

## Chapter 1

# Founding Fathers

The story of Unicef is a story about children in the poorer parts of the world, children whose lives were touched at some point—maybe a vital point, maybe not—by a particular organization trying to fulfill its humanitarian mission. The lives of those children are important in this story not as objects of pity or as trophies of international goodwill, but because ideas about how to touch those lives for the better have changed fundamentally in the postwar and post-colonial era.

With hindsight, much that was done in the name of the children of the developing countries forty, thirty, or even twenty years ago now seems naive. It was done with the best intentions, and often with the help of the best wisdom of the day. In twenty years time, the same will be said of what is being done today, and it will probably prove as sobering and instructive.

Nothing sounds simpler than helping improve the lives of children. In fact, as every parent knows who stops to think about it, nothing could be more challenging or more complex. The only simple part is that everyone agrees, nowadays, that the child has a right to that help. 'Mankind', says the Declaration of the Rights of the Child, 'owes the child the best it has to give'. The governments of the developing nations, which carry out the programmes and deliver the services that Unicef exists to help, all subscribe to that Declaration.

Despite all differences of colour, creed, income, nationality and ideology, and despite the many forces of division in a troubled world, the innocence of the child transcends all boundaries. In an ideal world, every adult wants the best for every child, whether the child belongs to a camel caravan in the Sahara Desert, a ghetto in a decaying inner city, a village in the high Sierras, or a humble homestead in the steppes of Asia. No government delegate or political leader, no economic planner or social reformer—whatever the real implications of the policies they espouse—repudiates the claim of every child to be protected, nurtured, fed, clothed, educated and raised in familial love. The child is everyone's tomorrow, and tomorrow must be brighter than today.

Unicef, the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund, was created on 11 December 1946 by resolution of the UN General Assembly. In the aftermath of the second World War, the desire to tie more

tightly the bonds uniting the family of man and to share the fruits of economic and technological progress more liberally among the people of the world led to a great experiment in international co-operation: the United Nations. Unicef's creation was a part of that experiment.

Created to help war-shattered countries mend the lives of their children, Unicef stayed in being to help developing countries improve lives undermined by hunger and ill-health. Unicef never abandoned the children of crisis—of war, conflict, drought, famine or other emergency—but within five years its mission changed. The international movement to put an end to poverty and underdevelopment around the world demanded of the new experiment in international co-operation that a special effort be made for the children. Unicef took on that special effort, shaped it and was shaped by it.

Within the UN, Unicef is a unique organization. Its mandate is for a particular group of human beings defined only by their lack of years, rather than for an area of human activity, such as health, agriculture, employment, education, or for an underprivileged group with a common predicament. Children can never be simply another cause because they are already part of every cause. Wherever you find the hungry, the sick, the ill-fed, the poorly-clothed, the homeless, the jobless, the illiterate, the destitute, there you find children. And because children are more vulnerable than adults to any kind of deprivation, they suffer worse the effects of all these things because they are children. So Unicef's mission sounds neat and self-contained, but is the opposite: helping the nations to help their children demands that it engage in many areas of human activity, accumulate many kinds of expertise, work with every underprivileged group, and do so alongside many other UN and voluntary organization partners.

Even to reach the lives of children in the poorer parts of the world, let alone to touch them for the better, is far from simple. Most children in the industrialized world regularly spend time in a play group, a day-care centre, a schoolroom; when they are small, they are regularly taken to the doctor or the clinic for a check-up. The absence of such institutions and services is a mirror image of a society's condition of underdevelopment.

Thanks to the progress of the past thirty-five years, more children in the developing world now attend classrooms and clinics. But in the majority of cases, particularly in the poorer countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America, the critical context in which to touch children's lives is still at home, in the family. That is the setting in which the child lives or dies, is hungry or well-fed, clean or ragged, languishes or bounces with good health.

Unicef therefore tries to touch the lives of children by helping to shape health, education or nutrition services which touch those of their families and communities. The most important person in the child's early life is the child's mother. The mother's own health and well-being have a critical

impact on that of her children. And her capacities as a mother depend on the way the family earns its living, what that living amounts to, and how the family's decision-makers translate it into food, shelter, clothing, health care and education. These are the decisive factors in a child's present condition and future prospects. Therefore, almost every effort to improve the well-being of children has a context for our society at large almost identical to efforts to create employment and work, and run health, education, and social welfare services. Every policy decision that affects work places, neighbourhoods, homes has an impact on the child.

Because the child has no vote and no political say in the issues which affect the life of the family and the community, the illusion is preserved that the fate of the child is an object of humanitarian concern and not one that affects political figures, administrators or economic policy-makers. Fortunately, the illusion is often strong enough to provide a shield for the child when one is needed. Unicef has been an architect of that shield at certain critical moments during the past forty years, when civil disturbance or international crisis has combined with food shortage to remove children almost beyond the reach of help. That strand of the Unicef story is the most visible and the most widely reported because it concerns wars and emergencies which throw a spotlight onto their victims.

In its other context, that of social and economic progress, the story of Unicef reflects the many debates which have characterized the whole evolution of development thinking in the postwar era. The response to the problems of children in the poorer parts of the world is, inevitably, part of the story of the response to world poverty itself. In four decades, that response has undergone many changes. Every setback has produced its new insights and understandings, but the chequered process of change for the better has moved slowly, inexorably forward.

In the 1950s, the menace of widespread disease—tuberculosis, yaws, syphilis, malaria—succumbed in large measure to medical science and the mass campaign. In the 1960s, the UN's first Development Decade, the coming of independence to many new nations sparked an international crusade to bring to an end centuries of rural stagnation and neglect. In the 1970s came disillusion and self-doubt within the growing international development community generating alternative visions, wiser and more thoughtful remedies for the ancient problems of hunger and disease. In the 1980s, global recession and debt, and the spectacle of large parts of Africa gripped in almost constant distress, have presented a challenge of new dimensions.

An ideal of international co-operation came of age because of the wholesale human destruction of the second World War. Unicef, the first arrangement between the nations to do something specifically for children, was almost accidentally conjured into existence as a result. This is the story of where that impulse led.

\* \* \* \* \*

The idea of an international mechanism to look after the specific needs of children was not without antecedents. During the first World War, Eglantyne Jebb, a remarkable Englishwoman, set up an organization in London called the 'Save the Children' fund and sent relief to children on the continent throughout the British blockade of Germany. In 1920, when Europe was in the grip of postwar famine, she prevailed upon the International Red Cross in Geneva to support a 'Save the Children International Union', in order to raise and spend voluntary donations on behalf of the children.

Many other voluntary organizations which had their roots in nineteenth-century missionary and philanthropic zeal were already active on behalf of the victims of disaster—fire, flood, epidemic; and of impoverished women and children. The abandoned and indigent mother and her child, the widowed and the orphaned, those who were otherwise a burden on poor-house and parish, had a natural place among the main beneficiaries of both religious and secular charitable works. But the idea of international relief was a twentieth-century novelty. And the idea that children were a special kind of people whose well-being transcended partisan considerations only began to gain currency when Eglantyne Jebb defied the British courts in declaring the principle that there was no such thing as an 'enemy' child: a curious notion by the standards of the time.

These ideas were refinements of an ethic born on the battlefields of Europe during the mid-nineteenth century as a result of the terrible sufferings inflicted on soldiers by modern instruments of warfare. In 1864, the Geneva Convention was ratified, conferring neutrality upon voluntary relief workers tending the wounded, the dying, and those taken prisoner. From now on, the red cross on a white background, the colours of the Swiss flag in reverse, became a familiar emblem of a new principle: human life was too precious to be entrusted solely to political or national self-interest. For the time being, this idea was only applied to those carrying arms, but once established, it took a comparatively small leap of the imagination to apply it to defenceless civilians, particularly children who could never be thought to bear the blame for hostilities declared by their country's leaders.

Meanwhile, the philanthropic impulse was being spurred from another direction. The industrialization of Europe and America was inflicting upon the poor a destitution far more degrading and ugly than the familiar, age-old rural poverty of the agricultural world. The cholera outbreaks in the slums of the new cities, the miseries suffered by children and women working in mines and sweat-shops, the poor diets of those on wage labour . . . these were the product of the factory age.

The changing face of society produced new tools for social progress, as well as an ideological and political flood of ideas. Democratic notions about universal education and universal suffrage gained ground. Socialist

ideas about equality and the distribution of wealth joined them. Out of urban squalor came the science of public health. Out of material prosperity came technological progress of all kinds. Benevolence and capitalism joined forces to push forward the medical, social, and humanitarian frontier. In the USA, trusts and foundations endowed by Rockefeller, Carnegie, and other benefactors of The Gilded Age invested hundreds of millions of philanthropic dollars in preventive and constructive, as well as ameliorative, tasks. People were beginning to set a higher price on human life at all social levels, whether they believed in John D. Rockefeller's 'business of benevolence', or Karl Marx's doctrines on the class struggle. Many secular organizations like the Red Cross supported an ideal of voluntary service to Mankind rooted in the Christian tradition but nominally purporting to be quite differently inspired; while other voluntary organizations which owed their existence to Christian piety—the YMCA, the Society of Friends—began to gain high reputations for secular good works.

When the first World War broke out, the growing humanitarian community faced a challenge of entirely new dimensions. War on this scale, affecting so many combatants and so many civilians, had never been known before. The protracted agony of the war, and the equally protracted misery of postwar famine and epidemic, represented a watershed in human affairs. The suffering it caused in the trenches and among 'innocent' civilians left a generation 'scorched in mind and character'. Not only did the extraordinary circumstances of suffering elicit extraordinary responses, such as that of Eglantyne Jebb, but the mobilization of voluntary resources for relief reached a phenomenal level. The war reached into people's hearts and minds in a way that helped to reshape social attitudes. Among all the other things the war did, it also launched the careers of a whole generation of people who carried the banner of international co-operation forward, through the Depression and a second world war, to the birth of a United Nations and beyond.

At the outset of the war, the Red Cross began to run its by-now familiar field hospitals for the care of sick and wounded combatants. But it soon became clear that medical help for wounded soldiers paled into insignificance beside the relief needs of the civilians in occupied territory. The British and French blockaded Channel and North Sea ports, shutting off all imports of food into Germany and Belgium. Within a month, the normally-thriving Belgian population of 7.5 million was reduced to hunger and destitution. A new kind of international humanitarian effort was needed: the relief of a civilian population in time of war, through the mediation of neutral parties.

Within a week of the alarm being sounded in the autumn of 1914, the Commission for Relief in Belgium (CRB), an unofficial private and philanthropic organization, was set up in London at the initiative of an American engineering magnate, Herbert Hoover. Inspired by his Quaker conscience

and his passionate belief in the ideal of voluntary co-operation, Hoover used his influence with the US Ambassador and other neutral diplomats to negotiate an agreement with the warring parties. Food and relief supplies for the starving Belgian civilians could go through the blockade, as long as they were not diverted to the German occupation forces. The new chapter he opened in organizing international relief also led his own career up a ladder of public service and power which took him into the White House.

The task undertaken by the CRB was to acquire by purchase or by gift the thousands of tons of food, clothing and other supplies needed to sustain the Belgian people—and later the people of German-occupied northern France—and to assemble, transport, and distribute these supplies. Contingents of bright young men—one of them a Nebraskan, Maurice Pate, the future first Executive Director of Unicef—were recruited to act as Hoover's envoys, overseeing the distribution of relief through civilian committees and making sure that nothing was diverted to the occupying forces. The enterprise went relatively smoothly, and won the warm support of voluntary organizations and private individuals worldwide. Drawing upon Belgian government deposits abroad—as well as British, French and US loans, together with \$52 million in private contributions—the CRB had dispensed supplies worth \$1 billion by 1919.

If the achievements in Belgium were surprising, they were outmatched after the Armistice by the man who had now become the major domo of international relief, the 'food czar' himself. Hoover performed even more Herculean feats of organizing and executing international aid during 1919–22. Millions of people in central and eastern Europe were suffering from the worst famine in 300 years. The US had quantities of surplus agricultural produce which it was willing to send overseas. Hoover, who was simultaneously head of the US Food Administration, the US Grain Corporation, the American Relief Administration, and Director-General of relief in Europe for the Allied governments, turned the official American Relief Administration into a private charitable organization. Once more he enlisted the support of religious and humanitarian organizations, as well as his former CRB bright young men, including Maurice Pate, and began to buy and ship supplies to Germany, Austria, Poland, and Russia. The toll during these years from typhus epidemics, undernutrition, influenza, and all the pestilences of war, mounted above thirty million.

In 1920, Hoover estimated that between four and five million homeless and orphaned children faced imminent death from starvation. But if many died, millions were saved. Hundreds and thousands of children lined up daily to receive special rations of nutritionally fortifying milk and soup, nicknamed 'Hooveria'. It is ironic that Hoover's name similarly applied in the USA during the years of the Great Depression has such opposite connotations—'Hoovervilles': packing-case dwellings; 'Hoover blankets': old newspapers. In Europe, Hoover was known as a great humanitarian,

not someone whose name was identified with distress. The soup kitchens established an enduring model for emergency relief. In parts of Europe, a generation of children grew up regarding Herbert Hoover as their saviour.

One of the outcomes of the new spirit of internationalism engendered by the first World War and enshrined in the Treaty of Versailles was the League of Nations. On its formation in 1919, the League became immediately caught up in the programmes of emergency relief needed in postwar Europe. In association with the Red Cross and many voluntary organizations, the League sent food and supplies to the victims of the terrible Russian famine of 1921–22, under the direction of Dr Fridtjof Nansen, the Norwegian explorer and politician, who later served the League as High Commissioner for Refugees. During the turmoil of the Russian civil war, not only was there widespread hunger and starvation, but troops and refugees infested with lice spread a great epidemic of typhus fever. At this time, no effective treatment existed. There were over twelve million cases, and at least one million people died.

In 1921, the fledgling health organization of the League took a leading role in preventing the epidemic from invading the rest of eastern Europe. A 'cordon sanitaire' from the Baltic to the Black Sea had been imposed, but could not be tightly enough sealed to contain the outbreak. The situation demanded closer co-operation between the countries affected.

The chief medical official of the League's health secretariat was a Polish doctor and epidemiologist, Ludwik Rajchman. Rajchman managed to negotiate a sanitary convention between Russia and Poland which was widely regarded as the turning point in the fight to prevent typhus engulfing the whole of Europe.

At a conference in Warsaw in 1922, all the European countries threatened by epidemics, whether League members or not, agreed to pool epidemiological intelligence. This was an important precedent, not only for international action in the field of health, but also for other areas where the sharing of scientific knowledge or human experience was of mutual benefit to all Mankind. Under Rajchman's brilliant and active leadership, the health secretariat organized international commissions and conferences on common health problems; solicited the financial support of such organizations as the Rockefeller Foundation; advised certain countries, notably China, on how to run public health services; and established a skeleton of international order in disease control.

These solid achievements by the League were eclipsed by its failures in political and economic affairs. Its performance was flawed from the start by the refusal of the US, and the long reluctance of Russia or Germany, to join it. Despite its inability to contain the repudiation of treaties and the acts of aggression of its members, the League was nevertheless more than just a symbol of a new tide in the affairs of men. Although the League had

lost most of its prestige by 1939 when the outbreak of European hostilities sounded its death knell, it had provided a nursery where governments took their first hesitant steps towards trying to put in place an international safety net under Mankind.

In humanitarian and welfare affairs—the least obviously contentious of international activities—the League had done well. Dr Nansen had been a distinguished Commissioner for Refugees; Rajchman an outstanding pioneer of international public health; some of the League's institutions were merely put into mothballs for the war, awaiting a future in the international arrangements of the postwar world.

Although much of the influence the League had tried to bring to bear on economic and social questions was still-born during its lifetime, during its final days Viscount Bruce of Melbourne, a former Prime Minister of Australia, delivered a report distilling twenty years of its experience and proposing the creation of a new kind of international regulatory mechanism. Six years later, this system came to life as the United Nations Economic and Social Council.

Besides the League, other forces were at work between the two world wars shaping and refining the twentieth century's humanitarian conscience. After the first World War, no crisis, no invasion, no aggression between the countries of a still-colonial world took place without eliciting a reaction from the forces of modern humanitarianism. Voluntary organizations ran soup kitchens and shelters for the victims of the Great Depression. Their inability to cope with the underlying causes of such widespread social distress eventually gave way to Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal in the US—and in Britain and elsewhere to economic interventionism and the welfare state advocated by John Maynard Keynes and other revisionist thinkers. Humanitarian effort spilled over into public service, and public service now began to be seen as the service that governments were expected to provide. Overseas, the voluntary organizations, and many of the heroes of postwar European famine relief, went off to rescue victims of the Spanish Civil War. Or they raised funds for the settlement of Jews in Palestine. Or they promoted medicine and education in the countries of the Far East. While the storm clouds gathered over Europe, protest against totalitarianism and militarism was closely linked with a kindling of spirit in the humanitarian community.

Then came the second World War. Its destructive force was unlike anything ever seen before. Even the sufferings of the first World War belonged to a different order and another scale. As early as August 1940, Winston Churchill in the British House of Commons recognized that exceptional arrangements would be needed to bring relief to the populations of Axis countries after the war was won. The last world war had given an indication of the hunger, misery, and pestilence to be expected; but the price of victory in this one would be far more pervasive and devastating

of civilian life. On the day of their liberation, millions of people would be hungry, sick, and homeless; not only emergency relief, but rehabilitation of their homes, communities, and countries would be needed.

On 9 November 1943, at a time when the term 'united nations' was still being used to describe the alliance between the USA, USSR, and Britain, the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration—UNRRA—was set up in Washington with a membership of over forty countries and dominions. UNRRA was the organization which would stand ready to move in behind the Allied armies and begin the task of mopping up the detritus of war. No-one had envisaged, not even Churchill, quite what that task would actually encompass.

As the Allied armies moved across continental Europe in 1944 and the scale of devastation began to unfold, UNRRA began to shoulder the largest and most complex international relief effort ever mounted. Cities had been levelled. Industrial plant lay in ruins. Trade was at a standstill. Agriculture and food production were in disarray. Educational and health services had collapsed. Millions of people had been uprooted from their homes and had nowhere to go and nothing to live on. All basic commodities—food, fuel, clothes, medicines—were in critically short supply. Some countries had endured such sustained and systematic devastation that their whole economic and social fabric lay in tatters and somehow had to be restored. And in many of these, the ranks of those in managerial and professional occupations—those whose leadership was now needed to restore government, administration, manufacture, trade, transport systems and services—had been drastically, even deliberately, thinned.

Infinitely more shocking and incomprehensible than the physical damage—the worst of which was carried out by scorched earth policies and Allied bombing—was the scale of the human disaster. That around twenty million people had been displaced by the war, either because they had fled their homes or had been forcibly taken away to a destination outside their country, was known long before the war ended. But what, in stark reality, this might turn out to mean had not been understood. As the armies of liberation moved into Europe, the deepest evils of a system of terror, torture, and extermination were discovered by the opening of the prison camps and the revelations about what had gone on inside them. Apart from the atrocities visited on slave labourers and war prisoners, the world understood for the first time that a systematic attempt had been made to extinguish forever the Jews of Europe. Five or six million people had perished. The closing of the camps, the succour of those found there still clinging precariously to life, the attempt to identify family members and bring relatives together again, the care of orphans and the homeless, the repatriation of around 8·5 million displaced people . . . this was the task

assigned to UNRRA, with vital help from voluntary organizations. For many of the personnel involved, dealing with this tragic residue of the war was among the most heartbreaking experiences of their lives.

Care of those reduced by war to a state of almost indescribable misery was only one part of UNRRA's mission. A larger and even more complex task was to bring in enough food and emergency supplies to fan the embers of economic and social life until national efforts for self-help and reconstruction could take over. Exactly when that critical moment was reached was a matter of fine judgement, and one that could—and did—quickly run foul of national sensitivities. Herbert Lehman, ex-Governor of New York and UNRRA's first Director-General, delicately explained the approach: 'Nations no less than individuals desire to live in dignity and self-respect. They wish to become self-reliant members of the world community. To this end they seek the opportunity to work, to produce, to trade. They turn to us with no idea of long-continuing relief . . . they merely ask for our help in order that they may overcome a dire national emergency'.

Although the US was the main reservoir of funds and supplies, UNRRA was not intended to be a charitable operation run by the victors for the victims of war. It was a genuine international partnership, in which even countries which received its help provided whatever they could spare in surplus foodstuffs or commodities for the relief of others. The guiding principle of the financial plan was that countries which had not been invaded would contribute one per cent of national income: 'to each according to their needs; from each according to their resources'. In this respect, UNRRA set a new pattern in mechanisms for international humanitarian effort.

During the three and a half years of its life, UNRRA provided essential relief and rehabilitation supplies to around twenty-five countries, including China, the Philippines, Korea, Ethiopia, and the countries of central and eastern Europe. In doing so, it helped in small or large measure the lives of several hundred million people. In 1945 and 1946, the peak period of operations, UNRRA had 15,000 international staff and 35,000 local employees on its own pay-roll, and spent nearly \$4 billion on aid.

One of the first priorities was to rebuild communications and transport systems so that relief could be distributed. Trucks, locomotives and rolling stock, boats, horses and mules poured out of UNRRA cargo holds into European ports. During the winter of 1945-46, before the first postwar harvest was in, UNRRA supplies of fats and cereals kept millions of people alive. Seed, fertilizer and agricultural machinery arrived to help revive food production. Imported cattle and livestock restocked slaughtered herds. Raw materials and tools helped local industries to re-start. During 1945 and 1946, UNRRA procured and moved twenty million tons of supplies into Europe, a larger amount than the US Army's total wartime shipments across the Atlantic.

But despite this achievement, UNRRA met constant criticism in the US. In 1944 and early 1945, this vast international apparatus to run a massive supply and recovery operation had been very quickly assembled. In the chaos of postwar Europe and Asia—a chaos whose full dimensions were never fully appreciated by many US policy-makers—UNRRA's efforts were bound to come occasionally unstuck, even though Lehman's Deputy Director, Commander Robert Jackson—an Australian who had distinguished himself in the wartime British forces running supply operations in the Middle-Eastern theatre—was widely regarded as an organizational genius. Lehman's own reputation was above reproach. Yet public and official opprobrium on the American side of the Atlantic dogged UNRRA with constant accusations of mismanagement, both among its own officials and among the officials of governments who received UNRRA goods. Some stemmed from misunderstanding of the Keynesian principle governing UNRRA operations: a country receiving goods free of charge was entitled to sell them on the market to accumulate resources for other UNRRA-approved rehabilitation projects. No doubt the system did leave room for abuse; some UNRRA goods found their way onto a black market awash with army surplus. This and other anomalies made little serious difference to national recovery, but certainly fuelled bad publicity, and UNRRA proved to be not adept at defending itself from attack.

Herbert Lehman blamed its poor reputation on the governments of member countries who failed to arouse public applause. In the US, little effort was made initially to broadcast the organization's good work for fear of the charge that it was taking bread out of American mouths. Xenophobia and the deepening political distrust between East and West exacerbated the problem; most of UNRRA's European clients were in the eastern countries, and nearly three-quarters of what they were receiving came from the US.

UNRRA was always intended to have a temporary life, to exist for no longer than whatever period of time it took for Europe and Asia to be set on the path to full-scale recovery. But few imagined that UNRRA's life would be abruptly and prematurely curtailed before that period had run its course. By the end of 1945, the widening rift between the wartime allies was already beginning to alter the dynamics of postwar recovery. As UNRRA failed to shake off its US critics, the Truman Administration, buttoning up against the early chills of the Cold War, began to see its operations in an exclusively negative light. By early 1946, the writing was already on the wall. The iron curtain which Churchill described as descending on Europe in his speech at Fulton, Missouri, in March 1946 was about to ring down on UNRRA relief. Commander Jackson and other senior UNRRA officials began to speed up their preparations for handing on essential functions—agricultural rehabilitation, support to medical and educational institutions, care for the displaced and the refugees, safeguards

for children—to other incipient organizations of the new United Nations. On 25 June 1946, a detailed aide-memoire was sent to all the member governments of UNRRA describing the plans for this transferral. Having pointed out the need for a continuity in all operations, the aide-memoire stated: 'In considering future needs it is earnestly hoped that the United Nations will include arrangements which will enable effective child feeding to be continued in all the countries in which UNRRA has been operating'. Here was UNRRA's avowal that, whatever else happened, the children of Europe must not be forgotten.

Meanwhile, President Truman decided on a course of action which would shift the emphasis in postwar relief away from an impartial, international context and place it more closely under an all-American wing. The 1945 European harvest had been extremely thin, and by the early spring of 1946, alarmists were describing 800 million people around the world as threatened by famine. Truman, the Democrat, therefore invited the man he said knew more than anyone about feeding nations to undertake an advisory mission on his behalf: Herbert Hoover, the Republican ex-President and 'food czar' of days gone by.

Hoover was an outspoken critic of UNRRA and was itching for a chance of public service. His life-long enmity with President Roosevelt, the Democrat who had driven him from the White House in 1933, had denied him any recent opportunity to put his talents for organizing wartime relief at the disposal of the US Administration. He gladly accepted Truman's request.

Herbert Hoover, now seventy-three years old, flew off on a world tour to assess global food supplies and to see how surpluses from the Americas and Asia might be deployed. The 50,000-mile tour of thirty-eight countries in eighty-two days was an extraordinary feat, given the discomforts of travel at the time. In an unpressurized plane he landed at Paris, Rome, Berlin, Quito, Tokyo, Warsaw, Caracas, London, Prague, Delhi, Ottawa, Cairo, on a whirlwind schedule. Accompanying him was a handful of aides, veterans of Belgian relief and the ARA famine and epidemic missions of the early 1920s. Among them was Maurice Pate, still one of his devoted protégés, who was assigned to assess the condition of children. Hoover's mission had little in common with the typical UNRRA operation. Everywhere the grand old man descended from the skies there were banquets and receptions, kings and presidents, prime ministers and ambassadors, lined up to discuss food shortage and national destitution with the distinguished representative of the US President. From the plane, a secretary sent daily reports back to Washington, describing the miseries of ration centres where mothers and children lined up in rags, babies wrapped in newspapers instead of blankets, food riots, medical shortages, malnutrition. All were issued to the press: a main part of the mission's purpose was to unlock the frozen conscience of North America and regain public support for postwar relief. In this, the

mission was an unqualified success.

Everywhere, Hoover made speeches. On the radio, at meetings, to the press, he called for an all-out campaign against famine. He wanted people in the US to self-ration themselves—the average American was currently eating 3500 calories a day—so that food could be given to others. 'The first expression of famine is to be found among the children', he told an audience in London on 5 April. 'From the Russian frontier to the Channel, there are today 20 millions of children who are not only badly undernourished, but steadily developing tuberculosis, rickets, and anaemia. If Europe is to have a future, something must be done about these children. . . . (They) will grow up with stunted bodies and distorted minds (and) furnish more malevolents in the world.' For malevolents, Hoover meant totalitarian warmongers, fascist and communist alike. He recalled how he organized meals for millions of hungry children after the last world war and regretted that an organization had not been set up then to carry on with the task. As the days went by he began to develop this theme.

On 19 May, he spoke to the American people from Chicago. This was vintage Hoover, a noble appeal to the voluntary spirit, and his words echoed through Unicef's literature for years. 'Of the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse, the one named War has gone. But Famine, Pestilence and Death are still charging over the world. Hunger is a silent visitor who comes like a shadow. He sits beside every anxious mother three times a day. He brings not alone suffering and sorrow, but fear and terror. He carries disorder and the paralysis of government. He is more destructive than armies; not only in human life, but in morale. All of the values of right living melt before his invasion and every gain of civilization crumbles. But we can save these people from the worst—if we will.'

A few days later, he addressed the new UN Food and Agricultural Organization in Washington. He called upon the UN to supply every underfed child with an extra daily meal of 500 restorative calories. He told the conference that this was the most important reconstruction effort in the world, and that if governments working together wanted to bring peace and order, food and children was where they should start. He also began to promote his idea in the US State Department and Congress, and on the travels he continued to undertake. He tried to enlist Argentina's General Juan Peron and the First Lady, Eva. He did enlist Prime Minister Mackenzie King of Canada who assured Hoover that he would instruct his representatives at the UN to support any such proposal.

When the Hoover food survey mission was announced, many UNRRA officials were dismayed. However useful the publicity of Europe's plight might be, it was clearly not going to be useful to UNRRA's continuing efforts to relieve it. Commander Jackson, who visited Hoover in his suite in the Waldorf Towers both before and after the mission, was sceptical that a whistle-stop survey could reveal more about the problems facing Europe

than the UNRRA mission chiefs had already reported; he was bound, however, to live with the mission and its political implications. Herbert Lehman did not feel the same way. For him the political implications were more personally significant: he was a Democrat, Hoover a Republican. He resigned as UNRRA's Director-General, disheartened by the turn US policies had taken. His place was taken by Fiorello LaGuardia, former Mayor of New York City.

LaGuardia, who took up his appointment anticipating the quick acceleration of UNRRA's end, was horrified to discover the depth of the trauma from which Europe was only beginning to emerge. A passionate man, his tour of war-torn countries on the far side of the Atlantic convinced him that he had been thoroughly misled about the desirability of UNRRA's demise. From mid-1946, he did his best to prolong UNRRA's life. Not only did he recognize that much of Europe was still in desperate need of help, but that the death of UNRRA could only exacerbate Cold War tensions. He was already seriously ill, and his particular brand of fire-and-brimstone anger exhausted him to no avail. It was already too late. The US Administration had made its decision.

Simultaneously, UNRRA was moving ahead with plans to transfer its functions to other organizations within the United Nations. The Food and Agriculture Organization had already been established in October 1945, and plans were already far advanced for the establishment of Unesco—the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization. By resolution of the first UN General Assembly, the International Refugee Organization had been set up in February 1946, to take over where UNRRA would leave off.

UNRRA had originally taken over the functions of the League of Nations' defunct health section; in July 1946, an 'interim commission' of the new World Health Organization was set up while technical and political problems over the shape and mandate of the permanent international health body were resolved. But at this point, nothing clearly guaranteed the continued feeding and medical care of the children of Europe—children whose plight daily confronted many a UNRRA official and epitomized the continuing needs of war-shocked Europe. Children, always, are most vulnerable to any sudden new calamity.

Commander Jackson believed that a too-abrupt termination of UNRRA's operations might endanger the benefit so far achieved and plunge people and countries back into the state of desperation in which the organization had found them. The precarious state of children's well-being bore visible witness to this risk, as the aide-memoire of the previous June had pointed out.

The timetable of UNRRA's demise was finally settled at its fifth Council session in August 1946. Shortly before it took place, Commander Jackson flew around the world to muster last-ditch support for a new round of

financial commitments and a stay of execution. Most of the countries receiving UNRRA aid were desperate that the supplies should continue: conditions were still extremely grim. Having gained the support of almost every other member UNRRA state, the British government proved the stumbling block. Clement Attlee's government was only prepared to support UNRRA if, by doing so, it did not interfere with a forthcoming US loan of \$3.75 billion. It did.

The UNRRA Council delegates from nearly fifty member states assembled in Geneva in the old League of Nations headquarters, requisitioned by the UN just in time to provide a setting for another doomed venture in international co-operation. LaGuardia presided. Unhappily, he stated that UNRRA's emergency task was over, although the needs in Europe and Asia continued. He described plans for the procurement and transshipment of supplies to complete the programme, outlined the preliminaries of UNRRA's demobilization, and asked to be relieved of his duties. William L. Clayton, the US delegate, then informed the Council that the US Administration believed that UNRRA was no longer needed. At the moment of their liberation, certain countries had not had the means to sustain themselves; most now did. Those governments still in difficulties could obtain loans on concessionary terms from friendly countries. Here, nine months before the Marshall Plan was first proposed, was the new US approach to post-war recovery.

The US had provided over seventy per cent of UNRRA's income; with the UK and Canada, the joint proportion amounted to over ninety per cent. If the US was determined, and the UK and Canada followed suit, the end of UNRRA was a *fait accompli*. Many delegates were appalled at the news and pleaded their unreadiness to manage without UNRRA assistance. They were not much reassured to hear that other UN bodies would be at their disposal: many were still in their infancy or not yet born. Aake Ording, the Norwegian delegate, made a plea that a last, more modest, round of contributions be made to fill the time gap between the end of UNRRA and the readiness of other UN bodies to assume its programmes. He spoke eloquently of the children who would be unfed and medically untreated in the coming months. The US and its supporters were not to be moved.

The meeting turned to the business of wrapping up UNRRA's affairs. A series of resolutions based upon the aide memoire sent out in June designated the inheritors of UNRRA's vital functions: health to the World Health Organization or its Interim Commission; displaced people to the new International Refugee Organization; agriculture to the FAO; other functions to the UN itself or bodies responsible to its Economic and Social Council. Among them resolution number 103, which signalled a determination that UNRRA's feeding programmes for children should go on, and that funds left in the UNRRA account at the end of the year—when the rest of the supplies operation closed down—be used to finance this special emergency venture for children. The resolution stated that 'such assets as . . . may be available after completion of

the work of UNRRA shall be utilized for the benefit of children and adolescents; that such purpose might effectively and appropriately be served by the creation of an International Children's Fund'.

Fiorello LaGuardia, always an enthusiastic supporter of children's causes, was already deeply committed along with Jackson and many members of UNRRA's staff; so in his personal capacity was Philip Noel-Baker, the UK representative, a veteran of 1921-22 famine relief in Russia; George Davidson, the Canadian delegate, along with some others, felt that such a proposal upset the tidy UN organizational pattern. But they conceded to the mood of the moment and the intense lobbying effort carried on in support of the resolution by Ludwik Rajchman, the Polish delegate to the UNRRA Council.

Thus, the first formal move within a United Nations context had been made towards establishing a special organization for children. A number of factors and a number of powerful individuals favoured the idea. But it took more than their goodwill to bring it into being. It took, first, legislative action; second, financial support; third, executive leadership which could transform an idea into a practical reality. The person who relentlessly pursued all three was Ludwik Rajchman, the extraordinary and brilliant figure who before the war had headed the League of Nations health secretariat.

When hostilities broke out in Europe, Rajchman had left the crumbling edifice of the League of Nations to help his Polish countrymen on the run from Hitler's armies. At first he went to France; when France fell, he went to Washington, where he represented Poland on certain diplomatic and US Administration circuits. He naturally took a close interest in the conferences at which the new mechanisms for international co-operation in the postwar world were designed: Bretton Woods, Dumbarton Oaks, San Francisco; and he represented Poland at all the UNRRA Council meetings.

A few weeks before the fifth UNRRA Council in Geneva in August 1946, the International Health Conference took place in New York and gave birth to the Interim Commission of WHO. For Ludwik Rajchman personally, the outcome of this conference had been a bitter disappointment. Rajchman had given his career to the cause of international public health. He had earned a high reputation as a medical visionary, was held in awe among peers at the Rockefeller Foundation and other prestigious institutions, and had almost unparalleled expertise in the international politics of health affairs. Quite understandably, he had hoped to play a leading role in the UN organization due to inherit the mantle of his old League of Nations *operation in Geneva*. But he had discovered that his services would not be required.

Rajchman was in the forefront of those who believed in social medicine, who wanted to apply knowledge about bacteriology and epidemiology to

the control of diseases among society at large. He was also an enthusiast for incorporating child nutrition and maternal care into regular medical practice—ideas which were still viewed as revolutionary by more conservative, clinically-oriented members of the health profession. During the course of his career, Rajchman's views and his thrusting operational style had not endeared him in every quarter: he was too much of a pusher and a doer. Those who wished to discredit him used his nationality and the political climate of the time against him, branding him as a doctrinaire left winger. As a key figure in WHO, Rajchman was unpalatable to the USA. Dr Thomas Parran, Surgeon-General of the US Public Health Service and President of the International Health Conference, was opposed to Rajchman's involvement and made sure he was rejected.

The man chosen to head the WHO Interim Commission, and who became the first Director-General of WHO in 1948, was Dr Brock Chisholm. Chisholm was Canadian.

If Rajchman could not put his long years of international service at the disposal of the new UN health organization, at least he could put them at the disposal of children. The well-being of children had first and foremost to do with their health and nutrition; an international children's fund within the UN system would have to be involved in public health. In the autumn of 1946 Rajchman invested a great deal of energy in the pursuit of a UN 'ICEF'. In so doing, he played a vital role in bringing the organization into existence and shaping its early years. For Rajchman, the needs of children became as important a cause as public health had previously been; and he never drew any very definite line between the two. This did not endear him to some of the senior people in WHO Interim Commission, which during the next few years looked upon Rajchman's 'ICEF' exploits with deep mistrust.

The UNRRA resolution to create an international children's fund was as yet no more than a statement of pious intent. A committee was set up to put flesh on its bones. On 30 September, its suggestions came before the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). 'Politics and international difference took a rare holiday here today', reported the *New York Times* from Lake Success, 'as the delegates vied with each other in eloquent and unanimous support of an international children's fund'.

Fiorello LaGuardia was a leading champion. 'I am keeping an eye on the final phase of UNRRA to see that there is something left in the till when we close shop', he assured the delegates. He had earmarked a \$550,000 donation and would 'hand it over the minute this new organization for children is given life'. ECOSOC invited the UN Secretary-General to present detailed proposals to the General Assembly. In October, the Committee on Social and Humanitarian Affairs—the Third Committee of the General Assembly—set up a subcommittee of delegates from Europe, the USSR, the US, China and Brazil to draft the proposal which would go

before the full meeting of the Assembly in December.

In all these tortuous and bureaucratic procedures, Rajchman was the leading player. He was the rapporteur, and essentially the executive secretary, of this international committee responsible for elaborating the fund's mandate and operating procedures. Not surprisingly, therefore, they were largely his work. He also worked out the strategy for making them internationally palatable. Here, he exercised his lobbying skill, which combined endless consultation with the accumulation of allies. He visited Washington frequently and made every effort to involve the US Administration as closely as possible. If he could manage to co-opt the State Department into drafting the resolutions which had to navigate various UN committees and assemblies, US support would be guaranteed. Both in political and financial terms, that support was critical. Support for an 'ICEF' at the United Nations was also taken up enthusiastically and championed in Washington by some of the voluntary organizations which had been active in postwar relief under the UNRRA umbrella.

As the weeks went by, the support of the US Administration became increasingly crucial. Rajchman began to fear that the residual assets of UNRRA—on which the children's fund was not the only UN claimant—would offer a slim financial base for meeting the needs of twenty million children, the number in need in Europe alone.

Earlier in the year, \$100 million had not seemed fanciful. Now it seemed possible that UNRRA might expire with considerably less. Even if there was something substantial left, the accounts might take years to wind up, and in what proportions the inheritance would be divided between WHO IC, the refugee organization, and the children's fund was uncertain. Rajchman was thinking in terms not of millions, but of hundreds of millions, of dollars. There was no other possible source than the US government. But the people at the State Department were careful to make no commitments to Rajchman as to how large a contribution they might recommend—or if indeed they would recommend one at all. They did, of course, appreciate that the fact of any 'ICEF' ultimately depended on the support of the US Congress and Administration. At this moment in history, when most other potential government supporters were trying to recover from the wounds of war, this was no more than a fact of life for any new mechanism of international co-operation trying to struggle into existence.

Gradually, opinions about the scope of the children's fund and its terms of reference began to coalesce. Like Rajchman, US State Department officials believed that it must consist of something more than the soup kitchen for children, designed according to the Hoover model. Nutrients were important, but children's needs did not begin and end with a reasonably full stomach. Ideas about the range of children's needs had considerably advanced during the first half of the twentieth century, courtesy of advances in medical, psychological, and educational science.

Within the US, a federal agency for children—the Children’s Bureau—had been set up as early as 1912 to act as an advisory body on legislation and government policy on all matters concerning children’s well-being. The current director of the Bureau, Katherine Lenroot, had frequently served as a US representative in international conferences on children’s issues. Now her views were sought on the establishment of an equivalent international body for children within the new mechanisms of United Nations co-operation. She became a keen advocate and an important influence. Many of the ideas incorporated into the resolution for the creation of the ‘ICEF’ derived from the Children’s Bureau expertise. The abandoned child and the child suffering from emotional disturbance must not be ignored; thorough surveys of the extent and nature of childhood nutrition and health should be envisaged; support to mothers was critical.

One of the young State Department officials who spent much energy on the paperwork was Jack Charnow; he found the experience useful when he joined Unicef’s staff the following year.

On 7 December 1946, the final proposals for the new fund came before the General Assembly. They reflected concern with children both in Europe and Asia; the preamble was an eloquent statement of why the organization was needed: ‘The children of Europe and China were not only deprived of food for several cruel years but lived in a state of constant terror, witness to massacres of the civilians, to horrors of scientific warfare and exposed to progressive lowering of standards of social conduct. The urgent problem facing the United Nations is how to ensure the survival of these children . . . With the hope of the world resting on the coming generation, the problem of caring for children is international in scope and its solution must be found on an international basis’. It was proposed that, in every country where children were hungry, the government should set a target of providing 700 extra calories to all children in schools, orphanages, clinics, hospitals, and day-care centres. Each country would have to develop its own overall plan to do this, co-ordinating the existing work of local authorities and voluntary agencies. Their work at present . . . ‘only touches the fringe of the problem, hence the necessity for an International Emergency Fund’. The years 1947 to 1950 would be the critical period: ‘Upon the success of the international assistance proposed will depend to a large degree the future of the children of Europe, and of China, and thus the future of the world’.

On 11 December the UN General Assembly unanimously established the UN International Children’s Emergency Fund or Unicef by adopting resolution 57(I). The mandate this resolution conferred on Unicef was deliberately broad. For the sake of flexibility, the broader the better. It spoke of ‘children’s rehabilitation’ and ‘child health purposes generally’—terms vague enough to legitimize almost anything the organization wanted to do. It could receive voluntary contributions from any source, and spend

them on virtually any kind of supplies, technical assistance, or services, as long as it monitored their 'proper utilization and distribution'—a conscious effort to keep Unicef free of the criticisms levelled at UNRRA. A very important provision laid down that all assistance should be given 'on the basis of need, without discrimination because of race, creed, nationality, status, or political belief. No limits should be set on which children might be eligible for help: ex-enemy children were, therefore, explicitly included, as were children in any and every part of the world.

The administration of the Children's Fund was to be carried out by an Executive Director according to policies determined by its Executive Board. Members of the Board would be chosen by ECOSOC from among the UN member governments, but nonmember states could be included. The twenty-five members of the Executive Board were named in the resolution; they included the US, the USSR, Australia, Brazil, Britain, Canada, China, France, Poland, Sweden, and Yugoslavia. Switzerland—a nonmember state—was added soon afterwards. An Executive Director would be appointed by the UN Secretary-General in consultation with the Executive Board. Staff and facilities would also be provided by the UN secretariat, and Unicef was expected to draw on the services of the specialized agencies, in particular WHO, to keep separate budget and personnel requirements to a minimum.

The Unicef Board held its first meeting a week later on 19 December, and elected Ludwik Rajchman as its Chairman. The first item on Rajchman's agenda was the appointment of the Executive Director. He had long had a candidate in mind.

Months before, Rajchman had decided who he wanted to occupy the chief executive slot at Unicef. His own experience had shown how easily any international organization or its leadership could be jeopardized by the political currents of the Cold War. Storms were ahead, and the best insurance against their destruction was a leadership which would draw no opposition from the US and its Western allies. For preference, the Executive Director should be an American with established Republican sympathies. Political positions over the past half century showed that the risk of a US Administration retreating into the old isolationist stance emanated from the Republican rather than the Democratic camp. The more Americans of Republican sympathy there were in senior UN positions, the less likely the US Administration was of withdrawing its co-operation from the new UN machinery.

Among the US candidates for Unicef's leadership, Herbert Hoover's stable of aides with their experience of famine relief in Europe were among the most striking; moreover, as Hoover protégés, they were decidedly Republican. One of them was a special acquaintance of Rajchman.

Maurice Pate, who had first served on Hoover's staff in Belgium, had spent thirteen years in Poland between the wars. During 1939–45 he had been active in Polish relief in Washington, in which capacity Rajchman had come to know him. The idea of Pate at the head of Unicef appealed to Rajchman. Pate had played no part in the various preparatory committees and conferences out of which the UN and its component parts were born; unlike Rajchman, he had no 'enemies' on the circuit.

While he was visiting New York in September 1946, Pate was sounded out by Rajchman, both on his views about an 'ICEF' and on his attitude towards becoming its chief executive. Before giving Rajchman an answer, Pate consulted the man he always called the 'Chief'. Hoover thoroughly approved, and from that point onwards both Pate and—by association—the 'Chief' were members of Rajchman's informal circle of advisers. When Rajchman received Pate's provisional assent that his name be put forward, he proceeded to lobby Trygve Lie, the UN Secretary-General, and enlist the support of friends in the UN delegations.

The only resistance came from the US Administration. Pate, a businessman from the Midwest, was not on any obvious list for State Department selection as their man for the leadership of a UN organization. Pate seemed too limited, too Hoover-esque, good at logistics and knowledgeable about child-feeding, but hardly the modern internationalist. Eleanor Roosevelt, chief US representative at the UN for social and humanitarian questions and an 'ICEF' supporter, thought that he was too old; his association with Hoover cannot have been much of an attraction in her eyes. Eventually, mainly due to Rajchman's lobbying, opposition to Pate's appointment gave way before the support his name mustered from other UN delegates. This hardly seemed an important diplomatic issue to the US Administration, particularly as the Children's Fund would remain a very insignificant body for the duration of what was expected to be its limited life. A more helpful assessment could not have been made; Maurice Pate turned out to be a choice of genius.

Maurice Pate received his letter of appointment from Trygve Lie on 8 January 1947. The \$550,000 from UNRRA that LaGuardia had promised was handed over, and arrangements were also made for Unicef to employ the services of some of the staff whose jobs at UNRRA were coming to an end. The immediate task was to start pressing Washington for financial support on the generous scale that he and Rajchman regarded as essential. The last shipments of UNRRA food were due to arrive in Europe in March. There must be a minimal pause before Unicef cargoes arrived to take their place.

Within a few days of his assumption of duties, Maurice Pate wrote to General George C. Marshall, then Secretary of State, and asked for \$100 million towards the costs of 'a glass of milk and some fat to be spread on bread for six million hungry children in Europe and China'.

Unicef, the special UN effort for children, was launched.

**Main sources**

*The Dynamics of International Organization* by Philip E. Jacob, Alexine L. Atherton, Arthur M. Wallenstein; The Dorsey Press, 1972.

'International Union for Child Welfare, 50 years'; Special Edition of the International Child Welfare Review; No. 7, June 1970.

*A History of the League of Nations* by F. P. Walters, former Deputy Secretary-General of the League of Nations; published under the auspices of the Royal Institute of International Affairs; OUP, 1952.

UNRRA. *The History of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration*. George Woodbridge, Columbia University Press, 1950; Vols I, II, III.

*An Uncommon Man: The Triumph of Herbert Hoover* by Richard Norton Smith. Simon & Schuster, 1984.

Interviews, memoirs, and papers of Sir Robert Jackson, Senior Deputy Director of UNRRA 1945–48.

Published obituaries and reminiscences of Dr Ludwik Rajchman; and interviews carried out for the Unicef History Project by Jack Charnow and Sherwin Moe, 1983–85.

Resolutions of the UN Committee on Social and Humanitarian Affairs; the UN Yearbook; Resolutions of the General Assembly; Unicef Executive Board documentation 1947–50, and summary records of discussions.

Some notes on trip with the Hoover Mission (March–June 1946); Maurice Pate, 1 August 1946; papers of Maurice Pate; unpublished memoir by Maurice Pate, 1958.

Department of State, US government: memoranda and position papers; Committee on Voluntary Foreign Aid and other State Department papers, 1946–47.