

Lebensleistung, wie z. B. das Konzept der sog. organischen Arbeit (*praca organiczna*). Die Werke der jiddischen Autoren enden, anders als die polnischen, in Emigration und Tod. Geschichte als Familiengeschichte scheint die größte Stärke des Familienromans in beiden Sprachen zu sein.

Der Band wirkt stellenweise zu schulisch geschrieben, aber das ist ein verzeihlicher Makel von Doktorarbeiten. Weniger verzeihlich ist, dass die Kapitel I und II zu ausführlich sind. Vor allem die Darstellung der einzelnen Protagonisten führt zu Wiederholungen, in weiteren Analysen (Kap. III). Wertvoll ist die sehr gute Übersetzung der jiddischen und polnischen Texte ins Deutsche durch die Autorin.

Poznań

Maria Wojtczak

Friederike Kind-Kovács: Budapest's Children. Humanitarian Relief in the Aftermath of the Great War. Indiana University Press. Bloomington 2022. 358 S., Ill. ISBN 978-0-253-06216-1. (\$ 39,—)

The theme of transnational humanitarianism is certainly not new in the overlapping fields of global and transnational history. Yet only recently has it begun to emerge as a prominent issue in the historiography of East Central Europe, with its adoption serving as a strategy for globalizing regional historical narratives. Friederike Kind-Kovács's *Budapest's Children* is an exemplary and groundbreaking study in this regard, one that is sure to be emulated by other scholars. It focuses on the international food aid that materialized in Hungary's metropolis, Budapest, in the early years after World War I, as the city was ravaged by the collapse of the empire and a vanquished revolution.

Articulate and full of vivid details, the nine chapters of this book (accompanied by an introduction and a conclusion) are a compelling read. While the individual chapters focus on specific themes such as migration, institutions, and bodies, K.-K. skillfully weaves them into a narrative about the interplay between internationalism and nationalism. By exploring how transnational food aid was leveraged to lend legitimacy to Hungary's national conservative regime and to promote its agendas on a transnational level, *Budapest's Children* aligns with authors such as Glenda Sluga,¹ who stress the ambiguity of interwar internationalism and its evolution hand in glove with nationalism.

The opening chapters set the stage by presenting the stark social challenges facing Budapest in the final years of World War I and the immediate postwar period. Merging social with cultural and institutional histories, K.-K. also analyzes the framing of these challenges in public discourse and reconstructs the local networks responsible for addressing them.

The book begins by examining the massive influx of displaced Hungarians into Budapest, showing how the images of their plight and downward social mobility were used to advance Hungarian nationalism and emerging territorial revisionism. Titled "Hunger" and "Degeneration," the next two chapters address the severe postwar food shortage in Budapest. The bodies affected—primarily children—were portrayed as both the future of the nation and a source of its strength, evoking fears that their starvation would cause a collective biological decline. Visual media played a key role in spreading these messages, making "[t]he story of Budapest's children [...] a visual story" (p. 99). The fourth chapter shifts focus to the germination of child protection and welfare in Hungary during the last decades of the empire, their expanded role in addressing wartime challenges, and the critical involvement of middle-class women in their day-to-day operations.

This foundation underpins the heart of this volume, exploring the transformative interplay between transnational humanitarian efforts and local actors. Chapter five analyzes the creation of an international humanitarian relief infrastructure in Hungary's capital starting in 1919, mapping connections between Budapest, Great Britain, the United States, and Geneva. Key transnational actors included the American Relief Administration and the

1 GLENDA SLUGA: *Internationalism in the Age of Nationalism*, Philadelphia 2013.

Save the Children Fund. The subsequent chapter focuses on practices sponsored by these actors, especially the feeding of a portion of the city's children. Adopting a Foucauldian lens, K.-K. interprets these medicalized practices as a "transnational biopolitical intervention" (p. 184). Chapter seven, a highlight of the book, probes the political rationales behind these relief projects, arguing that local actors used them to advance nationalism and revisionism, while transnational philanthropies pursued anti-Communist goals; they also sought to export the rationalization movement, create local dependence, and foster soft power for their states. The final two chapters explore major initiatives focused on children, beyond food distribution, supported by transnational actors: "children's trains" transporting selected children for recuperative stays or placement with families abroad, and educational projects aimed at preventing children's moral and biological "degeneration." K.-K. uses these examples to strongly suggest that the emotional and even physical welfare of children was often far from a priority for the actors involved, as it was overshadowed by the pursuit of the perceived national interest.

Beyond its main focus, the volume effectively illustrates, through the case of child protection and welfare, how the institutions and expertise that emerged in the Habsburg imperial context persisted in the nation-states that succeeded it after its demise, even in the unlikely sphere of biopolitics. In this regard, *Budapest's Children* commendably seeks to demonstrate how, in some cases, local knowledge and practices in Budapest contributed to transnational debates, challenging the notion that these exchanges were merely instances of a one-way transfer from "the West." By foregrounding the interplay of transnational humanitarians with actors beyond the state—primarily the sections of local civil society that were nationalist, and sometimes even illiberal—the volume also offers a striking example of how biopolitics in East Central Europe operated before and beyond its embrace by the state, even though these observations do not culminate in theoretical reflections.

One significant cluster of questions that appears to be largely overlooked in the volume relates to the racialization of Budapest's children and the role of the concept of "race" in the interaction between internationalist humanitarianism and local nationalist actors more broadly. One is left to wonder, for example, whether the calls for the magnanimity of the international public were limited to emotional appeals to help innocent suffering victims, or if it also mattered that these subjects were framed as being on the "white side" of the global color line. The ensuing dynamic of inclusion and exclusion, particularly with regard to Budapest's Romani and Jewish inhabitants, also remains underexplored.

A greater engagement with the history of eugenics would have added another significant layer to the volume's argument. As a discourse centered on reshaping and regenerating the "race," eugenics had a truly global spread by the early twentieth century, and its goals were widely shared across multiple scientific fields and beyond. A telling symptom of the not fully acknowledged salience of eugenics by the author is that "degeneration"—eugenicists' preferred specter—is one of the most frequently recurring tropes in the book. Significantly, eugenics in the early twentieth century was far from being limited to the genetic determinism with which it is often associated in popular view; rather, it drew on multiple competing assumptions about human heredity. A number of eugenics advocates in Austria-Hungary still held some version of the view that characteristics acquired during one's life were inherited by subsequent generations, and thus, one's environment crucially shaped the "race." These neo-Lamarckian assumptions help explain why doctors and the broader public were so concerned about the biological effects of food shortages and unsanitary conditions, and why these concerns revolved most strongly around children. Damaging children's bodies, regarded by these eugenicists as most vulnerable to external influences and as generators of future population growth, meant damaging the imagined and racialized collective body. The salience of eugenics is unsurprising here, considering that eugenic ideas thrived in Austria-Hungary long before its collapse and shaped certain practices of food aid and maternal welfare already during the war.

The concept of biopolitics could have played a more central role in the volume, as these points suggest, unifying key themes such as mobility control, nutrition, and the tropes of “degeneracy” and national efficiency. This would also have allowed the author to explore more deeply how these initiatives (re)defined the boundaries and core groups of the imagined national community. At a time when Hungarian nationalism increasingly cast the countryside as the wellspring of national identity and biological renewal, while cities (primarily Budapest) were viewed as centers of contaminating otherness, the emphatically nationalist language framing the aid program for the starving metropolis appeared less self-explanatory than the book assumes. Nonetheless, *Budapest's Children* remains a major and innovative contribution to discussions on internationalism, nationalism, and transnational humanitarian aid in East Central Europe.

Wien

Vojtěch Pojar²

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Wars and Betweenness. Big Powers in Middle Europe, 1919–1945. Hrsg. von Aliaksandr Piahanaŭ und Bojan Aleksov. Central European University Press. Budapest – New York 2020. VII, 227 S. ISBN 978-963-386-335-0. (€ 56,—.)

Der Sammelband enthält eine ganze Reihe von Beiträgen vor allem jüngerer Autorinnen und Autoren zu konzeptionellen, aber auch zu thematisch eher vereinzelt Themenbereichen der Geschichte Ostmitteleuropas im beginnenden 20. Jh. Dabei wählen die Hrsg. Aliaksandr Piahanaŭ und Bojan Aleksov eine zeitliche Zuordnung, der sich nur als sehr beliebig bezeichnen lässt: 1918, also vom Ende des Ersten Weltkriegs, bis 1945, dem Ende des Zweiten Weltkriegs. Dieser Zeitschnitt kann von den Hrsg. nicht wirklich konzipiert und einsichtig beschrieben werden. Er mag sich aus dem Blickwinkel auf die vor allem westeuropäischen Akteure erklären, denen das Hauptaugenmerk des Bandes gilt. Für die Geschichte Europas als Ganzes oder gar des östlichen Mitteleuropas bleibt er für eine klare Analyse eher hinderlich.

Der Band ist in fünf Cluster unterteilt, die sich gliedern nach: „Balancing (out) of Powers“, „Bordering“, „Putting Out Fire with Gasoline“, „Self-Determination?“ und „Culturing and Perceiving“ mit jeweils zwei Aufsätzen. Diese thematische Breite in einem eher schmalen Band erfordert die Konzentration auf wenige Schwerpunkte. Im ersten Cluster konzentrieren sich die Autoren auf die französische und die britische Seite und deren Politik in den 1920er-Jahren als Versuch der Schaffung einer französischen Einflussosphäre in Ostmitteleuropa 1936 und 1939 (Balkan). Bereits hier sind Probleme hinsichtlich der geradlinigen Vergleichbarkeit und damit der Übersichtlichkeit der Beiträge für eine ostmitteleuropäische Geschichtsschreibung zu bemerken: die Zeitschnitte blenden in allen Clustern die Tatsache der Ent-Demokratisierung der meisten ostmitteleuropäischen Staaten aus, die nach 1919 als moderne parlamentarische Demokratien oder konstitutionelle Monarchien in ihre (wiedererlangte) Selbstständigkeit gestartet waren. Die Hegemonialbestrebungen und die gerade Ostmitteleuropa bedrohende rassistische Ideologie des nationalsozialistischen Deutschland werden in den einzelnen Beiträgen ebenso nur angerissen wie die sowjetische Politik. Damit werden zentrale systemische Strukturen Ostmitteleuropas zu wenig beachtet, und der zeitliche Fokus des Bandes behindert die Autoren.

Dem kann auch die Einleitung der Hrsg. keine Abhilfe schaffen. Hier wird ein konzeptioneller und terminologischer Aspekt zu sehr in den Vordergrund gestellt: die Nutzung des Begriffes *big* anstatt *great* für die agierenden Großmächte – mithin soll es um eine rein quantitative anstelle einer auf ihre Machtstrukturen und Einflussmöglichkeiten bezogene qualitative Wirkung vor allem Frankreichs und Großbritanniens gehen. Die Hinzuziehung Deutschlands, Russlands, Italiens und sogar Japans bleibt fragmentarisch und strukturell