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CARING FOR OUR BROTHER'S CHILDREN GREEK AND MACEDONIAN CHILD REFUGEES IN SOCIALIST ROMANIA IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR*

Beatrice Scutaru

Abstract

This chapter focuses on the aid provided by Romania to refugee children in the aftermath of the Second World War. Drawing on the case of the Greek and Macedonian children, who arrived in Romania between early 1948 and 1949, this chapter explores the role of this socialist state – often perceived as a space of departure and in need of support – as a provider of aid and care to a brotherly nation and its children. This chapter provides a new perspective on the “East” and advances our knowledge of a neglected actor in the history of humanitarianism.

Keywords: Refugees, children, Romania, humanitarian aid, children’s homes, socialism

1. Introduction

“Ultimul care pleacă stinge lumina! [The last one to leave must turn off the lights!]” is a joke Romanians have been making for decades.¹ Besides its humorous intentions, this witty joke reveals the importance held by the idea of emigration in the Romanian mentality. This was a reality during socialism, which continues until the present day. Romania is, indeed, a place of departure, a space which individuals and groups flee to find refuge and a better life elsewhere.² Romania has also received, throughout the years, substantial aid and support from foreign countries and international organisations.³ Generally speaking, Romania, and Eastern Europe, are

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perceived and researched mainly as spaces of departure, in need of and receiving humanitarian aid.⁴ What is less known, however, is that Romania is also a space of refuge and has a long tradition of providing aid and support to countries and individuals.⁵

During the Cold War, as other East Central European countries, Romania provided humanitarian and developmental aid to numerous countries. This support took various forms: e.g., diplomatic support, fundraising campaigns and collection of goods from the population, medical expeditionary corps.⁶ While part of this support was provided abroad, Romania also received various groups of refugees on its own territory.⁷ Many of these were children.⁸ During socialism, Romania received three main groups of children: Greek and Macedonian, North Korean and Chileans. All came to Romania at different moments in time, 1940s, 1950s, and 1970s, from brotherly nations, and received help in the name of socialist international solidarity. Romania's action is part of a group of efforts taken by all member countries of the Eastern Bloc, at the behest and/or with the support of the Soviet Union.

The Greek and Macedonian children were the first to arrive, starting 1948 (6,000 children). North Korean children are part of the second group to come to Romania after the Second World War: between 1,000 and 3,000 children were hosted in Romania from the beginning of 1952 until 1960 when all were repatriated. In the 1970s, after Pinochet's coup d'état, about 2,000 Chileans (children and their parents) found refuge in Romania. This chapter will focus on one group of children, the Greek and Macedonian who started arriving in Romania in the spring of 1948, to illustrate the type of support Romania provided to children in the immediate aftermath of the war. This study of Romania as a country providing care and aid to refugees aims to provide a new perspective on the "East" and to advance our knowledge of a neglected actor in the history of humanitarianism.

The chapter will explore this phenomenon over a short period of time, between 1948 and the beginning of the 1950s, a time of great change at political, economic, cultural, social, etc. levels. During this period, which corresponds to the children's arrival, socialist Romania was engaged in a process of consolidation of power and of state-building. At the same time, through the aid provided to these children the young socialist Romanian state also constructed an identity as a provider of welfare. While tackling the various logistical challenges that arose from having to transport and house relatively large groups of people, Romania was engaging in the

process of state-building while contributing towards the state-building efforts of their foreign guests and their respective governments.⁹

Romania, like all host countries of the region, had to create a network of institutions for housing and educating unaccompanied children. Most Greek refugee children and young people were initially placed and cared for in these large, state-run institutions, the type of institutions that represent, in the national and international collective imagination, the flawed system of childcare and protection in Romania. While the institutionalisation of children and its terrible effects have been widely researched, especially for the post-1989 period,¹⁰ few studies focus on the early period of the communist regime. The aim of this chapter is also to contribute to this rich literature with an analysis focusing on the early years of the communist regime. This analysis will allow will allow for a better understanding of the first steps taken in establishing a new child protection system.

Drawing mainly on the archives of the Romanian Red Cross, the main body dealing with Greek and Macedonian refugees in Romania, this chapter is structured in three parts. The first section of the chapter will present the broad context and type of aid provided to Greek communists during the civil war by the members of the Eastern Bloc. The second and third sections will explore the type of care provided to Greek and Macedonian children in various Romanian institutions. These follow the steps taken by the authorities to provide support to refugees: first, there was the emergency arrangement and allocation of children in large groups and structures. This period is followed by a more structured life in the settlements and then integration into the mainstream school system and Romanian society.

2. Transnational support for the Greek brothers

2.1. The Eastern Bloc mobilises

The Greek Civil War erupted shortly after the end of the Second World War and lasted between 1946 and 1949. The conflict was one of the first battlegrounds of the Cold War. It was also an 'internal' war in which external actors played important roles. While the involvement of Western powers is well known, less has been written on the involvement of the Soviet Bloc.¹¹ The aid provided by the members of the Socialist Bloc to the

Communist Party of Greece (KKE) and its army was kept a secret, especially so that Western powers did not become aware of the fact, which could have led to renewed conflicts in Europe; only a small number of people, in each country, knew what the aid consisted of. Officially, socialist countries were sending humanitarian aid. Non-officially, besides food, clothing and medical equipment, the Greek communists also received weapons, ammunition, petrol, etc. The aid was provided in three phases: first between July 1946 and spring 1947, with a second phase between the summer of 1947 and October 1948. The third one lasted between autumn 1948 and April 1949.¹²

The support provided to the KKE can be divided into five categories: (1) weapons, ammunition, medical and personal hygiene supplies, food, clothing, equipment, vehicles; (2) money transfer; (3) training of officers and fighters in various camps established across socialist countries; (4) taking care of wounded partisans; (5) care of children and adults on the territories of eastern socialist countries.¹³ Until 1948 and the conflict between Stalin and Tito, the bulk of the support was provided by and transported through Yugoslavia. Besides weapons (initially of German origin to conceal the identity of the actual suppliers) and provisions, Yugoslavia also helped the KKE's propaganda needs: the Communists' Free Greece Radio station was transmitting from Belgrade, where was also the office of the KKE in exile.¹⁴ The Bulgarians and Albanians also played a substantial role. Besides supplying with weapons and provisions, Bulgaria also received injured and sick partisans for treatment and later training in preparation for their return to the front.¹⁵

Mid-1948, following the Tito-Stalin clash and the expulsion of Yugoslavia from the Cominform, the situation changed dramatically. The KKE chose to remain faithful to Moscow, and the other East European countries eventually took responsibility for most of the support to the KKE and its army. Officials from Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania and Greece met on various occasions to organise the new paths of transport of aid.¹⁶ Despite this collective mobilisation, the socialist parties' attitude towards the Greek conflict was not linear or uniform. With the exception of 'internationalist solidarity' towards the KKE, which manifested itself in various ways during the conflict, geographic proximity, internal politics, the international conjuncture and particular political stakes helped to shape the position of the communist parties as much as the 'revolutionary duty' did.¹⁷

Initially limited, Romania's aid to the KKE and its army increased to large quantities of food, clothing, medicine, weapons, horses and fuel. Romania seems to be the only country which provided the Greek partisans with fuel. Additionally, starting April 1948, Romania also starts receiving thousands of children and hundreds of sick and injured partisans.¹⁸ The latter represented an essential aspect of the aid Romania provided to its Greek brothers.

2.2. Receiving the Greek refugees in Romania

The Greek civil war, indeed, caused not only enormous human losses and material damage, but also massive internal and international population displacements. In the early 1950s, around 100,000 refugees from the Greek civil war were living in Eastern Bloc countries. Of these, about 20,000 were children.¹⁹ Given the Cold War context, the humanitarian assistance provided was politicised, a political project combining humanitarianism with state planning and a socialist agenda.²⁰ The 'brotherly' support given to the Greek Communist Party and refugees by the countries of the new Eastern bloc can be seen as part of a policy of internationalist and revolutionary solidarity, influenced by Cold War conflicts and national foreign policy interests. This reality is reflected in the criteria for accepting foreigners seeking asylum: refugees were not granted asylum individually but were accepted collectively in the host countries thanks to the goodwill of the communist leadership, whose decision was purely arbitrary. Not officially recognised as refugees or covered by the Geneva Convention (1951), Greeks and Macedonians had the legal status of "stateless persons" and remained dependent on the goodwill of the regimes, without individualised rights or the possibility of relying on institutionalised legal protection, independent of the executive.²¹ Despite their precarious legal status, the displaced population was generally well cared for in the host countries.²²

Greek refugees arrived in Romania in three waves: first came the children, second the ill and wounded and third the remaining partisans and elderly, after the defeat. Among the partisans were also the leaders of the KKE, which had moved its headquarters to Bucharest.²³ Between 1948 and 1949 arrived in Romania about 1,200 ill and wounded partisans that were treated at various hospitals in Bucharest and Sinaia. Many were suffering from serious conditions, such as tuberculosis, and were taken care of in various sanatoriums in Snagov, Argeş, Bacău, Prahova,

Humedoara and Slatina. When their conditions could be better attended elsewhere, some partisans were transferred abroad: e.g., those suffering from cranio-cerebral injuries were treated in Hungary, by the famous Dr Zoltan. About 800 of those who got better in East Central European countries, among which Romania, returned to Greece in April 1949 to fight in the last months of the civil war. Once the civil war was lost by the KKE, the partisans and the military and political leadership crossed the border in Albania. Those, along with the wounded already present in Bulgaria and Yugoslavia were distributed to Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, Eastern Germany and the Soviet Union.²⁴

Early 1948, the Greek Communist Party decided to evacuate children from the war zone. Displacing children to protect them from conflict is not a new practice. Children are perceived as the primary victims of armed conflict, being both targets and instruments. The conflicts of the 20th century had one characteristic which strongly influenced the 21st century: the domestic front starts to be involved in the conflict at an unprecedented level, leading to a sharp rise in civilian casualties, among which children.²⁵ Increasing concern for children and anxieties about the effects of war on them also popularized the practice of sending children away from their home areas after, during or in preparation for conflicts.

Between 1917 and 1925, about 500,000 German and Austrian children were sent to other countries in Europe, mainly Switzerland and the Netherlands, as a way to give them proper food and recreation. The schoolchildren were seen as war victims, but the authorities also believed this program would help ensure the children would not grow up to become a threat to the rebuilding of Europe. Between 1937 and 1939, about 30,000 Spanish children were sent to France, Belgium, Great Britain, Norway, Denmark, Sweden, the Soviet Union and Mexico in order to remove them from the war zone. Between 1939 and 1945, before, during and after the Winter War between the Soviet Union and Finland, about 70,000 children were sent to other Nordic countries, such as Sweden and Denmark, in order to protect them from war and its consequences. After the beginning of World War II, children were massively evacuated from British cities to the countryside and overseas members of the Commonwealth of Nations in order to protect them from enemy bomb attacks; it was estimated that, between 1939 and 1941, 3 million people, mostly children, were uprooted from urban areas in Great Britain. Between 1939 and 1940, massive evacuations were also conducted in France in order to protect people, especially children, from

German military invasion.²⁶ Moreover, when the war between Germany and the Soviet Union broke out in 1941, more than 264,000 children were evacuated from Leningrad and other major cities and sent to other parts of the country to escape invasion and the siege by German forces. Between 1940 and 1943, the Nazi regime organised the evacuation of 3 million children from urban areas to the countryside and safer occupied countries in order to save them from Allied aerial bombings.²⁷ The actions taken by Greek communists, thus, inscribe themselves in a long tradition according to which displacing and (re)educating children was the best way to protect them and the future of the nation.

The evacuation of children to the neighbouring communist states – Albania, Bulgaria and Yugoslavia – began in the spring of 1948. From there, the children continued their journey further to Hungary, Romania, Poland, Czechoslovakia. The process lasted until 1949. All Eastern Bloc countries received and offered aid to the evacuated Greek and Macedonian children. Nearly 6,000 children were placed in children's homes in Romania until they entered the national education system or the workforce. They were placed in 13 children's homes. Some of these children have lived in Romania all their lives, while others have returned to their country of origin or migrated to other countries in Europe and the United States. All of them, however, have been taken in by the state.²⁸

3. Emergency welfare while waiting to return to Greece

3.1. Managing the emergency

When the children arrived, as in other countries in the region, Romania was going through a period of great change. At the end of 1947, the Romanian Popular Republic was established (after the king was forced to abdicate). A soviet style inspired political, economic and social system had started to be implemented, based on one party rule, a command economy, and Marxist-Leninist ideology.²⁹ A new communist constitution was also implemented, in 1948. When the children arrived, socialist Romania was thus engaged in a process of consolidation of power and of state-building. To house and care for these children, Romania, like other host countries in the Eastern Bloc, had to create a network of institutions for housing and educating unaccompanied children. This situation also forced the country to start looking beyond the politics and economic emergencies and focus

on the welfare system. Initially, an emergency-and-basic-needs sort of welfare was set up. While tackling the various logistical challenges that arose from having to transport and house relatively large groups of people, Romania was also working on its identity, constructing an identity as a provider of welfare. Hence, they were literally engaging in the process of their own state-building while contributing toward the state-building efforts of their foreign guests and their government.³⁰

In April 1948, 892 children arrived in Romania.³¹ The numbers grew rapidly and at the end of the following year Romania had 7379 people in its care, most of them between 0 and 16 years of age.³² As in all the countries in the region, the main organisation dealing with the refugees was the Romanian Red Cross, which collaborated with the Ministries of Health, Education and Labour, as well as with the National Committee for the Relief of the Greek People and the National Liberation Front (EAM). Created at the end of the 19th century, the Romanian Red Cross was reorganised on 23 September 1948 (Law for the Organisation of the Romanian Red Cross) and was under state control.³³ In addition to the central structure in Bucharest, the Red Cross also opened a number of branches at county level. These branches dealt with refugees, in collaboration and with the help of the Central Committee in Bucharest.³⁴

On 6 April 1948, the 892 children arrived in Călimănești,³⁵ a small town in the county of Vâlcea, in Oltenia, a well-known and popular spa resort. Colonies were created in spa resorts because there was a very high capacity for accommodation (the hotel in Călimănești, for example, had a capacity of 245 beds). This setting was also considered to be more conducive to recreation and healing for sick children, compared to a place in the city.³⁶ Many of the children were ill (suffering from rheumatic fever, trachoma, mange, lice, bronchitis and psychological trauma), some were orphans, others frightened and disoriented. Most of the refugee population were children aged between 3 and 14. This meant they were born just before or during the Second World War and spent the first years of their lives in conditions of terrible hardship and famine, witnessing numerous deaths between 1941 and 1943. To this we can add the civil war that broke out in 1946. These children had thus suffered traumas whose effects and duration were difficult to assess.³⁷

Teams of nurses arrived from Bucharest and, together with a member of the Red Cross management in Bucharest and the local authorities (the local mayor and the staff of the Red Cross from Râmnicu Vâlcea), they formed teams to help with the reception of children.³⁸ The children were

initially housed in the local primary school where they were medically examined, bathed, dewormed and dressed in new clothes sent by the Red Cross in Bucharest.³⁹ Under the supervision of the nurses, a group of young people from the Young Workers' Union (UTM) helped with the disinfection of the clothes. A medical form was created for each child. They also received a medallion with the figure of General Markos on one side and a serial number on the other. Two members of the Union of Democratic Women of Romania (UFDR) were in charge of this operation.⁴⁰ Most of the children were then transported to the State Hotel where a children's camp was organised. This camp existed for almost 9 months.⁴¹ Those with more serious medical problems, which could not be solved locally, were sent to hospitals in the region (e.g. to Vâlcea County Hospital) and in Bucharest.⁴²

The living conditions, while better than in a country at war, were still very difficult and Călimănești was a particularly difficult experience. Testimonies of children who spent time at the camp mention the hardships endured here. According to Danforth and Boeschoten, "the children who passed through Romania remember with horror their time at the house in Călimănești, where a typhus epidemic broke out and hunger was so strong that the children had to catch frogs and snails and pull the leaves off the trees in order to eat something, anything".⁴³ The economic situation was very difficult across Europe. Romania was no exception: in 1946, the average European food production was only 36% of that of 1938. Many countries therefore resorted to rationing food consumption. In Romania, rationing was abandoned only in 1954.⁴⁴ The children of Călimănești were therefore not the only ones facing serious food shortages during this period. In the reports sent by the colony's employees, some of the difficulties were acknowledged (epidemics, cold, communication difficulties) and blamed on the lack of preparation in the organisation of the colony, phrases such as "unexpectedly", "in a hurry" being found in the reports sent to the Red Cross Central Committee in Bucharest. In addition, the managing and deputy directors admitted lacking experience: "we had never even been in a children's home".⁴⁵ No mention is made, however, of supply difficulties which appeared regularly in the reports drawn up for the following period. From the documents we only learn that supplies were provided from various sources, with local products from Călimănești and Râmnicu Vâlcea, supplemented with food brought from the Red Cross warehouse in Bucharest.⁴⁶ This demonstrates an interest in providing food for children, despite the difficulties at national level. National and

international interest in the children's situation, as evidenced by numerous visits by representatives of the National Liberation Front (EAM) as well as RPR (Republica Populară Română) deputies, the vice-president of the Presidium of the Grand National Assembly, or ministerial representatives have certainly played a role in this attitude.⁴⁷

3.2. The importance of health checks and the fear of disease

The children's health and especially keeping epidemics in check was an essential concern ever since the children's arrival in Romania. The first objective was to identify the health status of children and find ways to treat them. In a 1950 report, the Romanian Red Cross argued that the main objective was to cure children and improve their physical condition. Only then work could be done to raise the children's cultural and civic level in order to prepare them for the work of rebuilding their homeland after the KKE's victory.⁴⁸ Children were weighed and measured monthly to monitor their progress. Weekly they were bathed, and their underwear changed. Medical check-ups were also carried out.⁴⁹ This interest is illustrated by the series of visits to the colony by specialist doctors (radiologists, dentists, etc.), as well as by the number of staff employed in the sanitary section: 1 doctor, 2 head nurses, 15 nurses and auxiliary nurses. The infirmary was one of the first created in the colony, with 17 beds at the beginning. Later special isolation wards were built (65 beds). A total of 670 children were admitted and treated in the infirmary, the most common illnesses being mumps (255), influenza and flu (111) and bronchitis (98).⁵⁰ A large number of vaccinations were also carried out, in particular to limit the risk of contagious diseases (anti-diphtheria, anti-typhoparasite, anti-scarlet fever), as well as tests for malaria. Children identified as anaemic were given vitamins and food supplements. Also, in order for all children to "develop normally, vigorously and healthily" they had to follow a physical education programme.⁵¹

Despite these measures, outbreaks have been identified in the colonies. These were due to several factors: e.g., at Călimănești, the children arrived during the cold season. The hotel where they were staying, although very spacious, did not initially have enough beds for all the children, who slept 2-3 to a bed, which favoured the spread of contagious diseases. In addition, the building was set up to receive tourists only in the summer and had no heating, which favoured numerous cases of bronchitis and flu. Moreover, keeping the sick in isolation was very difficult, as they

were “stolen” from the isolation pavilions by family members.⁵² Family members and/or members of the village or region of origin were the only elements that allowed them to feel safe. They thus did not want to be separated from their family members. Also, a change could take place at any time and they could be moved to another institution or country (as it had happened before their arrival to Romania and will continue to happen) so family members were afraid of being separated. In addition, at least in the initial stage, none of the staff spoke Greek or Macedonian, which made communication and establishing trust very difficult.⁵³

Interest in children’s health continued to be central, as evidenced by numerous reports and statistics on the medical situation, as well as visits by representatives of the Ministry of Health. Medical work was divided into two categories: preventive and curative. Preventing epidemics and keeping children in good health was central to the work of the medical staff of the homes. To this end, on 10 October 1948 the Ministry of Health sent out health instructions for the organisation and operation of the colonies. Those who did not follow the instructions risked being held responsible for any epidemic that may occur.⁵⁴ Following this threat, the Sinaia colony finally set up an infirmary in a separate building (the Bucegi dormitory) in order to better isolate children with contagious diseases.⁵⁵ This action, carried out in January 1949, had been requested by the Ministry of Health and the National Committee for the Relief of the Greek People throughout 1948, without success. In addition to the existing facilities in the colony, medical staff could also send the sick children to hospitals in the region or to Bucharest as well as to other spa resorts.⁵⁶ Despite this better organisation, the staff in Sibiu regularly lacked medicines: month after month, the reports ended with a section highlighting the “total” and “permanent” lack of the usual medicines, but also of medical equipment such as instruments for the dental surgery, X-ray machines, ultra-violet rays for children with rickets, and a laboratory for emergency analyses.⁵⁷

4. Building a life for the children once the war was over

4.1. A more structured way of life

Once the emergency surpassed, some of the colonies were closed and the children were moved to other colonies where they started a more structured life. One of the first colonies to be closed was the one

in Călimănești: 503 children left on 23 October 1948, followed by a batch of 300 children on 4 November. The last children left the colony on 5 December.⁵⁸ Conditions were created for better organisation and operation of the colonies and schools. This happened 'organically', within each colony, but also at the central level: in 1952, rules of operation were established at national level, inspired by the Soviet Union model, which were then adapted and adopted within each colony.⁵⁹ To better illustrate how the children's lives were organised, these sections will focus especially on only one colony, the Sinaia colony.

One of the first created in Romania, the Sinaia colony existed between 1948 and 1953 and was composed of two structures dealing with refugees: the Palace hotel and the Caraiman hotel. At the end of 1948, the Palace hotel had 53 'mothers' and 899 children and Caraiman had 175 'mothers' and 189 children.⁶⁰ The 'mothers' were the women who had accompanied and cared for the displaced children. Usually under 30 years of age, unmarried or widowed, they were initially chosen by the communist leaders of each village. Some accompanied their own children, while others were not related to them. These 'mothers' played a very important role in the children's lives, providing much-needed emotional and moral support in a context where most children had left behind everything familiar. Gradually, the role of 'mother' was taken over by specially trained local teachers and professional care givers.⁶¹

An activity initiated without much success in 1948 in Caraiman (but also in Sinaia), but which became more and more a reality, was building a very structured way of life for children. They got up early in the morning, exercised, washed and then had breakfast. In the morning they went to school and in the afternoon, after lunch, they did their homework and various leisure activities (in nature when the weather allowed). They could only leave the colony accompanied; contact with local residents and even with the children of the employees was limited. Strict discipline was enforced. Clothing was uniform, sent from the centre or made in the colony's workshop.⁶² Food was also very strictly controlled, with monthly, weekly and daily rules and rations scientifically decided, approved by the director, according to the rules set by the Ministry of Internal Trade.⁶³ Children were organised in rooms and on floors according to age and gender. In Călimănești, for example, on the first floor were children up to 7 years old, boys on one side and girls on the other. On the second floor were the older girls and on the third floor the older boys.⁶⁴

4.2. Educating the future generation

Education was an essential aspect of these children's lives. Once the children recovered physically from their travels and various illnesses, they started to go to school. Children over 7 went to school and those under 7 to kindergartens and nurseries. Initially classrooms, kindergartens and crèches were improvised into rooms and lounges on each floor.⁶⁵ However, the colonies in Romania, as in other host countries, faced a lack of Greek and Macedonian textbooks and an insufficient number of teachers.⁶⁶ In May 1948, there were only 15 Greek language textbooks in Sinaia and the translator was trying to organise activities with the children in their mother tongue.⁶⁷ In 1949, the Greek Committee "Help the Children" (EVOP) started publishing Greek and Macedonian textbooks. Some were translations of Soviet textbooks, others newly written.⁶⁸ Also in 1949, in April, with the support of the Greek representatives in Romania, the homes and especially the children's education facilities were reorganised. Primary school was now from grade 1 to grade 6. Each class had between 30 and 45 children, with 1 or 2 teachers. In addition to the mother tongue, the children also attended Romanian classes 5 times a week.⁶⁹ Refugee children started learning the language of the host country in 1949-1950 and later. When it became clear that the Greek communists had lost the war, all education was conducted only in the language of the host country,⁷⁰ in this case Romanian. However, as Eleni admits in an interview in 2013/2014, the process of learning Romanian was difficult and not exactly welcomed by the children, many of whom believed that they would soon return to Greece and would not need Romanian.⁷¹ Language teaching was done through playful, specialized, sport or artistic activities. When the children had learnt Romanian well enough to be able to study for 3-4 hours a day, classes of pupils were formed and the Romanian curriculum was taught. Eventually, this would lead to an easier integration of children into the public education system as well as into the labour market.⁷²

With the help of a teacher from Bucharest, the improvised kindergartens were better organized, all classes were on the first floor, with 2 teachers each. The main problem that now needed to be addressed was the lack of training of most of the teachers. This led to difficulties in managing the children and keeping to the set timetable.⁷³ This situation was also found in other childcare institutions and was the result of decisions taken by the Romanian government: in 1948 the Concordat with the Vatican

was cancelled, and the educational institutions of all churches were nationalised (law 175 on religious cults). In 1949, all teaching, health care and other charitable activities carried out by churches were banned. Qualified nurses could continue to work only if they renounced their religious dress.⁷⁴ To make up for this lack, colonies were also used to train new specialists in the field. In Tulgheş there was a school for educators and in Sinaia 3 experienced educators (one with more than 20 years of experience) allowed the others to acquire knowledge through practice and daily classes.⁷⁵ This transmission of knowledge acquired before the Second World War demonstrates the existence, to a certain extent, of a continuity of practices and notions of pedagogy from the interwar period to the communist period, also found in the child protection system in Hungary.⁷⁶ For example, in Călimăneşti, children under 7 years of age attended Froebelian classes, the principles of which were developed in the 19th century, which sought to develop their skills by all possible means (games, songs, manual work, etc.).⁷⁷

Life in the colonies was also highly politicised. Discipline, uniform dress and numerous organised activities played an important role in instilling Communist Party ideology in children and turning them into model workers.⁷⁸ After improving the children's health, the aim was to raise their cultural and civil level. From the very beginning, regular meetings were held to explain to the children why they had been displaced from their homeland, leaving behind everything they knew. They listened to radio broadcasts and the Free Greece Radio Journal, read newspapers they had received in the colony, and created wall newspapers with cuttings from the newspapers they had received, as well as articles written by the children. These were changed about every 15 days.⁷⁹ The children were encouraged to join the existing communist youth organisation or create new ones. In Sinaia, the children's organisations were Epon and the Pioneers, which held meetings every 2 days.⁸⁰ The need for good training was also stressed: children had to learn well in order to return home as teachers, engineers and skilled workers to help build a new, democratic and socialist Greece.⁸¹

4.3. Labour was essential

The integration of children and accompanying adults into the labour market was also a very important issue. Adults, especially 'mothers' and employees, were responsible for establishing control over children's lives,

but they too had to be controlled. While the care staff could be employed locally, all other positions were decided centrally. For example, in 1948, the Sinaia colony required staff who spoke the children's language to be able to do Greek and Macedonian language courses.⁸² The roles and duties of each were very well defined and evaluated on a monthly basis and were an important part of the monthly reports sent to the Red Cross in Bucharest. The Sinaia colony has a special situation: the children are accompanied by a large number of adults who could be integrated into the labour market. This is exactly what the colony's management tried to do. The "Greek women", as they are called by the colony's administration, took part in most of the tasks alongside state employees. When the colony was opened, various groups were formed to carry out certain tasks and the newly arrived women were integrated according to their knowledge and needs. After an initially difficult period, by March 1949, about 70% of the "Greek women" had been employed, which allowed the colony and the state to save significant sums of money: they saved the work of about 30 employees who were assigned elsewhere. For example, on the floors, cleaning was done by "Greek women", who also worked in the kitchen, were responsible for rooms or floors, supervised the children and worked in the tailor shop.⁸³ School-age children, especially girls, also took part, cleaning the rooms and the dining room, helping to serve meals, etc. In Călimănești, tailoring, knitting (for girls) or shoemaking (for boys) workshops were organised to keep the children busy,⁸⁴ but also to instil the idea that everyone should participate in (re)building the country.

Caring for large numbers of refugees, some of them unfit for work, was a major financial burden for Romania, as it was for other host countries. The situation was complicated by the destruction and hardship of the post-war period and the loss of a large part of the workforce due to the expulsion of members of ethnic minority groups. In this context, able-bodied Greek and Macedonian refugees were integrated into the workforce to contribute to the "socialist reconstruction" effort.⁸⁵ The productivity of all, whether employed or in the care of the state, as well as the ability to save money, especially through voluntary work, is highly valued and encouraged. Competitions are one of the methods used. If in August 1948 the "hard-working" workers were congratulated,⁸⁶ in June 1949, competitions became essential to the work in the colony: "the work [of the colony] has been conducted largely on the basis of individual socialist competitions in all sectors of labour". Checked by a control committee, the results of the competitions were publicly displayed at the end of each

week.⁸⁷ Following the model of the Soviet Union, the so-called heroes of labour, the stakhanovist or hard-working workers, were emphasised and encouraged.⁸⁸

The situation became more complicated when some refused to play the game. For example, the activity report of February 1949 stated that “some of the Greek comrades are of real help to us in several sectors of work, and with some, we have not been able to train them”⁸⁹ and in April “we cannot get along with the Greek comrades to get them into work”.⁹⁰ Even though the refugee women and the Romanian staff collaborated in the preparation of the menus, and the “Greek women” helped with the food processing work, they did not “participate in the preparation of the food, although the Romanian staff has repeatedly requested this”.⁹¹ However, the above quotes refer to the most constant difficulty encountered by the colony’s administration: the women in the Caraiman hostel, where the youngest children are assigned, “do nothing but sit with their children in their arms all day long and when you ask them why they don’t do something, they reply that they have to sit with their children in their arms because that’s all they have left, because they have lost their husbands and children and they don’t want to lose the one they are holding”. Many of the women refused to let their infant children go to the nursery organised in the colony, which would free up their day and allow them to integrate into the labour market.⁹² At a time when the country needed industrial labour, women were entering the workforce. As in Hungary, refusal to participate in productive work by those fit for work was considered an immoral act to be rectified at any cost. The situation was even worse where mothers were concerned, as their refusal was considered a moral danger to their children who thus risked not becoming useful members of society, and even turning into criminals.⁹³ In Sinaia, a number of 6 women were held responsible for all the hardships, dragging the other women along, and the administration demanded their “removal”.⁹⁴

5. Conclusions

The evacuation of children during the Greek civil war is one of the most tragic and contested episodes in modern Greek history. While historiography has so far focused mainly on conflicting interpretations of the civil war, political emigration and the controversial displacement of children, the issue of humanitarian aid to refugees from Eastern Bloc

countries remains less researched. This chapter contributes to a rapidly developing literature that examines Eastern Europe not only as an area in need of and receiving humanitarian aid, but as an important actor in the history of humanitarianism. Here we have seen Romania as a provider of humanitarian care and aid. Despite the many difficulties Romania was going through in the post-war and nation-building (re)construction period, the archives show real attempts to provide aid and support to Greek and Macedonian refugees over a long period of time. In order to support this displaced population, significant funds were allocated, new infrastructure was provided and built, and a regime of (child) protection and control accompanied them throughout their lives.

This chapter also contributes to a better understanding of the early stages of the new child protection system developed in the RPR. It combines, as expected, new ideas about child labour and education and a tendency towards structuring and medicalisation, with elements of a continuation of the interwar period. The end of the Second World War thus marked not an absolute break with the previous period, but a period of transition. Initially, the refugee status of Greek and Macedonian children was considered temporary. Therefore, their education was aimed at their planned involvement in the socialist transformation of Greece. With the extension of their stay, refugee children became an integral part of society. They gradually integrated through education and professional expertise, entering the workplace or belonging to mass organisations and party structures. Even if their trajectories were different, one constant was the presence of state representatives in the lives of these children and young people, a state that combined humanitarian aid with state planning and a socialist agenda. Lessons learned during the arrival and first years of care of the Greek and Macedonian children were also put to use later on, when the North Korean children found refuge in Romania. A similar process was followed, but each step was a lot better organised, avoiding the repetition of some of the difficulties encountered at the end of the 1940s.

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