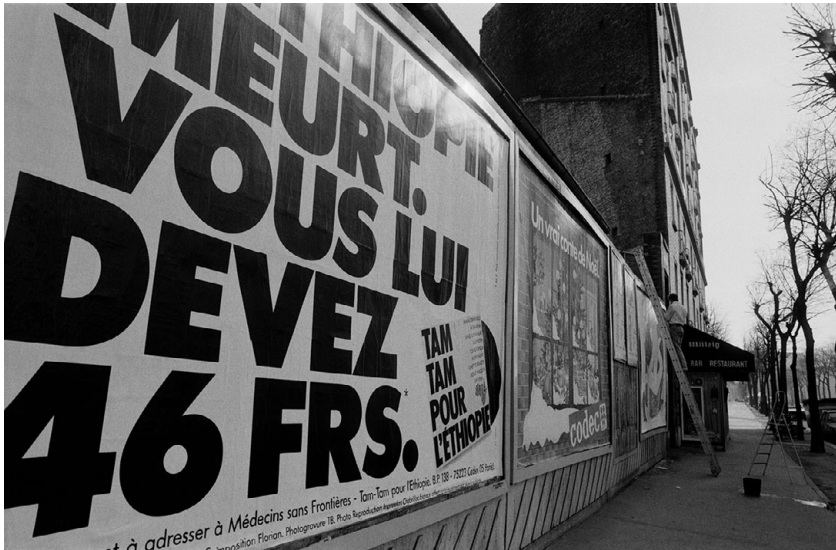


Figure 3.9 ‘Ethiopie Meurt’ (Ethiopia is dying), MSF fundraising campaign, 1985.

Photo by Patrick Aventurier. Courtesy of Getty Images

‘Tears Are Not Enough’ raised Can\$3.2 million for the Red Cross, UNICEF, and CARE, with 10 per cent going to food banks in Canada.³⁸⁰ Other singles included the Spanish-language *Cantaré*, *cantarás*, which featured a group of Latin American stars known collectively as ‘*Hermanos*’.

Celebrity activism also sought to channel and shape public sentiment about disaster relief. For example, the chorus of the Austria für Afrika song ‘Why’ (*Warum*) provided an ironic commentary on the Western response to the famine: ‘We’re sending money so we don’t feel so bad’ (*wir schicken Göd – damit’s uns besser geht*). Compared to the West German ‘Naked in the Wind’ (*Nackt im Wind*), which addressed the gravity of the situation and the lack of political consciousness in the West, the Austrian song was political on a deeper level. It referenced the Ethiopian regime’s use of famine as a weapon and alluded to its support from ‘Big Brother’ – the Soviet Union. An Ethiopian folk song was included along with some Ethiopian students based in Vienna.³⁸¹ In communist Yugoslavia, YU Rock Misija contributed to the global famine relief effort through a charity single ‘For a Million Years’ (*Za milion godina*)

³⁸⁰ ‘Tears Are Still Not Enough: 30 Years Later’, available at www.cbc.ca/news/politics/tears-still-are-not-enough-30-years-later-1.2949836 (accessed 29 June 2019).

³⁸¹ Rudi Dolezal, *Die Geschichte des Austropop in 20 Songs* (Salzburg: Servus, 2016), 160–7.

and a rock concert that raised over US\$400,000. All three songs, alongside other national efforts, were performed and broadcast as part of the Live Aid concerts. An analysis of English-language African newspapers shows that both official and popular responses to celebrity fundraising in 1984–5 were overwhelmingly favourable.³⁸²

A key difference between earlier forms of celebrity humanitarianism and Band Aid was Geldof's insistence on retaining control over the disbursement of funds – perhaps alarmed by the financial problems that had plagued Harrison's 1971 Concert for Bangladesh.³⁸³ A deep-rooted suspicion of aid agencies as 'pickpockets' shaped Geldof's approach to relief.³⁸⁴ Of his single's £1.35 selling price, 96p went to the Band Aid Trust set up by him and officially registered as a British charity in January 1985.³⁸⁵ Although the record industry waived most of the costs of production, the UK government took 18p of the cover price in taxes, which it initially refused to remit despite a public outcry, although it did later quietly allocate an equivalent sum to famine relief. More money was raised through a series of spin-off campaigns, including Fashion Aid, Classical Aid, Food Aid, Visual Aid, Sport Aid, and School Aid, and a series of local initiatives.³⁸⁶ Like Band Aid, USA for Africa rejected the 'traditional foundation game'; both sought to develop models of allocating aid that reflected their self-made origins.³⁸⁷

Expressive humanitarianism was evident in other participatory fundraising activities aimed at children and young people. In the UK, this included the 1984 Blue Peter Appeal in which millions of people collected stamps, post-cards, and buttons that could be turned into cash for Ethiopia. The appeal built on a growing relationship between the children's television show Blue Peter and Oxfam, a partnership which the charity was keen to continue. The programmers had responded to pressure from audience members who wrote in the thousands asking 'Please, please, please can we have an appeal this year for the starving people in Ethiopia? They need the food much more than we do.'³⁸⁸

³⁸² Hébert, 'Feed the World', 103–5.

³⁸³ The 1971 concert raised US\$240,000, but it took over a decade to distribute the additional sum of US\$8.8 million that came from album and film sales for UNICEF. Andrew Lycett, 'Songs for Africa with Another Tune', *Times* 12 July 1985; Richard Williams, 'Grains of Hope from the Gods of Pop', *Times* 15 July 1985; de Waal, 'Humanitarian Carnival', 51.

³⁸⁴ Vaux, *Selfish Altruist*, 53.

³⁸⁵ The first trustees included co-writer Midge Ure; theatrical manager Chris Morrison; Lord Gowre, Conservative minister for the arts; solicitor John Kennedy; controller of the BBC Michael Grade; promoter Harvey Goldsmith; Lord Harlech; and Maurice Oberstein, chairman of the British Phonographic Institute.

³⁸⁶ Food and Trucks and Rock 'n' Roll; Tony Samstag, 'Charities', the *Times*, 16 Dec. 1985; News in Brief, *Times*, 18 Nov. 1985; 'Entertainments', *Times*, 6 Mar. 1985; Advertisement, *Listener*, 10 July 1986, 29.

³⁸⁷ USA for Africa, *Memories and Reflections*, 8.

³⁸⁸ Letter from Amy and Katherine Hawthorn to Blue Peter, BBC Written Archives.

The same kind of enthusiasm in their own countries caused voluntary organisations across the world to create a range of appeals through link-ups with young people's magazines, television programmes, schools, youth organisations, and student unions.³⁸⁹ Save the Children (UK), for example, reported that donations from children and young people in 1984/5 were 476 per cent higher than the previous year.³⁹⁰ In Sweden, Lutherhjälpen's annual fast, in which three million households took part, used a series of daily reminders and simple tasks to motivate children's giving.³⁹¹ However, War on Want cautioned against 'cashing in on compassion' without offering an accompanying educational programme on the political context of aid.³⁹² Nonetheless, even War on Want echoed Band Aid's rhetoric in its 1985 membership recruitment leaflets, noting that 'If you've helped feed the world, then help change the world' by joining War on Want.³⁹³

In summer 1985, a Band Aid spin-off programme in the UK called 'Schools for Africa' – also known as School Aid – followed a well-established pattern of asking for gifts-in-kind rather than cash contributions from children (see Figure 5.8). The scheme invited schools to apply for special sacks that pupils would fill with sugar, flour, and dried peas or lentils, and would then be shipped to Africa, arriving at ports for free via British Rail's parcel delivery service. The appeal was 'on the basis that one more cheap item added onto the shopping list of every family could save thousands of people'.³⁹⁴ The Schools for Africa scheme was a success in terms of the numbers participating: even though it was August, the middle of the UK holidays, 200 schools a day were applying to join.³⁹⁵ In all, six million school children were enrolled.³⁹⁶ School Aid had a French counterpart called 'Action Ecole' that raised 4.6 million francs for projects in Mali.³⁹⁷

Many commentators agree that Band Aid succeeded in stimulating interest in famine relief and wider development issues among groups previously unreached by overseas aid charities – notably young people and blue collar

³⁸⁹ 'Fundraising', *War on Want News* 1 (1986), Box 249, War on Want Collection; 'Television', BBC 1, *Times*, 11 Aug. 1986; *Save the Children Annual Report 1986* (London: Save the Children, 1986), 22, 25; 'Blue Peter Appeal 1984', Memo from John Clark, 29 Oct. 1984, MS Oxfam, PGR2/3/1/8; Martin Nilsson, 'Svensk nödhjälp', in *Svälten på Afrikas horn*, eds Lars Adaktusson and Allan Hofgren (Uppsala: EFS-förlaget, 1986), 72–9.

³⁹⁰ *Save the Children Annual Report 1986*, 22.

³⁹¹ Lutherhjälpen, *I God Jord: Lutherhjälpens årsbok 1984* (Uppsala: Lutherhjälpen, 1984), 58.

³⁹² 'Fundraising', *War on Want News* 1 (1986).

³⁹³ Luetchford and Burns, *Waging the War on Want*, 138.

³⁹⁴ 'Together This Year Let's Make Sure They Know It's Christmas', Band Aid Press Release, July 1985, CARE Archive.

³⁹⁵ 'Band Aid Meeting, 7 Aug. 1985', CA 4/A/16.

³⁹⁶ Band Aid, 'Minutes of a Meeting with Coordinating Agencies on 23 Sept. 1985', 2, CA 4/01/130.

³⁹⁷ Band Aid, *With Love*, 5.

workers. Humanitarian organisations recognised Band Aid's pivotal role in heightening public awareness of famine and poverty abroad, leading to discussions on how to tap into this newly awakened interest. Christian Aid conducted a survey that concluded the Band Aid constituency was 'not ours', while research commissioned by Oxfam suggested that younger people responded to Band Aid, Live Aid, and Sport Aid because these campaigns offered 'something more participatory and emotive rather than rational', unlike Oxfam's usual messages.³⁹⁸ From early on, Oxfam's campaign manager was eager for the charity to develop strong ties with Band Aid in order to 'freshen' its image among young people and to publicise their support in its annual report.³⁹⁹

This all had long-term consequences for future fundraising, for it made aid agencies more receptive to novel ideas that they might earlier have dismissed. Notably among these was the 'Joke Aid' aid concept proposed to Oxfam and SCF after Live Aid by the comedy writer Richard Curtis. It eventually evolved into a regular UK fundraising telethon known as Comic Relief that featured comedians and entertainers.⁴⁰⁰

There was also soul-searching on the Left. The cultural theorist Stuart Hall argued that the Band Aid and Live Aid movement had mobilised a new, youthful constituency that put international aid onto the political agenda in Britain and created a 'famine movement'.⁴⁰¹ Other critics identified this phenomenon as a manifestation of hedonistic 1980s consumer culture.⁴⁰²

The UK Ambassador to Ethiopia, Sir Brian Barder, credited Geldof with awakening the conscience of people and keeping that awareness alive.⁴⁰³ Backed by what he called 'a constituency of compassion', Geldof had prime ministers, presidents, and the EEC in his sights, as his new-found mobilisation force made 'Western politicians rush for cover'.⁴⁰⁴ Geldof used his unique position to confront those in power with concerns that few aid workers or diplomats dared to raise for fear of jeopardising long-term relations.⁴⁰⁵ The main Sport Aid event, held in May 1986, was a sponsored run called the 'Race Against Time' held in eighty-nine countries to coincide with the opening of the

³⁹⁸ 'What Ethiopia Has Meant to the Africa Section', CA 4/A/32/1; BJM Research Partners Group, 'Oxfam and the Charity Market in Britain: A Report of Survey Findings', 1987, MS Oxfam APL/2/2/4, 8; IIED, *African Emergency*, 218.

³⁹⁹ John Clark, 'Band Aid', 2 Jan. 1984. MS Oxfam, PGR 2/3/1/8.

⁴⁰⁰ Hinton to Judd, 15 Aug. 1985, MS Oxfam PGR 2/3/10/8.

⁴⁰¹ Stuart Hall with Martin Jacques, 'People Aid: A New Politics Sweeps the Land', in *The Hard Road to Renewal: Thatcherism and the Crisis of the Left*, ed. Stuart Hall (London: Verso, 1988), 251–8.

⁴⁰² See Franks, *Reporting Disasters*, 85.

⁴⁰³ Sir Brian Barder interviewed by Malcolm McBain, 6 Mar. 1997, British Diplomatic Oral History Programme, Churchill College, Cambridge.

⁴⁰⁴ de Waal, 'Humanitarian Carnival', 51. ⁴⁰⁵ Geldof with Vallyely, *Is That It?*, 249.

UN General Assembly's first session on Africa and the food crisis. The funds raised were split between Band Aid and UNICEF.⁴⁰⁶

USA for Africa was not involved in organising Live Aid (although the song was performed in Philadelphia). However, in May 1986, it staged its own spin-off mass participation event, 'Hands across America', a human chain of 6.5 million people headed by celebrities, politicians, and religious leaders. It raised US\$34 million, which largely went to combat hunger in the USA, rather than overseas.⁴⁰⁷ Such initiatives kept the issue of hunger in the public eye far longer than it might otherwise have been, and succeeded in generating substantial funds that were eventually deployed for rehabilitation and development programmes in Africa. Manifestations of celebrity humanitarianism held one idea in common: issues of hunger and poverty in Africa require prominent interpreters or 'intermediaries' in order to make them meaningful – even enticing – to Western audiences.⁴⁰⁸ Expressive humanitarianism built on a long-standing tradition of popular engagement with charity in the form of consumption – that is, through sales of ancillary merchandise.⁴⁰⁹ Thus, through tie-ins with McDonalds and other commercial companies, Hands across America and Live Aid also influenced the development of cause-related marketing in the 1980s, more recently conceptualised as 'Brand Aid'.⁴¹⁰

The celebrity-endorsed, media-driven fundraising extravaganzas from 1984 to 1986, particularly Live Aid, have assumed iconic status in how the period is remembered in many countries, and have since been widely duplicated. As highly successful instances of a 'marketised philanthropy', these one-off, immersive, participatory experiences largely succeeded because they were not seeking any long-term engagement with the underlying issues of global inequalities.⁴¹¹ Self-declared 'band-aids', they proposed only temporary amelioration of hunger. Nonetheless, such participatory appeals worked not by duping 'audiences mesmerised by spectacle', but by tapping into a genuine desire for emotional investment in feeding the world – if it might be achieved without paying too high a price financially and emotionally.⁴¹²

3.5 Arousing Compassion: A Long View on Calls for Famine Relief

Our three case studies take a long view of the evolution of appeals for emergency aid. Stretching over a period of almost 150 years and drawing on

⁴⁰⁶ Sport Aid activities raised approximately US\$30 million.

⁴⁰⁷ USA for Africa, *Memories and Reflections*; Buck Wolf, 'Great Shakes: Hands across America: 20 Years On', ABC.com, 23 May 2006.

⁴⁰⁸ Franks, *Reporting Disasters*, 83. ⁴⁰⁹ Field, 'Consumption in lieu of Membership'.

⁴¹⁰ Stefano Ponte and Lisa Ann Richey, 'Buying into Development? Brand Aid Forms of Cause-Related Marketing', *Third World Quarterly* 35, no. 1 (2014): 65–87.

⁴¹¹ Jones, 'Band Aid Revisited', 190. ⁴¹² Lousley, 'With Love from Band Aid', 16.

source material from a range of donor countries, the cases presented illustrate the trajectory of humanitarian fundraising over time. We identify distinctions between the three examples, noting the differing historical contexts in which relief funds were raised, as well as the similarities and continuities in discourse and practice.

In all three cases, famine conditions had been developing for some time. However, transnational aid mobilisation first gained momentum as a consequence of media events after the crisis had escalated. For Ireland, it was the report from the Skibbereen neighbourhood in December 1846; in the case of Russia, the circulation of Gorky's appeal in July 1921; and for relief to Ethiopia, the screening of Buerky's and Amin's BBC report in October 1984. Once a broader public had become aware of the famine, fundraising, organisations, and the media deployed hyperbolic language to vivify conditions in the afflicted areas. In each of our examples, aid agencies depicted as unprecedented the scale of the crisis, the number of people affected, and the horrors of starvation.

While Irish and Russian representatives appealed directly to donors abroad, Ethiopian recipients depended on brokers in Europe and the USA. Those intermediaries shared images rather than transmitting the voices of those suffering, thereby depriving them of their own voice in the catastrophe. In all three countries, diaspora communities were engaged in fundraising, but their importance for the overall relief effort decreased over time. During the 1840s, Irish communities in the British Empire and the USA played a pivotal role in relief activities, and entreaties originating from Ireland are well documented in publications concerning relief efforts. Still, the largest British campaign calculated that they would receive a greater return in donations by citing officials and humanitarian workers, rather than beneficiaries. A similar strategy can be observed in the 1920s regarding Russia. Even though fundraising campaigns were triggered by Gorky's appeal, in the two years that followed, aid organisations relied mainly on reports and graphics provided by foreign visitors to the famine region. Russian voices, mostly in the form of letters, were occasionally heard in communications of gratitude or requests for small-scale relief. The role of Russian communities abroad, however, was ambivalent, as some members were active adversaries of the Bolshevik regime. Still, many supported the relief efforts financially and organised collections that were often directed at specific groups. With regard to Ethiopia, individuals were only depicted as famine victims to illustrate the horrors of starvation. The fact that they were given no other identity contributed to a distorted picture of Africans in the Global North that had lasting consequences. Exiled groups allied to the Tigrayan and Eritrean liberation fronts tried to create awareness of the fate of the population in areas outside governmental control, but their overall influence was limited.

Historically, the waning voices of famine victims might appear surprising. It can partially be explained by the increasing spatial and emotional distance between donors and beneficiaries in our three cases. During the Irish Famine, many donors felt closely connected to beneficiaries, either as UK citizens, through their Irish kinship, or as Catholic coreligionists. At the time of organised humanitarianism, appeals on behalf of more distant populations became possible, even for enemies and former enemies, if other bonds appeared meaningful. Accordingly, Gorky described Russians as members of a European family of cultivated nations, and appeals often focused on children as a group presumably untainted by ethnic, religious, or political divisions. Many organisations called on the entire population of their home countries, or even beyond, with appeals in the name of humanity, Christianity, and the idea of reconciliation. Others continued to rely on more narrowly defined religious and ethnic bonds, and the obligations and entitlements they entailed.

By contrast, relief for ethnic was mainly provided by ‘distant strangers’ in a geographical, ethnical, and cultural sense, although the rapid coverage provided by the media gave donors a sense of participating in real time. Appeals relied almost exclusively on notions of urgency and the broader ties of humanity or Christianity, again focusing on children. The role of celebrities as mediators between the donating public in the West and starving Africans, while it had earlier roots (such as the engagement of Gorky and other writers and artists in the early 1920s), is generally seen as a hallmark of modern-day humanitarianism. However, Live Aid is also reminiscent of earlier engagements, such as the Anti-Corn-Law League Bazaar in 1845, which raised an enormous sum of money while politicising the middle classes.⁴¹³ The notion that there can be reconciliation after political rupture, prominently advocated after the First World War, did not play a role in the Ethiopian case.

Worthy Victims and Guilty Governments

Doubts regarding the entitlement of famine victims were handled in various ways. At the time of the Great Irish Famine, the Anglo-Saxon discourse was not only characterised by prejudice against the Irish, but also by a Malthusian logic that considered starving populations at least partly responsible for their own fate. Thus, many appeals suggested a ‘quid quo pro’ moral economy regarding a beneficiary’s entitlement, adjusted to the targeted donor group: Catholic efforts and US campaigns tended to stress historical justifications, such as a debt owed to Ireland for being a stronghold of Catholicism or a nucleus of North American society, while appeals in the British Empire

⁴¹³ Prochaska, *Voluntary Impulse*, 14.

recalled Ireland's military contributions to imperial expansion. In the case of Russia, a future requital was occasionally promised, if only indirectly, by suggesting that relief to Russia would serve the donors' economic self-interests in the long run. Only communist relief organisations argued explicitly for reciprocity by referring to Russians as a revolutionary avant-garde who had bled for workers all over the world. During the famine in Ethiopia, notions of reciprocity no longer played a substantial role, even in the abstract; instead, appeals to a common humanity dominated, alongside a vague sense of responsibility to the 'Third World'.

In the 1840s, many fundraisers presented aid to the Irish as either ethnic, religious, or imperial in-group relief. The breakthrough of the principle of impartiality that followed – anticipated in numerous campaigns during the Great Famine – was a humanitarian milestone. However, it also led to the counterclaim that charity should begin at home, a position that was especially strong when nationalist or ideological tensions were high. Humanitarian appeals, therefore, had to stress that true altruism could not be limited to certain groups, but must be founded on an objective evaluation of need. The existence of deserving people at home was never denied, either during the Russian or the Ethiopian Famine, although humanitarian organisations tried to explain that their own compatriots were far better off than the victims of famine. Descriptive and visual here–there comparisons translated this argument into fundraising appeals. Nevertheless, in many cases, humanitarian agencies were forced to accompany their actions in support of distant sufferers with ancillary campaigns for the local charity market. For example, relief to Ireland was paralleled by relief to Scotland, and during the Russian Famine, the SCF ran a simultaneous fundraising drive for domestic relief. Likewise, USA for Africa and similar Canadian and French celebrity fundraising activities in the 1980s earmarked part of their donations for domestic charities.

While the necessity of objective evaluation and impartiality was promulgated early on, so was the modern criticism heard that such an approach might reduce relief 'from a moral enterprise to a merely technocratic one'.⁴¹⁴ Fundraisers realised that solely functional appeals would not result in the desired outcome, as donors rather 'react to people who have problems than to statistics about people with problems'.⁴¹⁵ In the case of all three countries

⁴¹⁴ Jacqueline Pfeffer Merrill, 'Peter Singer's Advice: No Charity at Home', *Philanthropy Daily*, 14 Aug. 2013, available at www.philanthropydaily.com/peter-singers-advice-no-charity-at-home/ (accessed 29 June 2019).

⁴¹⁵ Deborah A. Small, George Loewenstein, and Paul Slovic, 'Sympathy and Callousness: The Impact of Deliberative Thought on Donations to Identifiable and Statistical Victims', *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes* 102, no. 2 (2007): 146.

examined, appeals sought to individualise suffering by describing or portraying specific outcomes – preferably focusing on children and mothers. Another common campaign feature was engaging holidays, especially Christmas, to inspire giving, while repeating the claim that the scale of the famine was unprecedented.

During the Irish Famine, such strategies tended to move the public away from Malthusian reasoning. At the beginning of the appeals for starving Russia, however, many fundraisers were worried about a possibly desensitised post-war audience. They assumed that more powerful emotional triggers were needed and acted accordingly. Fundraisers for Ethiopia in the 1980s also presumed donor fatigue after the high-profile crises of the 1970s. The three campaigns we analysed confirm modern studies of media responsibility. Such studies claim that the presumption of ‘compassion fatigue’ not only reinforces simplistic press coverage, but also sets the sensationalism bar higher for coming emergencies, which in each case must then be described as ‘more dramatic or more lethal than their predecessors’.⁴¹⁶

The inclination to blame victims gave way to a modern humanitarian narrative during the late nineteenth century, although the old tendency seems to have reappeared in recent times. However, doubts regarding natural causes of famines – especially claims concerning the responsibility of governments – still hinder relief efforts. The situation in the three settings we examined differed, as Russia and Ethiopia were ruled by regimes hostile to the West, making transnational aid a delicate matter, while Ireland was part of the British Empire. Many Irish people, joined by some Germans and French, spoke out against the failure of the British government. In opposition, UK relief tended to frame the famine as a calamity limited to a discrete area with a problematic population, rather than concede that it was a domestic crisis. Hence, imperial calls for aid during the Irish Famine were careful to explain the safeguards put in place to prevent donations from being abused, as did Western organisations in Russia and Ethiopia.

Contemporary fundraisers understood that the perception of an emergency as a product of human agency might damage otherwise successful campaigns. They denounced any such claim of human causality, despite often knowing better, and attempted to depoliticise the context, either by concealing human causes or by rhetorically separating innocent suffering populations from their leaders. During the 1920s, relief organisations avoided any discussion of communism’s failure and the adverse effects of Western engagement in the Russian Civil War, highlighting instead their co-operation

⁴¹⁶ Susan D. Moeller, *Compassion Fatigue: How the Media Sell Disease, Famine, War and Death* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 2.

with the Russian population and governmental authorities. Similarly, the well-known broadcaster Buerk admitted he downplayed the civil war in Ethiopia in order not to compromise relief efforts. Another fundraising strategy was to assure donors that aid would not strengthen a country's hostile ideological order, but that they would rather weaken it by winning the 'hearts and minds' of the starving masses.

Despite transnational ambitions and appeals invoking humanity and universal siblinghood, one striking continuity across our three case studies is the framing of campaigns as a national relief effort. During the Irish Famine, many fundraisers abroad drew on feelings of national pride and competition when trying to encourage donors. This partitioning of transnational relief became more prevalent during the Russian Famine, and by the 1980s, most practical and effective campaigns were organised within the framework of the nation-state, such as the various celebrity-endorsed national television rallies during the Ethiopian Famine. However, the success of national campaigns for wider impartial relief efforts cannot only be explained by nationalist feelings, practicalities, or the expectations of higher donations and an economisation of expenditures for logistics. It also has to do with the role charity plays in religious, political, and social power relations. During the Irish Famine, charity was already being used as a means of influencing affected populations, or, alternatively, to counter the attempts of others to do so. In Ireland, the conflict between Catholics and Protestants was most important in this regard, while during the Russian Famine, ideological and political antagonism was decisive. Similar mechanisms were at work in Ethiopia, where a Cold War narrative contributed to national forms of organising aid campaigns.

Ethics, Effectiveness, and Efficiency

Reductionist and paternalistic attitudes during the Ethiopian Famine characterised ongoing discussions about the moral agency of beneficiaries and Northern 'pornography of pain' in a fundraising context. The humanitarian organisations of the 1920s were aware of the ethical tensions that resulted from the dependence of relief work on professional advertising agencies and public relations techniques. The SCF had to face the reproach of exploiting the public's emotions, while the ARA was accused of abusing famine relief for political purposes.

Fundraisers struggled to find a balance between the objective of running an efficient aid operation and the necessity of creating compassion and generating donations. During the Irish Famine, the utilitarian recommendation that relief should 'give the greatest amount of needful help, with the smallest encouragement to undue reliance on it' was implicitly part of

appeals.⁴¹⁷ This Victorian approach remained a guiding principle for some organisations during the Russian Famine. However, appeals now followed a business logic, vowing to save as many people as possible with the smallest means possible. More often than in the case of Ireland, Russian appeals put a price tag on human lives – ‘£1 saves one child’ – thereby encouraging people to translate everyday expenditures into rescuing children from starvation – something Singer later did more systematically. During the famine in Ethiopia, such arguments were already well-established and are evident in various calls for aid.

Throughout the whole period, there were appeals that incorporated the three-fold goal of not only feeding the starving, but also fighting the origins of famine and providing long-term aid. The ‘help them to help themselves’ credo was highly regarded at the time of the Irish Famine. During the 1920s, both the FSR and the Quakers anticipated later forms of ‘development assistance’ by sending agricultural equipment and tools as well as instructors to Russia. In Ethiopia, too, some appeals promised to address broader questions of long-term rehabilitation, while continuing to provide aid in the present.

Regarding Flynn’s ideal types of the ‘suffering stranger appeal’ and the ‘causal contribution appeal’, it becomes clear that while the latter remains an exception, it is not a modern phenomenon. Already during the 1840s, the colonial exploitation under English rule was considered a major cause of famine by some Irish commentators. Similarly, US appeals sometimes related Ireland’s agony to profiteering caused by the discrepancy between poor harvests in Europe and New World abundance. During the Russian Famine, Nansen and Hoover pointed in like manner to the large surplus of grain in the Americas. The SCF further called donations ‘blood money’ and an atonement for previous deeds and Gorky’s appeal hinted in a similar direction. That a donor’s capability and culpability often go hand in hand is illustrated by the feelings of shame and guilt many Europeans expressed over the notorious ‘butter mountains’ and ‘milk lakes’ they were taunted with during the Ethiopian Famine. Thus, the moral economy topic of overflow versus need was significant in all three cases, although neither one of the pair was necessarily described as conditioning the other.

The critical observation that relief is often ‘about us, not them’ gained broad recognition towards the end of the twentieth century, having already been noted by commentators on the Irish and Russian famines. Several appeals could be cited that focused on the well-being of the donor rather than the beneficiary by promising salvation for those who gave – a promise meant in a literal, religious sense during the Irish Famine. Fundraisers in the 1920s also

⁴¹⁷ John Stuart Mill, *Principles of Political Economy: With Some of Their Applications to Social Philosophy*, vol. 2 (London: Parker, 1848), 536.

invoked spiritual salvation, but sometimes also economic salvation and the promise of a better future in the here and now. The USA for Africa song, 'We Are the World', exemplifies this utopian longing for a just global community, its lyrics suggesting that donors would be saving their own lives by contributing to a good cause. Donor-centredness is also apparent in the expressive mixture of consumerism and appeals typified by charity concerts and the sale of recordings.