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Hilton, Matthew

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Ken Loach and the Save the Children Film: Humanitarianism, Imperialism, and the Changing Role of Charity in Postwar Britain*

Matthew Hilton

University of Birmingham

This article offers a critical assessment of British humanitarianism using a case study of the first fifty years of one of its largest charities, the Save the Children Fund (SCF). It is an exercise the organization was once keen to conduct itself. In the run-up to its fiftieth anniversary celebrations in 1969, SCF decided to commission a film. Very much the “establishment” charity of the humanitarian sector, it nevertheless made a surprising decision to approach the avowedly left-wing, social realist filmmaker Ken Loach, who at that time was arguably reaching his creative peak (his most well-known film, *Kes*, was made in the same year). SCF did not want a film that simply celebrated the achievements of the organization over the years. It wanted a controversial documentary to be shown on national television that would highlight the problems of poverty in both Britain and the developing world and that would go on to showcase the work of SCF in alleviating suffering. Ideally, it sought to stamp on the public consciousness an association between film and charity like the one created when Loach’s *Cathy Come Home* (aired as a BBC *Wednesday Play* on November 16, 1966) was followed by the launch of the homelessness organization Shelter two weeks later.¹

Precisely because of Loach’s prior success, SCF was happy to grant him free rein.² And while it hoped that the film would “reflect credit on the organisation,” it knew it was not to be a “direct-appeal film”; indeed, SCF explicitly gave the film company “carte blanche in preparing the theme.”³ Loach took the instruction to heart. After he had visited Kenya to record SCF’s activities, it seemed to him that

* I am extremely grateful to the following for their very helpful advice and comments: Emily Baughan, Matt Houlbrook, Andrew Jones, Kevin O’Sullivan, Corey Ross, Benedetta Rossi, Kate Skinner, plus three anonymous reviewers and all the participants in the AHRC “nonstate humanitarianism network” (grant AH/K002805/1).

¹ Paul Whiteley and Stephen Winward, *Pressure for the Poor: The Poverty Lobby and Policy Making* (London, 1987), 46.

² The Save the Children Fund Archive, Cadbury Research Library, University of Birmingham (hereafter SCA): A66: Kestrel Films, 1967–69: AWE to PRO, July 9, 1968.

³ SCA: A43: Kestrel Films, 1969–70: John Graham to Tony Garnett, August 19, 1968.

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the charity was engaged in “a brazen act of neo-colonialism.”⁴ This, then, became the principal theme of his film. Loach took a position on the suitability of charity in tackling global poverty that has to some extent been sidelined, especially as more recent debates—and high-profile interventions by the likes of Bill Clinton and Bill Gates—have unproblematically heralded the benefits of “giving.” Loach asked questions in his 1969 film to which we might now return as both humanitarians and historians fix their attention on issues of imperialism, globalization, emergency relief, development, and philanthropic action.

The film opens with contrasting images of the Lancashire town of Blackburn’s social elite entering the Civic Hall and archetypal shots of urban squalor. It then moves to a study of SCF’s children’s home, Hill House, contrasting the voices of the northern, working-class children with the well-pronounced denunciations of the children’s families by the staff (“coal in the bathtub,” “just born lazy,” etc.). The film then cuts to Kenya, where the frankly appalling views of some truly awful expatriates are juxtaposed with rather typical images of poverty. These are then used to reflect on the social backgrounds of Kenyan boys who—it is strongly implied—have been wrenched from their own cultures and placed in what effectively amounts to an English public school run by SCF (and by a headmaster Loach believed to have “shot more people in the Mau Mau uprising than anyone else”⁵). Here, the boys are banned from using their native language and made to read books such as *What Katy Did* and *Tom Brown’s Schooldays*. Loach’s repeated shots of uniformed Kenyan schoolboys marching in a brass band serve to reinforce the inappropriateness to the local African context of much of SCF’s charitable endeavor.

The second half of the film reflects more broadly on the problems of postcolonial Africa. It concentrates on the corruption of political elites in newly independent states and the vices of the *rentier* expats with whom they are in cahoots—and from whom SCF is not disassociated. It ends with a complete rejection of charity as the answer to social deprivation. Just in case any doubts remained about Loach’s message, the final words are given to a Lancashire political activist who explicitly tells the viewer that “the solution to the problem does not exist with the framework of capitalism” and that charities are simply “stretcher-bearers” who “help bandage the wounds” and “divert our attention from the real cause of racialism, poverty and hunger, whether in Birmingham, Liverpool or Kenya.” His message is driven home with the closing line: “First we must change the property relationship of society, then we change man. That’s the only real honest solution and all the rest is propaganda.”⁶

⁴ BFI Live, “Save the Children Film + Discussion,” September 1, 2011, <http://www.bfi.org.uk/live/video/700>.

⁵ Loach, in Anthony Hayward, *Which Side Are You On? Ken Loach and His Films* (London, 2004), 120.

⁶ SCA: A43: Kestrel Films, 1969–70: “Transcript of Save the Children Fund Film,” 17.

This was not a film to endear SCF to its then patron (the queen), its soon-to-be president (Princess Anne), or many of its socially conservative supporters. The staff of SCF were not happy. Loach has recently claimed to have a “faint memory of enraged people in a viewing theatre.”⁷ This does not do justice to the subsequent anger within the organization. The polite version was that the film was “unsuitable for our purposes.”⁸ A more honest account was that the whole thing had been a “disastrous experience” that had only served to produce a film “that might well be saleable as a political documentary behind the Iron Curtain.”⁹ Senior staff variously described it as “objectionable,” “highly derogatory,” and “quite unashamedly a political tract.”¹⁰ With morbid curiosity, some returned for second and third viewings, only to continue to be “embarrassed” and convinced further “that it was every bit as bad as . . . originally thought.”¹¹ The political message was blunt even by Loach’s standards, and it is worth noting that he largely avoided making documentaries again, at least until *The Spirit of ’45* in 2013. SCF was almost wholly irrelevant to the film’s second half, and even when the film pointed to some of the good work being done in public health programs, Loach failed to mention that the clinic he was filming in Uganda actually belonged to SCF. The film not only did little to reflect credit on the work of SCF, as the original instruction had hoped, but it implied instead that the organization was itself as much the problem as any of the other causes of the global inequalities in the distribution of wealth. It is no surprise that so many were appalled. In the ensuing legal battle, SCF staff and their lawyers analyzed every minute of the film in detail, objecting to the deliberate juxtaposition of images of poverty and affluence and the heavy-handed overlaying of political comment.¹²

And yet, however forcibly—even crudely—expressed, Loach did raise a number of fundamental accusations against SCF that we might use to assess the work and achievements of the organization and of the humanitarian sector in Britain as a whole. These accusations relate to the two broad themes explored in this essay, which reflect the principal functions—lobbying and service delivery—of charities: their role in post-Second World War British society and politics, and the attitudes of charity staff toward recipient populations at a time when organizations

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ SCA: A66: Kestrel Films, 1967–69: Memorandum from Director General, July 9, 1969.

⁹ SCA: A43: Kestrel Films, 1969–70: Thornley, “Memorandum,” July 26, 1969; Deputy Director General, “Memorandum,” August 8, 1969.

¹⁰ SCA: A66: Kestrel Films, 1967–69: SCF Chairman to A. M. Crawley, July 19, 1969.

¹¹ SCA: A66: Kestrel Films, 1967–69: Memorandum from Director of Fund-Raising, October 7, 1969.

¹² SCA: A43: Kestrel Films, 1969–70: Heath to Teitelbaum, October 28, 1969; Kenneth Brown Baker Baker, “The Save the Children Fund v Kestrel Films: Advice,” July 15, 1969.

were deliberately shifting their operations from emergency relief to long-term development.

First, Loach refers in the film to charitable work as a “sticking plaster” and a “fire brigade.” In its failure to address the root causes of poverty he contends it maintains a paternalist attitude toward the poor that is reminiscent domestically of some of the worst aspects of Victorian philanthropy and that links aid agencies internationally to all the inequities associated with neocolonial capitalist exploitation. Yet this was rather a traditional critique from the political left that, even if it applied to SCF, did not take into account deeper changes within the charitable sector as a whole. By the end of the 1960s, many charities had professionalized their staffs, expanded their support bases, and become the expert representatives of their client communities.¹³ They positioned themselves at the frontier of the welfare state, casting aside their traditional service-provision role and calling into question the very bases of UK charity legislation, which sought to restrict the freedom of these organizations to lobby, advocate, and speak out on a whole range of affairs deemed to reside within the supposedly noncharitable political arena.

Humanitarian charities especially were experiencing these changes. The film came at a significant moment in the broader history of aid and development in Britain and elsewhere. The year 1969 marked the end of the United Nation’s first development decade, ten years that had a profound impact on the UK’s humanitarian and development nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). The organizations associated with relief at the end of the Second World War such as Oxfam, War on Want, and Christian Aid had been joined by newcomers such as Tearfund and CAFOD (the Catholic Agency for Overseas Development). These had all engaged in an ongoing and sometimes difficult debate about the sorts of issues raised by Loach, particularly whether it was better to tackle poverty by providing local services or by challenging governments to intervene on a grander scale, just as the welfare state had done domestically in usurping the roles of many philanthropic bodies founded in the nineteenth century.¹⁴ The result was that many charities had deliberately taken a more political path. That is, despite the diversity of their perspectives and approaches to the alleviation of suffering, they agreed on the need to campaign and educate the public about the underlying causes of poverty, thereby stepping outside their legally prescribed charitable remit. It culminated in several of the newer bodies issuing the Haslemere Declaration on world

¹³ Matthew Hilton, James McKay, Nicholas Crowson, and Jean-François Mouhot, *The Politics of Expertise: How NGOs Shaped Modern Britain* (Oxford, 2013).

¹⁴ Pat Thane, *The Foundations of the Welfare State*, 2nd ed. (London, 1996); Derek Fraser, *The Evolution of the British Welfare State: A History of Social Policy since the Industrial Revolution* (London, 1973); Bernard Harris, *The Origins of the British Welfare State: Society, State and Social Welfare in England and Wales, 1800–1945* (Basingstoke, 2004); Geoffrey Finlayson, *Citizen, State and Social Welfare in Britain, 1830–1990* (Oxford, 1994).

poverty in 1968 and several NGOs establishing the noncharitable Action for World Development in 1969 (renamed the World Development Movement one year later).¹⁵ However, the decisions by all of these NGOs to take a more outspoken approach were fraught with tension and the divisions were by no means resolved. The period in question therefore marks a crucial transition phase in modern nonstate humanitarianism, and a focus on Loach's accusations against SCF provides a useful lens through which to examine some broader issues about the limits of charity and the nature of political advocacy.

Second, Loach's critique of SCF in Kenya struck at a more general and ongoing problem for humanitarian agencies: namely, the appropriateness of development initiatives on the ground and the legacies of imperialist worldviews and modes of operating. Admittedly, Loach tackled these themes through what appeared at times to be some rather cheap shots. But this essay argues that there was actually much substance to Loach's accusations, at least in regard to SCF. Unlike the other main British agencies that were founded during or after the Second World War (with the exception of the internationally aligned British Red Cross), SCF was established in 1919 when the British Empire was at its height, so it provides a unique opportunity to examine the operations of a single organization over a fifty-year period that includes both an imperial and a postimperial context. The continuities in attitudes toward the poor and disadvantaged are likely to be stronger in such an organization, but "the afterlife of empire," as one author has recently put it, may be found within the humanitarian sector more generally.¹⁶

Certainly, by its fiftieth anniversary SCF had become old-fashioned; some of its working methods were anachronistic and it did indeed find itself behind the times amidst the new fashions of humanitarian intervention. The hurtfulness of Loach's accusations probably lay behind the root-and-branch review of its operations it undertook just two years later. But more than this, the imperial and postimperial humanitarian perspectives are not so dissimilar, and there are implications for other charities too. Most generally, SCF's work actually perpetuated the imagined divisions between a benevolent, affluent North and a grateful, impoverished South. Here especially the well-known problems that critics have raised in connection with all humanitarian groups' representations of suffering and of the developed world were not specific to SCF and have by no means been resolved several decades later.

¹⁵ Haslemere Committee, *The Haslemere Declaration* (London, 1968); Peter Burnell, *Charity, Politics and the Third World* (London, 1991); Brian H. Smith, *More than Altruism: The Politics of Private Foreign Aid* (Princeton, NJ, 1990); Peter Burnell, *Foreign Aid in a Changing World* (Buckingham, 1997); Matthew Hilton, "International Aid and Development NGOs in Britain and Human Rights since 1945," *Humanity* (Winter 2012): 449–72.

¹⁶ Jordanna Bailkin, *The Afterlife of Empire* (Berkeley, 2012).

The archive of SCF was recently deposited at the Cadbury Research Library, University of Birmingham, and its newly available documents enable a sustained and systematic analysis to be made of the organization in the context of materials drawn from across the sector. Further questions may then be raised for other organizations, though their archives are either not so rich and detailed as SCF's or else have not yet been made available for academic scrutiny.¹⁷ The present analysis by no means constitutes a comprehensive history of SCF's first fifty years, but it is a starting point for demonstrating how history can show that NGOs are not immune from the charges that have long been leveled against development work more generally from both the left and the right.¹⁸ What follows is organized into four parts. The first traces the early history of SCF and the embedding of approaches and attitudes toward the world's poor that left a legacy for the organization in the 1950s and 1960s. The second explores the impact of war and the increasing militarization of those engaged in emergency relief in Europe. This profoundly changed the nature of SCF personnel, making the organization distinct from the new relief agencies such as Oxfam, War on Want, and Christian Aid. The third examines the changing role of charities from the late 1950s and the turn to political advocacy and lobbying by leading humanitarians; SCF's more traditional approach to its charitable role acted as a significant brake on what has been seen as the politicization of the humanitarian sector in the 1960s. Finally, an analysis of the attitudes of SCF staff on the ground will show that there was indeed much to Loach's observations. This gives rise to specific conclusions about SCF's imperialist legacies, but it also raises further questions for future research both on other charities and more generally on the effects and limits of charitable activity.

Finally, one additional issue needs to be raised: that of the attitudes of charities toward their own past. While a whole academic apparatus has been built up around the humanitarian sector's activities, these organizations are not known for their engagement with historical debate or for an awareness of their own histories. Historians and humanitarian agencies have only just begun to work together to learn lessons from the past in a dialogue that builds on the sector's engagement with a whole range of other disciplines, notably the social sciences.¹⁹ The denou-

¹⁷ There is an impressive collection on Christian Aid at the School of Oriental and African Studies, though the materials relating to War on Want are more scant; and while the Red Cross is releasing ever more material, archives do not yet exist for some of the younger bodies such as CAFOD. The most impressive archive is Oxfam's, recently deposited at the Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, which has been becoming available since 2014.

¹⁸ For example, Peter Bauer, *Dissent on Development: Studies and Debates in Development Economics* (London, 1971).

¹⁹ C. A. Bayly, Vijayendra Rao, Simon Szreter, and Michael Woolcock, eds., *History, Historians and Development Policy: A Necessary Dialogue* (Manchester, 2011).

ment to the Loach affair, which will be set out in the conclusion below, offers some intriguing insights into how one institution approaches its own past. Usually, for nongovernmental organizations, history is little more than a marketing exercise, a list of successes and achievements. But history can also be catharsis. It would not be until September 2011—more than forty years after its completion—that the Loach film was actually shown to a public audience. This was in itself an extraordinary amount of time for an organization to expend in coming to terms with its own past. The fact that SCF then admitted that it had made mistakes and attempted to explain its errors begs the question as to when such an organization believes its much more credible present began. As NGOs point to the error of their ways in the past—usually in order to justify a new, alternative solution being proposed in the present—it must be asked how long they are allowed to get it “wrong” before they eventually get it “right.”

ORIGINS OF SCF

SCF has consistently been one of the largest humanitarian charities in the United Kingdom. In 1969, its annual income dwarfed those of War on Want and Tearfund, placing it well ahead of the Red Cross and on comparable terms with Christian Aid and Oxfam. Its origins in 1919 place it between two of the main waves of British humanitarianism. In the nineteenth century, faith-based bodies such as the Quaker Friends War Victims Relief Committee (1870) and the Methodist Salvation Army (1864) added to the work of the British Red Cross (1870) and older imperial bodies such as the Church Missionary Society (1799). Later, the experience of the Second World War gave birth to Oxfam (1942), Christian Aid (1945), and War on Want (1952).²⁰

Although SCF was inspired by the work of the Red Cross, its early efforts were steered by its principal driving force, Eglantyne Jebb. Along with her sister, Dorothy Buxton, Jebb created SCF as an offshoot of the Fight the Famine Council, which had been set up to protest the suffering caused by the Allied blockade of Germany at the end of the First World War. Wanting to do something more practical than just campaigning, Jebb and Buxton used SCF to provide direct aid and assistance to those suffering the effects of the war. While such assistance opened up the organization to the charge of aiding Britain’s enemies, a focus on children made it appear more politically innocuous and enabled it to attract cross-party and cross-denominational support. Its greatest moment in its early years came in its relief of the famine in Russia in 1921. Although part of a wider inter-

²⁰ Matthew Hilton, Nicholas Crowson, Jean-François Mouhot, and James McKay, *A Historical Guide to NGOs in Britain: Charities, Civil Society and the Voluntary Sector since 1945* (Basingstoke, 2012).

national effort, at the peak of its operations SCF was feeding 300,000 children per day in the province of Saratov.²¹

As with many a nongovernmental organization, the early history of SCF was bound up with the personality, energy, and vision of its guiding light, Jebb. She brought to emergency relief an approach to charity that she had learned from her earlier work with the Charity Organisation Society.²² “Saving” was not something solely concerned with the alleviation of hunger and suffering: it was also deliberately moral and social. She believed it crucial “to stimulate at the same time the initiative and the power of self-help.”²³ SCF had also to tackle the “root of suffering,” which she identified as lack of education and sanitation. During her last illness she rushed out a series of statements to reiterate her point that SCF was about much more than immediate relief. In 1927 she argued that it was not enough “to save them from immediate menace—it must place in their hands the means of saving themselves and so of saving the world.”²⁴ She offered a view of development that eschewed overt ideological reasoning but nevertheless suggested a massive philanthropic effort toward a long-term goal that foreshadowed much of the development discourse of the latter half of the twentieth century.²⁵ In a letter she had written earlier to Lord Robert Cecil, one of the architects of the League of Nations, she could not have made her wider vision more clear: “Both the combating of disease and economic restoration are undertakings bearing more permanent results than the temporary alleviation of suffering by charity.”²⁶

If Jebb came from a philanthropic background, she also leaned to the Left, as did her sister, who, with her husband, Charles Roden Buxton, left the Liberals in 1917 to join the Labour Party.²⁷ Despite the range of supporters sitting on SCF’s council and the number of establishment figures who wrote early endorsements,

²¹ Linda Mahood and Vic Satzewich, “The Save the Children Fund and the Russian Famine of 1921–23: Claims and Counter-Claims about Feeding ‘Bolshevik’ Children,” *Journal of Historical Sociology* 22, no. 1 (2009): 55–83; Kathleen Freeman, *If Any Man Build: The History of the Save the Children Fund* (London, 1965); Emily Baughan, “‘Every Citizen of Empire Implored to Save the Children!’ Empire, Internationalism and the Save the Children Fund in Inter-War Britain,” *Historical Research* 86, no. 231 (2012): 116–37.

²² Francesca M. Wilson, *Rebel Daughter of a Country House: The Life of Eglantyne Jebb* (London, 1967).

²³ “The Outlook,” *Record of the Save the Children’s Fund* (later *World’s Children*) 1, no. 1 (1920): 2.

²⁴ Eglantyne Jebb, “The War against Poverty,” *World’s Children* 7, nos. 11–12 (1927): 155. See also Eglantyne Jebb, “International Responsibilities for Child Welfare,” *World’s Children* 8, no. 1 (1927): 4–6.

²⁵ Jebb, “The War against Poverty,” 156.

²⁶ SCA: EJ, Eglantyne Jebb Papers: A414: EJ 242, “Publicity”: Jebb to Lord Robert Cecil, March 14, 1920.

²⁷ C. V. J. Griffiths, “Charles Roden Buxton,” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*; Dorothy Buxton, *The Challenge of Bolshevism: A New Social Ideal* (London, 1928).

there was also strong support from the Left—from the suffragist Ethel Snowden, for example, and from Robert Smillie, president of the Miners' Federation of Great Britain. Indeed, the miners gave £30,000 to SCF in its first year, an indebtedness that SCF repaid when it focused some of its activities on supporting miners' children during the General Strike of 1926.²⁸

What such figures also gave to SCF was an “internationalist spirit” almost utopian in its commitment to peace and the fledgling League of Nations.²⁹ Through combination with others—especially the umbrella body, the Save the Children International Union, founded by Jebb in Geneva in 1920—the organization could work toward the universal goal of protecting children. A quarter of a century before the passing of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, SCF set out its own Declaration of the Rights of the Child in 1923, which the General Assembly of the League of Nations then endorsed in 1924.³⁰ Here, SCF's ambition was clear: “the salvation not merely of the children, but of all mankind.”³¹

Yet for all its radical origins—long forgotten by its fiftieth anniversary—SCF adopted approaches to aid and development that would shape its longer history and operations and that Loach would pick up on in his film. Four of these require further comment. First, while Jebb flirted with a radical internationalism, she also did as much as she could to make her organization part of the social and political elite. The donors she attracted to the organization did not share her ideals beyond a basic commitment to rescuing children, and they would be ready to steer SCF toward a more moderate course after her death. She and SCF also did little to overturn the celebrity culture associated with the Victorian philanthropist. It made several members of the British aristocracy the Bonos and Geldofs of their day.³² The heroic philanthropy of Lord Weardale, the first president of SCF, for instance, moved the publicity officer, Edward Fuller, to write a sonnet upon his death in

²⁸ Robert Smillie, “Truth from the Mine,” *Record of the Save the Children Fund* 1, no. 10 (1920): 147–48; SCA: Council Minutes: A1213: Emergency Meeting, May 14, 1926.

²⁹ Hubert D. Watson, “Three Days in Geneva,” *Record of the Save the Children Fund* 1, no. 2 (1920): 17–20; Percy Allen, “The Children of Europe,” *Record of the Save the Children Fund* 1, no. 7 (1921): 99–101; SCA: Council Minutes: A1213: Meeting, October 7, 1920: “Internationalism.”

³⁰ Eglantyne Jebb, “The Children's Charter in Great Britain” and “A Children's Charter,” *World's Children* 3, no. 3 (1923): 120–23, 146–47; Edward Fuller, “Great Britain and the Declaration of Geneva,” *World's Children* 5, no. 2 (1924): 27–28; Eglantyne Jebb, “The League and the Child,” *World's Children* 5, no. 10 (1925): 153–55; SCA: Council Minutes: A1213: Special Meeting, January 26, 1923; SCA: Council Minutes: A1213: 44th Meeting, June 12, 1925: C.551, “Advisory Committee”; Philip Veerman, *The Rights of the Child and the Changing Image of Childhood* (Dordrecht, 1992).

³¹ “Outlook,” *World's Children* 6, no. 1 (1925): 2.

³² Alan Finlayson, “Cameron, Culture and the Creative Class: The Big Society and the Post-Bureaucratic Age,” in *Retrieving the Big Society*, ed. Jason Edwards (Oxford, 2012), 35–47.

1923 in which he imagined the children Weardale had “saved” coming to “proclaim your greatness.”³³ For an inner core of early SCF staff, Jebb herself was the figurehead that would be used to promote what they referred to as a “movement.”³⁴ Her death earned her the status of a martyr, and the early epithets—“the white flame”; she was “*plus flame que femme*”—merely preceded a number of hagiographical accounts that persist to this day.³⁵ No matter the changing fortunes of SCF over its first fifty years, its pursuit of elite endorsement would persist throughout. When Elizabeth II agreed to be the charity’s patron upon her accession to the throne, SCF’s reputation as the establishment charity was assured for decades to come.

Second, SCF developed a relationship with the wider public through simple, depoliticized images that tugged at the lowest common denominators of human compassion. It is most unlikely that the mass of supporters who contributed in such numbers in the early years wanted to do anything other than rescue starving babies, and the simple but effective images that the charity put out certainly encouraged little reflection beyond the statement that George Bernard Shaw lent to the cause: “I have no enemies under the age of seven.” Questions asked of the public (“Will you help save the children?”), “appeals to humanity,” and constant references to the “poor little ones” may well have raised funds, but they did little to make the public aware of the causes of suffering, and they also established a paternalist relationship between donor and recipient that the humanitarian sector has never fully removed.³⁶ Following the imagery associated with the sentimentalization of childhood in the nineteenth century, particularly by groups such as the children’s charity Barnardo’s, SCF portrayed the child in a manner that stimulated compassion but little else.³⁷

Indeed, SCF’s publicity photography creates a link from nineteenth-century images through to those of the starving child in the later development decades (fig. 1). It suggests that no matter how aware humanitarians have been of the problematic nature of such imagery, they also know what sells, and the image of suffering passivity would be returned to again and again. Decades later, Francis Khoo, the secretary general of War on Want in the 1990s, commented, “I baulk at

³³ Edward Fuller, “To Lord Weardale,” *Record of the Save the Children Fund* 3, no. 2 (1922): 103.

³⁴ SCA: Council Minutes: A1213: 26th Meeting, December 14, 1923: C.338, Membership.

³⁵ Freeman, *If Any Man Build*, 24; Wilson, *Rebel Daughter*; Clare Mulley, *The Woman Who Saved the Children: A Biography of Eglantyne Jebb* (Oxford, 2009); Dorothy F. Buxton, *The White Flame: The Story of the Save the Children Fund* (London, 1931); Edward Fuller, *The Rights of the Child: A Chapter in Social History* (London, 1951).

³⁶ “Outlook,” *World’s Children* 5, nos. 7–8 (April–May 1925): 101.

³⁷ “Priesthood of the Child,” *Record of the Save the Children Fund* 3, no. 1 (1922): 54; Seth Koven, *Slumming: Sexual and Social Politics in Victorian London* (Princeton, NJ, 2004).



FIG. 1.—“A group of children at an orphanage in Pokrovsk, Saratov Province,” *Record of the Save the Children Fund* 2, no. 5 (November 15, 1921): 73. Courtesy of the Save the Children Fund.

the poverty of images in our images of poverty.”³⁸ Oxfam, long associated with the image of the starving African since the crisis in the Congo in the early 1960s, had by the 1970s taken the decision to stop using such images. However, it did so when much of its income was being raised collectively for the humanitarian

³⁸ Cited in Peter J. Burnell, *Charity, Politics and the Third World* (London, 1991), 18.

sector through the Disasters Emergency Committee, which has continued very successfully to use imagery of this kind in its appeals.³⁹

Third, throughout its early decades SCF adopted an approach to social services that owed more to Victorian philanthropy than to the universalizing tendencies of the modern welfare state. That is, its solutions to social problems looked back more to the containment and isolation of the workhouse than to the redistribution of wealth within society as a whole. One of its earlier experiments in solving poverty over the long term was the establishment of a “work school” in Budapest, run by Julia Vajkai. She “lured” the “little beggars” from the “dirty slum streets” initially by enticing them with the promise of chocolate.⁴⁰ The young girls were taught basic handicraft skills and their products were sold in the United Kingdom.⁴¹ The experiment was regarded as a “success” not least because they went on to become excellent factory workers according to local employers.⁴²

The rationale offered for institutional care betrayed the prejudices that Loach later picked up on. During the Second World War, SCF strongly opposed plans to locate evacuated children in private homes. It believed the mixing of the social classes in private houses would provoke too much “ill feeling.”⁴³ It proposed instead the creation of large care homes that could be turned into holiday resorts in peacetime.⁴⁴ SCF backed down only when the potential tragic consequences of a bomb hitting one of its proposed concentrations of children were pointed out to them.⁴⁵ Instead, it became a willing advocate of the scheme to ship children to Canada. After the war, it experimented with nursery centers for mixed-race children, working with the West Indian cricketer-cum-politician, Learie Constantine.⁴⁶ All of these activities betrayed a willingness to assume that it knew best what was good for children. While it may well have been correct at times, in other

³⁹ Lindsay Mackie, “Oxfam Changing Child Plea Image,” *Guardian* (October 6, 1973), 4; Maggie Black, *A Cause for Our Times: Oxfam, the First Fifty Years* (Oxford, 1992), 63

⁴⁰ Julie E. Vajkai, “Work-Schools and Child Labour: The Budapest Experiment,” *World's Children* 5, nos. 3–4 (December 1924–January 1925): 49–51.

⁴¹ “In Budapest: Making Life Better for the Children,” *Record of the Save the Children Fund* 2, no. 9 (1922): 141–42; SCA: Council Minutes: A1213: 50th Meeting, November 26, 1925: C.604, “Handicrafts Department Report.”

⁴² SCF, *Annual Report, 1946–1947* (London, 1947), 4; SCA: Council Minutes: A1213: 1st Meeting, January 19, 1922: C.20, “Budapest”; Freeman, *If Any Man Build*, 36.

⁴³ SCA: Executive Minutes: A418: 8th Meeting, February 7, 1939: E.112, “Protection of Children in Time of War.”

⁴⁴ SCA: Executive Minutes: A418: 5th Meeting, November 1, 1938: E.69, “Protection of Children in Time of War.”

⁴⁵ SCA: Executive Minutes: A418: 12th Meeting, June 6, 1939: E.167, “Protection of Children in Time of War.”

⁴⁶ SCA: Executive Minutes: A418: 22nd Meeting, June 6, 1949: E.296, “Overseas Evacuation”; Jessica Mann, *Out of Harm's Way: The Wartime Evacuation of Children from Britain* (London, 2006); SCF, *Annual Report, 1939–1940* (London, 1940), 5; SCF,

instances its actions could be based as much on prejudice as on science. What Loach found at Hill House was the legacy of such a tradition.

Finally, for all the internationalism of its support for universal children's rights, SCF also retained an imperial commitment to child protection that reworked traditional missionary duties of spreading civilization across the colonial world. Jebb encouraged SCF to turn its attention away from the relief of hunger in Europe toward longer-term development goals of better education and eradication of child labor in Africa. She hoped that the organization would propose development initiatives for local communities "in harmony with their own tradition."⁴⁷ However, when SCF actually turned its attention to Africa in the 1930s, it did so in a manner that owed as much to imperialism as it did to internationalism.

SCF's early discussions about Africa wrote into the DNA of the organization a set of assumptions that would be elaborated upon when operations on the ground expanded in the 1950s and 1960s and to which Loach would turn his attention. That the knowledge about Africa among SCF's metropolitan staff was highly circumscribed in no way diminished their willingness to claim to "know" Africa and "the African" in much the same way that "knowing the native" was central to forming white British proconsular identities during the time of the empire and beyond.⁴⁸ Victoria de Bunsen, author of *The Soul of the Turk* (1910), sister of Charles Roden Buxton, and cousin of SCF President Lord Noel-Buxton, took the initiative within SCF to cast light on the "dark continent."⁴⁹ She helped organize a conference on the "non-European" child in 1928 and set about making connections with a variety of well-established missionary societies.⁵⁰

The organizing committee of the conference developed into a permanent Child Protection Committee. It was chaired by de Bunsen and met from 1932 until the Second World War, focusing on the key issues of child mortality, educa-

Annual Report, 1942–1943 (London, 1943), 9; SCF, *Annual Report, 1943–1944* (London, 1944), 11; SCA: Council Minutes: A1214: 200th Meeting, January 18, 1945: C.2936, "Executive Committee Reports."

⁴⁷ Eglantyne Jebb, "A Publicist in Africa," *World's Children* 8, no. 6 (1928): 74–76.

⁴⁸ Bill Schwarz, *Memories of Empire*, vol. 1, *The White Man's World* (Oxford, 2011).

⁴⁹ "Looking at Africa's children," *World's Children* 10, no. 12 (1930): 221–22; Lord Noel-Buxton, "Children of the Dark Continent," *World's Children* 11, no. 9 (1931): 167–68.

⁵⁰ Edward Fuller, "The 'Non-European' Child," *World's Children* 9, no. 3 (1928): 38–39; Victoria de Bunsen, "For Africa's Future," *World's Children* 11, no. 5 (1931): 88–89; Edward Fuller, "Conference on African Children," *World's Children* 11, no. 10 (1931): 193–94; SCA: A1217: M14/12: British Committee of the 1931 Congress on Children of Non-European Origin: Minutes: 1st Meeting, October 15, 1929; W. E. Owen, *International Conference on African Children, Question IV* (Geneva, 1931); Dominique Marshall, "Children's Rights in Imperial Political Cultures: Missionary and Humanitarian Contributions to the Conference on the African Child of 1931," *International Journal of Child Rights* 12 (2004): 273–318

tion, and public health.⁵¹ The committee's deliberations betrayed most of the classic hallmarks of an orientalist imagination.⁵² "Knowing the African" was the key benchmark that provided the confidence to proclaim and to speak. For the committee, however, such knowledge was to come solely from the reports of missionaries and colonial officials back in London for their vacations who were invited to the de Bunsen household for an "at home." Ignorance of a subject was no barrier to forming an opinion, yet it was also ignorance that explained conditions across the continent. Blaming conditions on "culture" was the stock-in-trade of the missionaries and voluntary society ladies (usually the wives of colonial administrators who ran maternal health centers in their spare time) who addressed the committee and then wrote short pieces for SCF propaganda. The question "why African children die" could only be answered through greater education in "hygiene and mothercraft."⁵³ Shock and amusement went hand in hand as silly cultural beliefs gave rise to funny misunderstandings that soon turned to tragedy.⁵⁴ Alternatively, the most absurd instances of abuse that would be deplored in any culture were taken as insights into the specifically African mental universe: "In certain countries, . . . unwanted children are still thrown out at birth, either to die, or, worse still, to be eaten by dogs."⁵⁵

While the Africans were "backward," SCF correspondents were adventure-some trailblazers who engaged in "single-handed" missions to remove the "shadows of tradition" that hung over Africans' own desire for improvement.⁵⁶ The civilizing mission was translated into the more up-to-date language of the League of Nations: "trusteeship" meant caring for the Africans until they could "grow up" and learn "European standards of hygiene, of education and of religion."⁵⁷ Indeed, it was the responsibility of organizations such as SCF "not to feel that the welfare of the native African is the closed province of a small circle of experts": "the price of African liberty was eternal vigilance on our part."⁵⁸ At all times Africa was taken as a homogenous whole, and what comes across is the remarkable consistency of the SCF worldview over the course of the 1930s. Yet some

⁵¹ SCA: A1217: M14/17: Child Protection Committee: Minutes of 1st Meeting, March 9, 1932; Minutes of 4th Meeting, May 18, 1937; Save the Children Fund Child Protection Committee, *Information Bulletin on Infant and Child Mortality and Allied Questions in Non-European Lands* 8 (1933), contained in *World's Children* 14, no. 2 (1933).

⁵² Edward Fuller, "The Problem with Race," *World's Children* 11, no. 6 (1931): 115–17.

⁵³ Mary Elms, "Why African Children Die," *World's Children* 12, no. 8 (1932): 118–19.

⁵⁴ E. Dora Earthy, "Birth among the Mendi," *World's Children* 13, no. 9 (1933): 135–36.

⁵⁵ "Child Life in the Colonies," *World's Children* 17, no. 5 (1937): 69–71.

⁵⁶ "A Woman in the Wilds," *World's Children* 13, no. 7 (1933): 102–3.

⁵⁷ "African Children," *World's Children* 16, no. 4 (1936): 58.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

attempt was made to hear a different version of events. An occasional native-born clergyman might be given an audience should he find himself in London, though usually such visitors would praise SCF for its good work.⁵⁹ Harold Moody, the Jamaican doctor, chair of the London Missionary Society, and founder of the League of Coloured Peoples, joined the Child Protection Committee and then became a vice-chair of SCF and served an active role on the council. But, as left-wing critics of his wider political role have put it, he did little to challenge an imperialist worldview.⁶⁰

From the comfort of their own homes, then, SCF leaders learned about and made pronouncements on Africa. Key to this was an ability to take the moral high ground. Child slavery and female genital mutilation were not discussed as topics that ought to be addressed in and of themselves. SCF knew that other organizations were more experienced and better equipped to tackle these issues. Rather, these moral absolutes laid the foundations for the development of a right—again, not the right of the harmed to be protected from such practices, but the right of the charitable to intervene more generally and to offer their own program of development, which, it was claimed, would prevent such practices from occurring again.

For all Jebb's commitment to internationalism, then, the work of the Committee on Child Protection after her death ensured that imperialism better characterized the approach of the organization by the end of the 1930s. Indeed, there are signs in these early attitudes toward poverty eradication that SCF would develop the sort of specific initiatives that Loach would later bemoan. For instance, one article found that "communal sense" in Africans made them ideally suited to the English school system with its "house system, representing tribal units, each with its pupil elders."⁶¹ And when de Bunsen turned her gaze to the apparently similar problems of the working class in the north of England, the solutions lay in small-scale initiative and educational work in the appreciative "villages."⁶² It is perhaps no wonder that Loach would focus his camera lens again and again on the Nairobi schoolboys marching pointlessly for hours in the Kenyan sun, or that he turned to the words of an American civil rights activist who considered the plight of the poor everywhere, regardless of color, to be one and the same. However, in order to understand how these attitudes still prevailed, and whether they were indicative of a broader approach among development workers, the continuities and

⁵⁹ "Looking at Africa's Children," *World's Children* 10, no. 12 (1930): 221–22.

⁶⁰ SCF, *Annual Report, 1942–1943* (London, 1943), 15; SCA: Council Minutes: A1214: 190th Meeting, July 16, 1942: C.2760, Nomination to Council; 197th Meeting, April 20, 1944: C.2887, Child Protection Committee.

⁶¹ P. E., "Making 'Good Africans,'" *World's Children* 11, no. 2 (1930): 29–30.

⁶² Victoria de Bunsen, "How Can You Change the North?" *World's Children* 16, no. 10 (1936): 149–50.

changes affecting both SCF and the humanitarian sector in the Second World War and after first need to be examined.

WAR AND DECOLONIZATION

The Second World War had a lasting impact on British humanitarianism. Once hostilities commenced, concerns began to be expressed for innocent victims suffering from the effects of occupation and blockades. Just as SCF had been set up at the end of the First World War to respond to the needs of such people, so a host of famine relief committees were established around the country in the early 1940s. The most enduring was that which began at a meeting in October 1942 in Oxford organized by, among others, the Anglican Canon Richard Milford, the classicist scholar Gilbert Murray, and the Quaker-inspired philanthropist Cecil Jackson-Cole. While others disbanded from 1945, the Oxford Committee continued, eventually changing its title to the abbreviation used on its telex machine, Oxfam.

Christian Aid also had its origins in the war. The World Council of Churches (WCC), set up in 1937, established the Department of Reconstruction and Inter-Church Aid (alternatively termed Christian Reconstruction in Europe) in 1945. This became a department of the British Council of Churches, eventually changing its name to Christian Aid in 1964 as it identified itself with the increasingly prominent "Christian Aid week" begun in 1957.⁶³ At the same time, the socialist publisher Victor Gollancz launched a number of peace initiatives such as the Save Europe Now campaign of 1945. Later, his Association for World Peace brought together various liberals, progressives, and Fabians with Labour members of Parliament such as the future Prime Minister Harold Wilson, who would chair the committee that produced the founding pamphlet of War on Want in 1952.⁶⁴

Such organizations were but one part of a wider shift in humanitarianism, and not only in Britain. The 1940s are usually regarded as a pivotal moment in the history of development. The response to the massive refugee problem at the end of the war created an intergovernmental machinery spearheaded by the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA, 1943). This was followed by the emergence of the modern technocratic aid regime triggered by President Truman's Four Point speech of January 1949, which introduced the concept of "underdevelopment" and committed the United States to promoting economic

⁶³ Janet Lacey, *Christian Aid* (London, 1961), 7–9; Michael Taylor, *Not Angels but Agencies: The Ecumenical Response to Poverty* (London, 1995), 5–7.

⁶⁴ Association for World Peace, *War on Want: A Plan for World Development* (London, 1952); Mark Luetchford and Peter Burns, *Waging the War on Want: 50 Years of Campaign against World Poverty* (London, 2003).

growth throughout the developing world.⁶⁵ Amidst such a context, older faith-based, nonstate, and often voluntary organizations are supposed to have become anachronistic as mission and empire were superseded by the new world of expert-driven professionalism.⁶⁶

Recent work, however, has challenged us to examine the continuities across the two periods and the persistence of imperialist and missionary institutional structures and worldviews.⁶⁷ Most clearly, religion continued to inspire humanitarianism, and not only through Christian Aid, CAFOD, and Tearfund (originally the Evangelical Alliance Relief Fund Committee). Both Oxfam and War on Want, for instance, relied on the support of various faith groups, especially Quakers, though prominent Anglican clergymen were often key to their establishment: Canon John Collins helped found War on Want as well as going on to help set up the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament.⁶⁸ When these organizations began their relief operations on the ground they frequently turned to the institutional structures set up by previous missionary endeavors. Oxfam's early projects included channeling funds to Quaker teaching colleges in Greece and to the YMCA (Young Men's Christian Association) in Palestine and Korea. When famine struck in Bihar, India, in 1951, Oxfam had to find a partner to work with, eventually settling on a famine relief committee run by the wife of the Bishop of Bhagalpur.⁶⁹ Likewise, the whole transition from colonialism to developmentalism could only be managed because of the local bodies of knowledge and expertise that persisted throughout the decades of transition.⁷⁰

⁶⁵ Michael Barnett, *Empire of Humanity: A History of Humanitarianism* (Ithaca, NY, 2011); Gilbert Rist, *The History of Development: From Western Origins to Global Faith* (London, 2008); Gerard Daniel Cohen, *In War's Wake: Europe's Displaced Persons in the Postwar Order* (Oxford, 2012).

⁶⁶ Ruth Compton Brouwer, "When Missions Became Development: Ironies of 'NGoization' in Mainstream Canadian Churches in the 1960s," *Canadian Historical Review* 91, no. 4 (2010): 661–93.

⁶⁷ Rob Skinner and Alan Lester, "Humanitarianism and Empire: New Research Agendas," *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 40, no. 5 (2012): 729–47.

⁶⁸ Jeffrey Cox, "From the Empire of Christ to the Third World: Religion and the Experience of Empire in the Twentieth Century," in *Britain's Experience of Empire in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Andrew Thompson (Oxford, 2012), 76–121; Luetchford and Burns, *Waging the War on Want*.

⁶⁹ Black, *A Cause for Our Times*.

⁷⁰ Frederick Cooper, *Africa since 1940: The Past of the Present* (Cambridge, 2002); Frederick Cooper, "Writing the History of Development," *Journal of Modern European History* 8, no. 1 (2010): 5–23; Marc Frey and Sönke Kunkel, "Writing the History of Development: A Review of the Recent Literature," *Contemporary European History* 20, no. 2 (2011): 215–32; William Beinart, Karen Brown, and Daniel Gilfoyle, "Experts and Expertise in Colonial Africa Reconsidered: Science and the Interpenetration of Knowledge," *African Affairs* 108, no. 432 (2009): 413–33.

In these early years of the new NGOs, their key difference from SCF was their relationship to the actual war. While Oxfam, Christian Aid, and War on Want were the products of war, SCF adapted its role to wartime demands. Indeed, it could be argued that in many ways SCF had a “good” war, as it tied itself to many of the relief operations run by an increasingly influential intergovernmental machinery. The significance of such experiences, not just for SCF but for the Red Cross too, was that SCF transformed its operations to suit a more militaristic ethos. It became an organization run along highly professional lines, but one that deliberately eschewed the internationalism that had driven its foundation. The right to intervene was still there, but it was to be focused primarily on immediate humanitarian relief and organized with all the hallmarks of the military efficiency one would expect of a charity increasingly staffed by former army and naval officers.

SCF was a willing participant in relief operations during wartime, ensuring that nonofficial humanitarianism thrived alongside the official agencies. It set up its own postwar committee, which, from 1942, made plans along with fourteen other bodies to establish the Council of Voluntary Societies for the Relief of Suffering and for Aiding Social Recovery, later known as the Council of British Societies for Relief Abroad (COBSRA).⁷¹ This council played a prominent role in ensuring that UNRRA would make good use of the services of the voluntary sector, under the overall coordination of the Red Cross.⁷² The relationship with UNRRA was not without its tensions, since many of the voluntary organizations were impatient to have their resources drawn upon. But once the Red Cross had been accepted as the official partner of the intergovernmental operation, then ultimately SCF fell compliantly into line with the more general relief effort.⁷³

The sheer amount of resources available at the UN made organizations such as SCF appear minuscule in this new era of humanitarianism. But one other consequence of UNRRA was that it forced those voluntary organizations that wished to work with it to raise their game in terms of their professionalism and operational effectiveness. SCF was an enthusiastic partner in this new era of military-driven and depoliticized relief. In contrast to its activities at the end of the First World War, when it defied the government’s unwillingness to provide assistance to German civilians, SCF in the 1940s chose not to do anything that might ap-

⁷¹ SCA: Council Minutes: A1214: 191st Meeting, October 22, 1942: C.2786, Report of Post-War Committee; 192nd Meeting, January 21, 1943: C.2803, Report of Post-War Committee.

⁷² SCF, *Annual Report, 1943–1944* (London, 1944), 7; SCA: Executive Minutes: A419: 82nd Meeting, June 8, 1944: E.1214, Council of British Societies for Relief Abroad; 83rd Meeting, July 13, 1944: E.1239, Foreign Relief and Rehabilitation.

⁷³ SCA: Executive Minutes: A419: 87th Meeting, December 14, 1944: E.1326, Foreign Relief and Rehabilitation; 88th Meeting, January 11, 1945: E.1338, Foreign Relief and Rehabilitation; SCA: Council Minutes: A1214: 201st Meeting, April 19, 1945: C.2956, Foreign Relief and Rehabilitation.

pear controversial and certainly nothing that ran counter to the patterns of official relief and assistance.⁷⁴

The result was that the character of the organization was profoundly changed, and in ways that would make it distinct from the emerging NGOs of the 1940s. While it retained its commitment to elite patronage (the appointment as president of the Countess of Mountbatten, wife of the Viceroy of India, was but one stage on the path to obtaining the queen's support), it also began deliberately recruiting former military personnel at all levels of the organization.⁷⁵ Retired officers from the armed services took up positions not only on the Executive but also as ordinary staff in all departments of the charity. By the 1950s the chairman of the council was Captain Leonard Henry Green, formerly of the Royal Warwickshire Regiment, and the general secretary was Brigadier T. W. Boyce, who had spent his entire career in the army, in particular on its intelligence staff. These two men stood at the pinnacle of an organization in which a military ethos had begun to pervade every aspect of the work. Relief operations could be imagined as military maneuvers requiring attention to logistics and supply rather than as a reflection on the broader aspects of development after emergency humanitarianism. The Korean War was a significant opportunity for these men in SCF. Initially, Prime Minister Clement Attlee had told the organization not to intervene; but SCF, eager to enter a "theatre of war," bypassed the British state, using its Commonwealth connections to obtain a foothold through the Australian SCF. After the Countess Mountbatten's visit to Korea in the spring of 1952, further doors opened and SCF sprang into action.⁷⁶

Once SCF began to undertake actual development work, early reports of SCF field-workers around the world betrayed the clipped tones of military personnel. They quickly and neatly expressed the high regard for the excellent work being undertaken by SCF staff and the difficulties they had with the less willing locals. The successor to Mountbatten, Viscount Astor, for instance, visited SCF operations in Jordan in 1961. There he observed the "excellent work" of Major Derek Cooper, a former cavalry officer who had enjoyed an impressive military career.⁷⁷ Back in London, the SCF Executive Committee drew inspiration from the Ryder-Cheshire Foundation, which aimed to help disabled people through its Ryder-Cheshire Volunteers, organized very much along the lines of a social national service. (Cheshire himself was a highly decorated RAF pilot with a Victoria Cross.) SCF proposed the creation of a similar group of "Commandos" made up of "the sort of people who would be willing to go off at 24 hours' notice anywhere in the

⁷⁴ SCA: Executive Minutes: A419: 77th Meeting, January 13, 1944: E.1103, Future Policy of the Fund.

⁷⁵ SCF, *Annual Report, 1952–1953* (London, 1953), 1.

⁷⁶ SCF, *Annual Report, 1951–1952* (London, 1952), 1.

⁷⁷ SCA: Overseas Department Papers: A145: Jordan: Viscount Astor, "Notes on Visit to SCF in Jordan," October 1960.

world and report on emergencies.”⁷⁸ They would be paid “danger money” and would ensure that whenever any major emergency occurred, SCF “could always be one of the organisations first on the spot.”⁷⁹ Ultimately, SCF decided not to pursue this plan, but the fact that it was discussed reflects the operational logic that had begun to drive the organization.

This was an approach to disaster learned on the battlefield and geared toward crisis more than rehabilitation. Moreover, it was an approach increasingly out of step with both its own traditions and the wider humanitarian sector. The younger organizations were marked by commitments to peace and internationalism similar to those that had motivated the Jebb sisters in 1919. Yet in the Second World War and after, SCF chose not to work with what were effectively the inheritors of its own founding spirit, the famine relief committees that gave rise to Oxfam. This was despite the protestations of Dorothy Buxton, the keeper of the original principles of SCF.⁸⁰ When Gollancz launched “Save Europe Now” in 1945, the voluntary societies connected to COBSRA rebuffed his overtures, feeling that his campaign was too “political.”⁸¹ SCF even pulled back from its own internationalism precisely when the global context was attuned to such a vision. While it had been a pioneer in articulating children’s rights within the League of Nations, after 1945 it only half-heartedly supported the UN’s adoption of an equivalent document. SCF tracked the progress of what would eventually become the Declaration on the Rights of the Child in 1959, but it did little to encourage its endorsement.⁸² It preferred too not to dwell on the new clauses of the declaration that made commitments to the social and economic security of the child. It stuck to focusing on the basic clauses of the original 1923 declaration—“The Child that is hungry must be fed, the child that is sick must be nursed”—and continued to use the original in its publicity materials throughout the 1960s.⁸³

Having been an enthusiastic assistant to the emerging international community in a time of emergency, SCF proved far less willing to collaborate in a time of peace. In 1948, it reluctantly agreed to cooperate in the UN Appeal for Children,

⁷⁸ SCA: Executive Minutes: A421: 214th Meeting, June 20, 1961: E.3796, SCF Commandos.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ SCA: Council Minutes: A1214: 196th Meeting, January 20, 1944: C.2867, Correspondence—Dorothy Buxton.

⁸¹ SCA: Executive Minutes: A419: 96th Meeting, October 11, 1945: E.1483, “Save Europe’s Children” Meeting.

⁸² SCA: Council Minutes: A1215: 248th Meeting, July 18, 1957: C.4032, Declaration of the Rights of the Child: Appendix A: Notes on the Declaration of the Rights of the Child; SCF, *Annual Report, 1948–1949* (London, 1949), 39; SCF, *Annual Report, 1949–1950* (London, 1950), 4–5; SCF, *Annual Report, 1953–1954* (London, 1954), 8–9; SCF, *Annual Report, 1960–1961* (London, 1961), 19–20; Veerman, *The Rights of the Child*.

⁸³ SCA: Executive Minutes: A421: 233rd Meeting, April 25, 1963: E.3501, UN Declaration of the Rights of the Child.

perhaps understandably worrying about its own future viability if the UN were to engage in such work.⁸⁴ When what became the UN International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) emerged as a proposal from within UNRRA, SCF looked upon the initiative with some anxiety.⁸⁵ These developments within the architecture of an emerging system of global governance also forced SCF to focus its concerns on its international partner, the International Union of Child Welfare (IUCW). Jebb had created the two organizations almost simultaneously, so the distinctions between them were blurred, and in the late 1940s and throughout the 1950s SCF wondered what the purpose of the IUCW was at all. While Oxfam, Christian Aid, and War on Want sought to develop further their international links and institutional connections, SCF retreated and then threatened to withdraw all support from the international arm it had originally created. The split was only averted when the American branch of SCF intervened and undertook a thorough review of the IUCW.⁸⁶

Certainly, the new military ethos within the organization brought some substantial benefits. It engendered an administrative efficiency that enabled it to prosper in the decades after the war, especially through its extensive local support infrastructure (there were over 600 local branches by the time of Loach's film) and through its novel fund-raising schemes (its Penny-a-Week scheme organized with the trade unions on the factory floor meant the working classes were contributing over 40 percent of all cash donations by 1955).⁸⁷ But it also steered SCF in a particular direction, one that would be increasingly adrift from the rest of the development community. While Oxfam, Christian Aid, and War on Want were beginning to reflect more broadly on the alternative modes of development that their small-scale initiatives were fostering, as well as on the broader principles of global development, SCF eschewed any discussion of rights, poverty, social justice, economic growth, or internationalism and continued to view itself, like the Red Cross, as an organization focused primarily on emergency relief.

This meant that when SCF did eventually turn to some limited welfare projects in the developing world, it did so only with the backing of the colonial authorities and in a manner that ignored many of the new approaches to development. Moreover, it meant that many of the assumptions and attitudes articulated in the 1930s would be lazily carried forward into the postwar decades, especially

⁸⁴ SCA: Council Minutes: A1214: 212th Meeting, January 15, 1948: C.3174, Executive Committee.

⁸⁵ SCA: Executive Minutes: A420: 110th Meeting, March 13, 1947: E.1831, UN Agencies and Voluntary Agencies.

⁸⁶ SCA: Executive Minutes: A420: 137th Meeting, March 20, 1951: E.2359, IUCW; 156th Meeting, March 16, 1954: E.2670, Study of the Work of the IUCW; A421: 163rd Meeting, February 14, 1955: E.2823, IUCW; Council Minutes: 1214: 237th Meeting, April 8, 1954: C.3741, IUCW.

⁸⁷ SCF, *Annual Report, 1954–1955* (London, 1955), 5.

when charities were invited to step into the social arenas from which the colonial state had begun to retreat. According to Frederick Cooper, colonial policy from the 1930s was reoriented away from a civilizing mission to one more explicitly geared toward raising colonial living standards in order to improve the export market.⁸⁸ However, in the final years of empire the colonial state drew back from its new social and economic infrastructure, leaving new African governments with an inheritance of “weak instruments for entering into the social and cultural realm.”⁸⁹ NGOs held attractions to both late colonial and emerging postcolonial states, as they could take on some of the services that government itself was unwilling or unable to perform.

SCF’s tentative ventures into Africa were therefore often prompted by requests from colonial officials—with whom they were often well connected—to respond to particular local social problems. In 1944 Harold Moody was in contact with the Colonial Office, which was interested in having SCF set up operations in West Africa. With an optimism that would characterize so many one-size-fits-all development initiatives, they looked for a project that would “demonstrate to the whole of Africa what could be done if money was wisely and efficiently spent.”⁹⁰ They agreed that SCF should run a welfare center in Ibadan, Nigeria, to provide care for infants and “guidance on mothercraft for their mothers.”⁹¹ Elsewhere, in Malaya, it established the Serendah Boys’ Home for around 200 orphans in 1946, and in Jamaica it set up a health center named after Eglantyne Jebb.⁹² The move into development projects was ad hoc and piecemeal, though there was a deliberate decision to undertake work of various kinds, especially as it realized there was going to be spare capacity after the work in Europe wound down. In 1949, SCF leaders wrote directly to the governor of Sudan to ask if the organization could “give any useful help in that territory.”⁹³ They did the same for Uganda, though there they were able to write to the education officer, Bernard de Bunsen—son of Victoria de Bunsen, who had led SCF’s earlier exploration of African issues.

Colonial administrators responded positively. While lower officials in the Sudan argued that relief work was unnecessary since “the Mahommedans keep

⁸⁸ Frederick Cooper and Randall Packard, “Introduction,” in *International Development and the Social Sciences: Essays on the History and Politics of Knowledge*, ed. Cooper and Packard (Berkeley, 1997), 1–41, 13.

⁸⁹ Cooper, *Africa since 1940*, 4.

⁹⁰ SCA: Council Minutes: A1214: 197th Meeting, April 20, 1944: C.2887, Child Protection Committee.

⁹¹ SCF, *Annual Report, 1943–1944* (London, 1944), 11.

⁹² SCF, *Annual Report, 1946–1947* (London, 1947), 8; SCA: Council Minutes: A1214: 203rd Meeting, October 18, 1945: C.2999, Foreign Relief and Rehabilitation Section.

⁹³ SCA: Executive Minutes: A420: 122nd Meeting, February 22, 1949: E.2153, Future SCF Work.

their children much better than the English,” the governor general disagreed, and he invited SCF to embark upon the “great adventure” and “mission” of maternity and child welfare work in the south of the country.⁹⁴ In Somaliland, SCF set up a welfare scheme for homeless boys “at the behest of the Colonial Government,” and in Uganda it looked into setting up a home for abandoned children “at the request of the Governor of the Uganda Protectorate, Sir Frederick Crawford.”⁹⁵

When these territories became independent states, the relationships often continued with the new rulers. For instance, after the Somaliland Protectorate became independent in 1960 (joining with Somalia), the new government ministers asked SCF to continue its work in Hargesia and agreed to contribute financially on the same scale as the protectorate government had done. In recognition of the smooth transition and the ease with which the NGO could work with the new state, the Somali president was made head of the Somaliland SCF.⁹⁶ Likewise, work in Nigeria continued on the same scale after independence in 1960. In 1963, while an impoverished Nigerian Ministry of Health was cutting its own services and funding of hospitals, it reiterated to an SCF representative that it believed SCF’s training of community nurses was “one of the most vital jobs in the country.”⁹⁷ SCF was not as enthusiastic as the other NGOs in the turn to development, but its point of entry into Africa was driven as much by its elite and official contacts as by its concerns for the alleviation of poverty. Moreover, and as will be explored in further detail, it began its work in Africa with a staff schooled in the immediacy of wartime emergency rather than the sober reflections of long-term development planning. Acting primarily from a military-driven desire to get the job done, without reexamining its operating principles, the organization allowed its long-held assumptions—especially about Africa and the Africans—to go unchallenged.

ADVOCACY AND CHARITY

As SCF staff began tentatively to enter the world of long-term development projects, they did so at a time when the humanitarian sector—and NGOs as a whole—were transforming their role. While the emergence of the British welfare state had seemingly removed much of the need for the traditional voluntary society engaged in the provision of social services, a new class of expert-driven professional staff was engaged in reimagining a role for a whole host of charitable

⁹⁴ SCA: Council Minutes: A1214: 222nd Meeting, July 19, 1950: C.3439, Foreign Relief Committee; SCF, *Annual Report, 1949–1950* (London, 1950), 9.

⁹⁵ SCF, *Annual Report, 1950–1951* (London, 1951), 24; SCF, *Annual Report, 1958–59* (London, 1959), 8.

⁹⁶ SCF, *Annual Report, 1959–1960* (London, 1960), 1.

⁹⁷ SCA: A163: File: Nigeria 1963 (Part 1): “Report on Nigeria by Lady Alexandra Metcalfe.”

organizations. Just as expertise drove forward the social and economic planning initiatives of the post-Second World War, so too did doctors and lawyers, engineers and economists, teachers and social workers begin to populate the offices of charities to make these organizations as much a part of the professional society as anything created by the private and public sectors. Indeed, in order to make up for his neglect of voluntary organizations, the architect of British welfare, William Beveridge, returned to what he saw as the rich traditions and still relevant work of Victorian philanthropy in the third volume of his trilogy on the postwar world.⁹⁸ It would be but one of many interventions that sought to capture a constantly evolving and ever-expanding charitable sector in the latter half of the twentieth century.⁹⁹

This is not to say that charities did not continue to be motivated by questions of injustice, philanthropy, religion, and care for those less fortunate, but it did mean they now combined such emotions with expert knowledge. In the humanitarian sector, Oxfam quickly cast off its Quaker inspiration and embraced the technocratic world of engineers, social planners, and economists, while in its appeals to the public it broke new ground in hiring professional marketing staff. While Christian Aid's influential director Janet Lacey called on Christians to be "at the forefront of the fight for a hungry world" they were to do so in united action with other professionals and expert development staff.¹⁰⁰ From a rather different perspective, War on Want may well have drawn inspiration from broad socialist and laborist traditions, but it still funded and worked with professional staff on the ground who were key to the early development initiatives of the other humanitarian agencies.¹⁰¹ Even the VSO (Voluntary Service Overseas), which was set up deliberately to draw upon the amateur spirit supposedly found in the English public schools, soon gave way to a form of intervention that recognized the need for professional and expert knowledge.¹⁰²

This meant that these charities were quick to embrace the broader principles of aid and development promoted by the United Nations, especially as the UN deliberately courted the voluntary sector in the late 1950s. Indeed, the 1959 UN World Refugee Year acted as a powerful stimulus to British NGOs. Oxfam, Chris-

⁹⁸ William Beveridge, *Voluntary Action: A Report on the Methods of Social Advance* (London, 1948).

⁹⁹ Finlayson, *Citizen, State and Social Welfare in Britain*, 183; Nicholas Deakin, "The Perils of Partnership: The Voluntary Sector and the State, 1945–1992," in *An Introduction to the Voluntary Sector*, ed. Justin Davis Smith, Colin Rochester, and Rodney Hedley (London, 1995), 40–65; Matthew Hilton and James McKay, eds., *The Ages of Voluntarism: Evolution and Change in Modern British Voluntary Action* (Oxford, 2011).

¹⁰⁰ Janet Lacey, *Christian Aid* (London, 1961), 27; Christian Aid Mss, School of Oriental and African Studies (hereafter Christian Aid Mss), CA/J/1: Janet Lacey, *Meeting Human Need* (London, 1965), 5.

¹⁰¹ Luetchford and Burns, *Waging the War on Want*.

¹⁰² Bailkin, *Afterlife of Empire*, 55–94.

tian Aid, and War on Want were all eager to associate their names with such an officially sanctioned cause.¹⁰³ This cooperation and pooling of resources and expertise was consolidated the following year with the launch of the Freedom from Hunger Campaign (FFHC), timed to mark the beginning of the UN Development Decade. In Britain, 1,000 local FFHC committees were set up and £7 million was raised between 1960 and 1965. This campaign had a marked influence on organizations such as Oxfam, reorientating the sector toward longer-term development initiatives.¹⁰⁴

In a related development, as organizations improved their knowledge and expertise about social issues, so too did they become more aware of the underlying causes of the problems they were seeking to address. Most famously, poverty in Britain was “rediscovered” during an age of mass affluence as charities engaged in the provision of social services identified gaps in the coverage of the welfare state.¹⁰⁵ This has been identified as the “moving frontier” between the state and nonstate sectors, as charities and the voluntary sector began to call upon government to tackle a broader range of issues that their activities had identified.¹⁰⁶ What this also meant was that charities moved away from their traditional roles and instead turned to advocacy, lobbying government and Parliament for further intervention in areas where they felt their own voluntary endeavors were too limited in scope to succeed. The poverty lobby has been the most closely studied, but the phenomenon can be witnessed across other sectors too, from human rights to race, gender, disability, and health, as well as, later, the environment.¹⁰⁷

The humanitarian sector was not immune from these broader changes in the relationship between politics, the state, and the charitable sector. British charity legislation, stretching back to 1601, restricted the ability of organizations to speak out in the public realm in a manner that might be construed as “political.” Charities had to tread carefully as they expanded their lobbying work, especially af-

¹⁰³ Janet Lacey, *Refugees: Still They Come* (London, 1963); Black, *A Cause for Our Times*, 59; Luetchford and Burns, *Waging the War on Want*, 37; Peter Gattrell, *Free World?: The Campaign to Save the World's Refugees, 1956–1963* (Cambridge, 2011).

¹⁰⁴ Black, *A Cause for Our Times*, 74; Anna Bocking-Welch, “Imperial Legacies and Internationalist Discourses: British Involvement in the United Nations Freedom from Hunger Campaign, 1960–70,” *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 40, no. 5 (2012): 879–96.

¹⁰⁵ Whiteley and Winyard, *Pressure for the Poor*; Tanya Evans, “Stopping the Poor Getting Poorer: The Establishment and Professionalization of Poverty NGOs, 1945–1995,” in *NGOs in Contemporary Britain: Non-State Actors in Society and Politics since 1945*, ed. Nicholas Crowson, Matthew Hilton, and James McKay (Basingstoke, 2009), 157–63.

¹⁰⁶ Geoffrey Finlayson, “A Moving Frontier: Voluntarism and the State in British Social Welfare,” *Twentieth-Century British History* 1 (1990): 183–206

¹⁰⁷ Hilton et al., *A Historical Guide to NGOs in Britain*, 33–78.

ter the 1960 Charities Act gave greater powers of scrutiny to the overseers—the charity commissioners.¹⁰⁸ Humanitarian agencies engaged in prolonged and heated discussion over the decision to expand their advocacy work and enter the political fray. In 1963 a frustrated Pete Burns jumped ship from Oxfam to become the general secretary of the more overtly leftist War on Want. As Oxfam in turn took on a more political role, younger staff impatiently pushed to increase the speed of change still further.¹⁰⁹ In 1970, the Reverend Nicholas Stacey felt unable to convince his Council of Management at Oxfam of the need to be more outspoken. As he put it in a letter to *The Times*, he felt obliged to resign because he did not “fancy [him]self primarily as a fund raiser.” Such decisions meant that the humanitarians envisaged a role for themselves far wider than that associated with the application of “sticking plasters.” It also meant they would increasingly fall foul of charity legislation. The commissioners would continue to monitor the activities of Oxfam, Christian Aid, and War on Want through the 1990s, when new legislation finally enabled charities to engage far more extensively in lobbying, advocacy, and campaigning.¹¹⁰

The approach of SCF to all these changes in the charitable sector was decidedly cooler—so much so that it effectively acted as a break on the speed of changes occurring within humanitarianism and the consequent redefinitions of appropriate charitable endeavor. It participated fully in the World Refugee Year activities and welcomed the extra income that came through funded relief operations in Jordan and Palestine and at the East German border.¹¹¹ But while it publicly lent its support to the FFHC, it proved slow, even reluctant, to extend its work into the longer-term development projects that the FFHC was encouraging. Indeed, it was anxious that the FFHC was forcing it in a direction it was uncomfortable traveling. The sheer success of the campaign meant funds raised exceeded those which could be spent on projects, and SCF feared it was being made to search for projects rather than respond to need.¹¹² When the initial phase of the FFHC came to an end in 1964, SCF, unlike other NGOs, was against its renewal.¹¹³

¹⁰⁸ James McKay, “Voluntary Politics: The Sector’s Political Function from Beveridge to Deakin,” in *Beveridge and Voluntary Action in Britain and the Wider World*, ed. Melanie Oppenheimer and Nicholas Deakin (Manchester, 2011), 80–93; Lord Goodman, *Charity Law and Voluntary Organisations* (London, 1976).

¹⁰⁹ Black, *A Cause for Our Times*, 105.

¹¹⁰ Hilton et al., *The Politics of Expertise*, 196–200.

¹¹¹ SCF, *Annual Report, 1959–1960* (London, 1960), 19; SCF, *Annual Report, 1960–1961* (London, 1961), 16.

¹¹² SCA: Executive Minutes: A421: 227th Meeting, September 18, 1962: E.3980, Freedom from Hunger.

¹¹³ SCA: Executive Minutes: A421: 246th Meeting, December 15, 1964: E.3776, Freedom from Hunger Campaign.

The FFHC, however, had acted as a catalyst for NGO cooperation in the United Kingdom. In 1963 the British Red Cross, Christian Aid, Oxfam, SCF, and War on Want came together to form the Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC), which has coordinated fund-raising during emergencies to the present day. But while the other NGOs saw the DEC as a meeting of equals, SCF pushed unsuccessfully for the joint appeals to be spearheaded by the Red Cross, in order that it could be seen as promoting emergency relief and nothing more.¹¹⁴ More significantly, the FFHC had demonstrated to the sector the need to be able to act as a collective lobby. First prompted by the new Minister for Overseas Development, Barbara Castle, Oxfam took the lead in the negotiations that led to the formation of the Voluntary Committee on Overseas Aid and Development (VCOAD) in 1965.¹¹⁵ SCF was opposed to the idea, though it felt obliged to join, fearing how an “aloof” reluctance might be perceived by the public.¹¹⁶ It insisted, though, that its financial contribution to the lobby ought to be minimal, and it repeatedly objected to the more political interventions that VCOAD sought to make. For instance, in 1967, when many within VCOAD wanted to extend the organization into a more general overseas aid council that tackled the question of aid from every conceivable angle, SCF effectively halted the initiative.¹¹⁷

One year later, Christian Aid sought the endorsement from VCOAD of an overtly political document entitled “The Agencies and World Development.” SCF expressed its “dismay and concern” and threatened to withdraw from VCOAD.¹¹⁸ Knowing that SCF was still a significant if conservative player, the other organizations wished to avert an open division. The *Haslemere Declaration* of that year, urging an increase in the quantity and quality of British aid, was therefore published under the auspices of the “Haslemere Committee” (a collection of the leading humanitarian NGOs excluding SCF) rather than through VCOAD.¹¹⁹ The

¹¹⁴ SCA: A72: International Red Cross, 1965–72: Patrick Renison, “Preliminary Notes for a Meeting of the Disasters Emergency Committee on Special Appeals,” July 7, 1965; W. N. Hibbert, “Memorandum: Disasters Emergency Committee,” July 12, 1965.

¹¹⁵ SCA: A72: Refugees (Standing Conference of British Organisations for Aid to Refugees), 1965–72: A. E. Oram, Ministry of Overseas Development, to Colin Thomley, March 5, 1965; Ministry of Overseas Development, “Draft Proposals for a Committee of Voluntary Societies Concerned with Overseas Aid and Development,” March 1965.

¹¹⁶ SCA: Council Minutes: A1216: 278th Meeting, January 21, 1965: C.4801, FFHC; SCA: Executive Minutes: A421: 246th Meeting, December 15, 1964: E.3776, FFHC; 248th Meeting, March 16, 1965: E.3819, FFHC; 25th Meeting, June 15, 1965: E.3869, FFHC.

¹¹⁷ SCA: A48: Freedom from Hunger UK Committee Papers: Minutes of 22nd Meeting, May 31, 1967.

¹¹⁸ SCA: Executive Minutes: A421: 271st Meeting, November 19, 1968: E.4248, VCOAD.

¹¹⁹ Haslemere Committee, *The Haslemere Declaration* (London, 1968).

following year, the more radical voices within VCOAD—especially Christian Aid and Oxfam—pushed for the publication of *A Manifesto on Aid and Development*.¹²⁰ By now, SCF had become well aware that the 1960s had brought about something of a transformation in attitudes, and it realized that it needed to appeal to “youth which was looking for progressive leadership.”¹²¹ Accordingly, rather than threatening to resign, it pushed for a dilution of the *Manifesto*’s message. When the other groups proved unwilling to tone it down, SCF again felt compelled to threaten to resign even though it knew it “stood alone.”¹²² Once more, VCOAD backed down and the *Manifesto* was published instead in the autumn by those who lent their name to Action for World Development.

The formation of this latter organization troubled SCF for some time. It led to one proposal to break with VCOAD and the other British groups and seek instead a closer relationship with UNICEF, so that it would be more obviously tied to the cause of children rather than that of development.¹²³ Tensions between SCF and VCOAD would continue into the early 1970s. The problem for SCF was that while formally VCOAD was separate from what soon became the noncharitable—and hence more clearly political—World Development Movement, it was obvious to anyone with little more than a passing interest that there were close institutional connections between the two.¹²⁴ At the same time, these same organizations were pushing to extend VCOAD’s remit to something far wider than SCF felt it could endorse. SCF wanted VCOAD to be “a co-ordinating body and no more.”¹²⁵ It deliberately, and with some effect, worked to slow the pace of change within the sector. Yet SCF became increasingly despondent about its ability to rein in the now extremely popular developmentalist mindset.¹²⁶

Around the time of Loach’s film some of SCF’s decisions not to be “political” appeared just as political as anything positively stated by the likes of Oxfam,

¹²⁰ SCA: A73: VCOAD: Action for World Development, 1969–70: Minutes of 21st Meeting, July 3, 1969.

¹²¹ SCA: Executive Minutes: A421: 273rd Meeting, June 17, 1969: E.4273, *A Manifesto on Aid and Development*.

¹²² SCA: Council Minutes: A1216: 297th Meeting, July 25, 1969: C.5224, *A Manifesto on Aid and Development*.

¹²³ SCA: 48: Freedom from Hunger UK Committee Papers: Papers of 25th Meeting, June 24, 1969.

¹²⁴ SCA: Executive Minutes: A421: 281st Meeting, November 17, 1970: E.4402, VCOAD, “Report on the Recommendations of the Action for World Development Group on the Future of Its Work, and Consequential Proposals.”

¹²⁵ SCA: Executive Minutes: A421: 285th Meeting, May 20, 1971: E.4476, Report on the Recommendations for the Future Constitution of VCOAD.

¹²⁶ SCA: A61: File: VCOAD, General Correspondence, 1967–72: Note of a Meeting in Eland House, January 19, 1971; J. P. Fonseca, Memorandum, July 6, 1971; Brian Morrell, Memorandum: VCOAD Conference, April 22, 1972; VCOAD, “Mobilisation of Public Opinion,” April 22, 1972.

Christian Aid, and War on Want. When several individuals and charities called on the government to offer assistance during the crisis in West Bengal in 1971, SCF refused to sign, even though it was itself involved.¹²⁷ For SCF, humanitarianism was principally about relief operations on the ground in times of emergency, carried out by appropriately trained—that is, military—staff. Such a definition both held back aid agencies as a whole as they took these tentative steps beyond the traditional realm of charity and profoundly shaped the nature of the expanding welfare work that SCF somewhat reluctantly undertook. SCF claimed to be beyond politics. But its very neutrality had the political consequences of both diverting attention from certain larger subjects and restricting the collective political presence of the sector as a whole. Moreover, it meant that SCF failed to question or challenge the working assumptions that lay behind its operations in Africa and beyond.

SCF ON THE GROUND

Throughout the 1960s, the humanitarian agencies had begun to develop an alternative approach to development that favored small-scale, grassroots approaches. Although many were not yet in a position to undertake activities themselves, they nevertheless funded a variety of projects that were supposedly more flexible and better attuned to local circumstances than anything associated with the large-scale technocratic plans of the UN agencies. This was the origin of the “alternative” approach to development fully articulated by the NGOs in the 1970s and 1980s and associated with the writings of liberation theologians, the consciousness-raising initiatives of Paulo Freire, and the advocate of “small is beautiful,” E. F. Schumacher. In the 1960s, though, early initiatives were launched that would attempt to put into practice the piecemeal advantages of the microlevel initiative. Oxfam and War on Want supported the *gramdam* land reform movement that eventually led to the redistribution of land in 50,000 Indian villages. Similarly, War on Want, Christian Aid, and Oxfam were all early supporters of Julius Nyerere’s experiments with *Ujamaa*. From as early as 1963, War on Want funded the Ruvuma Development Association in Tanzania, and all three charities maintained their commitment to the small-scale, if nationally planned, venture long after it had become increasingly authoritarian in the 1970s.¹²⁸

However, in the detail of its work in the field, it is apparent that SCF staff were not inspired by the same trends in development thinking. Usually older than the young volunteers increasingly attracted to Oxfam, the male field officers contin-

¹²⁷ SCA: A41: VCOAD finance: UK Standing Conference on the Second UN Development Decade, Letter to All Members, June 8, 1971.

¹²⁸ Luetchford and Burns, *Waging the War on Want*, 53; Michael Jennings, *Surrogates of the State: NGOs, Development and Ujamaa in Tanzania* (Bloomfield, CT, 2008).

ued to draw on their training in the military while their female counterparts drew on their backgrounds in nursing, a key skill for tackling emergencies if not always long-term relief. What therefore linked SCF's refusal to engage with the wider political debates about poverty with its work in the field was an approach to humanitarianism that denied the existence of structural causes. Instead, SCF field-workers preferred to focus on the problems of individual ignorance and on the ability of education programs initiated by their nurses and public health staff to help the poor out of their poverty. In this sense, the attitudes prevalent within SCF's early investigations into the African child in the 1930s persisted, though they had come to be expressed in the plainer, more matter-of-fact tone of the military manner.

Repeated over and over again in field reports, no matter from which country, was the problem of "maternal ignorance." Superstition and backward practices were rife, and the anecdote served to condemn a continent. To select just one example of many, Margaret Stears, a nurse working largely alone in Jordan in 1962 and with no knowledge of a local community she was being driven through, found twin babies "completely covered in sheep's dung—'Arab medicine'—to keep them warm": only a quick lesson in "how to wash" and "how to make up the milk feeds" from infant formula resulted in a return to health and a realization on the part of the family of the benefits of "the modern way of rearing babies."¹²⁹ With such no-nonsense high-handedness and an assumption of backwardness it is no wonder that SCF staff could, without irony, teach girls and young women classes with titles such as "why must you not use sand to powder your babies."¹³⁰ The approach here mirrored the attitudes of the Hill House staff to the British working classes: it is quite possible that if the Africans had either coal or bathtubs, SCF field-workers would have claimed the latter were used as repositories for the former.

Malnutrition, according to Captain L. M. Brown, operating in Nigeria in 1964, was "due to ignorance of proper foods all of which could be produced locally."¹³¹ One year later, he claimed "the ignorance and poverty" had to be "seen to be believed," as though the two went hand in hand and no other factors were of relevance.¹³² If only the poor could be educated, then poverty would disappear, though he was up against "hundreds of years of ignorance."¹³³ Over and

¹²⁹ SCA: A145: Jordan: Margaret C. Stears, "Jordan: Quarterly Report, April to June 1962," 4.

¹³⁰ SCA: A145: Jordan: Derek Cooper, "Jordan: Report for March/April 1960," July 5, 1960.

¹³¹ SCA: A163: Nigeria 1964 (Part III): L. M. Brown, "Ilesha, Western Nigeria," August 31, 1964.

¹³² SCA: A163: Nigeria 1964 (Part III): L. M. Brown, "Ilesha, Western Nigeria," November 1965.

¹³³ *Ibid.*

over again “ignorance and superstition” were the two principal problems “which must be overcome before we can be sure that every child will have a reasonable chance of survival.”¹³⁴

By focusing on one particular area of operations—Biafra/Nigeria at the end of the 1960s—SCF’s emphasis on the cultural and individual factors behind poverty is particularly striking. The civil war is a notorious episode in the history of humanitarianism, the moment when many NGOs lost their “innocence” as their relief efforts were exploited by the warring parties in ways that both misdirected aid and prolonged the conflict.¹³⁵ It brought to the fore the wider political and systemic issues influencing the impoverishment of a country and made many organizations reexamine their working practices; it also gave rise to new groups such as Médecins Sans Frontières in 1971. The continuities in SCF’s working methods and its worldview during and after the conflict are therefore all the more remarkable.

SCF already had a presence in Biafra when war broke out. In the summer of 1968, it was “shocked” by the reports being sent in from its administrator in Nigeria. It immediately started relief operations under the aegis of the International Committee of the Red Cross and provided the first British team to reach Biafra.¹³⁶ So fast was SCF’s move into the confusion of a war zone that two of its staff were killed in an ambush on July 26.¹³⁷ However, SCF continued to work through official channels, cooperating closely with the Commonwealth Office and the rest of the British government, which sided with the Nigerian state forces rather than the Biafran rebels.¹³⁸ It meant that while other organizations increasingly sympathized with the Biafrans (at this stage not knowing that stories of suffering were being deliberately exaggerated by those they were seeking to help), SCF and the Red Cross worked closely with the Nigerian authorities. It pulled out of Biafra in November 1968 and then provided assistance and later rehabilitation in the federal territories.¹³⁹ Some of its staff were uneasy about being seen

¹³⁴ SCA: A163: File: Nigeria 1965: M. G. K. Dowdens, “Report on SCF Project, Ilesha,” May 1966.

¹³⁵ Black, *A Cause for Our Times*, 130; Alex de Waal, *Famine Crimes: Politics and the Disaster Relief Industry in Africa* (London, 1997); Ian Smillie, *The Alms Bazaar: Altruism Under Fire* (London, 1995); Kevin O’Sullivan, *Ireland, Africa and the End of Empire: Small State Identity in the Cold War* (Manchester, 2012).

¹³⁶ SCF, *Annual Report, 1968–1969* (London, 1969), 6; SCA: A164: Nigeria: J. V. Hawkins, “Report on Visit to Nigeria,” October 30, 1968; N. H. Moynihan and Michael Moynihan, “SCF Nigeria/Biafra Relief Work—Interim Report,” September 1968; SCF press release. “First Save the Children Medical Team Reaches Biafra,” August 22, 1968.

¹³⁷ SCA: A164: Nigeria: ICRC to Colin Thornley, July 30, 1968.

¹³⁸ SCA: Overseas Advisory Committee Papers: A650: Minutes: 222nd Meeting, July 11, 1968: ORW.4003 Nigeria.

¹³⁹ SCA: Overseas Advisory Committee Papers: A650: Minutes: 225th Meeting, November 14, 1968: ORW.4063 Nigeria.

to be too closely associated with one side in the conflict, but SCF was more concerned about maintaining its good relations with the British government. It was rewarded with many opportunities for further relief work throughout 1969 and 1970, working closely with the Nigerian Red Cross and the official Nigerian Rehabilitation Commission.¹⁴⁰

SCF's principal field officer in Nigeria throughout the crisis was A. R. Irvine Neave, a former lieutenant-commander of the Nigerian Navy pre- and postindependence.¹⁴¹ His confidence in his abilities to assess a situation was impressive, as was his understanding of the causes of poverty: "Nature provides all that is necessary for a healthy development of the human animal indigenous to the country, and yet there is the most appalling poverty, malnutrition, sickness, and mortality in children that one could ever imagine. Why is this? The answer is IGNORANCE."¹⁴²

Neave believed the way to move beyond such a "primitive society" was education: "giving advice about food and health to the ignorant."¹⁴³ Kwashiorkor, the form of acute childhood malnutrition focused on in parts of the Loach film, was an illness that could be solved not through redistributive justice (as Loach called for) but through the enlightenment brought by SCF teaching, "dispelling ignorance and superstitions in the minds of the mothers."¹⁴⁴ A few months later in his report on malnutrition he likened the situation to one of "starving in a supermarket." He railed against "the abysmal ignorance of the villagers," complained of "traditional prejudice against anything which is not established custom," and made the following claim about kwashiorkor and marasmus: all "could be avoided if only the mothers could be taught the simplest facts about nutrition."¹⁴⁵ He bemoaned how often SCF saved children and returned them to their families only to see them again a few months later because the mother is "either too lazy, too ignorant, too superstitious, or too stupid to know what to do."¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁰ SCA: Overseas Advisory Committee Papers: A650: Minutes: 236th Meeting, November 13, 1969: ORW.4269 Nigeria; 239th Meeting, February 12, 1970: ORW.4329 Nigeria; 240th Meeting, March 12, 1970: ORW.4350 Nigeria; 244th Meeting, July 9, 1970: ORW.4452 Nigeria; A63: Overseas Relief and Welfare: Nigeria, 1970–72: John Hunt, Colin Thornley, Brian Hodgson, N. B. J. Huijsman, *Nigeria: The Problem of Relief in the Aftermath of the Nigerian Civil War: Report of Lord Hunt's Mission*, Cmnd.4275 (London, 1970); A68: file: Nigeria, 1970–71: Note from Director General, May 11, 1970.

¹⁴¹ The Peerage: <http://www.thepeerage.com/p31415.htm#i314145>.

¹⁴² SCA: A164: Nigeria: A. R. Y. Irvine Neave, "Report from Nigeria (Ilesha)," September 1969, 1.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 2

¹⁴⁵ SCA: A68: Nigeria, 1970–71: Lt. Cmdr. A. R. Y. I. Neave, "Quarterly Report: Malnutrition in Western Nigeria," June 1970.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

The sentiments Neave expressed were shared throughout the organization. Other reports from Nigeria at this time spoke of the dangers of aid dependency, especially among a people “in the habit of living in an easy way.”¹⁴⁷ And as the reports filtered back to London, colleagues with similar military backgrounds repeated the cultural commentary.¹⁴⁸ All too much of it smacked of the language of “deserving” and “undeserving” that had characterized charitable activity among the poor in nineteenth-century Britain. Given a military twist, it created an organization extremely effective at managing an emergency relief operation, but rather blinkered in its reflections on the underlying causes of poverty and largely unprepared to challenge sources of official authority in a manner that might have undermined its own politically safe establishment support. Loach was forced to visit East Africa because of the Biafran war, but had he traveled to the west of the continent, it is unlikely that with relief workers such as Lieutenant Commander Neave on the scene he would have produced a film with a message any different from the one he ultimately showed to the SCF Executive in 1969.

CONCLUSION

The questions Loach raised about SCF cannot be answered with the certitude that he brought to the subject. Certainly the rhetoric of the film ran away with itself, and the charity was always going to be upset at its complete absence in the second half. But in the denouement to the dispute between Loach and SCF, there is much to suggest he had touched an extremely raw nerve. SCF did not want simply to ban the film. That would only have brought further negative publicity, especially if, as it feared, Loach would have claimed in the press that the ban was for “political reasons.”¹⁴⁹ Rather it sought to ensure nobody could ever see the film again by hiding its very existence, and it showed an extraordinary ruthlessness in the way it achieved this goal—by making Loach pay for his perceived slander.

SCF decided both to suppress the film and to claim its money back from Loach’s company, Kestrel Films. A legal battle then rumbled on for months, and it became increasingly obvious that SCF was not going to recoup its costs from such a small production outfit. Loach’s solicitor realized his case was not strong, and he offered to pay a nominal £100 and to hand over the film, provided that Loach and his producer, Tony Garnett, were allowed to hold a small private

¹⁴⁷ SCA: A164: Nigeria: Gustav Weissglass and Helen Milne, “Survival-Medicine in Nigeria,” January 1969.

¹⁴⁸ SCA: A164: Nigeria: J. V. Hawkins, “Report on Visit to Nigeria,” April 25, 1969.

¹⁴⁹ SCA: A43: Kestrel Films, 1969–70: Deputy Director General, “Memorandum: “Kestrel” Film—Meeting with Representatives of London Weekend Television,” August 8, 1969.

viewing to show “the industry that they have made a good film.”¹⁵⁰ SCF refused and demanded £5,000 plus legal costs. By this time, SCF knew it could have the film returned, and some within the organization thought it best to let the matter rest. But even when it learned in 1971 that Loach and his wife had been badly hurt in a car accident in which his five-year-old son and grandmother-in-law had died, it still pressed the case.¹⁵¹ Citing the commercial success of *Kes*, it pushed for £1,000 while Loach was convalescing and grieving, a relatively trivial (to SCF) and hence vindictive amount given the expenses incurred and the efforts made over the previous four years. Only in November 1971 did SCF back down: it accepted the token £100 and agreed to deposit the film at the British Film Institute, where it remained for another forty years before being publicly screened.¹⁵²

That SCF was so thin-skinned was perhaps due to an awareness that it was an organization out of step with the times. On several occasions it recognized it was not appealing to the young in the same way as the more recent humanitarian NGOs. While Christian Aid was often referred to as “Oxfam with hymns,” the differences between these two were much less significant than those between SCF and the rest of the sector. In 1972, it accepted that it had created a public image that made it “the antithesis of Oxfam and War on Want” and realized that some general stock-taking of its policy was necessary.¹⁵³ It commissioned one of its senior staff to launch a thoroughgoing review into “all aspects” of SCF’s policy and public image. This indeed found that many people believed SCF to be “rather old fashioned, very much a part of the ‘establishment,’ certainly not particularly progressive”: in reference to policy, it was often accused of “not rocking the boat.”¹⁵⁴

It is tempting to see in this internal review of its work a fitting end to the Loach affair: initially defensive, SCF eventually admitted there was a kernel of truth in the documentary’s accusations and that this needed to be addressed. Today the organization would like to think that the strategic review launched in the 1970s was the start of a closer alignment of SCF with the rest of the humanitarian mainstream. Certainly, it does now collaborate far more effectively with its fel-

¹⁵⁰ SCA: A43: Kestrel Films, 1969–70: Scollay to Hibbert, February 17, 1971.

¹⁵¹ Hayward, *Which Side Are You On?*, 129–30.

¹⁵² SCA: A43: Kestrel Films, 1969–70: Scollay to Hibbert, April 1, 1971; Scollay to Thornley, May 10, 1971; Teitelbaum to Kenneth Brown Baker Baker, June 17, 1971; Hibbert to Scollay, July 7, 1971; Hibbert to Scollay, July 13, 1971; Kenneth Brown Baker Baker to Teitelbaum, August 16, 1971; Scollay to Hibbert, August 25, 1971; Hibbert to Heath, September 15, 1971; Kenneth Brown Baker Baker to Teitelbaum, November 3, 1971; SCA: Executive Minutes: A423: 287th Meeting, September 16, 1971: E.4521, Kestrel Films.

¹⁵³ SCA: Executive Minutes: A422: 293rd Meeting, September 211, 1972: E.4634, *The Policy of the Fund and Its Public Image*.

¹⁵⁴ SCA: A85: File: Secretariat General: Director General’s Report, *Fund Policy and Public Image*, 1972: W. N. Hibbert, Draft Report.

low NGOs and is prepared to make its voice heard on the sorts of issues raised by the Haslemere Group and the World Development Movement at the end of the 1960s. So much is this the case that when a screening of the film was eventually allowed in 2011, the CEO of SCF, Justyn Forsyth, shared the platform with Loach in the discussion that followed. Admitting that it was “ridiculous” and “wrong” that the film was banned, he also argued that SCF had become “big enough to take it on the chin.”¹⁵⁵ However, it is, first of all, difficult to test this claim. Far more evidence would be required, and the specific research that would be needed is not possible. Despite its recent archival deposition, at the time of writing SCF’s legal team has insisted that only those papers relating to the period up to 1972 be made publicly available.

Both the film and this overview of SCF’s first half century raise deeper and more challenging questions about the history of nonstate humanitarianism. It would be too simplistic to argue that SCF was completely out of step with a monolithic aid sector in the 1960s. Rather, it represented one end of a spectrum in a debate—in fact, a dilemma—that all organizations were having, both internally and externally, at this time. There were serious questions all organizations were facing: about the proper role of charitable activity and the extent to which they could intervene in the political arena; about the assumptions and preconceived ideas staff took to development on the ground and how these notions needed to be informed by the latest thinking in development theory; about the relationships NGOs should court and maintain with official authorities, at home and in the field, and how these might constrain an organization’s activities. Indeed, these are issues that continue to trouble the sector to this day and are unlikely to disappear any time soon. There are no precise answers, though it is to be hoped that extensive research using the recently deposited archives of many of these NGOs might encourage further reflection.

I will raise just three of these issues here. First, what the assessment of SCF does is challenge the extent to which modern humanitarian NGOs can be regarded as a post-1945 phenomenon. What the continuities in thought and practice in SCF’s work do is cast doubt on any assumptions that imperial beliefs ended with the foundation of the United Nations. The issue is whether the same might be said of the rest of the sector. It is widely accepted that the legacy of empire stretched to many aspects of British society and politics.¹⁵⁶ As Bill Schwarz has recently argued, empire was forgotten and yet ever present in British life.¹⁵⁷ While NGOs such as Oxfam and War on Want might think themselves immune to such characterizations, the problematic relationship with their recipient com-

¹⁵⁵ BFI Live, “Save the Children Film.”

¹⁵⁶ Andrew Thompson, ed., *Britain’s Experience of Empire in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford, 2012).

¹⁵⁷ Schwarz, *Memories of Empire*.

munities—often mediated by the older institutions associated with Christian Mission—suggests that we might subject the whole of the charitable sector to a critique of its underlying assumptions about the peoples and the cultures they have tried to help.¹⁵⁸ SCF’s penchant for institutional provision betrayed a whole host of assumptions about both the British working class and the “ignorant” African. But the countless alternative development practices put forward by NGOs in Africa, Asia, and Latin America ought also to be subject to sustained historical critique. The recent opening of further NGO archives, especially Oxfam’s, should make it possible to examine the relationship of the metropolitan NGOs to their recipient communities.¹⁵⁹ Had Loach made a film about another organization, he might not have found what he interpreted to be overt neocolonialism, but he might well have come across world-weary field-workers who betray a whole range of other assumptions about the lives and beliefs of those they have chosen to help. Indeed, more recent critiques of the sector have continued to put the charge that through their moral high-handedness and their eagerness to intervene, modern humanitarians have much in common with dyed-in-the-wool imperialists.¹⁶⁰

Second, SCF’s position as the “establishment” charity, close to both ministers and monarchs, raises ongoing questions about the relationship between the voluntary sector and the state. What is obvious in the history of SCF is that one of the reasons its early radicalism was soon lost was because of its desire to maintain the legitimacy conferred upon it by its impressive list of patrons and presidents. Either deliberately through the membership of the council, or implicitly through what SCF staff assumed their supporters in government might think, its close connections with those at the heart of power constrained its freedom of maneuver. Within the aid and development sector, the question has long been one of whether NGOs are “too close for comfort.”¹⁶¹ The qualitative connections SCF had with the establishment prefigure many of the more quantitative connections developed

¹⁵⁸ See, for instance, the debate on partnership: Bill Cooke and Uma Kothari, eds., *Participation: The New Tyranny?* (London, 2004), 72–87.

¹⁵⁹ One excellent example made possible when the Oxfam archive was previously accessible (before its temporary closure while being transferred to and cataloged at the Bodleian Library, Oxford) is Jennings, *Surrogates of the State*.

¹⁶⁰ David Rieff, *A Bed for the Night: Humanitarianism in Crisis* (New York, 2003), 61.

¹⁶¹ Michael Edwards and David Hulme, “Too Close for Comfort? The Impact of Official Aid on Nongovernmental Organizations,” *World Development* 24, no. 6 (1996): 961–73; Peter Burnell, “Debate: Third World Charities in Britain towards 2000,” *Community Development Journal* 28, no. 1 (1993): 66–81; Smith, *More than Altruism*; Burnell, *Foreign Aid in a Changing World*; Doug Hellinger, “NGOs and the Large Aid Donors: Changing the Terms of Engagement,” *World Development* 15, suppl. (1987): 135–43; Tina Wallace, Sarah Crowther, and Andrew Shepherd, *Standardising Development: Influences on UK NGOs’ Policies and Procedures* (Oxford, 1997); Terje Tvedt, *Angels of Mercy or State-Financed Development Diplomats? NGOs and Foreign Aid* (Oxford,

with the rise of state funding of NGOs in Britain since the 1970s, especially the Joint Funding Scheme launched in 1975 (which was supporting the work of 120 NGOs by the early 1990s).¹⁶² NGOs usually acknowledge the dangers of accepting government contracts and official sources of funding, but the question is only asked of a moment in time. Again, sustained historical investigation of the relationship between governments and charities can perhaps provide a more compelling answer.¹⁶³ Certainly the recent accounts of specific fields of activity have shown how intertwined with the institutions of global governance NGOs have become.¹⁶⁴ The sniping that continues within the sector as to who is more or less independent merely reflects the fact that the problems associated with SCF's conservative approach to charitable activity in the 1960s are relevant for other humanitarian agencies too.

Third, in this era of heightened regard for philanthropy and voluntarism, we might return to the older critiques of charity that inspired Loach and earlier drove so many to build the welfare state. What is remarkable is that in all of the attacks on the aid industry, the NGOs have largely managed to maintain their reputation as the "good guys." Their espousal of alternatives and their focus on the small scale has meant they have always been able to suggest they have represented the solutions to, rather than the problems of, the aid industry. Recently, however, commentators have begun to realize that NGOs are neither the alternative nor, in many instances, small.¹⁶⁵ Popular accounts suggesting that aid does not work, and that emergency humanitarianism too often prolongs conflicts, have begun to appear in greater number.¹⁶⁶ Some of the most recent have even begun to have

1998); David Lewis and Tina Wallace, eds., *New Roles and Relevance: Development NGOs and the Challenge of Change* (Bloomfield, CT, 2000).

¹⁶² Central Office of Information, *Britain and Development Aid* (London, 1995), 24.

¹⁶³ Michael Woolcock, Simon Szreter, and Vijayendra Rao, "How and Why Does History Matter for Development Policy?," *Journal of Development Studies* 47, no. 1 (2011): 70–96; C. A. Bayly, Vijayendra Rao, Simon Szreter, and Michael Woolcock, *History, Historians and Development Policy* (Manchester, 2011).

¹⁶⁴ Matthew Connelly, *Fatal Misconception: The Struggle to Control World Population* (Cambridge, MA, 2008); James Vernon, *Hunger: A Modern History* (Cambridge, MA, 2007); Matthew Hilton, *Prosperity for All: Consumer Activism in an Era of Globalisation* (Ithaca, NY, 2009); Margaret E. Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, *Activists beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics* (Ithaca, NY, 1998); Erez Manela, "A Pox on Your Narrative: Writing Disease Control into Cold War History," *Diplomatic History* 34, no. 2 (2010): 299–323; Nick Cullather, "The Foreign Policy of the Calorie," *American Historical Review* 112, no. 2 (2007): 337–64.

¹⁶⁵ David Ransom, "The Big Charity Bonanza," *New Internationalist* 383 (2005), available at: <http://www.newint.org/features/2005/10/01/keynote/>.

¹⁶⁶ Michael Maren, *The Road to Hell* (New York, 1997); Roger C. Riddell, *Does Foreign Aid Really Work?* (Oxford, 2007); William Easterly, *The White Man's Burden* (Oxford, 2006).

the NGOs within their sights.¹⁶⁷ Work is beginning to emerge that analyzes the history of humanitarianism and development so as to measure NGO effectiveness, but further research will ensure that history provides an important contribution to a debate that has long concerned so many disciplines across the social sciences. Certainly, as income inequalities around the world begin to mirror the proportions that existed in the Victorian era—the golden age of philanthropy—then older questions that used to be asked of the limits of charitable endeavor might once again be raised, if not so bluntly as in the Loach film. Indeed, as SCF approaches its centenary in 2019, it is tempting to wonder what another Loach film commissioned to mark this anniversary would look like.

Finally, to return to the opening point about the role of history, NGOs have proved all too willing to admit their failures in the past only as a means of promoting their new methods in the present. At the public screening of Loach's film, SCF's Justin Forsyth claimed that from the 1960s to the 1980s aid did "more harm than good." This was an extraordinary admission. Clearly, he wanted to convey how far SCF and the humanitarian sector had traveled since Loach made his film. But if we add to his own statement some of the evidence about SCF in the previous fifty years, then it does beg the question of how long an NGO is to be permitted to cause "harm" before it finally gets it right and does "good." The humanitarian sector is one that is remarkably frank in its admissions that it too often finds itself "condemned to repeat."¹⁶⁸ But this in itself is a claim that requires further historical analysis. Why is it that charities and NGOs have gone on to repeat mistakes and operate in ways they later believe to be wrong? History ought not to be used crudely to learn direct lessons from the past. But in the case of saving both children and adults, it might just be that history can let us appreciate better just what has succeeded and what has failed. Certainly, from what can be seen of SCF's first fifty years, the organization was closely implicated in both the advantages and the disadvantages of nonstate humanitarianism and long-term development. Moreover, it was implicated in ways that call into question the high regard that has continued to be accorded to the NGO sector as a whole.

¹⁶⁷ Linda Polman, *War Games: The Story of Aid and War in Modern Times* (London, 2010).

¹⁶⁸ Fiona Terry, *Condemned to Repeat? The Paradox of Humanitarian Intervention* (Ithaca, NY, 2002).