

Éva Merenics

**WHOSE CHILDREN, WHOSE FUTURE? ORPHAN CARE IN
CAUCASIAN ARMENIA DURING THE NEAR EAST RELIEF'S
OPERATIONS (1918-1930)**

MA Thesis in Sociology and Social Anthropology

submitted to the Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology,
Central European University, Budapest, in partial fulfillment of the requirements
of the Master of Arts degree in Sociology and Social Anthropology.

Supervisor: prof. Prem Kumar Rajaram

Second Reader: prof. Dan Rabinowitz

Central European University

Budapest

June 2017

Abstract:

Supporting child survivors of the Armenian genocide was a crucial issue in the first independent Republic of Armenia and in the initial years of the Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic. The third party in the endeavour was the Near East Relief, an American charity organisation.

The large-scale endeavour; building communities in orphanages and schools, establishing the orphans' ties with the broader society was realised in a period of very intensive political, economic and social change. Socialising the orphans was carried out in a period of intensive state-building processes, the nation-building project of the first Republic of Armenia, and the communitarian society building process, involving still nationalist elements in the Armenian SSR. All three actors tried to realise their principles of the ideal society through these children, who, losing their families, seemed not to have any social embeddedness.

With the use of archival sources I answer the questions how the conflict between these institutions for their ideologies was played out, and how the practical measures were related to the social reality of children. Further questions are how the results influenced children's lives, and finally, how they reacted to the ways of being treated by these actors.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my gratitude to my professors Prem Kumar Rajaram and Dan Rabinowitz for providing guidance throughout the work on this thesis, and providing insight into the theoretical background of Orientalism and nationalism during related courses. I also would like to thank my colleagues, classmates, the Armenian community at CEU and fellow students from the Residence Center for debates, discussions, remarks and sharing the struggles, which supported the development of this thesis.

The field research for the thesis was carried out under the auspices of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation's Short Term Research Grant for Armenian Studies in April 2017 in the archives of the Museum-Institute of the Armenian Genocide at the National Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Armenia.

I would like to express my appreciation to Rik Adriaans for local consultations during my fieldwork.

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| List of Abbreviations | iv |
| Transliteration | v |
| 1. Introduction | 1 |
| 1.1. Historical antecedents | 2 |
| 1.2. Theoretical framework | 5 |
| 1.2.1. State building..... | 5 |
| 1.2.2. The Armenian concept of the Armenian nation | 6 |
| 1.2.3. The Near East Relief's concept: Armenia in the 'Oriental' context | 8 |
| 1.2.4. National Communism or korenizatsiia in Soviet Armenia | 9 |
| 1.3. Contribution | 11 |
| 1.4. Methodology | 12 |
| 1.5. Structure | 15 |
| 2. The Image of Armenians in the Frameworks of Ideologies | 16 |
| 2.1. The Republic of Armenia's perception on the Nation and Orphans | 16 |
| 2.1.1. Orphans Transferred from Old to New National Community | 17 |
| 2.1.2. The relation between Education and the Creation of the National Economy in the Bureaucratic Field | 22 |
| 2.1.3. Obstacles to the National Concept | 22 |
| 2.2. The Aims of Orphan care of the American Committee for Relief in the Near East / the Near East Relief..... | 23 |
| 2.3. Raising the New Generation of Soviet Armenian Citizens | 30 |
| 2.4. Conclusion..... | 36 |
| 3. Managing orphan care between 1918 and 1920..... | 37 |
| 3.1. Initial Attempts for a Solution..... | 37 |
| 3.2. Towards more Concentrated Solutions | 41 |
| 3.3. Balancing, Positioning, and the Impacts | 46 |
| 4. Struggle for the Future without Funding in the 1920s | 48 |
| 4.1. Finance-related Compromise, Conflicts and Solutions..... | 48 |
| 4.2. The NER's Own Solution for Financing..... | 50 |
| 4.3. The Restructuring of the Bureaucratic Field during National Communism | 52 |
| 4.4. The NER's New Response to Restructuring | 53 |
| 4.5. The Interlude of the Elements | 55 |
| 4.6. The NER Regaining Dominance..... | 56 |
| 4.7. Solution without Resolution..... | 57 |
| 4.8. The Ultimate Response | 59 |
| Concluding Remarks | 60 |
| List of References..... | 63 |

List of Abbreviations

| | |
|-------|---|
| ARF | Armenian Revolutionary Federation (Hay Heghap'okhakan Dashnakts'ut'yun) |
| ACRNE | American Commission for Relief in the Near East |
| NEP | New Economic Policy (Russian: Novaya Ekonomicheskaya Politika) |
| NER | Near East Relief |
| SSR | Soviet Socialist Republic |
| SSFR | Soviet Socialist Federative Republic |

Transliteration

Based on the phonetics of the Eastern Armenian dialect

Ա = A, ա = a

Բ = B, բ = b

Գ = G, գ = g

Դ = D, դ = d

Ե = Ye/e, ե = ye/e

Զ = Z, զ = z

Է = E, է = e

Ը = E, ը = e

Թ = T', թ = t'

Ճ = Zh, ճ = zh

Ի = I, ի = i

Լ = L, լ = l

Խ = Kh, խ = kh

Օ = Ts, Օ = ts

Վ = K, վ = k

Հ = H, հ = h

Ձ = Dz, ձ = dz

Ղ = Gh, ղ = gh

Ճ = Ch, ճ = ch

Մ = M, մ = m

Ի = Y, ի = y

Ն = N, ն = n

Շ = Sh, Շ = sh

Ո = Vo/O, ո = vo/o

Չ = Ch', Չ = ch'

Պ = P, պ = p

Ջ = J, ջ = j

Ռ = R', ռ = r'

Ս = S, ս = s

Վ = V, վ = v

Տ = T, տ = t

Ր = R, ր = r

Ց = Ts', ց = ts'

Ու = U, ու = u

Փ = P', փ = p'

Ք = K', ք = k'

Եվ = Yev, է = yev

Օ = O, օ = o

Ֆ = F, ֆ = f

1. Introduction

Supporting child survivors of the Armenian genocide was a crucial issue in the first independent Republic of Armenia and in the initial years of the Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic [SSR]. Following tsarist Russian and Ottoman rule, the possibility opened to create an independent Armenian national state by the Republic of Armenia in 1918 for the first time. After two years of independence, in 1920 Soviet rule followed, representing the Bolshevik ideology. In parallel with both state formations, The Near East Relief, an American charity organisation functioning along an Orientalist ideology also operated in the country. The main profiles of it were orphan and refugee care.

There were several obstacles to those in a decision-making position regarding orphan care. The large-scale endeavour of organising it was carried out in a period of intensive state-building processes, the nation-building project of the first Republic of Armenia, and the communitarian society building process still involving nationalist elements in the Armenian SSR. Socialising the orphans, building communities in orphanages and schools, establishing their ties with the broader society was realised in a period of very intensive political, economic and social change.

It is a rare historical challenge to any institution, whether state or non-state one to carry out such a large-scale social project. Those institutions which contributed to orphan care in the independent Republic of Armenia and its Soviet successor state, based on the tone of their documents I will introduce in this thesis, were driven by goodwill. Still they preferred to have the children raised in the framework of their particular ideologies. They did not have self-reflexive approaches to their own ideologies; but automatically supposed that their own ideology is the right social order. On the other hand, they alleged that socialising a whole generation by their counterparts, may seem a promising opportunity to the other institutions

aiming to achieve a social utopia. They were convinced that children were vulnerable without or with minimal embeddedness in families and a larger social tissue. All three actors tried to realise their principles of the ideal society through these children. Therefore all of actors often ignored the social reality of the orphans. At the same time they feared that these children can easily become a risk for the values of the own state or organisation, as they supposed that youngsters could have been adapted to the ideology of a rival institution or political regime at once.

My main questions to examine and answer in this thesis are how the conflict between these institutions for their ideologies was played out, and how the practical measures were related to the social reality of children. Further questions are how the results influenced children's lives, and finally, how they reacted to the ways of being treated by these actors. Responding these I argue that the misrecognition or ignorance of the role of the children's actual origins and social embeddedness, already weakened the realisation of ideologies. How the actors attempted to acquire institutional dominance during state formation in order to achieve their ideological aims, again resulted in a mixture of ideologies. This was especially true during times when the balance between orphan care institutions was very delicate. Finally, where applicable, albeit sources regarding the children's voice are limited, I show that they were not merely passive receivers of the high-minded ideas and the means used for spreading them. However, I do not underestimate the power of the institutions which decided about their fate.

1.1. Historical antecedents

The severe humanitarian crisis resulting in mass orphan cities started to evolve in 1915 when under the cover of World War I, the Young Turk regime began the extermination of the Christian population in the Ottoman Empire, among them Armenians. As scholarly research shows, the attempt to erase these peoples from the territory of the Empire was due to the regime's pan-Turanist dreams, the unification of all Turkic peoples from the Ottoman Empire

to Central Asia. Armenians, located on the Eastern borderland of the empire were considered as a major geopolitical obstacle to this dream.¹

Several scholars state that the experience of those exposed to the genocide was rather differentiated by gender, and so was the process of extermination.² This is crucial to understand why in the end children became a specific group of survivors to care for. One aspect of gender-specific violence meant the extermination of the male population at first. In the beginning of the genocide, young, able-bodied Armenian men enrolled in the Ottoman army were disarmed, and sent to labour battalions. There, getting minimal amount of food and doing hard physical work, they practically starved to death, or were simply mass-murdered.³ By this step, the Armenian community was deprived of the possibility of self-defence. The the next action was the extermination of the Ottoman Armenian intelligentsia. On April 24 1915, Armenian intellectuals, public figures and political leaders in Constantinople were arrested, imprisoned, and deported. This phase aimed to hinder the intellectual capabilities to organise resistance against the upcoming deportations.⁴

The rest of the Armenian population in all the Ottoman Empire was rounded up in each settlement. They either had to leave their homes immediately, or had some time to collect and bring with them some essential belongings. Besides those who lived along the Berlin-Baghdad railway, most Armenians were forced to march on foot to the Syrian Desert.⁵ The remaining men were usually mass-murdered in the beginning of the deportation.⁶ During the death march, deportees were denied access to food, and often even water. Besides repeated mass-murders and lootings, epidemics were a regular phenomenon.⁷ Due to these circumstances the elderly

¹ See eg. Melson, *Revolution and Genocide*, 164; Akçam, *From Empire to Republic*, 31.

² See eg. "Project MUSE - Common Fate, Different Experience: Gender-Specific Aspects of the Armenian Genocide, 1915-1917"; Miller and Miller, *Survivors*, 94.

³ Melson, *Revolution and Genocide*, 144.

⁴ Akçam, "The Chilingirian Murder," 139; Melson, *Revolution and Genocide*, 144.

⁵ Hovannisian, *The Armenian Genocide in Perspective*, 87.

⁶ Melson, *Revolution and Genocide*, 144.

⁷ Shelley J. Burleson and Alberto Giordano, "Spatiality of the Stages of Genocide," 40.

were also mostly lost, due to their physical weakness. As a result, mostly women and children survived the genocide, many of whom escaped or were kidnapped to Muslim homes.⁸ The charity organisations already operating in the Ottoman Empire saved or attempted to save also many of them. Greece, Syria, Lebanon, Palestine and the small Republic of Armenia hosted altogether 600 000 refugees,⁹ half of whom were in the newly emerged national state.¹⁰ As Miss Chamberlain, a nurse reports her first experience in Yerevan: “Time and time again we workers could neither eat nor sleep so awful was the conditions of the people, and especially the children and the babies. Emaciated, half-naked little ones, their skins stretched across their bones and shriveled until their claw-like fingers and parchment-skinned faces they looked more like mummies than human beings, they were sleeping – with the dead.”¹¹

The Ministry of Care of the Republic of Armenia reported on May 1 1919 that there were 13 820 orphaned children in the country cared for in 86 orphanages and ten children’s hospitals.¹² In addition, the refugees lived under miserable conditions, therefore many; factually not orphaned children were handed over to orphanages.¹³ Also the one and half years of the republic from May 1918 till December 1920 were accompanied by constant warfare, famine and epidemics,¹⁴ which raised the numbers of children in need. Estimates show that only in Alexandropol¹⁵, the second biggest city of Armenia, and that time known as ‘the orphan city’ or ‘the city of orphans’, 20 000 children were cared for.¹⁶

⁸ “Project MUSE - Common Fate, Different Experience: Gender-Specific Aspects of the Armenian Genocide, 1915-1917,” 9.

⁹ Melson, *Revolution and Genocide*, 146.

¹⁰ Hovannisian, *The Republic of Armenia*, Vol. 1, 48.

¹¹ „Glimpses of the Inferno”, *The New Near East*, February 1920, 7.

¹² Ավետիսյան [Avetisyan], *Մերձավոր Արևելքի նպաստամատույց կոմիտեի գործունեությունը Հայաստանում 1918-1930 [The Operations of the American Committee for Relief in the Near East in Armenia 1918-1930]*, 81.

¹³ *Ibid*, 169.

¹⁴ Suny, *Looking toward Ararat*, 127.

¹⁵ Present day Gyumri

¹⁶ “Alexandropol: Life in Near East Relief’s ‘Orphan City.’”

In the case of the young independent republic founded in 1918, and of the young Soviet Armenian state in the 1920s faced the challenge of maintaining tens of thousands of orphaned children, often without sufficient sources of financing. In contrast, not only state bodies attempted to handle the situation. The US-based American Committee for Relief in the Near East [ACRNE], renamed in 1919 as Near East Relief [NER], maintained several orphanages in the area with amounts of funding incomparable with what the state budgets afforded.

1.2. *Theoretical framework*

Both the first Republic of Armenia and the Armenian SSR in the examined period were in the midst of a state-building process along with a nation-building process, albeit along different ideologies. In parallel, the Near East relief also operated several types of institutions, which the organisation used to realise its own ideology. These ideologies were the reasons of a conflict between the actors within orphan care, and all actors used their own institutions to win the battle. I analyse the process of this battle from the perspective of Bourdieu's field theory in general. For the ideologies regarding nation building, I use several theories, and introduce them following the theory of state building.

1.2.1. State building

As Bourdieu states: "One of the major difficulties of the social theory of philosophy, art or literature is that it has to reconstruct these spaces of original possibles which, because they were part of the self-evident givens of the situation, remained unremarked and are therefore unlikely to be mentioned in contemporary accounts, chronicles or memoirs."¹⁷ The subject of the present thesis is similarly unveiling a "space of original possibles", in the area of orphan

¹⁷ Bourdieu and Johnson, *The Field of Cultural Production*, 31.

care. The final combination of these possibles show what role the actors played in the field, and how they affected the situation of those depending on them. In the present case, how the relevant state bodies and the relief organisation positioned themselves, what they could realise of their aims and why, finally also how this influenced orphaned Armenian children.

In particular I apply Bourdieu's theory on the genesis and structure of the bureaucratic field.¹⁸ Its key factors according to Bourdieu are the "capital of physical force", "economic capital", "cultural or (better) informational capital", "symbolic capital", and within the latter „juridical capital" among the key factors and instruments in the bureaucratic field.¹⁹ These types of capital together produce a certain cultural code for the individuals, by determining their correct behaviour, their relations to each other and the state, the means and codes of communication, and ensuring the dissemination of state knowledge production among the citizens regarding these types of capital. The concentration of which creates therefore a stable long-term framework for operating the state and creating the community of its citizens.

It was obvious that both state structures did have monopoly over some types of capital which were crucial in gaining monopoly in the field of orphan care. These were juridical capital, and a limited extent of informational capital. The education system belongs to the latter, therefore it is crucial to mention that in both state institution systems, taken the formational period of the state, the content of education was in transition. It means that there were possible niches in the system, where the NER attempted to intrude and achieve monopoly. Finally, the sphere in which the NER had the most advantage, was that of economic capital, as neither of the state structures was financially capable of providing full scale orphan care. Nor could any of the actors have the possibility to purely realise their ideologies in orphan care.

1.2.2. The Armenian concept of the Armenian nation

¹⁸ Bourdieu, Loic J. D. Wacquant, and Farage, "Rethinking the State."

¹⁹ Ibid., 4, 9.

The Republic of Armenia was the freshly founded Armenian nation state, with numerous challenges. Domestically, the state made huge efforts to maintain the borders and manage the severe humanitarian and economic crisis. Representatives of the republic participated at the Paris Peace Conference, where the interests of the European Great powers influenced them from the field of foreign policy.²⁰ These processes, essential to the survival of the young state needed huge efforts, but this does not mean that the political leaders did not have long-term ideological aims to realise. Certainly, this was the creation of a stable and safe national state.

The Republic of Armenia emerged from the peripheries of feudal tsarist Russia. The archival materials of the short-lived independent republic show that the state aimed to follow its contemporaries in terms of economic, social and political setting, involving capitalist industrialism, a national community and democracy. It also put an emphasis on national education, including the reeducation of adults. The interrelation of capitalist industrialism, nationalism and education are theorised by Ernest Gellner. According to him, the need for organising the economy and the society at the state level originates from the establishment of a capitalist economy which results in an industrial society.²¹ In parallel, also the NER and the Armenian SSR encouraged the industrialisation of Armenia, while maintaining the national community in some, albeit different form. For this reason I use Gellner's theory to explain the processes of nation-building.

In a narrow sense, Gellner is important to understand the interrelation of education and nationalism, which is essential in a case when the former is in the focus of the creation of a nation state. He explains the origins of the modern nation state with the need for creating national economies, for which elementary education is essential.²² The archival materials also

²⁰ Hovannisian, *The Republic of Armenia*, 268.

²¹ Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, 19.

²² *Ibid.*, 29–35.

often deal with the question of education, both in terms of nation-building and building up the economy, thus his theory is very suitable for also explaining the intersections of these.

1.2.3. The Near East Relief's concept: Armenia in the 'Oriental' context

The second party to the conflict, which had been present both in republican and in the initial Soviet period, was the ACRNE / NER. Its aim was to bring prosperity to the region with a religious and civilising mission. "Armenia has undeveloped mines, lands, and water power and its people are capable under proper protection and leadership of developing these resources."²³ In its first Handbook, the NER also expresses that Armenians are a superior race: "Among all those who dwell in western Asia they (the Armenians) stand first, with a capacity for intellectual and moral progress, as well as with a natural tenacity of will and purpose beyond that of all their neighbours — not merely of Turks, Tartars, Kurds, and Persians, but also of Russians."²⁴

The organisation under both names followed Orientalist principles as Edward Said describes it: "[...] Orientalism depends for its strategy on this flexible positional superiority, which puts the Westerner in a whole series of possible relationships with the Orient without ever losing him the relative upper hand."²⁵ Chakrabarty expresses similarly "a lack, an absence, or an incompleteness that translates into "inadequacy" in the case of India, but which is generally present in the Orientalist discourse."²⁶

The NER originated in American Protestant missionaryism. Its predecessor, the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions had been actively worked for converting Armenians to Protestantism in the Ottoman Empire already in the 19th century. Their

²³ "Speakers' Handbook of American Committee for Relief in the Near East," 10.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 7.

²⁵ Said, *excerpt from Orientalism*, 134.

²⁶ Chakrabarty, *Postcoloniality and the Artifice of History*, 32.

ultimate aim was to “civilise” the Ottoman Empire through converting Armenians to Protestantism.²⁷ The NER attempted to contribute to the creation of an ideal post- World War I vision of the Near East, which coincided with that of the United States, as the organisation had been supported by US presidents from its beginnings.²⁸ While the organisation was cautious about representing itself as an institution not putting pressure on the children’s freedom of conscience,²⁹ it prioritised Protestantism. This strongly collided with both independent and Soviet Armenian ideology.

1.2.4. National Communism or korenizatsiia in Soviet Armenia

The Armenian SSR, appearing as the NER’s second state counterpart, represented Bolshevik ideology, and projected the future of the children within it. Due to its origins, Bolshevism offered the alternative of communism instead of capitalist industrialism. Its aims were establishing an egalitarian society through liberating workers from the capitalist exploitation. In the Russian context, though, this effort was debated, because the Russian Empire had not been exposed to industrialisation at that time. By taking the Marxist idea of unilinear historical development, the Bolsheviks were convinced that first and foremost industrialisation is a precondition to achieve communism.³⁰ For that as an initial step, the economy had to revive from the war-struck conditions.³¹

For realising this first aim, in 1921, shortly after Armenia was fell under Bolshevik rule, the New Economic Policy [NEP] and its parallel ideology of the korenizatsiia, meaning rooting or nationalisation prevailed and determined the life of soviet citizens. The economic shift from

²⁷ Fildis, “The American Board’s Vision of Protestant Anatolia and Fostering Armenian Nationalism 1810–90,” 737.

²⁸ “History | Near East Foundation.”

²⁹ “Հայ որբերը Վրաստանում” [The Armenian Orphans in Georgia], *Աշխատավոր* [Worker], May 23 1919, 2.

³⁰ Lavender, “History And The Emergence Of Bolshevik Strategy For The 1917 Russian Revolution.”

³¹ V. N. Bandera, “The New Economic Policy (NEP) as an Economic System,” 265, 279.

war communism to the NEP meant massive industrialisation and the introduction of certain capitalist elements, like profit.³² The ideology of the period was “National in form, socialist in content”, as Stalin described it.³³ This meant that the totalitarian, but culturally diverse empire aimed to spread the party-state ideology in the local languages, and make the local cultures adaptable to the central ideology.³⁴ This is identical to what Alexander J. Motyl calls national communism: “[... A] political idea that claims that communism, however defined, can be pursued best by acknowledging “national specificities” and by following “national paths”.”³⁵ The ideal Soviet citizen raised in this spirit should have been a “developed, multi-faceted, internally disciplined person [chelovek] capable of deep feeling, clear thought and organized action”, equipped with these abilities through education.³⁶

It is remarkable, how the korenizatsiia’s social ideology paralleled the economic process. Motyl provides an explanation of the question why the national economies still prevailed during the NEP-era. He builds his definition of the nation critically and partly on Gellner’s theory of a shared culture, originating from Geertz’ concept of culture as a “system of significant symbols”.³⁷ Motyl explains analogously to Gellner why the national economy was the smallest unit of production. He also applies this concept while placing this phenomenon specifically into the context of the Soviet Union. By analysing the nature of the planned economy he also shows why the smaller national units could flourish after the centralised war economy. “Most debilitating is the fact that central authorities (or planners) can never fully assimilate the information that they receive from lower levels of the system.[...] Raw data, no

³² Read, “Krupskaya, Proletkul’t and the Origins of Soviet Cultural Policy,” 250.

³³ Kemp, *Nationalism and Communism in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union*, 80.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 81.

³⁵ Motyl, *Sovietology, Rationality, Nationality*, 87.

³⁶ Read, “Krupskaya, Proletkul’t and the Origins of Soviet Cultural Policy,” 253.

³⁷ Motyl, *Sovietology, Rationality, Nationality*, 56.

matter how accurate and how extensive, can never replace the firsthand knowledge of local conditions [...]”³⁸

One of the common points at all three actors was that they all perceived children as the key to creating the ideal society of the future. Similarly, all had realised that education is a key factor in achieving their own ideal society of the future. Finally, all had a certain extent of knowledge production regarding and targeting the orphans. Still, the different ideological settings and the different means to which the actors had dominant access in the field, produced different images of the orphans’ present and future, which finally affected their education and raising.

1.3. Contribution

Whereas much scholarly attention has been paid to the long-term, often trans-generational social psychological effects of mass traumas, it often remains a question, how the practical side of restarting one’s life after a large-scale traumatic event takes place.

The analysis of ideologies, state and nation building processes and their immediate effects on orphans contributes to the historical research regarding the operation of the orphanages³⁹ and their role in re-socialising the orphans. This is less analysed from the perspective of social sciences. The field of international relations provides some materials, as the missionaries were foreigners, and the donations also arrived from abroad. The Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute [AGMI] dedicated a conference to Scandinavian missionaries in 2011, addressing numerous related issues, where I had the chance to be part of the audience.

³⁸ Ibid., 89–90.

³⁹ Anderson, “Genocide of Armenians.”

There are also some secondary sources available regarding Protestant missionaries.⁴⁰ There is also a widespread research how fundraising campaigns for the orphans were organised mainly in the United States.⁴¹ Analyses and descriptions of the operation of the Near East Relief highlight the issue further.⁴²

In the broader sense, besides the above mentioned research areas, the present thesis also contributes to the research results regarding community formation, nation- and state building, social change and stability. Therefore I am convinced that an analysis of the operation of the institutions from the perspective of sociology and social anthropology can contribute with relevant results to the presently existing studies.

1.4. Methodology

The present thesis is based on a qualitative and critical analysis of the discourse⁴³ on Armenian orphans in the first Republic of Armenia and in the Armenian SSR. I conducted archival research in the archives of the Museum-Institute of the Armenian Genocide and I made also a library research on printed and published archival materials at the Fundamental Scientific Library of the National Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Armenia. The sources in general were written by the main decision-making actors of the debate on the Armenian orphans' future. Materials include the correspondence between the RA's Ministry of Education and the Near East Relief, and the second RA minister of education's proposals to governmental meetings along with reports from both sides about the situation of orphans. A major part of the archival materials depict the conditions of orphans and the NER orphanages for a US or

⁴⁰ Joseph L. Grabill, *Protestant Diplomacy and the Near East*; Laycock, *Imagining Armenia*.

⁴¹ "Genocide Museum | The Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute."

⁴² "Genocide Museum | The Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute."

⁴³ van Dijk, "Principles of critical discourse analysis." *Discourse & Society* 4:249-83

Western European audience, in order to achieve successful fundraising. Such materials cover the entire period from 1918 until 1930.

Part of the primary archival sources is the collection of the *New Near East*, the monthly review of the NER. The collection available at the Museum-Institute of the Armenian Genocide does not contain all issues, but there are numerous from almost all years of publishing, consisting of several hundreds of pages. Thereby they are representative of the general approach of the press product and the organisation. I made sampling of the articles and concentrate on those which relate to the conditions of orphans in the RA or the Armenian SSR. At a lesser extent I also consider general reports and visions about the children's future to get an idea about how the South Caucasian area was represented within the NER's strategy. A rich source of photographic representation is also available in this review, representing the orphans' life in Armenia. A supplementary source to these materials is the handbook by Charles V. Vickrey, member of the editorial board of the *New Near East*, and also designer of the NER's fundraising campaigns.

Armenian press sources were also available to some extent from the period. I acquired these through the digital archives of Armenian press products. The collection in general is pretty fragmented, but the available issues well illustrate the relevant political concerns and ideas. Newspapers from the Shirak region, where Alexandrapol, later Leninakan, was located, constantly deal with the issue of orphans from a local perspective. Some issues of the governing official parties' official newspapers also deal with the problem.

Parts of published archival material collections concern the correspondence between the relevant state organs and the NER. The official writings of Nikol Aghbalyan, Minister of Education and Arts of the RA are also available in such a form. Furthermore, three significant personalities related to the NER wrote and published their own reports about the organisation immediately after gaining experience with it: James L. Barton chairman of the NER in 1930,

Fridtjof Nansen, the League of Nations' High Commissioner for Refugees in 1928, and Varazdat Teroyan, in 1931. The latter held high positions in the NER's education-related representative bodies, and was responsible for handing over NER properties to the Armenian SSR. I acquired the first in original form, the second in an Armenian translation, and the third as printed from Teroyan's family archives.

Some of the reprinted archival materials include fragments or complete diaries or memoirs of orphans. These are significant because generally within the available archival NER documents, field workers are less represented, and the orphans' voice is also almost completely missing. This also says a lot about the policy making procedures of the relevant institutions, and supports critical discourse analysis.

The Near East Relief Historical Society, maintaining the archives of the Near East Relief also has an available online archive. The sources they publish, concern mainly, but not only photographic materials. Recently also the number of articles introducing orphanage life based on original documents started to grow on the site. Some issues of the New Near East and NER Handbooks are available there also. These sources partly overlap with the paper-format archival sources, therefore I used only the non-duplicated materials of this online archive. Besides the ideology of the NER they represent the everyday life of the orphanages and adjacent institutions: schools, training centres, medical institutions and workshops.

Besides my recent research done specifically for the present thesis, I have also some field experience from the city of Gyumri between 2010 and 2012 (February 19 2010, December 7 2010 and July 20 2012). On the first occasion I was a member of a group which accompanied a documentary filmmaking team, who shot some footage about NER orphanages. Thereby I also have been to most of the NER orphanage sites, most of the times to the girls' orphanage at Kazachi Post. All buildings had operated as Russian, later Soviet military bases, and part of the buildings serve nowadays as part of a Russian military base. These shorter visits equipped me

with a deeper understanding of the meaning behind the immense quantity of orphans, and also with insight to the circumstances under which they had lived, in terms of infrastructural facilities, climate and natural environment. Such trips also provided me with local experience related to the memory of the 1926 earthquake, a tragic turning point in the life of NER orphanages in Soviet times.

1.5. Structure

In the following chapter I introduce the ideologies of the three main actors of orphan care in Armenia between 1918 and 1930. The third chapter deals with the attempt for cooperative coordination by the Republic of Armenia and the ACRNE / NER between 1918 and 1920. Then, in the fourth chapter I analyse the dynamics between the Soviet Armenian decision makers and the Near East Relief. Naturally, in all the cases I also reflect on how these institutional struggles afflicted orphans, and how the measures taken to ameliorate their lives were related to their actual social reality.

2. The Image of Armenians in the Frameworks of Ideologies

In this chapter I concentrate on how the ideal Armenian nation was perceived from the perspective of the actors in orphan care. This involves the knowledge production of these actors about Armenians, and also how they attempted to disseminate this knowledge to citizens, and in particular through the educational curricula to the orphans. I examine how the knowledge production was related to the broader ideological framework of the actors, and in parallel how the concept of the ideal Armenian nation was adapted to these larger frameworks. Related to the concept of the national community, I analyse in each actor's case the definition of the Armenian community in terms of religion or secular moral standards, language, geographical boundaries, and the vision of the ideal national economy, to which the vocational training of the orphans was related. I also highlight how the states and the NER placed particularly orphans within this framework. I relate the institutional means of realising these concepts to Bourdieu's theory as well.

After each criteria of being defined as an Armenian I critically describe how these elements of the national identity were related to the orphans' social reality. If it is applicable, I also involve the orphans' responses and coping strategies. Finally, I also evaluate how, and what elements of the actual ideologies were implemented. First I analyse the concept of the Republic of Armenia in this manner, then the ACRNE / NER's concept of the ideal Armenian nation. In the third subchapter I introduce the related concepts of the Bolshevik ideology.

2.1. The Republic of Armenia's perception on the Nation and Orphans

During the years of the independent republic, the Armenian economy struggled with constant crisis because of the ongoing warfare and also because of exceptionally severe winters.

It resulted in famine and mass-deaths,⁴⁴ therefore it was essential to revive the economy. The Armenian state imagined modern education as the key to ‘development’, and to the recovery of the nation.⁴⁵ The education of orphans was surrounded with special attention, for they were considered the key actors of achieving ‘development’ in the future. In contrast, as the related archival sources show, the ARF government did not perceive economy and education as strongly interdependent factors of ‘development’. They only wanted Armenia to ‘develop’ like any other, meaning ‘Western’ state, to reach an ideal condition which is “[...]worthy for a free Armenia”.⁴⁶

2.1.1. Orphans Transferred from Old to New National Community

In contrast to the government’s loose ideas, Gellner explicitly shows how standardised state education and economy are interrelated: “The level of literacy and technical competence, in a standardised medium, a common conceptual currency, which is required of members of this society if they are to be properly employable and enjoy full and effective moral citizenship, is so high that it simply *cannot* be provided by the kin or local units, such as they are. It can only be provided by something resembling a modern ‘national’ education system [...]”⁴⁷ This was exactly what the ARF government aimed to implement.

The base for such a national education system was not homogenous at all. In 1918, when the independent republic of Armenia was founded, the Armenian Revolutionary Federation became the governing party.⁴⁸ The lands they held control of after 1918, known as Eastern Armenia in Armenian vernacular, had been part of the Russian Empire before. In contrast, most refugees of the genocide were from Ottoman Eastern Anatolia, named Western Armenia in

⁴⁴ Hovannisian, *The Republic of Armenia*, 127.

⁴⁵ Աղբալյան [Aghbalyan], *Նամակներ, Պաշտոնական գրություններ [Official Writings]*, 225–226.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 226.

⁴⁷ Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, 34.

⁴⁸ Հայ հեղափոխական դաշնակցություն, Hay heghap’okhakan dashnakts’ut’yun, also called as the Dashnak party.

Armenian vernacular. This was also true for the orphans. There were common elements in Armenians' identity in the two empires, as I am going to indicate below, but there were several diversities as well. This was the basic cultural complex out of which the leaders of the republic started to unify a nation. Educating orphans was a crucial part of this endeavour.

The common elements in most Armenians' identity both in the eastern and western territories were the Christian Armenian Apostolic religion and the Armenian language. Therefore these constituted the base for constructing a national culture. In Gellner's terms, the nation as a community shares the same culture, and its members recognise each other upon that. Sharing the same culture means sharing "a system of ideas and signs and associations and ways of behaving and communicating."⁴⁹ In this case communication was ensured by the Armenian language. The 'national' content in other state-emphasised school subjects created the system of associations of communication. Such subjects were geography, history and Armenian literature, which, according to the Ministry of Education and Arts were of central importance within the national education curricula.⁵⁰ The appropriate behaviour was largely influenced by the moral standards of the Armenian Apostolic Church. These categories at the same time determined the boundaries of the Armenian nation.

Armenians were converted to Catholicism mostly in Central and Eastern Europe and at a lesser extent to Protestantism in the Ottoman Empire. Therefore the Armenian Apostolic Church stayed dominant among Armenians in general.⁵¹ Based on this, it is not hard to estimate that those children survivors of the genocide, who had had previous memories of their families, must have had also memories of the Apostolic Church. Thereby the attempt of the state was adequate in their case. As the religious centre, Ejmiatsin was located within the territory of the

⁴⁹ Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, 7.

⁵⁰ Աղբալյան [Aghbalyan], *Նամակներ, Պաշտոնական գրություններ [Official Writings]*, 187, 219.

⁵¹ Abrahamian, *Armenian Identity in a Changing World*, 115.

Republic of Armenia, according to Suren Avetisyan, the Minister of Education even coordinated the pedagogical program of schools with the Catholicos, the head of the church.⁵²

On the other hand, those children who survived in Muslim families, or were delivered previously to Muslim orphanages, were Islamicised. Part of these children was evacuated to the Caucasus in parallel with the advance of the Kemalist army.⁵³ No word in the related archival documents by Armenian state representatives involved is related to their fate and how to handle them, although it must have been a challenge. As Miller and Touryan Miller note, the life standards of such children usually dropped after being accepted to Armenian orphanages. The methods of ‘Collecting orphans’ [vorbahavak’ in Armenian] had meant that the relief workers agreed with the former Muslim masters of these children upon handing them over to the Armenian orphanages. Some children left the Muslim environment voluntarily, but the youngest ones depended on the adults’ decision.⁵⁴ Therefore re-socialising them must have demanded additional efforts compared to their continuously Christian peers.

An article describing Armenian orphans’ conditions in Georgia in the official newspaper of the ARF published in Shirak region, of which Alexandrapol was the centre, also contained a footnote regarding challenging religious issues in the orphanages. As the ministry of education did care about the issue of religious education, the footnote had been somewhat alarming: “We know it from reliable sources that when the Americans are asked about the religion passed on in school, whether the Armenian [Apostolic] priest or the Protestant missionary shall teach it, they respond: both the Armenian and the Protestant.”⁵⁵ This meant that the state’s prioritising

⁵² Ավետիսյան [Avetisyan], *Մերձավոր Արևելքի նպաստամատույց կոմիտեի գործունեությունը Հայաստանում 1918-1930 [The Operations of the American Committee for Relief in the Near East in Armenia 1918-1930]*, 95.

⁵³ “Genocide Museum | The Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute.” Mustafa Kemal’s war aimed to revise the 1920 Treaty of Sèvres, and finally it also achieved political powers for its supporters.

⁵⁴ Miller and Miller, *Survivors*, 124.

⁵⁵ Ավետիսյան [Avetisyan], *Մերձավոր Արևելքի նպաստամատույց կոմիտեի գործունեությունը Հայաստանում 1918-1930 [The Operations of the American Committee for Relief in the Near East in Armenia 1918-1930]*, 85.

the Armenian Apostolic religion was under risk, as an alternative to it was also taught in the ACRNE orphanages.

In terms of language, not the post-genocide, but the pre-genocide diversity created challenges for the state. Armenians living to the east from the Araxes river, practically in the previously Russian Empire-occupied territories and in the previous Persian Empire spoke the Eastern Armenian dialect. The ones to the west from the river, mainly in the Ottoman Empire spoke the Western Armenian dialect. Based on my personal experience, speakers the two dialects understand each other. Reading texts across the dialects is possible as well. There are certain major differences in pronunciation, spelling and orthography, grammar and vocabulary, though. When public education was introduced in the 19th century, Eastern Armenian was the vernacular in Caucasian Armenia under tsarist rule and western in Ottoman territories.⁵⁶

The ARF government prioritised Eastern Armenian, adapting to the local circumstances, when it accepted Armenian as a state language in 1918.⁵⁷ Refugees of the Armenian genocide, including orphans, though – if they had remembered or had the chance to learn Armenian in their families before – spoke the western dialect. Therefore educating them in Eastern Armenian must have been problematic, even if in my personal experience the Gyumri – then Alexandrapol – dialect spoken around the orphans is transitional between the two major dialects.

After the language-determined boundaries of the new national community, it is also relevant to introduce how the Republic of Armenia related to Armenians and the territories in which they lived. This relation defined the geographical boundaries of the national community. A lengthy article of the official newspaper of the ARF in Shirak region, Ashkhatavor (Worker) deals with handing over the care for Armenian orphans in Georgia completely to the ACRNE.

⁵⁶ Abrahamian, *Armenian Identity in a Changing World*, 330.

⁵⁷ Միմոնյան [Simonyan], *Հայ մանկավարժությունն պատմություն* [*The history of Armenian pedagogy*], 235.

The author notes that the fate of the children and the responsibilities on which the ACRNE agreed with the Armenian government had been yet unknown at the time. On the one hand the article states that Miss Allen, a NER high representative who was appointed to oversee the Armenian orphanages in Georgia, spoke “more or less” Armenian.⁵⁸ Her colleagues were not supposed to want to selfishly benefit from orphan care either. On the other hand the author warns not to allow the ACRNE to spread political propaganda in its institutions which could undermine the new democratic system.⁵⁹

This indicates that the Armenian state was also preoccupied with the fate of Armenian orphans in the neighbouring areas of the South Caucasus. The Ministry of Education and Arts repeatedly provided support for Armenians living in Mountainous Karabakh as well, the region which fell under Armenian military administration at that time, and had an Armenian majority, and also the Baku Armenians, whose minority education was not supported by Azerbaijan.⁶⁰

Concluding about the boundaries of the national community, the state-suggested features were belonging to the Armenian Apostolic Church, speaking the Armenian language, and feeling community with and responsibility for Armenians in the South Caucasus. This was not matching with the language knowledge of the orphans, and did not pay special attention to Islamicised Armenian children. The new geographical boundary also neglected the areas from where the majority of the children came from. The state still prioritised its own principles through education, which was made not only available to children, but also to adults, who received Russian education before.⁶¹ Therefore the homogenising intent of the national education system was obvious.

⁵⁸ “Հայ որբերը Վրաստանում” [The Armenian Orphans in Georgia], *Աշխատավոր* [Worker], May 23 1919, 2. Note that she is mentioned by the NER as an expert of Armenia. *New Near East* March 1922, 9.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Աղբալյան [Aghbalyan], *Նամակներ, Պաշտոնական գրություններ* [Official Writings], 202, 227.

⁶¹ Աղբալյան [Aghbalyan], *Նամակներ, Պաշտոնական գրություններ* [Official Writings], 187, 219.

2.1.2. The relation between Education and the Creation of the National Economy in the Bureaucratic Field

Paralleling Gellner's ideas, Bourdieu also mentions that the state unifies forms of communication "through bureaucratic procedures, educational structures and social rituals"⁶² in order to create the national market. In the orphans' case, the language knowledge was among the forms of communication, in a narrow sense. In a broader context, emphasising the role of the Armenian Apostolic religion in children's education determined the moral code of social interaction, which ensured communication.

Bourdieu also provides more details about why the education of history and geography are crucial in the formation of the citizens' community. He considers cartography as part of the knowledge accumulation process of the state, which the state uses for "theoretical unification". Similarly, the state "through the teaching of history [...] inculcates the foundations of a "true civic religion" and more precisely, the fundamental presuppositions of a national self-image."⁶³ This accumulated and unified knowledge is distributed by education, and again ensures that all citizens understand the same set of social phenomena, and relate to the same social reality. This means that their communication is ensured, thus, based on Bourdieu's argument; the creation of a national market was also supported by it.

2.1.3. Obstacles to the National Concept

Nikol Aghbalyan noted reasons, why besides the economy, education could not run smoothly, either. A proposal for a government meeting on 22 September 1919 shows that so many teachers were enrolled in the army that the state could not assure enough teachers for schools. As a solution, teachers over 25 years of age were exempted from military service.

⁶² Bourdieu, Loic J. D. Wacquant, and Farage, "Rethinking the State," 7.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 8.

Aghbalyan urged the government with the following words: “[...] the academic years of 1917-18 and 1918-19 school life was mostly halted due to war conditions, whereby the younger generation has stayed away from school for two years. If we do not restart teaching from this year on, then there will be such a moral harm to our educational life, which will result in a threat for our future life.”⁶⁴

This discontinuation of education, in parallel with the severe financial, agricultural, and humanitarian crisis shows that the government mostly struggled for mere survival. Therefore, and as the republic was very short-lived, their ideas and dreams of the nation did not have a chance to become realised. Neither in within the broader society, nor in the lives of the orphans. Still, their ideas and measures had some impact on society, similarly with their interactions with the ACRNE / NER. The latter had ten more years to realise its aims.

2.2. The Aims of Orphan care of the American Committee for Relief in the Near East / the Near East Relief

The way how the knowledge production of the ACRNE / NER was framed, showed that the organisation placed Armenians in the broader context of the ‘civilising’ project in the Near East. It is repeatedly expressed in the New Near East that there would be no world peace without peace in the Near East. Additionally, they were convinced that Armenians have a special role in creating it.⁶⁵

Said writes that “it [Orientalism] is an *elaboration* of not only of a basic geographical distinction [...] but also a whole series of ‘interests’ which, by such means as scholarly discovery, philological reconstruction, psychological analysis, landscape and sociological description, it not only creates but maintains; it *is*, rather than expresses, a certain *will or*

⁶⁴ Աղբալյան [Aghbalyan], *Նամակներ, Պաշտոնական գրություններ [Official Writings]*, 206.

⁶⁵ “Speakers’ Handbook of American Committee for Relief in the Near East,” 10.

intention to understand, in some cases to control, manipulate, even to incorporate, what is a manifestly different (or alternative and novel) world [...]”⁶⁶ As the geopolitical setting of the region was in turmoil, educating the children by the ACRNE / NER through the concept of its Orientalist knowledge production was a potential means to involve in framing the local international political setting. Similarly to the republic, the education of history, geography and language, religion and also vocational training played a central role.

Why the ACRNE became an organisation with an Orientalist ideological setting, can be explained by its antecedents. The ACRNE was founded upon the call of Henry Morgenthau,⁶⁷ US ambassador to the Ottoman Empire until 1917. Responding to his call, the primary aim of the organisation was raising funds and securing humanitarian aid for the survivors of the genocide. On the other hand, The ACRNE chairman, James L. Barton had previously been the foreign secretary of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. With his a missionary background and experience,⁶⁸ he had a key role in forming the ACRNE / NER’s an Orientalist concept.

Before implementing this ideology in practice, the fight for territories in the South Caucasus resulted in resettling NER orphanages two times. The Kemalist army occupied both Alexandrapol and Kars in late 1920, therefore the orphanages from there were moved to Kars.⁶⁹ The Turkish authorities had promised protection for the orphanages there, but very soon they started to cut the institutions’ supply chains. The NER personnel had to take administrative measures to gain access to their own storages. The soldiers assigned to accompany alimentation and clothes supply caravans of the NER, participated in looting, and sometimes the orphanage personnel was obliged to hand over goods from their buildings.⁷⁰ The situation had not

⁶⁶ Said, *excerpt from Orientalism*, 138.

⁶⁷ “Henry Morgenthau’s Urgent Telegrams | Near East Relief Historical Society.”

⁶⁸ “Barton, James Levi (1855-1936) | History of Missiology.”

⁶⁹ Nercessian, *The City of Orphans. Relief Workers, Commissars and the “Builders of the New Armenia”*. *Alexandrapol / Leninakan 1918-1930.*, 57.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.* 67.

ameliorated in Alexandrapol, either, and in parallel the Bolshevik occupation of Armenia had started. Therefore the NER was considering withdrawal from all operations in the Caucasus – meaning Armenia and Georgia. The field workers seriously opposed this opportunity on moral grounds. Finally, the NER stayed, and the orphans from Kars were relocated back to Alexandrapol.⁷¹

Albeit the ACRNE / NER itself became victimised by military operations for redrawing borders, the organisation determined only in 1921 for its American supporters what it had accepted as the territory of Armenia. This was represented in an article which was quoted from the Philadelphia Public Ledger in the *New Near East*: “Nobody who knows Armenia will be deceived into believing that the Bolshevik usurpation of power at Erivan, the capital, represents the will of the people. [...] Bolshevik rule in Erivan has nothing to say to Cilician Armenia⁷² and the rest of the triangular tract inclosed by the Black Sea, the Caspian and the Mediterranean.”⁷³ This involves the whole territory of the Armenian plateau and also Cilicia. Gaining the latter was not an aim of the republic’s delegation in Paris, moreover, Armenia lost some of its territory during the years of independence. Compared to what US president Woodrow Wilson guaranteed to the republic, the loss included the surroundings of Kars, Ardahan, Igdir and Mount Ararat, which are South and East from the Soviet Armenian border.⁷⁴

During this period, continuing even until 1921-22, Alexandrapol, including the orphanages was a place for starvation and epidemics. Moreover, the Bolshevik army demanded all relief shipments to be sent from the port of Batoum⁷⁵ to Yerevan directly. Thereby the

⁷¹ Ibid. 73-74.

⁷² The Cilician Kingdom of Armenia existed at the northeastern coastal area of the Mediterranean Sea between the late 11th and the late 14th century.

⁷³ „Government in the Near East”, *New Near East*, July 1921, 16. Note: these were the two areas where Armenian deportees did return after the 1918 amnesty, and could stay until the French Mandate troops withdrew in 1921. *New Near East*, June 1921, 16.

⁷⁴ Papian, “The Arbitral Award on Turkish-Armenian Boundary by Woodrow Wilson (Historical Background, Legal Aspects, and International Dimensions).”

⁷⁵ Present-day Batumi

orphanages had no possibility to provide necessary alimentation and medication for children.⁷⁶ It is not hard to imagine that in practice, under such circumstances, including warfare, repeated relocations, hunger, mass deaths and epidemics, the realisation of educational projects was everything but continuous. Still, there were priorities which the NER intended to emphasise in its educational program, therefore it is worth for consideration.

I have not found any materials about how history and geography was taught in the Near East Relief orphanages and schools, but it was emphasised by the organisation with the same importance as the republic stressed it. The New Near East review places Armenia in the context of the Biblical lands, especially as the NER operated orphanages in Palestine as well.⁷⁷ The review depicts the country also as a one between the Tigris and the Euphrates rivers, coinciding with the Biblical garden of Eden.⁷⁸ The previous example indicates a non-territorial approach within the global community of Christianity, while the second refers to the historically Western Armenian lands. Therefore neither the territory, nor the historiography coincided with that promoted by the Republic of Armenia. On the other hand, supporting the Wilsonian borders as a minimum for the sake of resettling Armenian refugees there⁷⁹, approximated the NER's vision to the republic's image of its territories.

Both the geographical and the historical context show that the NER imagined Armenians in a broader regional and international context, which was restricted in the republic's eyes to the direct South Caucasian neighbours, Georgia and Azerbaijan. The community of Armenians for the Near East Relief was desirable in all places where there were Armenian refugees. This means a broader perception compared to that of the republic.

⁷⁶ Nercessian, *The City of Orphans. Relief Workers, Commissars and the "Builders of the New Armenia"*. *Alexandrapol / Leninakan 1918-1930.*, 76 – 77.

⁷⁷ „Armenia”, *The New Near East*, May 1921, 4.

⁷⁸ „The history of Armenians”, *The New Near East*, October 1921, 3–5.

⁷⁹ *States of Separation*, 79.

In terms of language education, the NER again was less rigorous than the Republic of Armenia. In their schools they had taught both Eastern and Western Armenian.⁸⁰ In the Soviet era there was also some pragmatism present. Both Russian and Armenian were taught to the children in schools generally, while English was available in the later years of elementary education.⁸¹ The Edith Winchester School of Nurses established in 1927, already in the Soviet era also offered language education in English and Russian. The previous was considered to be the language of medical science, the latter as “universally spoken in this country”.⁸² This meant that albeit the NER put an emphasis on passing on certain elements of Armenian identity to the children, it was also pragmatic in terms of instructing necessary foreign languages.

Another already indicated contrast was also present between the independent state and the charity organisation. This was the issue of religion. First of all, the issue of islamised children did turn up in the Near East Relief issues, contradicting to the findings of Miller and Touryan Miller about higher living standards while Islamicisation. “Some of them are in rescue homes, striving to forget in peaceful living years of slavery in Moslem homes.”⁸³ This suggests that the NER paid special attention to these children. Still, reeducating the children to Protestantism was not without resistance. Nora L. Nercessian reports several such cases from the memoirs of Mihran Hovhannisyan, an orphan having resided both in Alexandrapol and Jelaloghli.⁸⁴ Children did question teachers at religion classes, and some of them also favoured Armenian mythology. These were considered as backward pagan thoughts and practices, but

⁸⁰ Ավետիսյան [Avetisyan], *Մերձավոր Արևելքի նպաստամատույց կոմիտեի գործունեությունը Հայաստանում 1918-1930 [The Operations of the American Committee for Relief in the Near East in Armenia 1918-1930]*, 98.

⁸¹ Nercessian, *The City of Orphans. Relief Workers, Commissars and the “Builders of the New Armenia”*. *Alexandrapol / Leninakan 1918-1930.*, 187.

⁸² „Edith Winchester School for Nurses”, *The New Near East*, March 1927, 16.

⁸³ „Waiting to get in” *The New Near East*, October 1921, 10-11.

⁸⁴ Present day Stepanavan.

children did not refrain from them despite serious physical harassment.⁸⁵ This indicates that even children were critical towards what they were presented from Protestantism.

Besides the fact that the NER held Protestant religious meetings and classes on Protestant religion, its representatives stated that it would not put on any influence on the children in terms of religion, which was not trusted by the government of the independent republic.⁸⁶ Considering the previously mentioned incidents, the government's allegations were not unfounded. On the other hand, even in the strictly atheist Soviet period, the NER had education on ethics, but finally the state obliged them to stay away from any kind of education that could be religious.⁸⁷

In conclusion, the NER had its own concept of the Armenian national community, its geographical location and territory, religion, language, and desired professions. As I have shown in the case of the Republic of Armenia referring to Bourdieu, knowledge production related to these aspects of social life, and distributing the accumulated knowledge through education is crucial in state formation. This means that the ACRNE / NER's concept, its bureaucratic and educational capacities provided quasi-state properties to the organisation.

However, before transmitting the factual knowledge which could influence the children to contribute to the 'civilisation' of the Near East, there were though more essential tasks to solve. The ACRNE / NER orphanages considered necessary to socialise the orphans in a way which makes them similar to children, who were not traumatised. One activity for achieving this was knitting. According to one of the girls' teachers, Madame Romanoff in Alexandrapol, the orphans could not concentrate on one single thing because of their previous experience.⁸⁸

⁸⁵ Nercessian *The City of Orphans. Relief Workers, Commissars and the "Builders of the New Armenia". Alexandrapol / Leninakan 1918-1930.* 241–244 .

⁸⁶ “Հայ որբերը Վրաստանում” [The Armenian Orphans in Georgia], *Աշխատույնը [Worker]*, May 23 1919, 2.

⁸⁷ Nercessian, *The City of Orphans. Relief Workers, Commissars and the "Builders of the New Armenia". Alexandrapol / Leninakan 1918-1930.*, 255.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 187.

Moreover, pedagogues made several efforts to train them how to play. One of the teachers complained that the children “roused themselves only to eat”.⁸⁹ Several other ways of spending their free time was also provided to them. There were regular musical events, theatre performances and even scouting, which were usually arranged by locally trained orphan musicians, theatrical companies.⁹⁰

The types of manual labour the children were taught in the frameworks of vocational training were traditional Armenian handicrafts.⁹¹ The general economic aim of the organisation was explained though around other arguments: “The East needs economic stability. It is on the threshold of an economic revolution comparable with that which took place in England fifty or sixty years ago. The difference lies in the fact that the people of England, when thrown out of employment by the introduction of machinery, finally found work in factories,[...] but the Orient has no factories. [...] I doubt the Orientals’ ability to organize or finance factories[...]It is for this reason that I [...] feel so strongly that the Near East Relief in making one of its biggest contributions to the country in training its youth in modern agricultural methods.”⁹² This was also part of the missionary rhetoric of the New Near East, which emphasised without exception in their issues that the orphans are raised to be self-reliant, and so were refugee adults.⁹³ The coherent socialisation and educational plan with the vocational training coincides with Gellner’s emphasis on education necessary to industrialisation also in the case of the Near East Relief. Therefore, in this term the NER played the role similar to that of a state.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 229.

⁹⁰ Nercessian, *The City of Orphans. Relief Workers, Commissars and the “Builders of the New Armenia”*. *Alexandrapol / Leninakan 1918-1930.*, 135-136, Նանսեն [Nansen] *Խաբված ժողովուրդը [Betrayed Nation]*, 158–159.

⁹¹ „The Under Side of the Rug”, *The New Near East*, March 1926, 18.

⁹² „For Great Needs” *The New Near East*, March 1927, 7–8.

⁹³ „The Under Side of the Rug”, *The New Near East*, March 1926, 18.

2.3. *Raising the New Generation of Soviet Armenian Citizens*

Transforming the orphan care project to the communist taste altogether was pretty similar to building a new nation. A new set of moral values was offered in turn to religious ones. The organisational structure, like the communist youth movement instead of scouting was similar to the national one. The language went under transformation, the borders of the community were redefined, and a new economic structure was inaugurated. Despite the long-term aim of this was to establish an integrated economy within the Soviet Union, the 1920s were featured by albeit communist but in any case national revival. This again confirms Gellner's theory regarding the nation state as the smallest unit of economy. Moscow also started to move along this line, attempting to create a larger unit of production later. Organising the smaller units – namely the national economies – into more industrial economic structures, continuation of the national endeavours was necessary, albeit in the frameworks of the Bolshevik ideology. Thus the state obviously suspected the danger of a foreign organisation, a representative of the American bourgeoisie, conducting operations which were in many senses contradictory to the state's aims. Which promoted the old definition of the Armenian nation combined with foreign ideas, and which taught the children middle-class intellectual skills and professions demanding advanced manual skills.

Establishing the Bolshevik state in Armenia was not easy due to the fierce armed resistance of the ARF. In parallel, Georgia also imposed a blockade on Armenia, as there the ruling national political elite could resist the Red Army longer. The army led by Armenian Bolsheviks could though finally force out the ARF troops towards Iran, and also led a successful military campaign against Georgia.⁹⁴

The NEP was introduced immediately after finishing the state of war in March 1921. The Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars of Armenia from January 1921 was

⁹⁴ Suny, *Looking toward Ararat*, 140.

Alexandr Miasnikyan (born Martuni), whose task was to introduce the new regime. His ideas about the relations of Armenians in the Soviet homeland and the diaspora were published in 1924 also involve the description of how he imagined the ideal Armenian nation.

He extended the political community in Soviet Armenia to the minorities, including Turks,⁹⁵ Yezidis, Kurds and Russians as long as they support the soviet republic.⁹⁶ The new polity also involved the participation of women. Miasnikyan's ideas were in terms of the totality of Armenians to create Greater Armenia, and he criticised the ARF for not being able to achieve it. He promised that the Bolsheviks will create it.⁹⁷ Greater Armenia is what also the NER emphasised as the national home of Armenians, and what the Armenian national delegation finally gave up in Paris because of the reality of territorial loss and military weakness.⁹⁸ Such an approach is strange from a government which emphasises nationalism less among its principles. Miasnikyan's approach also seems strange in the light of the basically Russian-Turkish agreement on the South Caucasus, which determined the borders of the Armenian SSR.⁹⁹ However, for him, the Armenian diaspora was important to realise the communist world revolution.¹⁰⁰ In this sense, it is reasonable that he meant Greater Armenia within the frameworks of national communism and the communist world revolution, and not as a strictly national(ist) formation.

On the other hand, religion was persecuted in complete accordance with the Bolshevik ideology. By 1927 this resulted in the fact that the state did not recognise the newly elected Catholicos Gevorg V.¹⁰¹ Miasnikyan argued that even the church could exist along with the

⁹⁵ This has been the name of Azerbaijanis in Armenian vernacular.

⁹⁶ Մարտունի [Martuni], Կուսակցությունները գաղութահայության մեջ [Parties in The Armenian Diaspora], 81.

⁹⁷ Ibid.,16.

⁹⁸ Papiian, “The Arbitral Award on Turkish-Armenian Boundary by Woodrow Wilson (Historical Background, Legal Aspects, and International Dimensions).”

⁹⁹ *Treaty of Kars*, Deutsch-Armenische Gesellschaft

¹⁰⁰ Մարտունի [Martuni], Կուսակցությունները գաղութահայության մեջ [Parties in The Armenian Diaspora], 6.

¹⁰¹ Suny, *Looking toward Ararat*, 144.

ethnic minorities if they supported Bolshevism.¹⁰² Additionally, he also denied state involvement in the case of closing several churches, and made local inhabitants responsible for these actions.¹⁰³

It is not hard to imagine what religious prosecution meant for an organisation strongly committed to protestant values. Varazdat Teroyan, a representative of the NER Educational Board, who later, after his own state persecution became highly critical towards the NER wrote the following: “That meeting house, or tabernacle was a complete novelty for the local people with its luxurious shine, illumination, homely table, comfortable benches, music instrument and the direct involvement of the people [...]”¹⁰⁴ He also complains at the same time that most people had not practiced the religion seriously. They only went to the NER’s religious occasions, because these were kind of intellectual programs for the local intelligentsia.¹⁰⁵

It is clear from these thoughts, that the NER meant a possible source of criticism of the political system, even if spreading Protestantism had limited success among adults, as Teroyan argues. It is also questionable whether this limited success could have a widespread effect among the people who were present at these meetings. Anyway, Teroyan strongly opposed that all kinds of people who were vulnerable for some reason, for example the ill who were cared for in NER hospitals, also participated in these occasions.¹⁰⁶

This secularism can again be connected to the national communist ideas. As Walter A. Kemp cites Otto Bauer, who inspired Stalin’s views in the 1920s of national communism: “The fact of matter is that the elimination of the bourgeois nations signifies the elimination not of

¹⁰² Մարտունի [Martuni], *Կուսակցությունները գաղութահայության մեջ* [Parties in The Armenian Diaspora], 81.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 82–83.

¹⁰⁴ *Տերոյան* [Teroyan] *Իմպերիալիստական ծիծեռնակներ: Միսիոներարարեգործական կազմակերպությունների աշխատանքը Մերձավոր Արևելքում և Անդրկովկասում* [Imperialist Swallows. The Operations of Missionary Charity Organisations in the Near East and Transcaucasia] 37.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 38.

nations in general, but only of the bourgeois nations.”¹⁰⁷ It means that the communist regime wanted to create a “proletarian nationalism”¹⁰⁸, and while religion was a feature of the bourgeois nationalism – in the Armenian case as well, as presented previously – it was undesired during the NEP and the korenizatsiia. This approach to religion combined with maintaining other elements of the national culture during the communist state formation is much closer to the “civic religion” in Bourdieu’s terms. Albeit the independent state was secular, the Armenian Apostolic religion played a great role in conceptualising the Armenian nation. In comparison, the communist ideology went completely secular, and it had to introduce an ideology which could represent the moral code in Gellner’s terms.

As a possible effect of religious persecution on the orphans, it must be mentioned that being connected to any religious education or involvement was a potential risk. Therefore it was not only dangerous for the NER, but also for the orphans to be connected to Protestantism. However, children also resisted the rigorous religious rule in the orphanages. “One day, in protest against religious strictness imposed on them, the orphans decided to eat their meals without first saying a prayer.” The response of the Armenian manager of the Jelaloghli orphanage was the following: “You eat our American bread, and don’t want to be subjected to us?”¹⁰⁹ The resistance of the children does mean that the suspicion of the state regarding the children’s receptivity was at some extent exaggerated, but they obviously bore the label of being educated by the American Protestants.

Not only religion, but also language reform and promoting literacy in the official languages of the soviet republics, were part of the Soviet nationalising policy of the korenizatsiia. Armenia was not an exception, either. The state language remained Armenian, certainly, Eastern. Paralleling Motyl and Kemp, Ronald Suny mentions the specificities of

¹⁰⁷ Kemp, *Nationalism and Communism in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union*, 81.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Necessian, *The City of Orphans. Relief Workers, Commissars and the “Builders of the New Armenia”*. *Alexandrapol / Leninakan 1918-1930.*, 241.

national communism's impact on the Armenian language in the local context. It went under massive reform to become appropriate for academic use.¹¹⁰ Taken the amount of still used and soviet-fashioned mosaic words based on my own experience – even abbreviating the NER as “Amerkom” –, this reform included the formation of a political-ideological vocabulary. This step though isolated somewhat the diaspora from those living in the Soviet republic. Promoting literacy among adults was not less important for the Bolshevik leaders of the country, either, than for those of the Republic.¹¹¹

This period was also a time of industrialisation, along with the capitalist elements in the frameworks of the NEP.¹¹² Industrialisation also started in Armenia, though Lenin was concerned whether and how to integrate the South Caucasus into a centralised Soviet economic system. He thought Armenia was different from other Soviet member states, first of all, because of the huge proportion of the peasantry. The proportion of workers was only 13%,¹¹³ and the industrialisation certainly meant the intent to increase this. Lenin's other concern was that Armenians could have established connections with ‘the West’ easily through the diaspora.¹¹⁴

However, industrialisation and ‘modernisation’ had started. Thereby several hundreds of orphans reaching the age of 15-16 started to be employed as workers by the textile factory in Alexandrapol or by the dairy in Gharakilisa,¹¹⁵ where the NER also operated orphanages. Additionally, many orphans started to work in agriculture as well.¹¹⁶ The children had surely high endurance for such type of works, if they were able to provide self-supply for the orphanages. On the other hand, their education in the NER schools was much more similar to

¹¹⁰ Suny, *Looking toward Ararat*, 145–48.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 148.

¹¹² Read, “Krupskaya, Proletkul't and the Origins of Soviet Cultural Policy.”

¹¹³ Suny, *Looking toward Ararat*, 143.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 140.

¹¹⁵ Later Kirovakan, present day Vanadzor

¹¹⁶ Ավետիսյան [Avetisyan], *Մերձավոր Արևելքի նպաստամատույց կոմիտեի գործունեությունը Հայաստանում 1918-1930 [The Operations of the American Committee for Relief in the Near East in Armenia 1918-1930]*, 169.

that of the middle class than the working class, considering the subjects and the foreign languages they were taught. Regarding the skills of the children, they were also higher educated in terms of manual labour than low-skilled factory labour would demand. The ability of preparing shoes, clothes, carpets and fine quality crafts proves this. Additionally, this was not only valid for orphans, but for a larger circle of children living in NER operation areas. Therefore again, they bore the suspicious label of not receiving proper Soviet-style education. As Varazdat Teroyan complains: “First and Foremost, the doors of those schools were open for all the people.”¹¹⁷ and “[...] they filled the orphanages with any kinds of children, meaning also non-orphans.”¹¹⁸

But still, in the beginning of the 1920s at least, according to Miasnikyan, whatever was humanitarian was considered pro-Armenian as well. He set the same criteria to the NER operations than that to churches. Until the organisation is ready to support the Soviet system, it can maintain its operations in Armenia.¹¹⁹ The state involved in education first in 1923 when it prescribed socialist education for all children. In this manner, from 1924 all NER schools were supervised by state commissars.¹²⁰ From the same year, the Commissariat of Enlightenment (i.e. the Soviet counterpart to the Ministry of Education) also started to hinder the scout movement by offering their own communist youth movement. As Nercessian depicts: “As the nucleus of a future nationalist army and a progeny of a bourgeois society it was by definition unacceptable by the tenets of socialism.”¹²¹ The new youth communist movement was quite popular among orphans because this was a way to express their criticism towards the NER’s

¹¹⁷ Տերոյան [Teroyan] *Ինպերիալիստական ծիծեռնակներ: Միսիոներաբարեգործական կազմակերպությունների աշխատանքը Մերձավոր Արևելքում և Անդրկովկասում* [Imperialist Swallows. The Operations of Missionary Charity Organisations in the Near East and Transcaucasia], 38.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 48.

¹¹⁹ Մարտունի [Martuni], *Կուսակցությունները գաղութահայության մեջ* [Parties in The Armenian Diaspora], 52.

¹²⁰ Nercessian, *The City of Orphans. Relief Workers, Commissars and the “Builders of the New Armenia”*. *Alexandrapol / Leninakan 1918-1930.*, 255.

¹²¹ Ibid., 256.

severe physical punishment practice in orphanages. Thus the new movement became ever popular among the adolescents.¹²²

2.4. Conclusion

The image of the Armenian nation, whatever ideological context it was adapted to, did not consider that the orphaned children were part of a certain social setting before. Albeit the genocide placed them outside the original setting, it also placed them in new and different ones – Muslim households, concentration camps or straying in the streets. Thereby the supposition that an ideology can be uniformly imposed on a whole generation of parentless children was inadequate.

None of the examined ideologies completely overlapped the social settings, or expressed otherwise, they did not coincide with the social reality of children. Besides, due to the battle in the bureaucratic field, none of these ideologies was realised in a pure form. This meant that each ideology had a limited impact on children. The conflict resulted in an ideological mixture the children were exposed to. But the then-present situation did not cause critical self-reflection of the parties, as they focused on the future of the orphans.

¹²² Ibid.

3. Managing orphan care between 1918 and 1920

The young Republic of Armenia faced several challenges, as it was depicted in the previous chapter. Managing orphan care was a very complex task, which involved the participation of numerous state institutions. Having monopoly over them still did not mean that the state could also finance the realisation of its humanitarian and educational rescue plan. It could count on the support of the ACRNE / NER in various tasks, as – like indicated in the previous chapter – they both considered Armenian children as key actors in the future of Armenia. However, the ideological differences also created conflicts of interests between the two parties.

My aim in this chapter is to make an inquiry about how the actors contributed independently and cooperatively to solve the orphan crisis, and how their solutions were adapted to the real-life situation. My next question is how actually implemented solutions affected the everyday lives of orphans and orphanages. These questions are important to ask, as problems of the everyday reality impacted the relationship between the orphans and the institutions having responsibility for them. Finally, this relationship also made an impact on the implementation of the organisations' ideologies.

3.1. *Initial Attempts for a Solution*

The state administration attempted to solve the issue of orphans at the institutional level from its coming to power in 1918. It had established the Ministry of Care, which was responsible for the orphans. It was in charge of the orphanages at the administrative level, attempting the coordination of this part of refugees relief. At the operational level, the whole sector of orphan care was managed by several independent Armenian and Russian charity

organisations. The rapidly growing numbers of orphans after the formation of the republic put this system to the test. While in September 1918 32 orphanages hosted 2400 children, in January 6567 orphans were present in 45-46 institutions. By May 1 this number grew to 13 820 orphans in 86 orphanages. Still, the ACRNE took care for only 540 children in 7 orphanages in the beginning of the year.¹²³ Taken this number, it needs explanation that according to Avetisyan in April 1919, the Armenian government handed over the complete issue of orphan care to the ACRNE without any concerns. The new regulation applied to the care of all those Armenian children in Armenia and Georgia, who were straying in the streets, lived in orphanages, studied in orphanage schools, or who were taken care of in children's hospitals.¹²⁴ Therefore this new measure meant high centralisation of orphan care in parallel with entrusting a foreign organisation with the task.

The growing needs and numbers, which could not be financed by smaller independent organisations, can explain the demand for centralisation. Additionally, the ACRNE had operated several orphanages, by that time, mostly in the Ottoman Empire, but also in Greece, Syria, Lebanon and Palestine. The total number of NER orphans in 1918 reached 130 000.¹²⁵ For managing such huge numbers of protégées, a well-organised institution system, logistical chain, and educated personnel were necessary. This was the institutional experience the NER could support the Armenian government with.

Very soon after handing over orphan care, however, Armenian intellectuals and state representatives started to raise concerns about the fate of the orphans in foreign hands. Representatives of the Armenian charity organisations and of the ACRNE discussed the issue in Tiflis at D. Davitkhanyan's a Ministry of Care representative's home. The Armenian

¹²³ Ավետիսյան [Avetisyan], *Մերձավոր Արևելքի նպաստամատույց կոմիտեի գործունեությունը Հայաստանում 1918-1930* [The Operations of the American Committee for Relief in the Near East in Armenia 1918-1930], 80–81.

¹²⁴ Ibid. 80

¹²⁵ Brand, “Near East Relief”, 1914-1918-online. *International Encyclopedia of the First World War* DOI: 10.15463/ie1418.10459.

representatives were concerned whether technically handing over orphan care to the American institution will mean at once educating and raising the children in the frameworks of a foreign ideology, promoting them a foreign identity.¹²⁶

Albeit the ACRNE repeatedly affirmed that they had not intended to put any ideological pressure on the children, the Armenian government carried out even an institutional change in orphan care. First the government demanded that at least part of the orphanages and the orphanage schools should stay under state control. The curricula should have been determined by the government. The only institutions where the NER was allowed to participate directly in decision-making were local educational councils. These consisted of deputies from local schools, state representatives and ACRNE representatives in Armenia. As a second step in the institutional management, the Ministry of Education demanded to take the charge for education in the orphanage schools from the Ministry of Care in October of the same year.¹²⁷

What this institutional rearrangement meant to the children, was manifold. The state fought with the lack of schools in general, with the challenge of establishing new ones, and separating children into appropriate number of classrooms.¹²⁸ The same was valid also for assuring buildings to state orphanages. For example in Yerevan, both the citizens and the government were concerned that a previous theatre building had been used as a hospital for orphans.¹²⁹ This indicates the infrastructural challenge the state had faced. Moreover, Aghbalyan's official writings show that there were some places where the shortage of schools was graver. Such were Alexandrapol¹³⁰ and Jelaloghli¹³¹, both in which the ACRNE maintained orphanages.

¹²⁶ Ավետիսյան [Avetisyan], *Մերձավոր Արևելքի նպաստամատույց կոմիտեի գործունեությունը Հայաստանում 1918-1930 [The Operations of the American Committee for Relief in the Near East in Armenia 1918-1930]*, 84.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 86.

¹²⁸ Աղբալյան [Aghbalyan], *Նամակներ, Պաշտոնական գրություններ [Official Writings]*, 213.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 200.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 194–196, 202, 212-213, 242-244.

¹³¹ Ibid., 185–186.

He mentions the issue of schools in Jelaloghli only once, and returns to the challenge in Gyumri several times: on September 7, 18, October 13 1919 and February 1920. The related documents indicate a correspondence between the representatives of the settlements and school teachers involved. The references to the representatives' letters show that the ministry usually provided financial support or aid to these schools on their own request.¹³² The fact that the issue of orphanage schools is represented in such scattered way in the Minister of Education's official documents, and these documents are independent from each other, show that there was no coordinated state plan for opening new schools for orphans. How schools demanded financial aid also indicates that there was no sufficient coordinated financial plan for establishing schools where orphans were concentrated, either.

It is not hard to imagine that if there was such a shortage of schools, and lack of infrastructure of care, then masses were in the group of “stray children”, as referred to earlier in the regulation of handing over orphan care to the ACRNE from the state. Such children's condition is represented in the issues of the newspaper Humanity (*Mardkaynut'yun*), the Independent Socialists' Newspaper available from 1919, published in Alexandrapol. The article “Save them from being lost” describes a child knocking at the author's window at a time of massive rain and April evening cold. The author had given the child some tea, bread and sugar, offered a place near the stove, and finally also allowed the child to stay overnight. The author also suggests a solution: “If all of us took such a child and warmed one of these little ones up, in whose rebirth Armenia's hope stands, a great work would be done.”¹³³

An article from the same month describes such children's physical condition and their dependency from adults. The author writes about a child whom s/he saw while going to work. The child had looked older than a ten-year-old should look like, had had old but clean clothes

¹³² Ibid. 185–186, 194–196, 202, 212–213, 242–244

¹³³ “Փրքեցիք ք կորուստից” [“Save Them from Being Lost!”], *Մարդկայնություն* [Humanity] April 5, 1919, 3.

on, seemed very weak, could hardly keep balance while walking, and broke down in tears. Then the child had started some self-suggestion in order the others don't see this emotional struggle. Finally, after fainting because of hunger, the child said proudly: "I do not cry, mummy, my lovely mummy, I only want bread, I am hungry... See, I don't cry." The author describes how the child still fought with the weakness of the body, and finally started to "climb up the cruel Golgotha of life".¹³⁴

The title of this article: "On the Way to Work" shows how general begging and hungry children were in the streets of Alexandropol. In parallel with the previous example it is also obvious how even merely maintaining their lives depended on the goodwill of adults, and especially on wealthier adults. The relation of their suffering and dependence can be concluded as the first article mentions: "Children, these 'flowers of the country' as Maxim Gorky names them, suffer more from hunger and the lack of care than adults."¹³⁵

3.2. *Towards more Concentrated Solutions*

These everyday situations also show that without a coordinated plan, allocating a considerable amount of financial sources, even maintaining the orphans was impossible. Thereby the sporadic efforts of the state, which were not even self-initiated, were neither institutionally, nor financially enough to solve the situation. In August 1919 the state made an optimistic pledge that it would take care of all school-age children, meaning that the state should ensure education even for children in the orphanages. The Ministry of Public Education,¹³⁶ realised the limited nature of its resources, but it was also aware of the concerns of politicians

¹³⁴ "Թեէթօն: Դէպի Աշխատանք" [(Probably mistyped from Feuilleton to) Teuilleton: On the Way to Work], *Մարդկայնություն* [Humanity] April 27 1919, 3.

¹³⁵ "Փրբեցէք ք կորուստից" ["Save Them from Being Lost!"], *Մարդկայնություն* [Humanity] April 5 1919, 3.

¹³⁶ Name of the Ministry of Education and Arts until Aghbalyan took office.

and intellectuals. On the other hand, the NER also had problems, but more in terms of school curricula in the debated subjects, and teachers familiar with teaching materials in Yerevan. Additionally, the organisation found the 3000 needy children in the capital too diverse in terms of age and educational background to deal with. Therefore the NER demanded altogether 38 teachers of Armenian, language, history and religion from the state. The ministry took the responsibility for providing language and history teachers, a total number of 130 in all of the NER-schools in Armenia, but did not finance religious education. According to the Ministry, the reason for this was that religion was not a mandatory subject, because the state desired to provide the freedom of conscience to its citizens.¹³⁷

After there was general agreement on these demands, the NER demanded further state support, in the form of providing at least partially textbooks and workbooks for the NER schools. The state could not provide these, therefore it called for mutual efforts.¹³⁸ Thus it is clear that the state did not have complete control over the curricula in the NER schools. Furthermore, although it had the desire to have a word in how the NER should have raise the children outside the schools, it did not have influence on it at all. The state also maintained its own orphanages, where it had the control over all these processes. Still, According to Avetisyan, by 1920, the conditions in the NER orphanages, however miserable they were in absolute terms, were much better than in state institutions. The state could not maintain its own orphanages. In August it demanded clothes and shoes from the NER for children living in state orphanages, but the organisation could not provide them.¹³⁹ Thereby it is again obvious that the contrast of financial means resulted in a contrast of the quality of orphan care as well. It is also problematic

¹³⁷ Ավետիսյան [Avetisyan], *Մերձավոր Արևելքի նպաստամատույց կոմիտեի գործունեությունը Հայաստանում 1918-1930 [The Operations of the American Committee for Relief in the Near East in Armenia 1918-1930]*, 91–93.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 95.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 104–105.

how under such grave circumstances the state could operate educating and raising the children in its own institutions.

The ACRNE /NER was not without challenges in terms of financing, either, but it made massive fundraising campaigns. One of these was the promotion of Aurora Mardiganian's story, *Ravished Armenia*. An interpreter translated and a script writer noted down Mardiganian's own experience of the deportation. The book was published in 1918, and In 1919 Oscar Apfel directed a silent full movie based on it, in which Mardiganian acted herself. The income from the book and cinema ticket sales supported the Near East Relief. To ensure the success of fundraising, the presentation of the film also involved first-hand accounts. Mardiganian or her impersonators were present at the screenings. Stories of field workers or US-representatives, having witnessed the genocide or the humanitarian crisis in its aftermath, were shared with the audience.¹⁴⁰ Both the book and the film were distributed also Canada, various Latin American and European countries and Australia. In Great Britain this endeavour was a League of Nations' initiation, in most of the other countries local Armenian funds organised translation, distribution, screening and fundraising.¹⁴¹ The ACRNE had also launched a poster campaign for its main target area, the United States for 30 000 dollars, representing "the starving Armenians"¹⁴² In parallel to these efforts also a campaign using the popularity of Hollywood child star Jackie Coogan was launched to gather canned milk and other types of non-perishable food, clothes and funding.¹⁴³

Beside the campaigns, the vocational training of the orphans also aimed to secure self-supply of the orphanages in terms of clothing, shoes and agriculture. This was not only a reasonable cost-saving measure, but also a message to the supporters in America. The

¹⁴⁰ Torchin, *Creating the Witness*, 40–41.

¹⁴¹ Demoyan and Abrahamyan, *Aurora's Road: The Odyssey of an Armenian Genocide Survivor*, 86–91, 100–103, 105, 111, 115–116, 120–121.

¹⁴² "Archives Archive | Near East Relief Historical Society."

¹⁴³ "Jackie Coogan's Million-Dollar Crusade | Near East Relief Historical Society."

organisation could not have emphasised it more than they educated the orphans to be self-sufficient in the present and the future. The self-maintenance of the orphanages was merged with vocational training,¹⁴⁴ and the NER also organised campaigns for selling their handcrafts products.¹⁴⁵

However, is still questionable whether and how the children from this rather isolated economy could integrate in the larger unit of the national economy after finishing education. The ACRNE / NER economic model was undoubtedly successful in terms of self-maintenance, but orphanage structures did have a very different model from the Armenian economy at large. It is at least sure that a national economy would not need only shoemakers, seamstresses, carpet weavers, farmers, teachers and nurses.

Attempting to repeat the NER's success in US-based fundraising, the Minister of Education and Arts launched his own campaign in November 1920. Nikol Aghbalyan addressed American Armenians hoping for financial support. His efforts were manifold as well. First of all, he wrote a letter to Shahan Natali (born Hagop Der-Hagopian), the member of the United States Central Committee of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation. Aghbalyan assured him that Armenians' wish in the homeland is to work, to be engaged in arts and science.¹⁴⁶ At last he also expressed his wish: "Organise branches everywhere for aiding educational work in Armenia and attempt to acquire and send to Armenia everything which is essential for the young generations' education and raising."¹⁴⁷ He notified about this demand also the American Commission for Armenia's Independence¹⁴⁸ and addressed the same to the Armenians of America as to Shahan Natali.¹⁴⁹ From addressing this message to Armenians in the United States, and in particularly to the representative of his own political party, it is obvious that he

¹⁴⁴ „Starting Again at their Beginnings”, *The New Near East*, June 1920.

¹⁴⁵ „For Sale!”, *The New Near East*, November 1921, 2.

¹⁴⁶ Աղբալյան [Aghbalyan], *Նամակներ, Պաշտոնական գրություններ [Official Writings]*, 223.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 224.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 224–225.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 225–226.

knew about the financial potential available in the United States. On the other hand this also indicates that he attempted to find a source of financing which would have the same ideological preferences as the government.

One of the proposals of the Ministry of Education and Arts at the beginning of the 1920-1921 academic year followed Aghbalyan's notion of separating the influence of foreign ideology and its influence on spending funding. In this the NER was suggested to restrict its activities to the financial maintenance of the children, and stricter state control on education was promised.¹⁵⁰ Aghbalyan's ministry recommended in parallel to Alexandrapol city representatives to accept food donations from the NER, but set a certain amount of it apart for teachers in state schools.¹⁵¹

Such suggestions are already close to legal regulations, especially if issued by a government representative. Therefore, after analysing the institutional and financial aspects, also legal solutions shall be examined. The ministries of education attempted to gain influence in the organisation's activities through constant negotiations. The results of some of these were already mentioned earlier in this chapter. Why it was necessary to chose such cooperative means, had several reasons. First of all, it is visible that the state realised the financial monopoly of the ACRNE/ NER, and also that maintaining the orphans was hardly possible without the organisation's financial contribution. Therefore negotiations and suggestions were soft means to achieve at least partial control, if not full monopoly in the education of orphans. As these measures were not to be carried out mandatorily, nor were they legally sanctioned, the outcomes could be more flexible, and adaptable to the ever actual power and financial balance of the parties. The ministry's suggestions were also similar in terms of legal obligation and sanctions.

¹⁵⁰ Ավետիսյան [Avetisyan], *Մերձավոր Արևելքի նպաստամատույց կոմիտեի գործունեությունը Հայաստանում 1918-1930* [The Operations of the American Committee for Relief in the Near East in Armenia 1918-1930], 106.

¹⁵¹ Աղբալյան [Aghbalyan], *Նամակներ, Պաշտոնական գրություններ* [Official Writings], 243.

3.3. Balancing, Positioning, and the Impacts

It is interesting to ask why these soft means are overwhelming. The state could have prescribed that only state-accredited teachers could have taught or only state-distributed textbooks could have been used in all schools. Even if the NER had had sufficient sources for financing schooling after funding socialisation, daily alimentation, and care, their own teachers should have at least receive basic education or teaching manuals from the state if they had to teach state-determined curricula. Or if this had not been assured, the state should have provided teachers for the NER schools. These would have involved again serious financial efforts from the state. Therefore it is clear, that creating mandatory criteria, which could not have been met even in state schools, or burdened the state from supporting the NER meeting them, would have automatically discredited the state and its prescriptions. Such a process would have meant a stronger position of NER at future negotiations. Therefore prescribing untenable norms would have been highly problematic in a state which emphasised its modern democratic character.

Observing the NER as the other party to the negotiations, it is clear that it was well aware of its financial dominance, but also of the state monopoly over the legal field in the Bourdieusian sense. Additionally, albeit both actors had different basic ideological settings, they did have some common goals and principles. Therefore the NER was also ready to negotiate with the state, even when it could not meet its voluntary obligations towards the organisation. Finally, this resulted in a flexible balance in the field of education. Because of the NER's better financial supply, besides undertaking physical maintenance, socialising and raising orphans, it had a higher share in orphan care both in tasks and the number of protégées. This was true even if the NER did not have fully sufficient sources, either.

The NER's dominance was also strongly present in the case of those children, who could have found a place outside the context of the local orphanages. They were offered replacement. A NER newspaper from October 30 1920 indicated that as they found out that numerous

orphans have relatives in the United States, the organisation encouraged connecting relatives for several reasons. One was sending funding to the children, and the other was reuniting the families. “In many cases, these little children only know that their father or their older brothers and uncles are in the fairyland, America. [...] – they talk of it, dream of going there, and the American children have really been their fairies.”¹⁵² This excerpt implies however, that not only had the NER dominance in many fields of orphan-care, pro-American propaganda was indeed present in its orphanages, and it did have an impact on children. Naturally, it is reasonable that refugees, who already found their new life in the United States, would not move back to a war-struck country struggling with famine and epidemics. But it is remarkable the NER-institutions did not encourage US-resident relatives of the children to become part of the Caucasian Armenian society and enrich it, but rather supported the children to join their relatives abroad.

¹⁵² “Many Relatives in their Fairyland “America”” *Near East Relief*, October 30 1920, 3.

4. Struggle for the Future without Funding in the 1920s

The most serious problem in the 1920s was in contrast to the late 1910s that neither the state, nor the NER had sufficient sources for orphan care. Additionally, a fierce ideological and legal battle followed the ideology-based but compromise-oriented negotiations of the republican era. In addition to that, compared to the short period of 1918-1920, on the long run, numerous orphans grew up, and both the state and the NER faced the challenge of launching their adult lives. My aim in this chapter is to explain how the ideological and legal conflicts were related to and appeared in the everyday reality of the orphans.

4.1. *Finance-related Compromise, Conflicts and Solutions*

As I have mentioned earlier, the NER almost stopped its operations in the South Caucasus because of the sovietisation of the area. Beside political discontent with the new political system, the Caucasian branch of the organisation had fought with serious financial problems. Besides, because of military operations of the Kemalist army and the withdrawal of the French from Southeast Anatolia in 1921 forced the NER to evacuate its orphanages in Turkey. This caused an additional crisis.¹⁵³ Therefore the heads of the organisation called for an agreement with the Soviet Armenian state. Both Clarence Ussher, the temporary local representative of the NER and Charles V. Vickrey urged for this move. Their desire not only met the support of the already mentioned first secretary, Miasnikyan, but that of the People's Commissar of Foreign Affairs as well. In this sense, the parties signed an agreement.

The state granted lands and real estate to the organisation. Its workers were permitted to move freely in Transcaucasia. The state provided the NER also an exemption from local taxes for the donations it received and for the locally prepared products of the orphanages.

¹⁵³ Barton, *The Story of the Near East Relief, (1915-1930) An Interpretation*. 138–160.

Finally, the state also took over the financial responsibility for the charity organisation's electricity, water and telecommunication costs along with the expenses of cargo transport from the port of Batumi. But finally, the representatives of the Transcaucasian Soviet Socialist Federal Republic [SSFR] – formed in 1922 of Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan – rejected the right of Armenian Soviet state representatives to sign such a treaty at their own discretion.¹⁵⁴

The latter step shows that the Transcaucasian SSFR had a centralising power over its member states, but still was a decentralised unit compared to the central power of Moscow. Otherwise, the initial intent of the Armenian decision makers was to keep the decision and financing issues of orphan care in their own hands. This indicates a desire for maintaining national communism in the field of orphan care. Even though the Armenian decision makers, concerning the vulnerability of the children could have decided to educate them to being non-national communists at once.

However, as the atmosphere of the korenizatsiia and the NEP encouraged basing communist ideology on national culture, it was reasonable to fear that the children would resist communist ideology if receiving it without the national frames. They had been already educated in foreign-operated orphanages to partly national, partly Protestant and Orientalist ideology before. Therefore their re-education should have built on these already acquired ideologies, which, in neither case had proletarian roots. Thus, it was reasonable that Armenian communists attempted to control the education and raising of orphans through controlling the NER's financing.

The willingness to pay several expenses of the organisation ensured that the state would gain some insight into the operations of the organisation through controlling the related financial operations. These entries to the budget would all at once influence the most essential

¹⁵⁴ Ավետիսյան [Avetisyan], *Մերձավոր Արևելքի նպաստամատույց կոմիտեի գործունեությունը Հայաստանում 1918-1930 [The Operations of the American Committee for Relief in the Near East in Armenia 1918-1930]*, 161–162.

expenses. The state by not paying electricity or water bills, or introducing taxes on NER relief shipments or orphanage products could shortly blackmail the NER in any case of discontent with its operation. This action was hindered though by a larger political unit, which aimed a closer monitoring of any US-related activities. From the latter move it can also be supposed that the Armenian local administration could have allocated necessary financial sources for orphan care.

4.2. *The NER's Own Solution for Financing*

The NER had its own challenge with finding additional sources of funding, and it could hardly rely on the US government. This coincides with the post- or even anti-Wilsonian approach involving US non-interference in international politics. By the end of his presidency, Wilson was heavily criticised in the United States for involving in the post-war resolution in Europe.¹⁵⁵ Therefore new strategy appeared in the *New Near East* periodical to attract supporters for the orphans in the initial years of Soviet Rule.

Vickrey's articles aiming fundraising in the *New Near East* review targeted his message to the American upper and middle class. For example he addressed the following to American bachelors: "What are you doing with all the money that you would pay the maids and the chauffeur, and feed, clothe, educate the children, to say nothing of the maintenance of that luxury – the wife? [...] Particularly wouldn't you willing to do this if all your responsibility ended with the giving of the money, and in return you could win a little child's lifelong gratitude?"¹⁵⁶ Or to the general public: "I hear from people who have recently come from America that the public is – to use an American expression – 'fed up' with giving the Near East

¹⁵⁵ Küntay, "Peace through Institutions," 73. (Abstract)

¹⁵⁶ "Are You a Bachelor?", *The New Near East*, March 1923, 3.

Relief for the Armenians. [...] It is easy to preach but the Near East workers are more ‘fed up’ than the American public.”¹⁵⁷ This tone is continuous in the issues starting from 1922.

The NER also started to emphasise self-support of the orphans from another angle, in a way of also ensuring the children’s future self-maintenance. Until that time the articles usually dealt with how the orphanages support themselves in the then-current period. Again the March 1922 issue provides insight in the agricultural aid sent to Armenia. With providing seeds and infrastructure on the farmlands, which the government granted to the organisation. “...[I]n fact, it is hoped that in Transcaucasia there will be no famine next year, that we will be able entirely to abandon general relief and concentrate on our orphanage work.”¹⁵⁸

The periodical also indicates the problems of the state with financing. It is mentioned in the May 1922 issue that albeit the state maintained some orphanages, their means were not enough for completely supplying the children’s physical needs. In parallel with these problems, Soviet Armenian officials gradually more often complained that the NER had conducted illegal trade under the cover of its economic privileges, and held Armenian antiquities without the awareness and consent of the state authorities.¹⁵⁹ This shows that the state was ready to deprive the NER from its economic privileges not to have any minimal advantage in terms of finances. As Avetisyan also mentions, it became more frequent that their buildings were confiscated while the local Armenian people still used the NER institutions to access medical care there.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁷ Ibid 6.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 6.

¹⁵⁹ Ավետիսյան [Avetisyan], *Մերձավոր Արևելքի նպաստամատուց կոմիտեի գործունեությունը Հայաստանում 1918-1930 [The Operations of the American Committee for Relief in the Near East in Armenia 1918-1930]*, 167.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid. 167–168.

4.3. The Restructuring of the Bureaucratic Field during National

Communism

These processes show that the bureaucratic field was restructured around financial issues. There was an external actor, the Transcaucasian SSFR, which had more authority over international treaties, and thereby also over US-Soviet economic relations than the Armenian communist leadership. The initial Soviet Armenian approach to the NER in the first treaty showed though that the Armenian communist leadership considered orphan care as an issue to be regulated and handled locally. Therefore they also tried to maintain the state's role in terms of orphan care. In the meantime the NER lost its previous sources of finance, therefore the concentration of economic capital in its hands was not present any more. By alleging that the NER had tried to circumvent the regulations and gained illegal financial sources was a means to warn the organisation not even to attempt economic capital concentration. Thereby the state could maintain its monopoly in terms of finances.

Still the fact that the state could not even maintain its own orphanages in this later period suggests that there was the severe financial crisis had not finished. Which evolved either from the lack sufficient sources of the local Armenian political leaders, or the South Caucasian Federative SSR's government was more willing to allocate existing sources for different tasks.

Additionally this case also shows how a change in external circumstances restructures the whole field. The withdrawal of the United States and the appearance of the Transcaucasian SSFR had this effect. The first would result in the financial monopoly of the Armenian SSR, while the second took this possibility away. Still, gaining monopoly by the Transcaucasian SSFR only over one type of capital of the bureaucratic field did not mean total concentration of all types of necessary capital to create its dominance.

The state therefore applied legal means against the NER. For example, new regulations of a bilateral treaty from 1923 obliged its workers to become members of the trade unions, even

if they did not enter them individually. NER-workers were forbidden to conduct economic, religious, and political activities. Such moves also indicate that all workers were forced to adopt the Soviet ideology, regardless of their nationalities. Additionally a conclusion related to Bourdieu's theory is also clear in this case. The state could use one type of concentrated capital, namely juridical capital to achieve dominance in the field of ideology or symbolic capital, even without involving extra financial capital. According to Avetisyan, these measures again resulted in debates among field workers and representatives of the NER whether to close down operations in Armenia and move them to Greece and Iran.¹⁶¹

As a result of this fight and the lack of finances, in 1922 50 NER workers returned to the United States out of 105, while the NER attempted to fill in their positions with older orphans. Altogether 7265 of them participated in caring for the younger generations. Still, the circumstances in the orphanages deteriorated, which resulted in masses of orphans leaving the system of orphan care. Those, who had their families near the orphanages, joined them.¹⁶²

4.4. *The NER's New Response to Restructuring*

The NER had again started a new fundraising strategy, that of the golden rule. This was an idea of the already mentioned Charles V. Vickrey. Numerous articles of the New Near East promote this issue. Out of the issues I had access to; the first appearance of this strategy was in December 1923.¹⁶³ The Golden Rule campaign was organised in a way that American families could eat a general orphanage menu on Sundays make a contribution to the NER with an amount which “[...] we should wish to have made for our own children if conditions were reversed.”¹⁶⁴

¹⁶¹ Ավետիսյան [Avetisyan], *Մերձավոր Արևելքի նպաստամատույց կոմիտեի գործունեությունը Հայաստանում 1918-1930 [The Operations of the American Committee for Relief in the Near East in Armenia 1918-1930]*, 167–168.

¹⁶² Ibid., 168–169.

¹⁶³ “America and the Golden Rule”, *The New Near East*, December 1923, 3.

¹⁶⁴ Vickrey, *International Golden Rule Sunday*, 27.

In comparison to the emotional blackmailing of its reader in the United States, this was a structured effort which demanded well-organised occasions of donations in the form of golden rule meals. By 1925 it had already become a general topic of the newspaper. There are some issues which deal almost exclusively with it¹⁶⁵ in contrast to the previous practice of introducing orphanage life. Charles V. Vickrey dedicated a whole handbook to promote and support the organisation of fundraising events, and published it in 1926.

Time to time notabilities also wrote supportive articles in the periodical. Such was Fridtjof Nansen for example, after his visit to Armenia.¹⁶⁶ President Coolidge contributed with a call to the American people in Vickrey's handbook: "I regard International Golden Rule Sunday as a movement of much importance. Begun in an attempt to care for the orphaned children of Bible lands, it has been extended to other countries. Practical help is the best expression of friendship. The aid we may give out of our abundance to those less fortunately situated than we should be of great value in bringing about the application of the Golden Rule to the settlements of misunderstandings among nations as well as among individuals."¹⁶⁷ Despite such efforts the Near East Relief could not achieve a constant amount of donations, and kept on struggling with funding.¹⁶⁸

However controversial the circumstances were in terms of ideology, finances and organisational structures, Fridtjof Nansen, chairman of the League of Nations still found a very well-organised institution in Leninakan in 1925. He visited several refugee camps in the Near East, and also travelled all around Armenia. He spent two days in Leninakan, visited the Polygon boy's orphanage and Severski Post girls' orphanage besides the local NER hospital.

¹⁶⁵ See g. the issues of September and December 1925.

¹⁶⁶ Nansen, "A Sight I Shall Never Forget", *The New Near East*, September 1925, 8–9.

¹⁶⁷ Vickrey, *International Golden Rule Sunday*, 13.

¹⁶⁸ Ավետիսյան [Avetisyan], *Մերձավոր Արևելքի նպաստամատույց կոմիտեի գործունեությունը Հայաստանում 1918-1930 [The Operations of the American Committee for Relief in the Near East in Armenia 1918-1930]*, 154.

He found cleanliness and discipline everywhere. He considered the orphans' conditions satisfactory.¹⁶⁹

Still, not even this representative visit could hide the fact that the orphanages' dormitory rooms had no heating in the, while Nansen complained that temperatures can fall as low as -20 degrees Celsius outside in the winter.¹⁷⁰ This indicated how the lack of sources resulted in the absence of most basic elements of comfort. Being an experienced traveller and ethnographer, Nansen also paid attention to the dry and hot summer which made agricultural work enormously difficult. This appeared to him at most when he visited the opening of the local irrigation channel, and admired the Americans and local Armenians for constructing it.¹⁷¹ This indicates that the reality orphanage life did not match the romantic view of the Near East Relief about a sweet and easy childhood.

4.5. *The Interlude of the Elements*

Nansen was most probably the last distinguished guest from abroad before the ultimate disaster happened, which brought the NER operations closer to the end. As the guides of the local city museum, the Dzitoghtsyan Museum of National Architecture inform their visitors, a severe earthquake hit Leninakan on October 22 1926. It caused mostly infrastructural, but also personal casualties. As they emphasise, the actual strong quake was preceded by a weaker one at night time. Taken the first scare, most people could escape from their houses.

The museum holds a diorama of the pre-1926 city. Recognising the present-day view through that is almost impossible. Much of the city was destroyed then, including also churches. Many other buildings disappeared because of the more severe 1988 earthquake, but it is obvious

¹⁶⁹ Նանսեն [Nansen] *Խաբված ժողովուրդ [Betrayed Nation]*, 158–159.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 160.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 159, 177–179.

that several orphanage buildings I have seen survived both disasters. When I first visited Gyumri, one of the tasks of the group I accompanied was recognising present day buildings on original photographs. The Kazachi post buildings except for the church almost stood in the same condition as in the 1920s. These were mostly tuff¹⁷² buildings built with similar technologies to those lodging buildings which also massively resisted this natural disaster in 1926. Additionally, all pre-1926 buildings I have seen in the city are built in the 19th century upper and middle class style. This implies that the earthquake must have struck the poor severely, having resided in less steady buildings.

The NER reported that 9000 orphans and several members of their personnel were living in tents after the quake, and that one building of the Severski post orphanage collapsed one day after evacuation.¹⁷³ A later article informs that this was the main orphanage building of Severski. Besides, numerous buildings were damaged or became uninhabitable¹⁷⁴ Still after this unfortunate incident, the NER suddenly became the richest property owner in Leninakan. It controlled those arable lands which belonged to their experimental farms, thereby they could even produce food. This was crucial, because in March 1927 the organisation reported that food reserves suffered also damage in the city.¹⁷⁵ The NER owned buildings which could be used for lodging. It had schools, canteens and had professional medical personnel while the affected population had no medical care. Many of them became homeless and famine again hit the city. Even if the NER moved some of its operations to tents, its activities were still running.

4.6. *The NER Regaining Dominance*

¹⁷² A porous volcanic stone generally used for construction in the South Caucasus.

¹⁷³ “Cabled Notes of Earthquake”, *The New Near East*, December 1926, 18.

¹⁷⁴ “Earthquake Relief”, *The New Near East*, March 1927, 6.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

The NER could organise a fundraising campaign and also allocate funds from other operational areas to Armenia. While they also appreciated the contribution of the Armenian SSR's and the Transcaucasian SSFR's support,¹⁷⁶ it was the NER which had experience, institutions and infrastructure for providing relief to the earthquake-affected population. Both the Armenian Red Cross and the Armenian Relief Fund – the latter established to handle the refugee crisis and later repatriation – participated in charity operations by contributing to the NER's activities rather than establishing independent operations.¹⁷⁷

This shows how much the interwoven character of economic capital and informational capital played an important role in this case. Real estate and allocated sources can be mentioned under the first term, while informational capital originated from the institutional experience and existing professional network of the NER. These features contributed to the organisation's gaining dominance again in contrast to the state organs – both Armenian and Transcaucasian Federative – operating in Leninakan. This is another illustrative example of concentrating each type of capital, normally held by the state. Furthermore the concentration of these several types of capital in one hand is also illustrated by the NER's example. In this sense, the NER suddenly again became a quasi-state organisation, stronger than the actual state, at least in the area of Leninakan.

4.7. Solution without Resolution

As a result of the earthquake, even more children left the orphan care system. Besides, in the academic year of 1926-1927 after the earthquake, the children practically did not receive education in NER institutions. Many of them escaped from the orphanages and started straying.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Ավետիսյան [Avetisyan], *Մերձավոր Արևելքի նպաստամատույց կոմիտեի գործունեությունը Հայաստանում 1918-1930 [The Operations of the American Committee for Relief in the Near East in Armenia 1918-1930]*, 180.

For those who decided to stay, but there was no financial or infrastructural possibility to maintain them, both the NER and the state offered various solutions. First of all, more than 5000 orphans were transmitted under state care.¹⁷⁸ Already in 1924 the NER started preparing record books of the orphans. In these they recorded the children’s main features, the level of their knowledge in English and general education, physical and mental abilities and so on.¹⁷⁹ I have found some pages of such a catalogue in the NER online archives. Albeit the archives say that these catalogues served probably for getting donations for the children, they do not differ much in content from the adoption catalogues, and contain also the orphans’ passport-style photos. Just to mention two examples from 1925:

“Orphan No. O. S. 529 – boy
 Shushanik Hagopian
 Age: 8 years old
 Born: in Nakhitchevan
 Now in Caucasus
 Father was killed. Mother dead.”

“Orphan No. O. S. 647 – boy
 Name: Bakik Bedrossian
 Age: 13 years old
 Born: in Lim Island¹⁸⁰
 Now in Caucasus
 Father was cut to pieces in presence of wife and son. Boy was kept in captivity and had to work hard though only five years old. Mother died of hardships. No relatives.”¹⁸¹

The aim of recording was partly to find adoptive parents in the United States. Several hundreds of children were moved to Sukhumi and Batumi and left the Caucasus for America through the port of Batumi. Adopting children to Armenian refugees who already had stable existence was also possible. Many children ended up in the surroundings of Sochi and in Abkhazia with their new Armenian families who were keen on adopting them. Albeit these

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 178–179.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 176.

¹⁸⁰ Present-day Adir Island in Lake Van

¹⁸¹ “Archives Archive | Near East Relief Historical Society.”

operations were coordinated with the government, Avetisyan considers it as an “irreparable loss”.¹⁸² Despite that there was also a demand on behalf of Armenian Refugees from Syria and Lebanon to reunite with their children in Soviet Armenia.¹⁸³

4.8. *The Ultimate Response*

The state applied one strategy regarding the orphans growing out of primary care which was similar to that of the NER, and sometimes coordinated with it. This was moving the children to factories, vocational schools, model farms and villages.¹⁸⁴ By this move obviously the number of those needing care dropped, and the children also could learn how to maintain themselves. This coincided even with the way how the NER attempted to promote its activities to the American audience by emphasising that the children are taught to care for themselves.

Taken the lack of funds on both sides, the most plausible solution was to provide children a transition period to self-support. With this approach, on the long run, both state and NER orphanages lost children. Those orphans, who started to live outside the orphanages, already began work in a soviet economy. Therefore all of a sudden they had the chance to realise and adapt to the state’s practice of reorganising the economy, without any institutional struggle above their heads. As a result, the overwhelming majority of children, those, who stayed in the Soviet Union, slowly but surely moved towards being Soviet citizens.

¹⁸² Ավետիսյան [Avetisyan], *Մերձավոր Արևելքի նպաստամատույց կոմիտեի գործունեությունը Հայաստանում 1918-1930 [The Operations of the American Committee for Relief in the Near East in Armenia 1918-1930]*, 81., 183.

¹⁸³ Ibid., 176–177, 179, 182.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 179.

Concluding Remarks

The period between 1918 and 1930 was crucial for state creation, establishing the Armenian nation in Caucasian Armenia, later the Soviet Armenian nation, and reviving the country from severe economic crisis. Twelve years in a state's or a society's life can be significant, but for a child, it is a life-determining period. Armenian orphans spent this time at the crossing points of state and nation building efforts. Supposing that they were receptive to being raised to ideal members of an ideal society, actors managing their care attempted to shape their personalities through education and raising.

The ideas of the ideal national community neglected the origins and social background of the children at least in part. As if the homogenisation process Gellner wrote about, would not have been valid in the case of the children, as if they were originally homogenous, and moldable by nature. The institutions involved in orphan care tried to realise an image of Armenians, which was more or less unfamiliar to the orphans. This process went through the filter of state and institution building.

Building the state and its institutions weakened the implementation of ideologies. Namely, none of the institutions could gain complete dominance to realise its ideology without other institutions' influence. The result was a mixture of ideologies in orphan care. The two short years of the independent republic resulted in constant negotiations and compromises as a democratic state preferred it. This still resulted in a practical halt of the education, engraved by the infrastructural deficiencies and the shortage of personnel. The Soviet period besides the lack of finances brought a constant and extreme distrust towards the Near East Relief. This, again, with the financial crisis hindered proper care for the children. The material circumstances of the children in both periods showed that the state(s) and the Near East Relief were wrong when fighting for ideas, while the children's basic needs could not have been satisfied without constant coordination and cooperation.

Additionally, the fights for realising the ideal of the Armenian nation by the actors of orphan care during the state-making processes often hindered children's physical maintenance and also trauma processing. The latter was one of the most painful problems in their lives, but no solution was offered for it at the high levels of decision making. As Miller and Touryan Miller express, speaking about the past traumas was handled occasionally. Some of the orphanage personnel encouraged it, others banned it completely.¹⁸⁵ But as it is obvious, it was completely forbidden to speak up against the orphanage traumas the children suffered.

Until the Soviet state wiped out the Near East Relief, mostly it was the American charity organisation which had the most control over the children. The Soviet "victory" over the NER in 1930 meant a final institutional stability. However, just like in the periods where there was relative stability in managing orphan care, proper care itself was not necessarily assured. Family reunions, adoptions and sending 15-16-year old children to work meant only that they did not mean a problem for their previous caretakers. This was rather a pressured solution, but not a resolution.

The ideological frameworks perceived the children as important members of the future society. Still, the education they received was much higher in quality than their possibilities were after starting work in Soviet Armenia. This means that forced mass industrialisation did not provide adequate professions for the children, who had the potential to work on creating an alternative type of economy. Similarly to this case, the analysis showed that in several cases there were potentials for alternatives in the system. This refutes historical necessity.

Surprisingly, in some other cases even those institutions and stable moral values resulted in change, which were to ensure social stability. The moral values and devotedness of the NER's fieldworkers caused that the organisation changed its initial refusal of the Soviet Union. These factors also changed the way how the organisation imagined Armenians in the regional

¹⁸⁵ Miller and Miller, *Survivors*, 127.

political and economic context of the Near East. In a similar way, the strict discipline that the NER imposed on the children for the sake of order, resulted in the children's reporting violence to Soviet authorities¹⁸⁶. This seriously contributed to the expulsion of the organisation. The resistance of the children also shows that they were not completely helpless and not completely moldable. This phenomenon again weakened the implementation of ideologies in times of fragile balance between the orphan care actors.

In contrast to these conclusions, researching the same phenomena in Armenian state orphanages in the same period could contribute to a much more complete picture of orphan care. For example what discipline and force resulted in, and what the children's possibilities were to overcome their challenges in state institutions. Whether the vocational training prepared the children to social integration or it just contributed to temporary self-maintenance. Or how nationalist or Bolshevik moral education affected children, and whether they had some inherent criticism towards it just like NER orphans. Answering these questions could also contribute to a more effective planning of also present-time and future orphan care, where children could be brought up with equity and dignity.

¹⁸⁶ Nercessian, *The City of Orphans*, 256.

List of References

- Abrahamian, Levon. *Armenian Identity in a Changing World*. Armenian Studies Series 8. Costa Mesa, Calif: Mazda Publishers, 2005.
- Աղբալյան, Նիկոլ [Aghbalyan, Nikol]. *Նամակներ, Պաշտոնական գրություններ* [Namakner, pashtonakan grut'tunner / Letters, Official Writings], Yerevan: Հայաստան, 2003.
- Akçam, Taner. “The Chilingirian Murder: A Case Study from the 1915 Roundup of Armenian Intellectuals.” *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, no. 1 (2011): 127.
- Akçam, Taner (1953-). *From Empire to Republic : Turkish Nationalism and the Armenian Genocide / Taner Akçam*. London: Zed Books, 2004.
- “America and the Golden Rule”, *The New Near East*, December 1923. *
- “Alexandropol: Life in Near East Relief’s ‘Orphan City.’” Accessed February 11, 2017. <http://neareastmuseum.com/2015/07/16/alexandropol-life-in-the-orphan-city/>.
- Anderson, Margaret Lavinia. “Genocide of Armenians: Through Swedish Eyes Ed. by Göran Gunner, and: The Armenian Genocide: Evidence from the German Foreign Office Archives, 1915–1916 Ed. by Wolfgang Gust (Review).” *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 29, no. 3 (January 12, 2016): 483–88.
- “Archives Archive | Near East Relief Historical Society.” Accessed June 13, 2017. http://neareastmuseum.com/archives/?search_query=poster&tax_resource-types%5B%5D=poster&wpas=1.
- “Archives Archive | Near East Relief Historical Society.” Accessed June 14, 2017. http://neareastmuseum.com/archives/?search_query=Shushanik+Hagopian+Bakik+Bedrosian&tax_collections%5B%5D=identified-children&wpas=1.
- “Are You a Bachelor?”, *The New Near East*, March 1923.*
- “Armenia.” *The New Near East*, May 1921.*
- Ավետիսյան, Սուրեն [Avetisyan, Suren], *Մերձավոր Արևելքի նպաստամատույց կոմիտեի գործունեությունը Հայաստանում 1918-1930 [The Operations of the American Committee for Relief in the Near East in Armenia 1918-1930]*. Yerevan: ՀՀ ԳԱԱ Պատմության Ինստիտուտ / NAS RA Institute of History, 2009.*
- “Barton, James Levi (1855-1936) | History of Missiology.” Accessed June 13, 2017. <http://www.bu.edu/missiology/missionary-biography/a-c/barton-james-levi-1855-1936/>.
- Barton, James L. *The Story of the Near East Relief. (1915-1930) An Interpretation*. New York: The MacMillan Company, 1930.*
- Bourdieu, Pierre, and Randal Johnson. *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993.
- Bourdieu, Pierre, Loic J. D. Wacquant, and Samar Farage. “Rethinking the State: Genesis and Structure of the Bureaucratic Field.” *Sociological Theory*, 1994.
- Brand, “Near East Relief”, *1914-1918-online. International Encyclopedia of the First World War* Accessed June 14, 2017. http://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/near_east_relief DOI: 10.15463/ie1418.10459.
- “Cabled Notes of Earthquake”, *The New Near East*, December 1926.*
- Chakrabarty, Dipesh. “Postcoloniality and the Artifice of History” in Chakrabarty, Dipesh. *Provincializing Europe*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000.
- van Dijk, Teun A. ”Principles of critical discourse analysis.” *Discourse & Society* 4, no. 2 1993.

- Demoyan, Hayk and Abrahamyan, Lousine. *Aurora's Road: The Odyssey of an Armenian Genocide Survivor*. Yerevan: The Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute, 2015*
- “Earthquake Relief”, *The New Near East*, March 1927.*
- “Edith Winchester School for Nurses”, *The New Near East*, March 1927.*
- Fildis, Ayşe Tekdal. “The American Board’s Vision of Protestant Anatolia and Fostering Armenian Nationalism 1810–90.” *Middle Eastern Studies* 48, no. 5 (September 2012): 735–47. doi:10.1080/00263206.2012.703618.
- “For Great Needs.” *The New Near East*, March 1927.*
- “For Sale!” *The New Near East*, November 1921.*
- Gellner, Ernest. *Nations and Nationalism*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1983.
- “Genocide Museum | The Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute.” Accessed December 16, 2016. <http://www.genocide-museum.am/eng/23.05.2014.php>.
- “Genocide Museum | The Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute.” Accessed December 16, 2016. http://www.genocide-museum.am/eng/online_exhibition_10.php.
- “Genocide Museum | The Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute.” Accessed May 21, 2017. http://www.genocide-museum.am/eng/online_exhibition_18.php.
- “Glimpses of the Inferno”, *The New Near East*, February 1920.
- “Government in the Near East.”, *New Near East*, July 1921.*
- “Հայ որբերը Վրաստանում” [Hay vorbere Vrastanum / The Armenian Orphans in Georgia], Աշխատավոր [Ashkhatavor / Worker], May 23 1919.
- “Henry Morgenthau’s Urgent Telegrams | Near East Relief Historical Society.” Accessed June 13, 2017. <http://neareastmuseum.com/exhibit/taking-action/henry-morgenthau-urgent-telegram/>.
- “History | Near East Foundation.” Accessed May 8, 2017. <http://www.neareast.org/who-we-are/>.
- Hovannisian, Richard G. *The Armenian Genocide in Perspective*. New Brunswick : Transaction Publishers, 1991, c1986, n.d.
- . *The Republic of Armenia*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971.
- “Jackie Coogan’s Million-Dollar Crusade | Near East Relief Historical Society.” Accessed June 12, 2017. <http://neareastmuseum.com/2015/06/22/jackie-coogans-million-dollar-crusade/>.
- Joseph L. Grabill. *Protestant Diplomacy and the Near East : Missionary Influence on American Policy, 1810-1927*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1971.
- Kemp, Walter A. *Nationalism and Communism in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union : A Basic Contradiction?* New York : St. Martin’s Press, 1999., n.d.
- Küntay, Burak. “Peace through Institutions: Woodrow Wilson and the Paris Peace Conference.” *Kurumlar Yoluyla Barış: Woodrow Wilson ve Paris Barış Konferansı*. 8, no. 15 (December 2014): 73–89.
- Lavender, William. “History And The Emergence Of Bolshevik Strategy For The 1917 Russian Revolution.” *Culture & Religion Review Journal* 2015, no. 2 (June 2015): 50–56.
- Laycock, Jo. *Imagining Armenia : Orientalism, Ambiguity and Intervention*. Cultural History of Modern War. Manchester, UK ; New York : Manchester University Press ; New York : Distributed in the USA by Palgrave Macmillan, 2009, 2009.
- “Many Relatives in their Fairyland “America”” *Near East Relief*, October 30 1920.
- Մարտունի, Ալեքսանդր [Martuni, Alek’sandr], Կուսակցությունները գաղութահայության մեջ [Kusakts’ut’yunnere gaghutahayut’yan mej / Parties in The Armenian Diaspora]. Tiflis: Պետական հրատարակչություն / Petakan hratarakchut’yun, 1924.

- Melson, Robert (1937-). *Revolution and Genocide : On the Origins of the Armenian Genocide and the Holocaust / Robert Melson ; with a Foreword by Leo Kuper*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996.
- Miller, Donald E., and Lorna Touryan Miller. *Survivors : An Oral History of the Armenian Genocide*. Berkeley : University of California Press, c1993, n.d.
- Motyl, Alexander J. *Sovietology, Rationality, Nationality : Coming to Grips with Nationalism in the USSR*. New York : Columbia University Press, c1990, n.d.
- Նանսեն, Ֆրիդտյոֆ [Nansen, Fridtjof]. *Խաբված ժողովուրդ* [Khabvats zhoghovurd / Betrayed Nation] Yerevan: Գասպրինտ / Gasprint, 2009.
- Nansen, Fridtjof. “A Sight I Shall Never Forget”, *The New Near East*, September 1925*
- Nercessian, Nora N. *The City of Orphans. Relief Workers, Commissars and the “Builders of the New Armenia”*. Alexandrapol / Leninakan 1918-1930. Hollis: Hollis Publishing, 2016.*
- Papian, Ara. “The Arbitral Award on Turkish-Armenian Boundary by Woodrow Wilson (Historical Background, Legal Aspects, and International Dimensions).” *Iran & The Caucasus* 11, no. 2 (December 2007): 255–94. doi:10.1163/157338407X265487.
- “Փրքեցէ՛ք ք կորուստից” [Prk’ets’ek’ korustits’ / “Save Them from Being Lost!”], Մարդկայնություն [Mardkaynut’yun / Humanity] April 5, 1919.
- “Project MUSE - Common Fate, Different Experience: Gender-Specific Aspects of the Armenian Genocide, 1915-1917.” Accessed June 10, 2017. <http://muse.jhu.edu/article/182192>.
- Read, Christopher. “Krupskaya, Proletkul’t and the Origins of Soviet Cultural Policy.” *International Journal of Cultural Policy* 12, no. 3 (November 2006): 245–55. doi:10.1080/10286630601020306.
- Said, Edward, excerpt from *Orientalism*, reproduced in: Williams, Patrick and Chrisman, Laura *Colonial Discourse and Postcolonial Theory*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1994.
- Shelley J. Burlison, and Alberto Giordano. “Spatiality of the Stages of Genocide: The Armenian Case.” *Genocide Studies and Prevention: An International Journal, Vol 10, Iss 3, Pp 39-58 (2016)*, no. 3 (2016): 39. doi:10.5038/1911-9933.10.3.1410.
- Սիմոնյան Ծոլակ [Simonyan, Tsolak] Հայ մանկավարժության պատմություն [Hay mankavarzhut’yan patmut’yun / The history of Armenian pedagogy]. Yerevan, Վան Արյան / Van aryan, 2012.
- “Speakers’ Handbook of American Committee for Relief in the Near East : American Committee for American and Syrian Relief, New York : Free Download & Streaming.” *Internet Archive*. Accessed February 2, 2017. <https://archive.org/details/speakershandbook00amer>.
- “Starting Again at their Beginnings”, *The New Near East*, June 1920.*
- States of Separation*. Accessed June 13, 2017. https://books.google.com/books/about/States_of_Separation.html?id=F-Q6DgAAQBAJ.
- Suny, Ronald Grigor. *Looking toward Ararat : Armenia in Modern History*. Bloomington : Indiana University Press, c1993, n.d.
- “The history of Armenians”, *The New Near East*, October 1921.*
- The New Near East*, March 1922.*
- The New Near East*, June 1921.*
- The New Near East*, September 1925.*
- The New Near East*, December 1925.*
- “The Under Side of the Rug”, *The New Near East*, March 1926.*

“Թեյթօն: Դեպի Աշխատանք” [Teyeton / (Probably mistyped from Feuilleton to) Teuilleton: On the Way to Work], Մարդկայնություն [Humanity] April 27 1919.

Տերոյան, Վարազդատ [Teroyan, Varazdat]. Իմպերիալիստական ծիծեռնակներ: Միսիոներաբարեգործական կազմակերպությունների աշխատանքը Մերձավոր Արևելքում և Անդրկովկասում [Imperialistakan tsitser'nakner. Misionerabaregortsakan kazmakerput'yunneri ashkhatank'e Merdzavor Arevelk'um yev Andrkovkasum / Imperialist Swallows. The Operations of Missionary Charity Organisations in the Near East and Transcaucasia] Yerevan: ՀՀ ԳԱԱ Գիտություն / Gitut'yun, 2003.*

Torchin, Leshu. *Creating the Witness : Documenting Genocide on Film, Video, and the Internet*. Visible Evidence: 26. Minneapolis : University of Minnesota Press, 2012., 2012.

Vickrey, Charles Vernon. *International Golden Rule Sunday. A Handbook*. New York: George H. Doran Company, 1931.*

V. N. Bandera, author. “The New Economic Policy (NEP) as an Economic System.” *Journal of Political Economy*, no. 3 (1963): 265.

“Waiting to get in” *The New Near East*, October 1921*

* Courtesy of the Museum-Institute of the Armenian Genocide