

ACTIVITIES OF AMERICAN HUMANITARIAN ORGANIZATIONS ARA AND JOINT AFTER THE FIRST WORLD WAR ON THE TERRITORY OF THE THIRD BULGARIAN KINGDOM



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Abstract. In the article "Activities of American humanitarian organizations ARA and Joint after the First World War on the territory of the Third Bulgarian Kingdom" the questions about the activities of American humanitarian organizations, which began to operate in the immediate aftermath of the First World War in the

States of the European continent most affected by the fighting are being raised. Although Bulgaria was among the United States' opponents during the war, humanist ideas in America prevailed and the Bulgarian Kingdom was included in the list of countries that received humanitarian support. The American Relief Administration, commonly known as ARA and the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee – Joint (JDC) were the most active in Bulgaria. The article presents the facts that have become key to the decision-making regarding the deployment of a humanitarian mission and provides quantitative indicators of assistance. The main distribution centres for humanitarian supplies are the cities of Sofia and Plovdiv. The article consecrated the activities of American humanitarian organizations (AHO) in the field of assistance to children's homes, targeted assistance to poor Bulgarian citizens, assistance in the after of natural disasters. In fact, the scientific work presented is one of the first attempts to systematize and generalize the material on the activities of American humanitarian organizations after the First World War in the territory of Bulgaria. The scientific work uses documents from Ukrainian, American and Bulgarian archives not previously included in scientific circulation as well as press and information periodicals from the humanitarian organizations themselves.

Keywords: *American philanthropy, opposition to communism, ARA, Joint (JDC), Bulgaria, humanitarian aid.*

Introduction

Analysis of recent researches and publications. According to the analysis of historiography of the proposed scientific problem, unfortunately, within the framework of Ukrainian historical science it remains not enough researched. Only recently has the subject received a certain amount of research impetus. Among such studies can be mentioned V. Pogromskiy's publications "Joint's activities in the context of humanitarian assistance to the Third Bulgarian Kingdom in the 1920s" (Pogromskiy, 2019) "American humanitarian organization in the context of economic support to Bulgaria after the First World War" (Pogromskiy, 2020) where the author in fact for the first time in national historical science attempts to analyze the importance of American humanitarian organizations in the process of reconstruction of Bulgaria after the the First World War. Within the historical mind of the countries of Eastern Europe there is virtually no researches on the activities of American philanthropic organizations in Bulgaria between the wars, except for the monograph of Alexander Velichkov "American Charity in Bulgaria between the Two World Wars" (Velichkov, 1994). However, there is a complete lack of information about JDC and the American Relief Administration. English-language literature has only memoirs of figures of American organizations in its arsenal, which very contextually relate to humanitarian aid in Bulgaria. So the proposed scientific research is actually one of the first attempts to analyze "Activities of American humanitarian organizations after the First World War on the territory of the Third Bulgarian Kingdom".

Purpose of the article. The purpose of the article is to research the activities of American humanitarian organizations (AHO) that operated in the territory of Bulgarian lands after the First World War in the context of the US global humanitarian operation in the countries of Eastern Europe. The aim was to minimize the consequences of the First World War, reduce social tensions, restore destroyed infrastructure and political and economic ties, and counteract the spread of left-wing political ideas such as Marxism, Bolshevism, and communism.

Presentation of the main material. What was Herbert Hoover's motivation for helping Eastern Europe in 1919? Some historians pointed to economic motives. It means that he had to sell excess food produced in the United States. But there were also more important political-economic considerations. It was important to support Europe's economic recovery so that it could be a stable trading partner of the United States. For Herbert Hoover Eastern Europe would become an agricultural part of Europe and a necessary trading partner for industrialized Western Europe. The consequence of this goal was the desire to prevent the spread of Bolshevism from Russia to Europe. At the same time a purely humanitarian dimension emerged – Hoover's stated goal was also to end famine in Eastern Europe. It is difficult to argue that narrow economic considerations were the main driving force behind the launch of Hoover's Helping Children program. Here humanitarian and political problems seem to have been the first priority: preventing hunger and worrying about the health of future generations in Eastern Europe and using food aid as a means of reducing the spread of Bolshevism (Arens, 2017).

The American Relief Administration was established by American President Woodrow Wilson. However, in 1918 Bulgaria was not included in the list of Eastern European countries included in the list of territories to which assistance was provided. This fact clearly illustrates the text of the European Famine Relief bill (Feeding Hungry Europe The New York times current history, 1919), which was adopted in February 1919. According to this document, the United States provided \$100 000 000 for food and medical supplies to the affected countries in Europe (initially excluding Germany, Austria, Hungary, Bulgaria and Turkey), which were listed by the end of 1919.

In early April 1919, the Bulgarian government asked the head office of the ARA (American Relief Administration) in Paris to assist in the purchase of flour to prevent the spread of famine. It was noted that the

Bulgarian government had a deposit of \$3 000 000 which was held in American banks. Therefore, it was decided that the designated foreign exchange reserves should be used to buy flour and deliver it on American steamboats to the port of Varna. All organizational aspects of food delivery were to be provided by the American Relief Administration (The Papers of Robert A. Taft, 1997, p. 200).

It is worth noting that JDC played a significant role in the deployment of humanitarian aid from American philanthropic organizations. It should also be noted that, as of the second half of 1921 the economic situation in Bulgaria has stabilized. This in turn allowed the export of bread to Bolshevik Russia. Thus, according to a letter from the CPC (Council of People's Commissioners) for Foreign Exchange Operations, M. Litvinov, in People's Committee of Foreign Trade, it was proposed through the American Relief Administration, to help purchase grains from Eastern European countries, in particular Bulgaria. The document has a V. Lenin's visa (Lenin, 2013).

One of the features of the activities of American humanitarian organizations within Bulgaria was the impact of the Balkan wars of 1912-1913. which actually became a factor in the outbreak of the First World War. It was these wars that became an additional driver of the worsening economic situation in Bulgaria, for after the second Balkan war of 1913, Bulgaria emerged with significant territorial and demographic losses, in fact in the status of a losing country (Riabin, 2003).

It should be noted that since the end of the First World War the problem of orphans and street children has been quite serious in Bulgaria, so the importance of the operation of orphanages was particularly important. The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee was very active here (acronym. JDC, "American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee"; until 1931 – "United Distribution Committee of American Relief Funds for Jews Affected by the War") is the largest Jewish

charity established in 1914. Its headquarters are in New York.

Assistance to Bulgarian orphans required a clarification of the costs JDC demanded. Thus, in a letter to Dr Julius Goldman dated 11 October 1921, certain conditions were attached. In fact, it was Joint's internal correspondence to define the terms and principles of assistance in Bulgaria. Here it was noted in particular that JDC provides funding in the amount of \$500 annually for five years for the "Queen Eleanor Children's House" in Sofia, as well as an additional \$750 annually for palliative care. Each year, depending on the need for palliative support, this amount should be adjusted. Expenditures in Bulgaria were to be controlled by a representative of the Child Benefits Division of the JDC. Support for orphans was determined by Joint's annual budget and the organization's children's fund plans. It was also noted that for quite some time the leadership of JDC and other American humanitarian organizations had no confirmed knowledge of the humanitarian situation in Bulgaria (JDC Archives. 1921-1932 New York Collection. Bulgaria: Letter from Howard H. Cans to Dr. Julius Goldman. 1921 October 11. Item ID – 321596. P.1-2).

JDC Head Office in New York closely monitored the humanitarian situation in Bulgaria, with frequent referrals to Joint's Paris office regarding the delegation of experts to Bulgaria to clarify the local situation (JDC Archives. 1921-1932 New York Collection. Bulgaria: Letter from JDC Distribution Committee, New York to European Executive Council, Paris, Subject: Queen Eleanora Orphanage, Bulgaria. 1922 March 24. Item ID – 321602. P.1). Here it is worth remembering an outstanding personality – Boris Bogen, a functionary of the American Relief Administration, an employee of the Jewish Joint Distribution Committee. In October 1921 B. Bogen was directly involved in the affairs of the needy population of Bulgaria, especially Bulgarian orphans. He oversaw financial support from JDC through the Paris office. He personally lobbied for additional funding of \$2 000 for orphans in Sofia (JDC Archives. 1921-1932 New York Collection. memorandum from Miss Morrissey to The Administration Committee, Subject: In re \$10.000 appropriation for War Orphans in Bulgaria. 1921 October 21. Item ID – 321599. P.1).

Humanitarian activities in Bulgaria, which took place with the help of Joint (JDC), were quite often limited to the financial support of various Bulgarian humanitarian organizations. Thus in August 1922 the Bulgarian institution "Queen Eleanor Children's House" from Sofia in the person of Abraham Isaac Levy appealed to the German branch of JDC with a request for an annual scholarship for the needs of the orphanage in the amount of \$1 000. This orphanage housed between 80 and 100 children. Donations were used to purchase clothing, hygiene products, food and a company to find foster families (JDC Archives. 1921-1932 New York Collection. Bulgaria: Letter from Dr. Bernhard Kahn to Abram David Itzok Levy, President of the Queen Eleanora Jewish Orphans Home, Sophia. 1922 August 03. Item ID – 321606. P.1-2).

The Polish branch of JDC also took care of business in Bulgaria. On 21 June 1922, Dr. B. Kan wrote to Joint's Polish Mission in Warsaw, in the person of Abraham Shohan, about the state of affairs in Bulgaria. The letter noted that JDC spends approximately \$10 000 annually on humanitarian purposes in Sofia, However, given the large number of orphans in Bulgaria and the very difficult situation in the country, the level of funding should be increased by a minimum of \$1 500 additional. After all Joint's annual budget in Bulgaria was \$88 100 in 1922 (JDC Archives. 1921-1932 New York Collection. Bulgaria: Letter from Dr. B. Kahn to Mr. Abraham Shohan. 1922 June 21. Item ID – 321603. P.1).

Regarding the importance of the city of Plovdiv as a centre of humanitarian action, a letter was sent from JDC headquarters in New York to that city where it was noted that there was information about 8,000 Jewish families within Bulgaria in need of assistance. A budget of \$15 000 had been allocated to assist them. The letter also noted the fact that the JDC Distribution Committee could not stand by when people needed assistance and requested that all difficulties and needs be reported to the head office (JDC Archives. 1921-1932 New York Collection. Bulgaria: Letter from Joseph C. Hyman to Miss E. Morrissey, Re: Philippolis. 1928 October 24. Item ID – 321619. P.1). It is noteworthy that despite the small size of the Jewish population in Bulgaria its membership in the countries of the Fourth Union, American philanthropy has been extended to that country (Pogromskiy,2019). In addition United States

humanitarian organizations are involved in providing assistance to the areas affected by the 1928 earthquake in Polovica and Gljubovo. Plovdiv were partly affected too (Bieloemigrants in Bulgaria. Memoirs, p. 72). Based on these circumstances Joint sent help and targeted donations were also made by the employees of the organization, with \$3 000 being made available for the Plovdiv earthquake response (JDC Archives. 1921-1932 New York Collection. Bulgaria: Letter from N. Calef to JDC Distribution Committee. 1928 May 09. Item ID – 321611. P.1). In April 1928 Joint sent an inspector to southern Bulgaria to investigate the situation of the earthquake and to determine the amount of assistance needed [JDC Archives. 1921-1932

New York Collection. Bulgaria: Letter from Secretary to Mr. N. Calef. 1928 May 11. Item ID – 321613. P.1]. On the Bulgarian side, the situation was analysed by Dr. B. Kahn (JDC Archives. 1921-1932 New York Collection. Bulgaria: Memorandum from Evelyn M. Morrissey to Mr. Joseph C. Hyman, Subject: Earthquakes in Philippole, Bulgaria. 1928 May 10. Item ID – 321612. P.1).

It is worth noting that Joint's financial records of the assistance provided remain intact. Thus, the most affected cities in Bulgaria were provided with about 7000000 lev (Table "Distribution of Joint's financial aid, which was given to cities of Bulgaria after the earthquake of 1928").

Table 1.

Distribution of Joint's financial aid, which was given to cities of Bulgaria after the earthquake of 1928

City	Amount of money provided in Bulgarian currency (lev)
Plovdiv(Philippopel)	5065026
Chirpan (Tschirpan)	320000
Stara-Zagora (StaraSagora)	200000
Tatar-Bazardzyk (TatarBazardjik)	1406000
Total	6991026

* Created by the author based on Joint's 1928 financial report(JDC Archives. 1921-1932 New York Collection. Notes on Bulgaria.1929 July 22. Item ID – 321621. P.3).

It should be noted that the largest amount of money was given to Plovdiv. The report on the use of the funds provided is quite revealing (Table "Use of JDC funds for the needs of Plovdiv after the earthquake of 1928").

Table 2.

Use of JDC funds for the needs of Plovdiv after the earthquake of 1928

What the money is spent on	Amount of money provided in Bulgarian currency (lev)
Torebuildthesynagogue	60000
Fordiningfacilities	101261
Office	15000
School	220000
Hospital	45000
Repair of buildings of needy people and families who have lost a breadwinner	730000
Food for the first days after the earthquake	50000
Buildingwood	165000
Clothes	35000
Summertimeforchildren	20000
Cash loans to affected populations	155000
Other	75000
Total:	1.671.261

*Created by the author based on Joint's 1928 financial report(JDC Archives. 1921-1932 New York Collection. Notes on Bulgaria.1929 July 22. Item ID – 321621. P.4).

It is worth noting that the above information related to expenditures for the first month after the earthquake. JDC also supported credit banks in Sofia that financed small traders and entrepreneurs. In March 1930 \$5 000 loan application was sent to the Joint branch in London to lend to the Bulgarian capital (JDC Archives. 1921-1932 New York Collection. Bulgaria: Letter from Dr. B. Kahnand Dr. L. Oungre to Mr. Herbert H. Lehman, New York. 1930 March 25. Item ID – 321623. P.1)

Conclusions

As a conclusion American philanthropic organizations played a significant role in assisting the countries of Eastern Europe after the First World War. Their assistance was also extended to territories that were part of the Fourth Alliance countries. The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee –Joint– made a contribution to overcoming the consequences of the war in Bulgaria. Its activities focused on targeted assistance to orphanages, local societies as financial donors, Bulgarian citizens affected by the consequences of the war in the Balkans. The main activity centers of Joint in Bulgaria were Sofia and Plovdiv. The representatives of Joint closely monitored the socio-economic situation in Bulgaria and provided information to the management of the organization in New York. The American Relief Administration also worked closely with Joint. Many of its employees were also Joint's employees. Coordination of humanitarian activities took place with the participation of ARA regional centers in Paris, Warsaw, Berlin. This scientific publication is one of the first attempts of a comprehensive analysis of the activities of American humanitarian organizations in Bulgaria in the 20-30's within the limits of Ukrainian historical science. However in view of the large number of archival documents that have not been studied. It is hoped that the research will continue within the scope of the topics we have identified, drawing on a wider range of documentary sources.

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