

THE STATE, VOLUNTARY ACTIVITIES AND NATIONAL AIMS IN SOCIAL CARE FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN INTER-WAR CZECHOSLOVAKIA

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The article is directed towards describing and analysing three thematic parts. The first is directed towards the social conditions in the modern European societies of around 1900, which stimulated the development of public care for the young. These conditions are classified as follows: the end of the first demographic transition, an economy of human resources motivated by utilitarian thinking, nationalist populationism and militarism. In the specific conditions of building Czechoslovakia, state propaganda emphasizing building the image of a democratic, tolerant and progressive republic must be added to these facts.

The second part is devoted to the problematic fusion of the different traditions of care for the young in the Austrian and Hungarian parts of the Habsburg Monarchy. Analysis of the problems of unification focuses on three thematic parts: 1) differences in the legislation of the two parts of the state, 2) the institutional structure and its development, 3) traditions of civil charity. In spite of the transfer of the Czech organizational structure of District Youth Care and its centralized building based on ethnic principles into Slovakia and Sub-Carpathian Ruthenia, strong elements of continuity with the pre-war system remained.

The third part deals with nationalism and ethnic factors in social care for the young. Precisely here, there was strong continuity with the 19th century, when national rivalry between the Czechs and Germans influenced the development of the institutions of social care. Special attention is devoted to the Roma and the application of the vague concept of the “Gypsy way of life” to care for the young.

Key Words: Children. Youth. Czechoslovakia. Social Care. Social Policy. Nationalism. Minorities.

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According to the contemporary and later evaluation of the system of social care for children and young people, inter-war Czechoslovakia succeeded in creating a relatively well organized and functional model combining three cooperating actors: the state, local government and voluntary charity. To what degree was such a combined system unique or specific, if we consider that the preceding models in the Austrian and Hungarian parts of the Habsburg Monarchy were also based on the combination of non-state, local government and state social care? Research shows that the difference lay especially in the role of the state in this developing area of social policy before and after 1918. On the other hand, it is possible to observe that in spite of the proclaimed distance from everything Austro-Hungarian, continuity was maintained in various ways in the practice of social care in the young Czechoslovakia.

Apart from this question, differences in the organization of social care for children and young people in the Czech Lands and Slovakia come into the foreground, including their different starting points in legislation, the network of social institutions and traditions of charity.¹ In practice, these factors proved to be the main obstacles to the ambition of the Czechoslovak state to create a unified organizational structure for state and non-state activities directed towards care for the young in the whole state. Apart from these differences, we note the resulting practice, which meant that the building of a complete network of district bodies in the whole territory of the state was achieved only partially in Slovakia in the course of the 1930s. The basic unit in the structure covering the whole state had to be the district, with a centre named “District Youth Care” (Okresní péče o mládež – OPM),² which would coordinate all the public and private, state and non-state forms of social support for children and young people.

In recent times, Slovak historiography has paid attention to the specifics of the organization, legislation and forms of public social care for children and young people in inter-war Slovakia.³ Especially M. Laclavíková and A.

1 The study arose in the framework of the project APVV-17-0399 *From the Monarchy to the Republic: The Transition process of the Society in Slovakia in the European context* and the project VEGA 2/0114/21 *From Charity to the State Social Policy: Ideas, Models and Practice in the period of State Interventionism in Slovakia during the 19th and the first half of 20th Centuries*, researched at the Institute of History of the Slovak Academy of Sciences. This text originated with the support of the project *Creativity and adaptability as conditions for the success of Europe in an inter-connected world*, reg. no.: CZ.02.1.01/0.0/0.0/16_019/0000734, financed from the European Fund Regional Development. The cooperation was a result of the COST action CA18119 “Who cares in Europe?”.

2 In the Czech terminology of the time: “Okresní péče o mládež”, in the Slovak terminology of the time: “Okresná pečlivosť o mládež”.

3 The problem of care for orphans and socially dependant children over a long period is consi-

Švecová concentrate primarily on the legislative framework and institutional basis for public care for children and young people after the formation of Czechoslovakia.⁴ V. Rigová has described in detail the organizational structure of the developing system of social care for the young in the inter-war period. In her latest monograph, she focused mainly to the category of criminal and “*morally disturbed*” young people.⁵ Anna Falisová has researched public social and health care especially for mothers with children in inter-war Slovakia for a long time.⁶ In spite of this, there is a lack of comparative work on differences between the Czech Lands and Slovakia, resulting from differences between the preceding

dered in the publication: „*Zabrániť bahnu morálneho rozkladu*“ : *starostlivosť o osirelé deti v Uhorsku/na Slovensku do roku 1945*. Eds. Ingrid Kušnieráková, Elena Mannová. Bratislava: VEDA, vydavateľstvo SAV, 2020.

- 4 Their research is summarized in the monograph LACLAVÍKOVÁ, Miriam and Adriana ŠVECOVÁ. *Dieťa medzivojnového Slovenska. Verejná sociálna starostlivosť o deti a mládež na Slovensku a jej inštitucionálna základňa*. Praha: Leges, 2019. From their latest work see also their sounding into the activities of the organization Okresná pečlivosť o mládež (District Youth Care OPM) in Trenčín: ŠVECOVÁ, Adriana and Miriam LACLAVÍKOVÁ. “Úkoly ktoré nás čakaly a čakajú, sú veľké a široké je pole pôsobenia”. Činnosť spolkov Okresnej pečlivosti o mládež v medzivojnovom období na Slovensku. In: „*Zabrániť bahnu morálneho rozkladu*“, p. 419–444.
- 5 RIGOVÁ, Viktória. Etablovanie Zemského ústredia pečlivosti o mládež v Bratislave a jeho okresných pobočiek v medzivojnovom Československu. In: *Studia Historica Nitriensia*, 2021, vol. 25, no. 1, p. 131–152; RIGOVÁ, Viktória. *Mládež nad priepasťou: sociálna starostlivosť o (nielen) problémovú mládež na Slovensku v rokoch 1918–1945*. Bratislava: Paradigma Publishing, 2022.
- 6 From many works see especially: FALISOVÁ, Anna. Spoločnosť a jej premeny v medzivojnovom období. Sféra sociálnej starostlivosti. In: FERENČUHOVÁ, Bohumila and Milan ZEMKO a kol. *Slovensko v 20. storočí. Tretí zväzok. V medzivojnovom Československu 1918–1939*. Bratislava: VEDA, 2012, p. 114–126; FALISOVÁ, Anna. Medzivojnové Slovensko z pohľadu zdravotného a sociálneho. In: ZEMKO, Milan and Valerián BYSTRICKÝ, ed. *Slovensko v Československu (1918–1939)*. Bratislava: VEDA, 2004, p. 365–416; FALISOVÁ, Anna. Aktivity štátu a dobrovoľných organizácií zamerané na zlepšenie zdravotných pomerov na Slovensku v rokoch 1918–1938. In: *Červený kríž, Alica G. Masaryková a Slovensko pri príležitosti 40. výročia smrti PhDr. Alice G. Masarykovej, prvej predsedníčky ČsČK a 125. výročie vzniku prvých spolkov ČK na území Slovenska. Zborník príspevkov z medzinárodnej vedeckej konferencie*. Bratislava: Slovenský Červený kríž, 2006 p. 25–34; FALISOVÁ, Anna. Zdravotno-sociálna starostlivosť o deti v Bratislave v minulosti. In: *Fenomén Bratislava*. Ed. Matej Medvecký. Bratislava: Ústav pamäti národa – Pamäť národa, 2011, p. 398–418; FALISOVÁ, Anna and Eva MOROVICSOVÁ. Realita v oblasti zdravotnej starostlivosti o deti na Slovensku v medzivojnovom období. In: *Studia Historica Nitriensia*, 2015, vol. 19, no. 2, p. 253–273. See also: JAKOBYOVÁ, Barbora. Americká potravinová pomoc pre deti po prvej svetovej vojne. In: *Dlhá cesta od monarchie k republike : zmeny režimov, myslenia a životného štýlu na Slovensku a v strednej Európe od polovice 19. do polovice 20. storočia. Jubileum Dušana Kováča*. Ed. Matej Hanula. Bratislava: Historický ústav SAV; Veda, vydavateľstvo SAV, 2021, p. 177–192.

Austrian and Hungarian models of social care. The situation is no better in Czech historiography. The period of the long 19th century has been thoroughly studied thanks to the published dissertation of Martina Halířová, but it does not extend into the inter-war period.⁷ The history of childhood published as part of *The Great History of the Czech Lands [Velké dějiny zemí Koruny české]* consider this theme only marginally, because social care was only one of many themes included in the book.⁸ At the beginning of the new millennium, Lukáš Fasora produced a thorough dissertation on inter-war care for young people in Moravia, but it was only partly published in the form of several studies in periodicals.⁹ Other authors have also produced periodical articles on questions concerning care for the young in the Czech lands.¹⁰ With regard for the rich archive sources, the care for the young is also a popular topic for student theses.¹¹ From the foreign literature, the monographs and articles by the American historian Tara Zahra are must-have items. She emphasizes especially the aspect of national competition

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- 7 HALÍŘOVÁ, Martina. *Sociální patologie a ochrana dětství v Čechách od dob osvícenství do roku 1914. Disciplinace jako součást ochrany dětství*. Pardubice: Univerzita Pardubice, 2012.
- 8 LENDEROVÁ, Milena et al. *Velké dějiny zemí Koruny české. Tematická řada Dějství*. Praha: Paseka, 2021.
- 9 FASORA, Lukáš. *Systém České zemské péče o mládež na Moravě v letech 1921–1937*. Dissertation at the Faculty of Arts of Masaryk University in Brno, 2001; FASORA, Lukáš. Postavení největších moravských měst v systému sociální péče o mládež v letech 1921–1937. In: *Vlastivědný věstník moravský*, 2003, no. 2, p. 142–154; FASORA, Lukáš. Problémy systému péče o mládež na Moravě v letech 1921–1937. In: *Vlastivědný věstník moravský*, 2001, no. 1, p. 24–38; FASORA, Lukáš. Centralizační trendy v organizaci péče o mládež v historických zemích Československa v letech 1918–1938. In: *Vlastivědný věstník moravský*, 1999, no. 2, p. 156–160.
- 10 See HOFFMANNOVÁ, Jaroslava. K vývoji sociální péče o děti a mládež v Čechách. In: *Sborník archivních prací*, 1982, vol. 32, no. 2, p. 419–445; HOFFMANNOVÁ, Jaroslava. Okresní péče o mládež v Brandýse nad Labem. In: *Středočeský sborník historický*, 1980, vol. 15, no. 1, p. 151–161; FÍŠMISTROVÁ, Věra. Okresní péče o mládež v Přerově. “Služba dítěti – nejvyšší služba národu”. In: *Sborník Státního okresního archivu Přerov*, 2008, vol. 16, p. 196–228; HALÍŘOVÁ, Martina. Česká zemská komise pro ochranu dítěte a péči o mládež v prvním válečném roce 1914–1915. In: *Léta do pole kovaná 1914–1918, sv. 2*. Ed. Jan Kykal. Praha: Vojensko-historický ústav, 2017, p. 222–229.
- 11 See e.g. HOLASOVÁ, Iveta. *Péče o mládež v Olomouci ve 20. století*. Master thesis. Brno: Masarykova univerzita, 2014; MALÁ, Kateřina. *Česká zemská péče o mládež na Moravě v Brně v první polovině 20. století*. Master thesis. Pardubice: Univerzita Pardubice, 2013; PÁNKOVÁ, Kamila. *Činnost České zemské péče pro péči o mládež v Čechách s dopadem na českou okresní péči o mládež na Tachovsku v letech 1929–1933*. Bachelor thesis. České Budějovice: Jihočeská univerzita, 2012; SCHOVÁNKOVÁ, Kristýna. *Siroťci, sirotčince a chudobince v Plzni*. Bachelor thesis. Plzeň: Západočeská univerzita v Plzni, 2015; MORAVANSKÝ, Matěj. *Kontinuity a diskontinuity v péči o mládež v letech 1938–1948*. Bachelor thesis. Praha: Univerzita Karlova, 2021.

between the Czechs and Germans, which also extended into social care.¹² From the point of view of empirical study, Moravia-Silesia is the best part of inter-war Czechoslovakia. The archive documents from the district youth care services of other parts of the state are still awaiting to be analysed.

With regard to the current state of historiography, we consider it useful to attempt a comparative study of the substantial differences and obstacles to unification efforts in the Czechoslovak Republic. We also consider the arguments of the experts, state social services personnel and non-state participants of the time. Their arguments emphasizing the progressive and democratic character of Czechoslovakia, significantly influenced not only the discourse, but also the political decisions about the legislative framework and partly also the real practice of providing support for young people, who needed help from outside their own families. Analysis of the argumentation of the time is especially important for knowledge of the national aims of the declared and actually provided social care for the young, who were seen by all political regimes as the future of the nation. Apart from humanitarian assistance for neighbours, the national education of children became an important motivation for social care. The sensitively and controversially perceived problem of linguistic and cultural assimilation of children by means of social care facilities was not acute only in the pre-war Kingdom of Hungary, where the system of care for socially dependant children with considerable state involvement also had the aim of securing the dominance of the Hungarian or Magyar language and culture. The national struggle for children in the ethnically mixed Austrian part of the Habsburg Monarchy occurred on the level of competing German and Czech language voluntary societies and institutions competing to bring up children. The continuity of these problems and national aims after the formation of Czechoslovakia is clear, while they also played an important role in the post-war reorganization of the system for social care for children and youth.

The motives of political interest in children: The needs of a modern state and economy

Although the new Czechoslovakia was soon struggling with the post-war economic crisis and the social consequences of the First World War, the leadership of the newly formed Czechoslovak Ministry of Social Care announced a wide range of social and health care for children and young people as one of the important priorities. In 1921, the Minister for Social Care Josef Gruber¹³

12 ZAHRA, Tara. *Kidnapped Souls: National Indifference and the Battle for Children in the Bohemian Lands 1900–1948*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008.

13 He held this function from September 1920 to September 1921.

underlined the importance of social policy reforms in the new state. He stated that a widely conceived “*social policy, also including land reform, is the most important feature of the legislation of our republic up to now*”. He did not hide the high ambitions of the political leaders to implement a social policy programme also as an expression of the advancement of the new Czechoslovak state: “*The new republic, democratic and culturally and economically highly developed, has the noble ambition fully proportionate to the political importance of our working classes, to prove itself as a highly progressive state, perhaps socially and politically more progressive than its nearer and more distant neighbours.*”¹⁴ This effort corresponded to the wider efforts of the founders of the republic to justify the break up of the Habsburg Monarchy before the governments of the Western democratic countries. While the international and domestic opponents of Czechoslovak statehood drew a picture of a weak, hypocritical and repressive regime, the myth built by Masaryk presented the image of an idyllic, tolerant, progressive and democratic heart of Europe, in this struggle for the sympathy of international public opinion.¹⁵ The progressivist expansive social policy of the new regime formed an integral part of this picture.

The last decades of the 19th century brought growing interest in care for children in most European countries.¹⁶ Apparently this was connected with completion of the first demographic transition, with birthrates beginning to fall in Western countries after a long period of rapid population growth. A gradual decline in the birthrate began to appear in Austria and Hungary after 1880, but starting from higher numbers in the eastern part of the Monarchy.¹⁷ However, the motives for growing interest in children and their desired development cannot be reduced to a one-cause explanation. If they wanted to successfully mobilize public financial resources from the state, local government or private donors, the promoters of child care had to appropriately justify their demands in terms of the protection of important and legitimate social interests.

The fears of dying out that already depressed especially the French in the late 19th century, begin to be mentioned in the Czechoslovak environment only in the 1930s, when the great economic crisis led to a decline in the Czech birth-rate

14 GRUBER Jos[ef]. Ministerstvo sociální péče a přehled dosavadní sociální politiky československé republiky. In: *Sociální revue (Věstník Ministerstva sociální péče)*, 1921, vol. 2, no. 15, p. 216–232, quotation p. 216.

15 ORZOFF, Andrea. *Battle for the Castle. Thy Myth of Czechoslovakia in Europe, 1914–1948*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009, p. 19–20.

16 See NEDOMA, Václav. *Ochranná péče o mládež v cizině i u nás*. Praha: Topič, 1916.

17 KOLOUŠEK, Jan. *Národní hospodářství, I. Díl*. Praha: Česká matice technická, 1920, p. 114–115.

to almost the lowest level in Europe.¹⁸ However, fears of decline in the birth-rate combined with high infant and child mortality in pre-war Hungary, and a resulting decline in the proportion of the Magyar ethnic group in the state, became a serious argument for the introduction of a new system of public social care for children under state control at the very beginning of the 20th century.¹⁹ However, our ancestors thought of economically rational use of human capital earlier than they became afraid of dying out. Wasting of potential skill as a result of unsatisfactory social conditions for the upbringing of children added economic measurability to simple human sympathy for the fate of orphaned and poor children. The sociologist Arnošt Inocenc Bláha spoke characteristically of the high “*death-rate of child talent*” in this sense. In his book *The child and the environment* from 1933, he stated with reference to the American progressive sociologist Edward Hayes: “*There are no statistics to show us the death-rate of human souls and consciousness in the poorer groups, but there is no doubt that thousands and thousands are ruined, who could be valuable people in a different environment.*”²⁰

Bláha’s expression “*valuable people*” does not mean only economically valuable, but also morally and biologically. However, the religious imperative for philanthropy was gradually losing its convincingness in a gradually secularizing society. Scientific rationality based on objective categorization of individuals and their subjection to varying regimes of care and repression, was beginning to penetrate into the sphere of Christian charity, which had been content to divide the poor into deserving and undeserving. Scientific findings showed the need for more differentiated care, which also meant the need for more qualified personnel, scientific data, material securing of institutions, and so more financial resources. In 1902, the respected musician Bohuslav Glos, who was also an active promoter of care for the young, appealed to the Darwin inspired star criminologist Cesare Lambroso, stating that libertinism among the young was not only a matter of poverty, but just as much a result of physical and mental degeneration. From this, he drew the conclusion that “*it is essential to correctly classify everybody, and identify the unfortunate people so that they receive the treatment they need*

18 RÁKOSNÍK, Jakub and Radka ŠUSTROVÁ. Toward a Population Revolution? The Threat of Extinction and Family Policy in Czechoslovakia 1930s–1950s. In: *Journal of Family History*, 2018, vol. 43, no. 2, p. 179.

19 See: Explanatory report on proposed legislation on state children’s asylums from 1901: Indokolás „az állami gyermekmenhelyekről” szóló törvényjavaslatához. (1-ső melléklet a 997. számú irományhoz.) In: *Az 1896. évi november hó 23-ára hirdetett Országgyűlés nyomtatványai. Képviselőház. – Irományok. XXXIV. kötet.* Budapest: Pesti könyvnyomda-Részvénytársaság, 1901, 997 szám, p. 142–150.

20 BLÁHA, Arnošt Inocenc. *Dítě a prostředí.* Praha: Státní nakladatelství, 1933, p. 3, 40.

and do not harm society... People need to be classified like grain".²¹ Lambroso was not an intellectual hegemon, but even his opponents did not cast doubt on degeneration. They only argued against his emphasis on inheritance underlining the influence of the social environments. However, it is true of both camps that *"fear of degeneration became one of the most frequent expressions not only for the most varied biological and anthropological phenomena, but also for a complex social and cultural crisis, which contemporaries perceived in the context of the advance of modernism. It represented one of the main concepts through which the urban middle class dealt with the social impacts of urbanization and industrialization"*.²²

"Valuable people" in the collectivist sense meant an abstract idea of a healthy and also numerous nation. Especially in the multi-ethnic Central European environment, care for the young also meant struggle for the *"souls of the children"*. The language of communication in children's homes and foster families became a highly political issue contributing to the explosive national controversies.²³ At the same time however, this national competition also acted as an effective stimulus to the development of institutions and new systems of social care, because the nationalist movement was well aware of how important these institutions were for the primary socialization of children, and so for their cultural anchoring as adults. Constant shortage of financial resources and expert personnel taught the Habsburg state to use these nationalist activists and incorporate them into its emerging system of state social policy.²⁴

If social care for the young had the internal national aim of ensuring that as many people as possible fulfilled their desired roles in favour of the national community, from the outward looking point of view care for the young had military importance. The First World War showed the need for as many men as possible, who were capable of fighting, but conscription showed a surprisingly high proportion of men, who were not capable of fighting, and this also applied to the next war. This experience accelerated the building up of social care

21 GLOS, Bohuslav. *Mládež zanedbaná, opuštěná a spustlá*. Brno: vl. nákl., 1902, p. 28, 30.

22 KONRÁD, Ota and Rudolf KUČERA. *Cesty z apokalypsy: Fyzické násilí v pádu a obnově střední Evropy 1914–1922*. Praha: Academia – Masarykův ústav a archiv, 2018, p. 42–45.

23 For more details see: ZAHRA, T. Kidnapped Souls; on the situation in the Kingdom of Hungary: DUDEKOVÁ KOVÁČOVÁ, Gabriela. Úskalia reformy starostlivosti o siroty a „opustené deti“ v Uhorsku na prelome 19. a 20. storočia. In: *„Zabrániť bahnu morálneho rozkladu“*, p. 207–248.

24 ZAHRA, Tara. "Each nation only cares for its own": Empire, Nation, and Child Welfare Activism in the Bohemian Lands, 1900 – 1918. In: *American Historical Review*, 2006, vol. 111, no. 5, pp. 1379–1381.

institutions in individual countries.²⁵ Military needs went hand in hand with the development of health and social care already from the mid 19th century, and this trend continued in the inter-war period. This is also clear in the Czechoslovak case. In the atmosphere of growing threat to the republic in 1938, associated with growing prestige of the armed forces, the impressive publication *Army and Nation* included a section devoted to the development of social policy in the new republic after 1918: “*Hunger cannot be allowed for military as well as humanitarian reasons. A welcome aspect of our developed health insurance is that it also applies to family members, and secures a decent standard of health care for the whole family of the insured person. It contributes to the interests of defence.*” Social insurance enacted by legislation in 1924, was similarly described as “*the strongest pre-condition for security and defence*”.²⁶

The mixture of these motivations jointly determined the conceptual form and reality of the approaches to solving the problem of caring for and bringing up children who lacked adequate parental care. In Czechoslovakia, the term “*care for the young*” included various forms of support for socially vulnerable children from birth to the completion of their fifteenth year, age of maturity or economic self-sufficiency.²⁷

Obstacles to unification: the Austrian versus the Hungarian model

The differences in the legislation, networks of social institutions and traditions of charity between the two parts of the dual Habsburg Monarchy became the greatest problems in the unification of public social care in Czechoslovakia. The intention of the Ministry of Social Care (Hereinafter: MSC) was to re-organize the existing forms and administration of public social care in the territory of the whole state by creating a unified legislative framework and “*building up of an effective organization on the basis of reliable organs that would secure the provision of care for the young*”.²⁸ However, the different systems based on legislation taken over from Austria-Hungary represented an obstacle.²⁹ As

25 OBRINGER, Herbert and Klaus PETERSEN. Mass Warfare and the Welfare State – Causal Mechanisms and Effects. In: *British Journal of Political Science*, 2017, vol. 47, no. 1, p. 207.

26 MALYPETR, Jan, KAPRAS, Jan and František SOUKUP. *Armáda a národ*. Praha: Národní rada československá, 1938, p. 329.

27 For more details especially: TŮMA, Antonín. *Právní základy sociální péče o mládež v Republice československé*. Praha: Česká zemská komise pro péči o mládež v Čechách, 1925.

28 TŮMA, A. *Právní základy sociální péče*, p. 222.

29 The Czechoslovak Act no. 11 from 28 October 1918 stated that all existing legislation remained valid without regard for substantial differences between the Austrian legal order valid for Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia, and the Hungarian legislation valid for Slovakia and Sub-Carpathian Ruthenia. TŮMA, A. *Právní základy sociální péče*, p. 20–21.

Jaroslav Janovský, an official at the MSC stated in 1922: “*Dualism in legislation and in the organization of the public administration, which the Czechoslovak state took over as a temporary legacy from the preceding Austro-Hungarian Empire, is also found in the legislation and organization of social care.*” However, he stated that in spite of these differences between the so-called territory of Hungarian law and their different administrative arrangements compared to the Czech Lands, it meant “*a similar legal arrangement of care for persons dependent on public assistance,*” based on the principles of poor relief.³⁰

In both parts of the Monarchy, municipalities had a legal obligation to provide and pay for social assistance for their own poor.³¹ The above mentioned regional differences were supposed to be removed in the new republic by reforms to the public administration and organization of social care for persons in need. In the field of assistance for children without parental protection or other socially dependant young people, the emphasis had to shift from removing the results of poverty associated with repressive measures, to up-bringing and prevention according to possibilities to support children in their families.³² The fact that in the understanding of the social policy of Czechoslovakia, the terms “*poor relief*” and “*poverty care*” began to be seen as not politically correct and were replaced by the less stigmatizing term “*social assistance*”, also testifies to a modified approach to the problem of poverty.³³

There were substantial ***differences in the social legislation*** of Austria and Hungary precisely in the field of public care for children aged up to 15. In contrast to Austria, social care for children was officially taken over by the state

30 JANOVSKEJ, Jar. Sociální a chudinská péče o děti a dospělé na Slovensku a Podkarpatské Rusi. In: *Péče o mládež*, 1922, vol. 1, no. 10, p. 310.

31 TŮMA, A. Právní základy sociální péče, p. 41–61. On the principles and organization of poverty relief see especially: HLAVÁČKA, Milan and Pavel CIBULKA et al. *Chudinství a chudoba jako sociálně historický fenomén : ambivalence dobových perspektiv, individuální a kolektivní strategie chudých a instrumentária řešení*. Praha: Historický ústav, 2013; RÁKOSNÍK, Jakub and Igor TOMEŠ et al. *Sociální stát v Československu: právně-institucionální vývoj v letech 1918–1992*. Praha: Auditorium, 2012; „*Chudé budete mít mezi sebou stále*“. *Od charity k sociální politice ve městech 18. – 20. století*. Ed. Oľga Fejtová et. al. Praha: Scriptorium; Archiv hlavního města Prahy, 2015 (Documenta Pragensia, 34); DUDEKOVÁ, Gabriela. Právo alebo milosrdenstvo? Domovská príslušnosť ako základný princíp sociálnej starostlivosti v Uhorsku. In: KOVÁČ, Dušan et al. *Sondy do slovenských dejín v dlhom 19. storočí*. Bratislava: Historický ústav Slovenskej akadémie vied, 2013, p. 196–213; DUDEKOVÁ, Gabriela. The System of Social Care in 19th Century Bratislava and its Modernization around 1900. In: *Historický časopis*, 2015, vol. 63, no. 5, p. 874–876.

32 TŮMA, A. Právní základy sociální péče, p. 12–14.

33 RÁKOSNÍK, Jakub. Od hegemonie k marginalizaci: vývojové tendence české chudinské péče v letech 1863–1956. In: „*Chudé budete mít mezi sebou stále*“, p. 158.

in Hungary. By act no. 8 from 1901, the Hungarian state took over financing and direct provision of care for so-called abandoned children aged up to 7 in a new system of state orphanages or so-called children's asylums.³⁴ Care for the same category of children aged from 7 to 15 was also controlled by the state, but still had to be financed by their home municipality. Although municipalities could place children aged 7 – 15 in non-state orphanages, these were subject to state control and in practice often remained within the network of state asylums. The centralized system headed by the state children's asylum in Budapest officially began to operate from 1 September 1903.³⁵ The basis of the newly established state system remained, as in Austria, foster care for children, but organized by means of state asylums. The children assigned by local offices to state care, were temporarily placed in a state children's asylum, and its director arranged for them to be placed in foster families in the surrounding district. The choice of foster carers continued existing practice and that also applied in Austria: Foster carers had to be reliable wet-nurses, or the families of farmers and craftsmen for older children.³⁶ Only children with health or other handicaps remained in the institutional care of the asylums, and when possible they were placed in specialized institutions for the physically or mentally handicapped.³⁷

The extension of state protection for children dependent on public care was considered a break through compared to previous practice. The political elites of Hungary presented it as a unique measure for the protection of children in the whole of Europe.³⁸ The relatively progressive principles of the legislation, guaranteeing direct state care to officially recognized socially dependent children aged up to 7, and state control of their care from 7 to 15, meant important new

34 The act came into force on 9 June 1901. *Zákonný článok VIII. z roku 1901 o štátnych útulkoch pre deti*. [Law no. 8 from 1901 about state asylums for children]. Budapest: Uh. kr. ministerstvo vnútra, 1901, p. 162–164.

35 Both acts i.e. nos. 8 and 21 from 1901, came into effect from 1. Sept. 1903. For more details from the point of view of a post-war social problems expert see: KAZDA, V. Státní péče o opuštěnou mládež na Slovensku a v Podkarpatské Rusi. In: *Sociální revue (Věstník Ministerstva sociální péče)*, 1921, vol. 2, no. 11, p. 158–162.

36 *Zákonný článok č. 21 z roku 1901, o opatere takých vyše 7 ročných dietok, ktoré sú odkázané na všeobecnú podporu*. [Law no. 21 from 1901 about the care of children over 7 years dependent on public support]. In: *Sbierka krajinských zákonov na rok 1901*, p. 242–244; STUBEN-RAUCH, Moriz von. *Statistische Darstellung des Vereinswesens im Kaiserthume Österreich*. Wien: Kaiserlich-königliche Hof- und Staatsdruckerei, 1857, p. 69.

37 For more details: HALÍŘOVÁ, M., *Sociální patologie*; DUDEKOVÁ KOVÁČOVÁ, G. *Úskalia reformy*, p. 207–248.

38 *Le droit de l'enfant abandonné et le système hongrois de protection de l'enfance. Ouvrage publié sous les auspices du Ministère royal de l'intérieur de Hongrie par Zoltán de Bosnyák, L. Edelsheim-Gyulai, avec une préface de Jules Andrássy*. Budapest: Athenaeum, 1909, p. 71.

principles directed towards building the system of state social policy in Hungary.³⁹ From the point of view of legal development, Slovak experts on the history of law of the time positively evaluated the act on state care for socially dependent children.⁴⁰ Evaluation of the Hungarian system of state social care for children must also consider the motivation of its creators. These motives were not only humanitarian, directed towards saving the lives and health of children, reducing infant mortality in Hungary, especially the extremely high death rate among infants placed in the paid care of wet-nurses. An equally important motivation for state officials was to make the financing of care more effective. Pro-population and nationalist arguments also had a firm place. They included the need to secure population growth in the country, to bring up the next generation as useful and loyal citizens, and to strengthen the numbers of the ethnic Magyars. When approving the legislation of state care, the parliamentary committee declared that in solving the problem of the “*extremely high level of infant mortality, it is also necessary to take into account both the general humanitarian and the Hungarian or Magyar national points of view*”.⁴¹

The practice of the new system under state supervision was decisive for a more objective evaluation of this reform. It had only limited effect because of various deficiencies. Several doctors and social workers criticized the practice of the selection and up-bringing of children in the framework of state social care in Hungary. Some of the contemporary critics pointed to the deficiencies that had already occurred in the previous mechanisms of foster and institutional care for socially dependent children: misuse of the practice of paying wet-nurses and foster parents, misuse of child labour and the weak material and hygienic conditions in foster families. There was also a shortage of professionally trained staff in the new state asylums, and complaints that especially the Budapest asylum had the character of a high capacity orphanage of the “*barracks type*”. However, the strongest criticism was directed against the practice of Magyarizing children by means of the system of state care, because the Ministry of the Interior selected as the locations for state children’s asylums only places with Hungarian population,

39 The implementation decree for this act (Decree of the Minister of the Interior no. 1/1903 on protection of abandoned children) explicitly formulated the claim to state care: “*A foundling as well as child declared to be abandoned, have the right to be admitted to state children's asylum.*” Szabályzat az elhagyott gyermekek védelméről. In: *Magyarországi Rendeletek Tára, 1903. 37. kötet*. Budapest: Magyar királyi elügyminisztérium, 1903, p. 535.

40 LACLAVÍKOVÁ, M. and A. ŠVECOVÁ, Dieťa medzivojnového Slovenska, p. 56.

41 A közigazgatási bizottság jelentése „az állami gyermekmenhelyekről” szóló 997. sz. törvényjavaslat tárgyában. In: *Az 1896. évi november hó 23-ára hirdetett Országgyűlés nyomtatványai. Képviselőház. – Irományok. XXXIV. kötet*. Budapest: Pesti könyvnyomda-Részvénytársaság, 1901, 1001 szám, p. 198–199.

and foster parents had to be ethnic Magyars.⁴² The category of “*abandoned*”, on the basis of which children came into the state system, was very broadly defined: It included not only orphans, but also half-orphans and children of living parents, who came from socially weak or “morally unreliable families”.⁴³ The practice of taking children from parents and organized transfer of children from ethnic minorities – Slovak, Rumanian, Ruthenian or even German – into the Hungarian language environment for up bringing exclusively in the Hungarian language, became reasons why the Hungarian system of state care for children was condemned especially in areas with ethnically mixed population, leading to criticism and rejection also in post-war Czechoslovakia.⁴⁴

Where *the institutional network* for socially dependent children is concerned, the above mentioned state children’s asylums placed in various regions formed the basis of state care in the Kingdom of Hungary. So-called children’s or family colonies, meaning selected rural localities where 10–20 children were placed with foster families under the direction of a social worker paid by the state and under the supervision of the nearest state children’s asylum, were a new feature of the Hungarian system. However, they appeared in practice only to a limited degree.⁴⁵ Similar arrangements under the name “*family colonies*” appeared a little later also in the Czech Lands.⁴⁶ Up to 1914, a total of 17 children’s asylums

42 Post-war critics of this aspect of the Hungarian system of care for children appealed to the provisions in the statutes of the state children’s asylums or in the regulations issued for state supervisors of foster care in the countryside. KAZDA, V. Státní péče o opuštěnou mládež na Slovensku a v Podkarpatské Rusi. (Dokončenie). In: *Sociální revue (Věstník Ministerstva sociální péče)*, 1921, vol. 2, no. 16, p. 243.

43 ROSENAUER, Otto. *O chudobníctve so zvláštnym zreteľom na právny stav na Slovensku a Podkarpatskej Rusi*. Bratislava: vlast. nákl., 1935, p. 59. On the basis of a decree of the Hungarian interior minister from 1907, “morally threatened” children aged up to 15, meaning children who had committed criminal offences or were “in danger of committing them” would be included in the state social care network. Decree of the Interior Minister no. 60.000/1907. RUFFY, Pál. *Állami gyermekvédelem*. [Budapest 1914], p. 33, accessible online In: A magyar társadalomtudományok digitális archívuma: http://mtda.hu/ruffy_pal.html [15. 4. 2020]

44 For more details: DUDEKOVÁ KOVÁČOVÁ, G. Úskalia reformy, p. 207–248; In the context of Transylvania see: KIND-KOVÁCS, Friederike. Hungary’s Forgotten Foundlings : State Care for “Abandoned” Children at the Turn of the 20th Century. In: *Romanian Journal of Population Studies*, 2021, Vol. 15, No. 2, p. 97–98.

45 Decree of the Interior Minister no. 1/1903 on protection of abandoned children: Szabályzat az elhagyott gyermekek védelméről. In: *Magyarországi Rendeletek Tára 1903. 37 kötet*. Budapest: Magyar királyi Belügyminisztérium, 1903, p. 554 and 557; FORBÁTH, Tivadar. *Adatok a magyar szegényügy rendezéséhez*. Budapest: Márkus Samu könyvnyomdája, 1908, p. 112–113.

46 The first “family colony” in Bohemia was established in 1909. HALÍŘOVÁ, M. Sociální patologie a ochrana dětství, p. 224–225; HALÍŘOVÁ, Martina. Development of Care for Orphans in Bohemia until 1918. In: *Romanian Journal of Population Studies*, 2021, Vol. 15,

were established in the Kingdom of Hungary, with only two located in territory of today's Slovakia: at Rimavská Sobota and Košice. There were 372 state children's colonies. From 1903 to 1915, more than 204,000 children passed through the state asylums, including those placed with wet-nurses or foster families with the mediation of the asylums.⁴⁷ Apart from them, almost 100 local non-state orphanages cared for more than 3000 children at the end of the 19th century without regular state finance. Most were small institutions with private support.⁴⁸ Institutions for the care of the physically and mentally handicapped, both children and adults, were less numerous and their capacity was inadequate. They were established and owned by churches or societies, in towns usually with local municipalities participation. Specialized institutions serving the whole of Hungary and financed from state funds were absent, although they existed in the Austrian crownlands.⁴⁹ Up to the break up of the Monarchy, only the largest non-state Hungarian institutions, concentrated mainly in Budapest, received any state support, and only selectively. However, institutional care was mainly the responsibility of municipal, district and private institutions also in Austria.⁵⁰

In contrast to this, Austria had a denser network of institutions for handicapped children, and before the introduction of the Hungarian state system, also for abandoned and orphaned children. Expert saw the main reason for these differences in the Austrian lands having access to larger and more stable financial resources. Statistics from the end of the 1850s already pointed to this. In contrast to Hungary, the foundling and maternity hospitals in Cis-Leithania came fully under the possession and administration of the Austrian lands from 1854, and were made crownland institutions.⁵¹ Similar institutions for the whole of Hungary were not created, although there were various attempts. The creators

No. 1, p. 103–104.

47 RUFFY, Pál. *Állami gyermekvédelem és a hadiárvák. Különlenyomat a Szabad Lyceum kiadványai 1915/16. évi számából*, p. 74; Gyermekvédelem. In: *Révai Nagy Lexikona. Az ismeretek enciklopédiája. IX. Kötet*. Budapest: Révai testvérek irodalmi intézet, 1913, p. 162.

48 CSORNA, Kálmán. *A szociális gyermekvédelem rendszere*. Budapest: Eggenberger-könyvkereskedés, 1929, p. 143.

49 The regional orphans' fund, established in the Czech Lands on the basis of act no. 6 from 1901, was intended for the care and up-bringing of poor, orphaned, abandoned and neglected children and became an important resource for financing special institutions for children such as Jedlička's institute for disabled children and Deyl's institute for the blind. CIBULKA, Pavel. *Stručný přehled chudinského a sociálního zákonodárství*. In: HLAVÁČKA, M. and P. CIBULKA et al. *Chudinství a chudoba*, p. 185–186; HALÍŘOVÁ, M. *Sociální patologie*, p. 216–220.

50 NEDOMA, V. *Ochranná péče*, p. 61.

51 STUBENRAUCH, M. *Statistische Darstellung*, 71–72; Nalezinec. In: *Ottův slovník naučný. Sedmnáctý díl*. Praha: J. Otto, 1901, p. 1000.

of the system of state children's asylums reacted to this inadequacy,⁵² when they created the beginnings of the network of state children's asylums by taking state control of already existing orphanages, which had been administered by a charitable society active in the whole of Hungary, namely the White Cross for Foundlings.⁵³ To a large extent, they still counted on multilateral organizational and financial support from charitable associations, concentrated especially in the towns.⁵⁴

In both parts of the Habsburg Monarchy, the state administration relied on the diversified charity of the churches, philanthropy of the nobility and charitable activities of town associations, organized particularly by women. Especially societies directed towards support for children had a strong tradition.⁵⁵ State intervention was only a subordinate element with the exception in Hungary of the state organizational and partly also financial support for children, who had been recognized by the orphans' offices as socially dependent on public care. The state only entered the field of social care when other possibilities had been exhausted. According to the existing rules, material support and up-bringing of children had to be provided first of all by the father as head of the family, by both parents or the extended family,⁵⁶ and if they failed by the religious community, charitable or self-help associations or home municipality⁵⁷ through the orphans'

52 Explanatory report on proposed legislation on state children's asylums from 1901. Indokolás, p. 142–150.

53 In 1901 the above mentioned White Cross society reported having orphanages in 11 towns in the Kingdom of Hungary. Indokolás, p. 153.

54 On the types of voluntary charitable societies, their differentiation in the territory now belonging to Slovakia and those directed towards care for orphans and socially dependent children from the second half of the 19th century see: MANNOVÁ, Elena. Charitable Societies and the Construction of Collective Identities. In: CSÁKY, Moritz and Elena MANNOVÁ, ed. *Collective Identities in Central Europe in Modern Times. Bratislava: Institute of History of the Slovak Academy of Sciences, 1999*, p. 197–216; MANNOVÁ, Elena. „Liečba rakoviny morálneho rozvratu“ a záchrana najzraniteľnejších : spolky a starostlivosť o siroty na území Slovenska v 19. storočí. In: „Zabrániť bahnu morálneho rozkladu“, p. 337–376.

55 On the context in Austria see: HALÍŘOVÁ, Martina. Koncept chudoby v dlhém 19. storočí a podoby péče o chudé v Čechách. In: *Chudinství a chudoba*, p. 94–98; HALÍŘOVÁ, M. Sociální patologie; HALÍŘOVÁ, M. Development of Care, pp. 88–110; on the situation in Hungary see: MANNOVÁ, Elena. „Liečba rakoviny morálneho rozvratu“, p. 337–376.

56 In Austria according to the Civil Code from 1811, in Hungary according to the Act on Guardianship and Foster care no. 20 from 1877. TŮMA, A. Právní základy sociální péče, p. 65–69.

57 Act on Guardianship and foster care no. 20 from 1877, plus its amendment no. 6 from 1885: 1877. évi XX. törvénycikk a gyámsági és gondnoksági ügyek rendezéséről. In: *Ezer év törvényei*. Accessible online: <https://net.jogtar.hu/getpdf?docid=87700020.TV&targetdate=&printTitle=1877.+%C3%A9vi+XX.+t%C3%B6rv%C3%A9nycikk&referer=1000ev> [15. 4. 2022]; For more details see: LACLAVÍKOVÁ, M and A. ŠVECOVÁ. Dieťa medzi vojnového Slovenska p. 40–41, 102–105.

(or later wards') office.⁵⁸ However, the public charity of churches and societies was characterized by fragmentation, lack of coordination and low capacity. The overall effectiveness of such organization was weak. The system of care for children in Cis-Leithania corresponded to the situation also known in Hungary.

The low effectiveness of the organizationally fragmented system was only one of various causes stimulating the growing activity of the Czechoslovak state in the field of social care. Economic reasons were no less important. Inflation and war loans weakened the economic potential of many philanthropic organizations that had played essential roles. Former Minister for Social Care Josef Gruber symptomatically noted in 1924: "*Funds [foundations and philanthropic associations – author's note] underwent serious devaluation as a result in decline in the value of money, and especially because the former Austrian authorities had required the depositing of capital in now devalued war loans.*"⁵⁹ The improving and progressivist ethos that Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk brought to the leadership of the new republic also played an important role as mentioned in the introduction.

In 1921 section chief at the MSC Antonín Tůma stated that in spite of the legal obligation to establish and run social care institutions for whole regions, such facilities were lacking in reality. In Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia, each region had this obligation by means of their regional committees according to the act on municipalities and poverty relief. However, the real result was that there were regional institutions for the feeble-minded and epileptic, the blind and deaf-mute only in Moravia and Silesia at this time. In Bohemia, institutions with such specializations operated under the administration of churches, charitable societies and other bodies, while the regional offices supported them only with "*appropriate subsidies for their establishment and operation*". Private specialized social facilities existed in the whole territory of the republic, but with regard to effectiveness and capacity they had similar limitations to those under Austria-Hungary. State institutions for the physically and mentally handicapped existed only in the territory of Slovakia and Sub-Carpathian Ruthenia, in the form of four institutions for the deaf-mute. There were also two private institutions caring for the blind and feeble-minded, both subsidized by the Czechoslovak

58 In the case of unpropertied orphans and half-orphans, the authorities in Hungary followed the principle that it was necessary to trace and record any property, and obtain resources for care from all accessible resources such as family and public charity: "*If an orphan is entirely without property, the guardianship office shall endeavour to gain support from more capable relations, charitable foundations and institutions.*" Árvügy. In: *Magyar lexicon. Az összes tudományok enciklopédiája. Első kötet.* Ed. Ede Somogyi. Budapest: Kautmann Frigyes, 1879, p. 555–556.

59 GRUBER, Josef. Sociální péče v československé republice. In: *Obzor národohospodářský*, 1924, vol. 29, p. 361.

state. As Tůma evaluated the situation, care for the handicapped “*in the whole republic was left to organized charitable care*” subsidized by the state and regional offices. With the aim of creating a network of functioning facilities, the leadership of the MSC initiated and supported the formation of regional centres for the operation of specialized institutions, such as the “*Regional Society for the Treatment and Up-Bringing of the Physically Handicapped*” in Bohemia. The long-term aim of the ministry was to create “*centres for individual branches for the whole republic*”, and it actually established, for example, a centre for the care of the blind and deaf-mute.⁶⁰

An overview of the number and structure of the institutions in 1921 illustrates the uneven distribution between regions of the network of facilities for the care of various categories of socially dependent children. It follows the categorization and designations of children of the time. It also points to the existence of institutions established especially for children of German nationality. The table does not include an institution for deaf-mute children of Hungarian nationality, founded a year later in Komárno.⁶¹

Numbers and types of institutions for children and young people in Czechoslovakia in 1921. The numbers in brackets are the numbers of non-state institutions.⁶²

For young people	Bohemia <i>Czech</i>	Bohemia <i>German</i>	Moravia & Silesia <i>Czech</i>	Moravia & Silesia <i>German</i>	Slovakia <i>Slovak</i>	Slovakia <i>other</i>	TOTAL
“normal”	101 (55)	53 (39)	70 (48)	16 (8)	17 (10)	10 (10)	267 (170)
“morally defective”	14 (7)	5 (5)	6 (3)	1	1		27 (15)
“blind”	5 (5)	1 (1)	1	1 (1)	1 (1)		9 (8)
“deaf”	3 (5)	1 (1)	3	1	3		15 (6)
“crippled”	4 (4)	1 (1)	1 (1)	-	1 (1)		7 (7)
“weak-minded”	3 (3)	-	6 (6)	1 (1)	1 (1)		11 (11)
“sick”	1 (1)	1 (1)					2 (2)

60 TŮMA [Antonín]. K otázce kompetence ministerstva sociální péče v oboru péče o mládež. In: *Sociální revue*, 1921, vol. 2, no. 6, p. 87.

61 J. Sz. Ústav hluchonemých s maď. vyuč. rečou v Komárne. In: *Péče o mládež*, 1922, vol. 1, p. 78.

62 TLAPÁK, Václav. Úprava ústavů pro mládež. In: *Sociální revue*, 1922, vol. 3, no. 1, p. 26.

The overview shows that the densest network of institutions and facilities was in the Czech Lands. The state children's homes in Košice and Rimavská Sobota with the family colonies under their administration formed the core of the organizational network of care for orphaned and social dependent children in Slovakia. The state children's home in Mukačevo and its branch in Sevljuši reserved for "mentally retarded children" formed the core of the system in Sub-Carpathian Ruthenia.⁶³

The distance from the former state children's asylums, and especially their Magyarizing practices, was also represented by their renaming as "*children's homes*".⁶⁴ On the other hand, there was clear continuity in the forms of care, with placing in foster families in the country around state institutions still prevailing,⁶⁵ and in the regional distribution of the state children's homes. The original plan to establish another state children's home in western Slovakia, as originally promised by the creators of the Hungarian system, was never implemented even in Czechoslovakia,⁶⁶ so they continued to be situated asymmetrically in south-central and eastern Slovakia. The practice of establishing family colonies also in western Slovakia, especially in Záhorie, to some degree compensated for the absence of a regional centre in the west.

Differences in *traditions of civil charity* between the two parts of the Monarchy were expressed especially after the formation of the Czechoslovak Republic. While the pre-war Kingdom of Hungary had unevenly distributed charitable societies, non-state orphanages and a network of state children's asylums concentrated in the central part of Hungary with a Hungarian speaking population, Austria at the beginning of the 20th century already had the beginnings of a network of district centres of philanthropy, which were further developed by the inter-war Czechoslovak Republic. The so-called "*commissions for youth care*", founded as voluntary societies from 1904, represented a developing network of centres for local charitable activities on the district level. About 90 of them, 77 of them Czech operated in the Kingdom of Bohemia in 1911, under the direction of the central regional commission for youth care. A "*Czech regional commission for child protection and youth care*" operated in a similar

63 TŮMA, A. Právní základy sociální péče, p. 104.

64 The name "Štátny detský domov" ("State children's home") was set by a decree of the Ministry of Social Care from 15 March 1920 (no. 1669/A). TŮMA, A., Právní základy sociální péče, p. 103.

65 According to the director of the state children's home in Košice as many as 90% of children were placed in foster families in a short time. KAZDA, V. Státní péče o opuštěnou mládež, p. 161.

66 TŮMA, A. Právní základy sociální péče, p. 104.

way in Moravia.⁶⁷ These centres, like the district commissions, had their German equivalents for children of German nationality in both mentioned crownlands. The district commissions also gained short-term special status in care for young people, both as organizational-administrative units and with regard to national divisions in ethnically mixed environments. Since their members were also officials entrusted with public protection of children and young people, the commissions originally had to fulfil the function of assisting the official public bodies. However, from 1909, on instructions from the regional committee, they changed into a form of private charitable association.⁶⁸

Although such a hybrid form of district commission was short-term, it played an important part in the post-war organizational network of care for socially dependent children and young people because the so-called “District Youth Care” organizations continued their activity. The transfer of this system of associations to the former Hungarian lands after 1918 was problematic but eventually successful, and especially in the second inter-war decade the structure of district care for youth grew quite rapidly.⁶⁹ According to data from the mid-1930s, the whole republic had 584 district institutions for youth care, including 220 Czech and 101 German in Bohemia, 94 Czech, 62 German and 2 Polish in Moravia and Silesia, 80 Slovak and 13 German in Slovakia, and 12 in Sub-Carpathian Ruthenia.⁷⁰

Ethnicity and social care for the young: state nation, minorities and Roma

A struggle over the national up-bringing of children was carried on in the ethnically mixed regions of the Habsburg Monarchy during the period of growing nationalism around 1900. Where Austria and Hungary are concerned, common features are visible at this time in connection with the “national struggle” for children, or over their linguistic and national cultural up-bringing, between the German and Czech nationalist societies in Bohemia and Moravia.⁷¹ With regard

67 About 50 of them were operating in 1915. RÁKOSNÍK, J. *Od hegemonie k marginalizaci*, p. 163–164; RÁKOSNÍK, J. and I. TOMEŠ et al. *Sociální stát v Československu*, p. 351; HALÍŘOVÁ, M. *Sociální patologie*, p. 222–224.

68 CIBULKA, *Stručný přehled chudinského a sociálního zákonodárství*, p. 186.

69 For more details see: RIGOVÁ, V. *Etablování Zemského ústředí*, p. 137–140.

70 HOFFMANNOVÁ, J., *K vývoji sociální péče*, p. 431; *Péče o chudé a péče o mládež ochrany potřebnou v republice Československé v roce 1931: Veřejná ústavní a všeobecná dobrovolná péče o chudé a mládež ochrany potřebnou v republice Československé Díl II*. Praha: Státní úřad statistický, 1937, p. 44–46. In 1938 Jaromír Nečas gave similar numbers, differently divided for the whole republic: 407 Czech and Slovak institutions, 177 German and 2 Polish. See NEČAS, Jaromír. *20 let sociální péče v Československé republice*. Praha: MSP 1938, p. 86.

71 For more details see ZAHRA, T. *Kidnapped souls*; ZAHRA, Tara. *From Christmas Gifts to*

to the multi-ethnic character of society, the national agenda remained important after the creation of the Czechoslovak republic. Although we find a whole series of specific conflicts, which disturbed the coexistence of the nations in the republic, the view prevails in historiography that “*minority rights and their application in practice were not unfavourable for the minorities, but were not especially favourable either*”.⁷² It appears that also in the field of care for the young, the higher administrative authorities were willing to intervene to prevent conflicts between groups on the municipal level. For example, in 1925 all municipalities were categorically instructed to divide all resources available for care of children and young people according to proportions of each nationality. The regional administrative commission for Silesia threatened that if this was not done, subsidies to municipalities would be stopped until such one-sidedness was corrected.⁷³

Apart from physical care, health, hygiene and school preparation of children in substitute care, the Czechoslovak legislation placed emphasis on preservation of their ethnic identity and ties with their original environment. Appealing to the criticized practice of Magyarization of children in the Kingdom of Hungary, Czechoslovak act no. 256 from 1921 explicitly stated: “*Any form of forcible denationalization is prohibited*.”⁷⁴ Later implementing regulations, namely government decree number 29 from 1930,⁷⁵ specified more exactly that foster

Orphans' Pensions: How Nationalist Associations Created the Welfare State in the Bohemian Lands, 1900–1918. In: HASLINGER, Peter, ed. *Schutzvereine in Ostmitteleuropa. Vereinswesen, Sprachenkonflikte und Dynamiken nationaler Mobilisierung 1860–1939*. Marburg: Herder Institut, 2009, p. 192–207. On the political struggle over national up-bringing by means of schools and nursery schools in Transylvania and the territory now forming Slovakia see: PUTTKAMER, Joachim von. Die EMKE in Siebenbürgen und die FEMKE in Oberungarn. Die Tätigkeit zweier ungarischer Schutzvereine in ihrem nationalen Umfeld. In: HASLINGER, Peter, ed. *Schutzvereine in Ostmitteleuropa*, p. 158–169, especially p. 162–163 and 166; PUTTKAMER, Joachim von. *Schulalltag und nationale Integration in Ungarn. Slowaken, Rumänen und Siebenbürger Sachsen in Auseinandersetzung mit der ungarischen Staatsidee, 1867–1914*. München: Oldenbourg, 2003.

72 PETRÁŠ, René, PETRŮV, Helena and Harald Christian SCHEU et al. *Menšiny a právo v České republice*. Praha: Auditorium, 2009, p. 89.

73 Státní okresní archiv (State District Archives, hereinafter SOkA) Nový Jičín, fond Archiv města Bílovice, karton (hereinafter ka.) 380: Péče o mládež – poskytnutí prostředků obcemi, [Care for the young – provided by municipalities] 6. IV. 1925, no. 26.586/24.

74 256/1921 Sb. Zákon ze dne 30. června 1921 o ochraně dětí v cizí péči a dětí nemanželských. [256/1926 Col. of Laws from 30 June 1921 on protection of children in foster care and extra-marital children]. Accessible online: <https://www.noveaspi.sk/products/law-Text/1/2537/1/2/zakon-c-256-1921-sb-o-ochrane-deti-v-cizi-peci-a-deti-nemanzelskych/zakon-c-256-1921-sb-o-ochrane-deti-v-cizi-peci-a-deti-nemanzelskych> [20. 4. 2022]

75 Decree no. 29/1930 was accepted for Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia in 1930, but this im-

carers had to have the same nationality and religion as the children placed in their care: “*These persons must be of the same nationality and religious confession as the children placed in their care.*” Guardians also had to fulfil this condition, and the specification of place of residence had to be a guarantee of leaving children in their native region and local cultural community: “*Supervisors should be mainly persons who live in the same place and have the same nationality and religious confession as the children placed in their care.*”⁷⁶ Where the application of these principles and regulations in practice is concerned, reports on the activities of the two state orphanages in Slovakia at Košice and Rimavská Sobota indicate that they were observed both in the records of children in the institution and in the choice of foster carers in the countryside. In a report on activity in 1928, the director of the Košice state children’s home stated that “*Special attention is given to foster carers having the same nationality.*”⁷⁷

Respect for the ethnic origin of children in foster care in Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia was secured by ethnically defined Czech, German and Polish district youth care organizations with their own regional centres in each of the three regions. A union for care for young people of German nationality with district branches also in Slovakia was formed in 1931.⁷⁸ Reports from the press of the time and the expert journal *Péče o mládež* (*Care for the Young*) point to cases of mutual cooperation, but also of competition between these bodies. Especially in the western frontier areas with a mixture of Czechs and Germans, there was often legal and personal continuity with the pre-war District Youth Care and continuity of national rhetoric. Coexistence of Slovak or Czechoslovak charitable societies, including those directed towards care for children and young people, with Hungarian, German or Jewish societies had various forms, including

plementation decree for Act no. 256/1921 became effective in Slovakia and Sub-Carpathian Ruthenia only in 1936. ŠVECOVÁ, Adriana and Miriam LACLAVÍKOVÁ. Nemanželské dieťa – relikv doby a príklad sociálnej a právnej humanizácie v slovenských právnych reáliách medzivojnového Československa. In: *Historický časopis*, 2022, vol. 70, no. 2, p. 256. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31577/histcaso.2022.70.2.3>

76 Část II, § 4 a Část I, § 6, Vládní nařízení 29/1930 Sb. ze dne 14. března 1930, jímž se provádí zákon o ochraně dětí v cizí péči a dětí nemanželských. [Part II, § 4 and Part I, § 6, Government decree 29/1930 Col. of laws from 14 March 1930, implementing the Act on children in the care of strangers and extra-marital children.]. Accessible online: <https://www.epravo.cz/vyhledavani-aspi/?Id=4975&Section=1&IdPara=1&ParaC=2> [20. 4. 2022]

77 Ze správ o činnosti Čs. stát. dětského domova v Košicích. In: *Péče o mládež*, 1929, vol. 8, no. 4, p. 71; Ze správ o činnosti Čs. stát. dětského domova v Rimavské Sobotě. In: *Péče o mládež*, 1929, vol. 8, no. 4, p. 70–71.

78 TVRDOŇ, Antonín. *Spolky, ústavy a zařízení pro péči o chudé a péči o mládež ochrany potřebnou v Republice československé*. Praha: Státní úřad statistický 1936, p. 14; *Péče o chudé a péče o mládež, Díl II.*, p. 48–49.

parallel existence, cooperation and competition.⁷⁹ In contrast to the situation in the Kingdom of Hungary, which limited the establishment and functioning of societies by ethnic groups, the democratic conditions of the Czechoslovak Republic enabled substantial growth in the number and types of civil societies. In this context, E. Mannová stated: *“In the period of the Czechoslovak Republic, education and society activity of the individual ethnic groups, apart from among the formerly privileged Hungarians, developed much more freely than under the Monarchy. [...] In the pluralist conditions, the ethnic ‘struggle’ could develop without basic limitations, and charitable societies vehemently participated, created coalitions, or competed in the quantity and quality of social care they provided for the socially dependent.”*⁸⁰

The intensity of the activities of the nationality centres for care for children and young people appears to have been the greatest difference between the Czech Lands and Slovakia. The Deutsches Landeskommission für Kinderschutz und Jugendfürsorge in der Slowakei, the German centre in Slovakia with its seat in Bratislava from 1931, connected with the Czechoslovak centre (Reichsverband für deutsche Jugendfürsorge in der ČSR) created its district youth care organizations (Bezirksjugendfürsorge) substantially later than in the Czech Lands. However, by the mid 1930s they existed in *“almost all the mainly German or mixed districts”* in Slovakia, especially in Spiš (Zips).⁸¹ Cooperation of Hungarian associations and facilities with Czechoslovak societies and state institutions was slow not only because many of them were disturbed by loss of their centres in Budapest. Another reason was lack of trust. There was a clear effort by the Czechoslovak bodies to incorporate representatives of the Hungarian elite into the structures of the District Youth Care (OPM) or other Czechoslovak organizations. However, in contrast to the German case, there are no known examples of the Hungarian minority creating district or regional organizations of the OPM type.

The most complex situation involved the Roma population. The expert reports of the time do not agree on how far the term *“Gypsy”* (*“cikán”*) reflects social conditions and how far it is a racial or ethnic category. Regardless of this conceptual dispute, there was agreement that the Gypsies represented a serious social problem, and that care for children was very important for its solution with regard for the future. The existing system of poverty relief legally placed on the shoulders of municipalities, was tied to the condition of place of residence. The claim to social assistance was tied to permanent residence in a municipality.

79 Various examples and forms on the local level in ethnically mixed towns are mentioned by E. Mannová. MANNOVÁ, E., Charitable Societies, p. 195–212.

80 MANNOVÁ, E., Charitable Societies, p. 195–196.

81 TVRDOŇ, A., Spolky, ústavy a zařízení, p. 14.

In practice, there was a reason to exclude large groups of socially vulnerable people already during the migration of country people to the towns in the second half of the 19th century. This was an even greater problem in the case of the less settled Roma population.⁸² Roma settlements separate from recognized villages usually already appeared in the inter-war period. “*The inhabitants of Roma settlements usually did not have domicile in the nearest municipality, and communal representatives did everything they could to avoid granting them rights of residence*”, as Jana Horvátová pointedly stated some time ago.⁸³ The families of half-settled and unsettled people were understandably in an ever more difficult position. The Roma essentially stood outside the emerging structure of the social state, as it was developing in Austria and Hungary during the second half of the 19th century: Social insurance covered only some employees, while the Roma usually worked independently or did short-term casual work, which usually did not involve social insurance, and they did not receive social assistance from their home municipality because they did not have officially recognized rights of residence.

Proposals put forward around 1900 to solve the problem of integration of the Roma population were strongly marked by the stereotypical view: “*If up to now the conscience of the clergy can unite with the state of the Gypsy race and be satisfied that Gypsies are baptized and recorded in the registers, but it does not occur to Holy Church that this race, scarcely similar to animals, because every animal at least cares for its own cleanliness, accepted the nature of civilized people, we address the request: The government must take action to ensure that this race [...] is incorporated into the ranks of human society.*”⁸⁴ A more qualified view, taking into account that the position of the Roma in society is a “*serious and complex social, political and cultural problem*”, comes from the beginning of the 20th century. The author, a Hungarian legal expert Ferenc Finkey stated that a large proportion of the Roma in Hungary are “*born vagrants and work avoiders*”, but various groups could be distinguished among them according to their way of life and relationship to work. He placed at the top of the hierarchy of Roma society those: “*grew into distinguished gentlemen thanks to their musical talent*”. As an example of the settled way of life with regular employment, he mentioned metal-workers, but with the comment that they are a rare exception.

82 For more details: POMOGYI, László. *Cigánykérdés és cigányügyi igazgatás a polgári Magyarországon*. Budapest: Osiris; Századvég, 1995.

83 HORVÁTOVÁ, Jana. *Kapitoly z dějin Romů*. Praha: Člověk v tísní, 2002, s. 40. (Accessible online: <https://www.pf.jcu.cz/stru/katedry/pgps/ikvz/podkapitoly/d01kapitoly.pdf>)

84 ŠTEFANOVIČ, Samo. Programm der österreich – ungarischen Slaven von einem Slovaken [1893]. In: BOKES, František, ed. *Dokumenty k slovenskému národnému hnutiu 1848–1914*. Zv. III. 1885–1901. Bratislava, SPN, 1972, p. 189.

On the next step of the hierarchy, he mentioned the “*more civilized part of the Gypsies*”, meaning the settled Roma population, who secure their subsistence with begging, minor frauds and thefts, as well as occasional performance of the lowest level of work. He considered the “*wandering or tent-dwelling Gypsies*” to be the “*most dangerous*” category. He described the problem of integration as follows: “*It is as if the authorities regard Gypsies as beyond the reach of the law; as if compulsory school attendance, administrative and legal norms do not exist for them. The only exception is that army, which sometimes calls up settled Gypsies for service.*”⁸⁵

Although experts and politicians agreed that the existing legislation from the time of Austria-Hungary was bad and needed to be replaced with new up to date legal norms, work on this task proceeded very slowly. As the ethnographer Zdeněk Šípek showed in one of his studies, the Czechoslovak Ministry of the Interior found itself from the beginning of the republic under periodic pressure from members of parliament and representatives of the lower levels of the state administration, to intervene against “*wandering gangs threatening public order*”. Moderation of social exclusion had to happen by “*re-education*” of Roma children and young people, but in practice this looked more like a repressive measure. Additional social protection implied that re-education was a cure-all both for adults and children. The problem lay in the fact that not enough money was provided for the aim of re-education.⁸⁶

In 1922, the interior minister announced the intension to propose legislation with the aim of achieving the “*correct up-bringing of young Gypsies, which can be achieved only when children of Gypsies and travellers are taken away from their parents*”.⁸⁷ The imagination of the time on solving the Gypsy question extended from concentration camps, which could have the form either of reservations enabling the traditional nomadic lifestyle, or the form of repressive up-bringing institutions with children taken away and brought up in orphanages or foster families, to the state organized dispersal, meaning that “*Gypsy families would be scattered individually and assigned to municipalities appropriately*”.

85 FINKEY, Ferenc. A csavargás és koldulás szabályozása kriminálpolitikai szempontból. [Regulation of vagrancy and begging from a criminal policy point of view. Separate part of the journal “Jogállam”, vol. 1905, no. 4 and 5]. In: LÉDERER, Pál, TENCZER, Tamás and László ULICSKA, ed. “*A tettetésnek minden mesterségeiben jártasok...*” *Koldusok, csavargók, veszélyeztetett gyermekek a modernkori Magyarországon*. Budapest: Új mandátum 1998, p. 193–194.

86 ŠÍPEK, Zdeněk. Cikánská otázka v prvním desetiletí ČSR. In: *Český lid*, 1990, vol. 77, no. 3, p. 144.

87 Národní archiv Praha (National Archives Prague), fund: Ministerstvo vnitra – stará registratura, (Ministry of the Interior – old register), carton 1, item no. 45 471, Supplements; Cited according to ŠÍPEK, Z., *Cikánská otázka v prvním desetiletí*, p. 140.

distant from each other.”⁸⁸ Internal discussions on preparation of the legislation only occasionally included the criticism that thorough social research should be done first, as a basis for the adoption of practical measures.⁸⁹ However, pressure from below, from municipal authorities, district governors and police units, to secure order was much louder and stronger. The priorities were clearly given: It was necessary to protect “*normal society*”, while the effort to provide effective social assistance for the Roma part of the population was entirely secondary.

The approved act on wandering Gypsies no. 117/1927 contained a special regulation of taking away of children with a very vaguely formulated empowerment for the district courts in the Czech Lands and the guardianship/orphans offices in Slovakia and Sub-Carpathian Ruthenia, according to which children younger than 18 could be taken away from wandering Gypsies, who “*could not care for them appropriately and especially if they could not give them the up-bringing they needed*”. The administrative bodies and the Ministry of the Interior itself became sceptical about their ability to apply this legislation. The act admitted the possibility of preliminary measures where the interests of the child justified removal from parents before an official decision was reached. Appeals against such measures were not allowed.⁹⁰

The practice of administrative bodies struck against the high geographical mobility of the Gypsy population, because difficult official procedures could not be effectively applied to people, who moved to different unknown places. Transferring the financial burden to the state was intended to help activate the municipal and district bodies responsible for care for the young. If children were placed in foster families, the costs went to the district court, if children were placed in institutions, the Ministry for Social Care paid the cost.⁹¹ Although the bodies responsible for care for the young described the transfer of the financial burden as a “*great advantage*” according to the cited document, the Ministry of the Interior remained sceptical: “*Gypsy bands pull away others and new difficulties arise when finding out a new place of residence. The great difficulties here also cause dislike and mistrust of the settled population towards the Roma. Very few families are willing to take in Gypsy children for up-bringing. Fear of eventual revenge is also involved here. It is difficult to expect that it will be possible to use the provisions of paragraph 12 of the act on Gypsies to a large*

88 Péče o děti cikánské. In: *Péče o mládež*, 1923, vol. 2, no. 6, p. 191.

89 See also ROSOL, E. K. Cikánská otázka na Slovensku. In: *Péče o mládež*, 1925, vol. 4, no. 2, p. 56–57.

90 SOKA Vsetín, fond: Okresní péče o mládež Valašské Meziříčí, ka. 3: Oběžník č. 5 Sdruženým Okresním péčím o mládež na Moravě, ze dne 24. II. 1928.

91 SOKA Vsetín, fond Okresní péče o Mládež Valašské Meziříčí, ka. 3: Oběžník č. 3 Okresním péčím o mládež na Moravě, 24. II. 1936.

*extent.*⁹² Recent historiography rightly criticizes the vagueness of the terms “*vagrant*” and “*Gypsy way of life*”, which the act used but did not clearly define.⁹³ Practices significantly varied between regions, but the application of § 12 on the taking away of children sometimes acquired the form of a deliberate strategy of “*cleansing Gypsy infested*” regions, as Pavel Baloun showed in his recent analysis of the example of the Písecko district.⁹⁴

Solidarity in the framework of individual ethnic groups was manifested in various forms. Among the Roma, it had the traditional informal nature of widely branching family ties, while among other groups voluntary and obligatory solidarity acquired a more institutionalized form. The sources do not enable us to create a representative comparison and we must assess accidental indications. It appears that minority position could mobilize ethnic Germans to greater willingness to bear a larger financial burden, if they knew that the money would go to German children.⁹⁵ Whether this also applies to the members of other nations cannot be determined at present, just as we cannot clearly identify the cause of the indicators valid for the German minority.

Conclusion

During the inter-war period, the creators of reform of public care for socially dependent children did not succeed in implementing the planned reorganization, that would have unified the legislation and traditions of the different systems inherited from Austria and Hungary. In spite of the declared distance from everything Austrian and Hungarian, perceived above all through the prism of the Magyarization of the Slovaks, the continuity of legal norms was preserved, and so to a large extent, were the organizational and institutional networks. The new act from 1921 regulating the care of children in foster care and of extra-marital children living with one parent,⁹⁶ and later partial regulations did not remove the inherited dualism in the legislation: According to the model functioning in Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia, the home municipality still had legal authority over the care of poor children with financial and organizational assistance from

92 ŠÍPEK, Zdeněk. Cikánská otázka ve druhém desetiletí ČSR (od vydání zákona č. 117/1927 do mnichovského diktátu). In: *Český lid*, 1991, vol. 78, no. 4, p. 271.

93 NEČAS, Ctibor. Cikáni na Moravě a ve Slezsku do první třetiny 20. století. In: *Český lid*, 2000, vol. 87, no. 3, p. 245.

94 BALOUN, Pavel. “*Metla našeho venkova!*” *Kriminalizace Romů od první republiky až po prvotní fázi protektorátu (1918–1941)*. Praha: Scriptorium, 2022.

95 Compare KALLAB, Jaroslav. K reformě obecní sociální péče o mládež. In: *Lidové noviny*, vol. 30, no. 309, 22. VI. 1922. See also FASORA, L., *Problémy systému péče*, p. 26.

96 On the legal position of extra-marital children, see most recently: ŠVECOVÁ, A and M. LAC-LAVÍKOVÁ. *Nemanželské dítě*, p. 243–470.

higher territorial authorities and charitable societies, while in Slovakia and Sub-Carpathian Ruthenia the system was more controlled and financed by the state on the basis of a network of state children's homes and their associated family settlements with foster care.

However, in spite of these differences, the practice of care was directed by the same principles in the whole territory of Czechoslovakia: priority for foster care under the supervision of higher authorities, with an emphasis on the physical health and up-bringing of children leading to their future economic independence, and gradually increasing application of the idea of prevention, with the aim of supporting socially weak families, so that children could remain with their biological families.⁹⁷ However, as the sounding into the practice applied to Roma children shows, this intension was meant for the majority community. National aims in up-bringing remained strong in the realities of inter-war Czechoslovakia. The national struggle over socially dependent children continued in more democratic conditions, with legislation based on the principle of respecting the ethnicity and religion of children.

The Czechoslovak state counted on a high proportion of voluntary civil activities as an inseparable part of the functioning of care for children dependent on public social care. The role of the state in this field mostly took the form of subsidies for selected institutions and associations administered by non-state bodies. The exception was financing of care for war orphans, organized in the framework of care for victims of the war.⁹⁸ A relatively effective model combining three cooperating participants: state, local government and voluntary civil groups, functioned especially in Bohemia and Moravia. The associations of district care for the young in Czechoslovakia forming an evenly distributed network of bodies on the district level represented a unique hybrid between public and private organization. They had various roles assigned to them directly by the Ministry for Social Care. However, it was not an entirely new form, since it continued similar district centres providing social care for children before the war. The combination of cooperation of the state, local government and charitable

97 On the principles and regulations of adoption see: ŠOŠKOVÁ, Ivana. Osvojenie v Československu (1918–1950) – na ceste k inštitútu tzv. náhradnej rodinnej starostlivosti. In: *Quid leges sine moribus? (Metamorfózy vývoja štátu a práva v dejinách)*. Ed. Miriam Laclavíková, Adriana Švecová, Peter Vyšný. Trnava: Trnavská univerzita v Trnave – Právnická fakulta, 2014, p. 139–152.

98 RŮŽIČKA, Marek. *Péče o válečné invalidy v Československu v letech 1918 – 1938*. Dissertation, Praha: Charles University – Faculty of Philosophy 2011, p. 195–213; ŠVECOVÁ, Adriana. Starostlivosť o sociálne slabé minority na Slovensku v období I. ČSR. In: MOSNÝ, Peter a kol. *Právnohistorická realita sociálnej doktríny 20. storočia*. Krakov: Spolok Slovákov v Poľsku, 2013, p. 157–205, here p. 186–191; STEGMANN, Natali. *Kriegsdeutungen – Staatsgründungen – Sozialpolitik*. München: Oldenbourg 2010, p. 92–126.

society social work with other types of social provision in the framework of the ambitiously conceived social policy of Czechoslovakia can be considered to represent the real unique feature of the Czechoslovak model.

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