Journal of Global History (2025), 20: 1, 61–81
doi:10.1017/S1740022824000184

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

ARTICLE

Between Moscow and Geneva: The Soviet Red Cross and the International Red Cross Movement

Siobhán Hearne

The University of Manchester, Manchester, UK
Email: siobhan.hearne@manchester.ac.uk

Abstract

In the decades after the death of Iosif Stalin in 1953, Soviet foreign policy shifted away from isolationism to knowledge transfer and competition with the West, as well as robust engagement with the decolonising and non-aligned world. A core component of this reorientation was the reversal of the USSR's temporary withdrawal from international organisations. This article explores the Soviet Red Cross's involvement in the League of Red Cross Societies and argues that the two organisations engaged in a mutually beneficial partnership that was built upon shared visions of humanitarianism and development. In this period, the Soviet Red Cross co-hosted major international seminars and conferences with the League, helped to channel humanitarian relief to conflict zones, and supported the League's development initiatives in the Global South. In return, the League offered the Soviets opportunities to forge links with newly independent countries of the decolonising world and advance narratives about Soviet superiority to international and domestic audiences.

Keywords: Red Cross; Soviet Union; humanitarianism; Soviet Red Cross; development

In July 1969, an article by Henrik Beer—a prominent figure within the international Red Cross movement—appeared in the Soviet Red Cross's magazine.[1] Beer's article provided an extended history of the League of Red Cross Societies (hereafter the League), a Geneva-based international organisation responsible for encouraging the formation of national Red Cross and Red Crescent societies worldwide, as well as supporting and coordinating their humanitarian activities.[2] In the article, Beer, who served as the League's Secretary General from 1960–81, expressed deep admiration for the Soviet Red Cross. 'Your society, with its huge reserve of activists, represents one of the most powerful units of the League', he noted, before listing the Soviet Red Cross' numerous material, technical, educational, and financial contributions to the international Red Cross movement.[3] There is no way of knowing whether journalists distorted Beer's words when translating them into Russian, but the article was nevertheless emblematic of the mutually beneficial partnership that developed between the leadership of the Soviet Red Cross and the League across the second half of the twentieth century. This article examines the challenges and

[1]The full name of the organisation was the Union of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies of the USSR. Throughout the article, I will use the shortened version 'Soviet Red Cross'.

[2]For an overview of the League's history, see Melanie Oppenheimer, Susanne Schech, Romani Fathi, Neville Wylie, and Rosemary Cresswell, 'Resilient Humanitarianism? Using Assemblage to Re-evaluate the History of the League of Red Cross Societies', *International History Review,* 43, no. 3 (2021): 579–97.

[3]Genrik Beer, 'Federatsiia gumanizma i mira' ('The Federation of Humanism and Peace') *Sovetskii Krasnyi Krest* (hereafter *SKK*), 7 (1969), 24–5.

opportunities of this partnership at a time when decolonisation reconfigured the world map, Soviet foreign policy, and the composition of international organisations.

The partnership between the League and the Soviet Red Cross was possible because both sides had something to gain. For the League, their relationship with a major power in the socialist world opened channels to deliver humanitarian aid to conflict zones and facilitated the organisation's adherence to the Red Cross fundamental principle of neutrality in the divided Cold War world. For the Soviet side, playing an important role in a major multilateral humanitarian network advanced propaganda narratives about the USSR's leading role in global health and humanitarianism to international and domestic audiences. Beyond this, the partnership worked because the League and the Soviet Red Cross shared a utopian, future-facing vision of humanitarianism centred on development in the Global South. As newly independent states arose out of the dissolution of colonial empires in the 1950s–1970s, their socioeconomic development became high on the agendas of international organisations and national governments alike, who attempted to export their development models of economic and social life to the decolonising world.[4] Decolonisation reconfigured international organisations, as dozens of new governments in Africa and Asia became members of supranational bodies like the United Nations (UN), World Health Organization (WHO), and the League.[5] Within this context, the League launched its own Development Programme, a funding scheme made up of contributions from national societies to provide technical, financial, and material assistance to new Red Cross and Red Crescent societies in the Global South.[6] Although the League's Development Programme was directed by a non-communist organisation, it fit neatly with Soviet visions of development that prioritised the development of large-scale infrastructure, the public sector, and welfare systems over strengthening the private sector.[7] As with the UN and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), the Soviet Red Cross's and League's enmeshed internationalist visions enabled the two organisations to forge a mutually beneficial relationship.[8]

In exploring the partnership forged between the League and the Soviet Red Cross, this article contributes a new perspective to the history of global health that emphasises the importance of collaboration and mutual benefit. Recent global health histories have tended to focus on disease control, or privilege the perspectives of Western powers and the work of Western-dominated organisations and institutions.[9] Innovative studies have pushed beyond these frameworks to emphasise the contributions of the socialist world.[10] Building upon this scholarship, this article

[4]Silvia Salvatici, *A History of Humanitarianism, 1755–1989: In the Name of Others*, trans. Philip Sanders (Manchester University Press, 2019), 157–65.

[5]Margot Tudor, 'Humanitarianism and the Global Cold War, 1945–1991' in *Handbook on Humanitarianism and Inequality*, eds. Silke Roth, Bandana Pukayastha, and Tobias Denskus (Edward Elgar Publishing Ltd, 2024), 40–3.

[6]Anna Wilkinson, 'The League of Red Cross Societies' Development Programme, the 1964 South East Asian Forum, and the Silencing of Asia', *Asian Studies Review*, 47, no. 4 (2023): 761–77.

[7]Oscar Sanchez-Sibony, 'The Cold War in the Margins of Capital: The Soviet Union's Introduction to the Decolonized World, 1955–1961', in *Alternative Globalizations. Eastern Europe and the Postcolonial World*, eds. James Mark, Artemy M. Kalinovsky, and Steffi Marung (Indiana University Press, 2020), 62–3; Artemy M. Kalinovsky, *Laboratory of Socialist Development: Cold War Politics and Decolonization in Soviet Tajikistan* (Cornell University Press, 2018), 8.

[8]Louis Howard Porter, *Reds in Blue: UNESCO, World Governance, and the Soviet Internationalist Imagination* (Oxford University Press, 2023); Elizabeth Banks, 'The Ruble Lever: Soviet Development Knowledge and the Political Economy of the UN', *Journal of Global History* (8 September 2024).

[9]Christian W. McMillen, *Discovering Tuberculosis: A Global History, 1900 to the Present* (Yale University Press, 2015); Christine Holmberg, Stuart Blume, Paul Greenough, eds., *The Politics of Vaccination: A Global History* (Manchester University Press, 2017); Nitsan Chorev, *The World Health Organisation between North and South* (Cornell University Press, 2012); John Farley, *To Cast Out Disease: A History of the International Health Division of the Rockefeller Foundation (1931–1951)* (Oxford University Press, 2004); Marcos Cueto, Theodore M. Brown, and Elizabeth Fee, *The World Health Organisation: A History* (Cambridge University Press, 2019); Randall M. Packard, *A History of Global Health: Interventions into the Lives of Others* (John Hopkins University Press, 2016).

[10]Mary Augusta Brazelton, *China in Global Health: Past and Present* (Cambridge University Press, 2023); Dora Vargha, *Polio Across the Iron Curtain: Hungary's Cold War with an Epidemic* (Cambridge University Press, 2018); Erez Manela, 'A Pox

demonstrates that just as socialist powers tapped into multilateral networks and international organisations to meet their goals in the field of medical diplomacy, international organisations also relied upon socialist channels to deliver medical aid and health care. In focusing on collaboration between a socialist state and an international organisation, the article responds to a recent call to excavate the 'missing pieces' in narratives on the development of global health and integrate the socialist world into global health history.[11]

Stalin's death in 1953 generated a distinctive shift in Soviet foreign policy. Beginning in the mid-1950s, Soviet leadership shifted away from Stalinist isolationism towards peaceful coexistence, knowledge transfer, and competition with the West, as well as the promotion of Soviet socialism in the decolonising and non-aligned world.[12] Another core component of this foreign policy reorientation was the reversal of the USSR's temporary withdrawal from various international organisations. In 1954, the USSR reshaped its relationship with the United Nations by rejoining the International Labour Organization and becoming a full member of UNESCO.[13] From the early-1950s, the USSR became the second largest contributor to the UN's budget.[14] In 1956, the USSR reactivated its membership to the WHO after a seven-year absence.[15] This embrace of international organisations extended into the world of the Red Cross. Throughout the late 1950s and early 1960s, the Soviet Red Cross resumed contact with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) following decades of strained and complicated relations.[16] The Soviet Red Cross had been a member of the League of Red Cross Societies since 1934, but it was in the post-Stalin period that they began to play a more active and visible role in the organisation's governing bodies. In 1957, Soviet Red Cross chairman Grigorii Miterev became the League's Vice President, a role which he served in until 1971. Under Miterev's leadership, the Soviet Red Cross became an important national society within the League.

Soviet internationalism has become a rich and developing field of study in recent years. Scholars have explored the cultural, economic, social, and political impact of the USSR's engagements in Central and Eastern Europe, Latin America, and Africa on both the Soviet Union and various recipient societies.[17] As Elizabeth Banks notes in a recent article, histories of Soviet internationalism have not devoted sufficient attention to the presence of Soviet ideas and practices

on Your Narrative: Writing Disease Control into Cold War History', *Diplomatic History,* 34, no. 2 (2010): 299–323; Bogdan C. Iacob, 'Malariology and Decolonization: Eastern European Experts from the League of Nations to the World Health Organization', *Journal of Global History,* 17, no. 2 (2022): 233–53.

[11]Dora Vargha, 'Missing Pieces: Integrating the Socialist World in Global Health History', *History Compass,* 21, no. 7 (2023): 1–8.

[12]For a broad overview, see Vladislav Zubok, *A Failed Empire: The Soviet Union in the Cold War from Stalin to Gorbachev* (University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 94–192.

[13]Harold Karan Jacobson, 'The USSR and ILO', *International Organisation* 14, no. 3 (1960): 402–28; Porter, *Reds in Blue*, 48–51.

[14]Banks, 'The Ruble Lever'.

[15]The USSR withdrew from the WHO in 1949, along with other nations from state socialist eastern Europe, to protest against the US dominance of the organisation. Theodore M. Brown, Marcos Cueto, and Elizabeth Fee, 'The World Health Organisation and the Transition from "International" to "Global" Public Health', *American Journal of Public Health* 96, no. 1 (2006): 64–5.

[16]Jean-François Fayet, 'Le CICR et la Russie: un peu plus que de l'humanitaire', *Connexe: Les Espaces Postcommunistes En question(s)* 1 (2019): 55–74; Boyd van Dijk, '"The Great Humanitarian": The Soviet Union, the International Committee of the Red Cross, and the Geneva Conventions of 1949', *Law and History Review* 37, no. 1 (2019): 209–35.

[17]A select number of recent examples include: Alessandro Iandolo, *Arrested Development: The Soviet Union in Ghana, Guinea, and Mali, 1955–1968* (Cornell University Press, 2022); Natalia Telepneva, *Cold War Liberation: The Soviet Union and the Collapse of the Portuguese Empire in Africa, 1961–1975* (University of North Carolina Press, 2022); Elizabeth Banks, 'Sewing Machines for Socialism?: Gifts of Development and Disagreement between the Soviet and Mozambican Women's Committees, 1963–87', *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 41, no. 1 (2021): 27–40; Rachel Appelbaum, *Empire of Friends: Soviet Power and Socialist Internationalism in Cold War Czechoslovakia* (Cornell University Press, 2019); Tobias Rupprecht, *Soviet Internationalism after Stalin: Interaction and Exchange between the USSR and Latin America during the Cold War* (Cambridge University Press, 2015).

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1740022824000184 Published online by Cambridge University Press

in multilateral initiatives, networks, and organisations.[18] The important exceptions to this rule have concentrated on the USSR's engagement with a handful of UN agencies and the role played by Soviet experts in the development of international law.[19] Medicine and health care are almost entirely absent from histories of post-war Soviet internationalism, even though the socialist world (and particularly the USSR) played a prominent role in the politics and practices of global health in the second half of the twentieth century.[20] In focusing on the Soviet Red Cross's international activities, this article offers insight both into Soviet medical internationalism and the USSR's engagement in the multilateral humanitarian networks that sought to transcend the geopolitical divisions of the Cold War world.

Focusing on Soviet engagements with the League is part of a historiographical shift in the history of internationalism to 'history in-between', which weaves 'international politics into national contexts and individual, local experiences'.[21] This approach helps to nuance the history of the international Red Cross movement, which has so far privileged Western perspectives and has tended to bypass the contributions of the socialist world altogether.[22] Examining the League's relationship with a major socialist Red Cross society helps us to better understand the organisation's 'capacity to evolve' in the face of political upheaval, war, and humanitarian disaster, as well as the League's ability to collaborate across Cold War divisions.[23]

In order to explore the relationship between the Soviet Red Cross and the League, this article draws upon material from the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and ICRC archives in Geneva, as well as Soviet Red Cross reports held in Estonian, Latvian, Moldovan, Russian, and Ukrainian archives and publications produced by members of the organisation's Executive Committee. While this source base offers insight into the shared vision of the two organisations and the challenges of their collaboration, it is skewed towards the perspectives of a small minority of powerful elites based in Moscow and Geneva. Leadership of the Soviet Red Cross was comprised of trusted members of the country's de facto elite (*nomenklatura*). The position of chairperson of the Soviet Red Cross was always held by a well-respected academician who had previously occupied prestigious high-level positions within the Soviet bureaucracy. For example, Grigorii Miterev served as the USSR's Minister of Health and

[18]Banks, 'The Ruble Lever'.

[19]Banks, 'The Ruble Lever'; Porter, *Reds in Blue*; Boyd van Dijk, 'Internationalizing Colonial War: on the Unintended Consequences of the Interventions of the International Committee of the Red Cross in South-East Asia, 1945–1949', *Past & Present* 250, no. 1 (2021): 243–83; van Dijk, 'The Great Humanitarian'; Sonja Dolinsek and Philippa Hetherington, 'Socialist Internationalism and Decolonizing Moralities in the UN Anti-Trafficking Regime, 1947–1954', *Journal of the History of International Law* 21, no. 2 (2021): 212–38.

[20]Two important exceptions include Paula M. Michaels, 'Soviet Medical Internationalism amid Destalinisation, 1953–1958', *Soviet and Post-Soviet Review* 50 (2023): 40–63; Anne-Emanuelle Birn and Nikolai Krementsov, '"Socialising" Primary Care? The Soviet Union, WHO and the 1978 Alma-Ata Conference', *BMJ Global Health* 3 (2018): 1–15. On socialist states and global health, see Bogdan C. Iacob, 'Health' in *Socialism Goes Global: The Soviet Union and Eastern Europe in the Age of Decolonisation*, eds. James Mark and Paul Betts (Oxford University Press, 2022), 255–89; Dora Vargha, 'The Socialist World in Global Polio Eradication', *Revue d'études comparatives Est-Ouest* 1, no. 1 (2018): 71–94.

[21]Ana Antic, Johanna Conterio, and Dora Vargha, 'Beyond Liberal Internationalism', *Contemporary European History,* 25, no. 2 (2016): 361.

[22]One exception in a recent edited volume on the history of the movement which otherwise focuses entirely on Western perspectives is Caroline Reeves, 'The Early History of the Red Cross Society of China and its Relation to the Red Cross Movement', in *The Red Cross Movement: Myths, Practices, and Turning Points*, eds. Neville Wylie, Melanie Oppenheimer, and James Crossland (Manchester University Press, 2020), 81–96. Other notable exceptions include Michiko Suzuki, *Humanitarian Internationalism under Empire: The Global Evolution of the Japanese Red Cross Movement, 1877–1945* (Colombia University Press, 2024); Fayet, 'Le CICR et la Russie'; Maren Hachmeister, *Selbstorganisation im Sozialismus. Das Rote Kreuz in Polen und der Tschechoslowakei 1945–1989 (Self-organization in Socialism. The Red Cross in Poland and Czechoslovakia 1945–1989)* (Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2019); Wilkinson, 'The League of Red Cross Societies' Development Programme', 761–77; Pavel E. Ratmanov and Vsevolod Y. Baskhuev, 'Foreign Representative Offices of the Soviet Red Cross in the 1920s and 1930s in the Context of the International Health Policy of the USSR', *History of Medicine* 7, no. 1 (2021): 41–50.

[23]Oppenheimer *et al.* 'Resilient Humanitarianism?'.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1740022824000184 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Nadezhda Troyan was a decorated war veteran and former partisan intelligence officer who headed the Scientific Research Institute of Health Education. The Soviet Red Cross had tens of millions of members, but directly participating in the League's activities was the prerogative of only a tiny minority who possessed the biography and political connections required to access privileges that were denied to the vast majority of Soviet citizens, such as international travel and frequent contact with foreigners.

The partnership between the League and the Soviet Red Cross was simultaneously productive for both parties and fraught with seemingly irreconcilable tensions. In order to trace the contours of the relationship, the article begins by examining how both the Soviet Red Cross and the League navigated the political and economic barriers to the USSR's participation in the international Red Cross movement. Focus then shifts onto two key moments of collaboration that hold broader significance to histories of global health and humanitarianism: the Vietnam War and the International Red Cross Seminar on Primary Health Care for Developing Countries, which was held in Frunze (now Bishkek), the capital of the Kyrgyz Soviet Socialist Republic (SSR) in 1979. In the final section, the article explores how the Soviet Red Cross's engagements with Geneva were presented to a domestic audience, focusing specifically on how participation in the League was instrumentalised to solidify Soviet racial hierarchies and advance narratives about the USSR's superiority on the global stage.

Divergent goals? The international Red Cross movement meets the Soviet system

The Soviet Red Cross's participation in the international Red Cross movement was at times rather complicated. While the Soviet Red Cross's membership was mainly comprised of unpaid volunteers, the organisation itself was extremely closely linked to the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) and embedded within state structures. The Central Committee of the CPSU chose the leadership of the Soviet Red Cross, tightly controlled its budget, and retained the right to veto the organisation's planned international activities. The CPSU even embedded KGB officers within the Soviet Red Cross, such as Ivan Teterin, who acted as a Soviet Red Cross representative in Geneva and Thailand during the late 1970s and early 1980s.[24] Therefore, the Soviet Red Cross's engagements in the international Red Cross movement were inflected by the broader foreign policy goals of the CPSU, and Soviet Red Cross representatives were expected to advance the aims of their government, just like their counterparts in other non-communist international organisations.[25]

Beyond the Soviet Red Cross's close links with the CPSU, tensions between the organisation and the League also reflected their vastly different visions of the international Red Cross movement. The League professed that its work was guided by a series of fundamental principles (humanity, impartiality, neutrality, independence from national government, voluntary service, unity, and universality), and the organisation's activities were supposed to be conducted without racial, political, and religious prejudice.[26] There was often a disconnect between the League's theoretical visions of its mission and its operations in practice. The League often conflated humanitarian aid with Western conceptions of development assistance, undermined the autonomy of national societies in the developing world, and served to reinforce divisions between the Global North and Global South.[27] Just like other international organisations, the League

[24]The ICRC conducted an investigation into Teterin's KGB links in 1980 and correspondence on this can be found in the International Committee of the Red Cross Archives (ICRC Archives) B AG 121 218-015, Généralités.

[25]Louis Porter explores how the Soviet government expected Soviet UNESCO employees in Paris to violate the oath of international civil service to aid the USSR's foreign policy goals; Porter, *Reds in Blue*, ch. 5.

[26]Jean Pictet, 'The Fundamental Principles of the Red Cross', *International Review of the Red Cross* 19, no. 210 (1979): 133.

[27]Wilkinson, 'The League of Red Cross Societies' Development Programme'.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1740022824000184 Published online by Cambridge University Press

offered opportunities for former imperial powers and powerful nations in the Global North to retain influence over the Global South through humanitarian practices and initiatives.[28]

In contrast to the League, Soviet Red Cross leadership did not profess to be neutral and actively sought to increase the influence of socialist national societies within the League. The Soviet Red Cross regularly met with the leaders of other socialist national societies to draft joint statements on international issues, encourage tactical voting for League leadership positions, and to develop unified stances ahead of international Red Cross conferences. When the Soviets felt that they were not being included as an equal partner within the League's governing bodies, they accused the League of pro-Western bias. This accusation was levelled at League Secretary General Henrik Beer in May 1965 when he rejected the nomination of a Soviet candidate for a position in the League's Secretariat because of budgetary concerns.[29] This response enraged Soviet Red Cross chairman Grigorii Miterev, who penned a scathing letter accusing the organisation of pro-Western bias. 'Your conception of cooperation actually turns into the cooperation exclusively with the western countries, from where you bring leading officers to the League, its consultants and its experts [sic]', Miterev wrote, before threatening to reduce the Soviet Red Cross's financial contribution.[30] Beer pushed back strongly against these accusations and mentioned the appointment of representatives from Yugoslavia, Poland, Bulgaria, and the GDR to prominent positions.

Unlike the League, the Soviet Red Cross were proudly political and often criticised national governments deemed to be 'unfriendly' for what they perceived to be the broader success of the international Red Cross movement. Soviet Red Cross leadership regarded the League as a powerful organisation with the ability to influence national governments and frequently criticised the League's leadership for failing to take a strong enough stance on a number of international issues, including apartheid in South Africa, Chinese and US military intervention in Vietnam, and the deployment of nuclear weapons in Europe.[31] Although the Soviet Red Cross often regarded the fundamental principle of neutrality as an impediment to the broader success of the international Red Cross movement, they also benefitted from the same neutrality when it came to the aggressive foreign policy of their own government in Eastern Europe and Afghanistan. After the Soviet-led invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, League General Secretary Henrik Beer reassured Miterev that the issue would not be raised at the next meeting of the League's Executive Committee because they would 'stick to the non-political character of the Red Cross'.[32] Similarly, the Soviet Red Cross praised the ICRC's 'objective position' on Afghanistan in a 1980 report.[33]

The Soviet Red Cross's political stance generated tension between Moscow and Geneva. While Beer often expressed sympathy for the organisation's position on international issues, he issued numerous firm reminders about the non-political nature of the Red Cross movement.[34] Others were less sympathetic and resorted to personal insults. In confidential notes on an April 1979 meeting with Soviet Red Cross leadership, the ICRC's regional delegate for Europe, Philippe Grand d'Hauteville, accused the Soviets of regarding the ICRC as nothing more than 'a megaphone intended to carry the voice of Moscow-style Marxist-Leninism into the

[28]Tudor, 'Humanitarianism and the Global Cold War', 42.

[29]International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies Archives (IFRC Archives), box R50962653. Letter from Beer to Miterev, 14 April 1965.

[30]IFRC Archives, box R50962653. Letter from Miterev to Beer, 6 May 1965.

[31]IFRC Archives, R50962653, Letter from Beer to Baltiiskii, 1 March 1979; Letter from Baltiiskii to Beer, 15 September 1976; IFRC Archives, box R510408989, Correspondence USSR/Chemical weapons. Letter from Hans Høegh to Baltiiskii, 6 January 1984. For the Soviet Red Cross's anti-apartheid appeal to the ICRC and League, see ICRC Archives, B AG 121 218-016, La Croix-Rouge soviétique et la paix (The Soviet Red Cross and Peace) 1981; Zaiavlenie Sovetskogo Krasnogo Kresta (Appeal of the Soviet Red Cross) 24 June 1976.

[32]IFRC Archives, R50962653, Notes from talks with Professor Miterev, 27 August 1968.

[33]Rahvusarhiiv (National Archives of Estonia, ERA) R-2032.2.298, lk. 23.

[34]IFRC Archives, R50962653, Letters from Beer to Baltiiskii from 1 March 1979, 30 November 1979, 4 February 1980.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1740022824000184 Published online by Cambridge University Press

international arena of the Red Cross'.[35] Grand d'Hauteville claimed to find dialogue with the Soviet Red Cross challenging, not only because of their 'political opinions' but also because of the apparent 'limited intellectual and cultural background of [the organisation's] representatives'.

The League and the Soviet Red Cross also had different perceptions about Red Cross membership. From the Soviet side, the Red Cross was a mass movement: in 1970 the organisation claimed to have 84.5 million members, a figure which accounted for around 35 per cent of the country's population.[36] Like many aspects of social, political, and economic life, Red Cross membership was centrally planned in Moscow and republican Red Cross and Red Crescent committees were expected to meet membership targets dictated by the centre.[37] It is perhaps because of these targets that the organisation had a very inclusive definition of membership, which included anybody who paid the extremely low membership fee or participated in any Red Cross activities, including blood donors, members of first aid teams, and schoolchildren. According to a briefing prepared by the League, becoming a member of the Soviet Red Cross involved merely paying the membership fee and did not necessarily require any regular commitment of time.[38]

From the League's side, being a Red Cross member involved making a financial contribution to the international Red Cross movement. Between 1969 and 1974, the League phased in a new scale of contributions for national societies which calculated contributions based upon a given society's financial resources, their country's gross national product (GNP), and the number of adult members.[39] This new scale of contributions put the Soviet Red Cross in a very difficult position. Chairwoman Nadezhda Troyan explained this in a letter to the League in July 1973, wherein she noted that the mass nature of the Soviet Red Cross did not necessarily make the organisation wealthy because membership contributions were paid in Soviet rubles and the organisation did not have its own hard currency (*valiuta,* stable foreign currency) account.[40] In order to reduce the Soviet Red Cross's contributions, Troyan began reporting reduced membership figures to the League, something which she claimed the Red Cross societies of the GDR, Bulgaria, UK, and USA had also done.[41]

The Soviet political and economic system also posed significant challenges. The Soviet Red Cross often appeared reluctant to meet its financial obligations to the League, especially when the latter requested an increased contribution. At the October 1952 meeting of the League's Executive Committee, the Soviet Red Cross voted against a proposed increase in contributions and suggested that the League reduce its expenses rather than asking for more money.[42] The Soviet Red Cross continued to accuse the League of wasting money in the decades that followed. One tense exchange between the two parties prompted Beer to provide the Soviet Red Cross with a detailed overview of the League's income and expenditure in June 1965.[43] From the League's side, this tension was driven by fundamentally different understandings of money. In his notes from an August 1967 meeting with Miterev on the topic of finance, Beer expressed frustration at Miterev's

[35]ICRC Archives, B AG 121 128-015, Généralités. Entretiens avec les représentants Croix-Rouge et Croissant-Rouge de l'Alliance des de l'U.R.S.S. dans le cadre des réunions de la Ligue (Conversations with representatives of the Red Cross and Red Crescent of the USSR during the meetings of the League) (23–28.4.79).

[36]*SKK*, 8 (1971), back cover.

[37]For example, in 1967 Red Cross and Red Crescent committees in all fifteen Soviet republics reportedly exceeded their planned targets for membership figures and were given increased targets for 1968; Latvijas Valsts arhivs (Latvian State Archive, LVA), f. 1416, ap. 1, l. 29, lp. 64.

[38]George Reid, 'Red Cross in Downtown Moscow', 26 June 1985. IFRC Archives, box R509626484, 'USSR Veterans de la CR' ('USSR Veterans of the Red Cross').

[39]IFRC Archives, box Z000176, 30 Board Governors. Proceedings: Board of Governors, XXXII Session, Tehran, 2–6 November 1973. Annex 3: 'Report of the Permanent Scale of Contributions Commission', 7.

[40]IFRC Archives, box R50962653. Letter from Troyan to Beer, 18 July 1973.

[41]Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv noveishei istorii (Russian State Archive of Contemporary History, RGANI), f. 5, op. 66, d. 966, l. 101.

[42]RGANI, f. 5, op. 28, d. 130, l. 176.

[43]IFRC Archives, box R50962653. Letter from Beer to Miterev, 10 June 1965.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1740022824000184 Published online by Cambridge University Press

apparent ignorance about inflation and the necessity of an element of risk to yield return on investments. According to Beer, Miterev asked for the League to use a state bank and invest money 'without any risks whatsoever'.[44] Miterev himself expressed his disapproval of the League's purchasing of bonds and participation in stock exchange transactions at a League meeting in Geneva in April 1966.[45]

Miterev's concerns about the League's expenditure may have reflected apprehension about investment in global financial markets, but it was also likely driven by practical circumstances. The Soviet Red Cross's budget was comprised of state funding and membership dues, both of which were paid in Soviet rubles, a non-convertible currency that was excluded from global financial systems.[46] Contributions to the League were paid in Swiss Francs, but the Soviet Red Cross only had a limited hard currency budget that had to cover contributions to the ICRC, the exchange of Red Cross delegations, attendance at international events, and the delivery of aid overseas. In order to access hard currency, the Soviet Red Cross had to secure approval from the Central Committee of the CPSU and the USSR's Council of Ministers, who on occasion flatly rejected requests.[47] Despite seeking greater representation within international organisations, the Soviet government took complicated measures to prevent handing over significant amounts of hard currency to them.[48]

The League was aware of the Soviet Red Cross's limited access to hard currency and tried to find solutions. In May 1964, Beer made an 'exceptional concession' and suggested that the Soviets paid part of their contribution in unconvertible rubles, but Soviet Red Cross leadership claimed that this would not work because it would have been impossible for them to receive permission from the government to open a dedicated account with a Soviet state bank for this purpose.[49] In March 1965, Miterev suggested that the Soviet Red Cross could pay part of its contribution in kind by supplying the League with materials and equipment that could be used to provide humanitarian relief.[50] The League readily accepted this proposal, and this became common practice in the decades that followed. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, the Soviet Red Cross supplied the League with items that had been manufactured within the Soviet Union, including paper, medications, powdered milk, tents, and even riverboats that could be used by mobile medical teams in the Amazon.[51] This flexible arrangement was specific to the Soviet Red Cross, but it represented part of a broader increase in the circulation of Soviet materials in international development work that was driven by the weakness of the ruble. For example, the USSR paid its contributions to the UN in rubles, which were then used by UN officials to purchase Soviet materials, equipment, and expertise, which in turn increased Soviet influence over UN development work.[52]

A mutually beneficial partnership

Despite the challenges posed by the USSR's political and economic system, the Soviet Red Cross and the League worked flexibly together for mutual benefit. For the League, a relationship with a

[44]IFRC Archives, box R50962653. Memorandum 'Notes from talks with Professor Miterev on Finance', 31 August 1967.

[45]RGANI, f. 5, op. 58, d. 43, l. 3.

[46]Kristy Ironside, *A Full-Value Ruble: The Promise of Prosperity in the Postwar Soviet Union* (Harvard University Press, 2021), 5.

[47]RGANI, f. 5, op. 62, d. 636, ll. 36–8.

[48]For example, the Soviet government took significant deductions from the salaries of Soviet UNESCO employees in Paris in an attempt to recoup a portion of the USSR's hard currency contributions to the organisation, Porter, *Reds in Blue*, 119–20.

[49]IFRC Archives, box R50962653. Letter from Beer to Miterev, 6 May 1964.

[50]IFRC Archives, box R50962653. Letter from Miterev to Beer, 30 March 1965.

[51]IFRC Archives, box R50962653. Letter from Beer to Miterev, 8 February 1966; Letter from Miterev to Beer, 17 March 1969; Letter from Beer to Nadezhda Troyan, 17 October 1973; IFRC Archives, box 999642, Dr Z. S. Hantchef, Croix-Rouge Sovietique 1967–1968. Memorandum on recent shipments of goods by the Soviet Red Cross, 1968.

[52]Banks, 'The Ruble Lever'.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1740022824000184 Published online by Cambridge University Press

major power in the socialist world offered channels for delivering humanitarian aid to hard-to-reach conflict zones. For the Soviet Red Cross, engagement in the League served important propaganda purposes and provided legitimisation at both home and abroad. The Soviet Red Cross were also able to use the League's global network of national societies to advance narratives about the superiority of the USSR's health care system and development models to target audiences in the decolonising world.

During the Vietnam War, the Soviets provided both the League and the ICRC with essential channels of communication and transportation through which to reach the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV, North Vietnam). The Soviet government had developed a close relationship with the DRV in the decade following the USSR's official recognition of the country in 1950. In 1955, the Soviets sent an ambassador to the DRV and Ho Chi Minh made an official visit to the USSR.[53] By the late 1950s, the USSR was providing regular economic, technical, and military assistance in the form of both non-refundable aid and long-term credits.[54] USSR-DRV ties were further strengthened following the United States's escalation of conflict in 1965. In this year, the USSR and DRV exchanged high-level delegations and the Soviets significantly increased economic aid, providing 594 million rubles in the period 1966–9 alone.[55] Alongside economic aid, Hanoi sent thousands of Vietnamese students to Soviet universities, technical colleges, and institutes to study a wide range of subjects, including architecture, art, medicine, and engineering.[56]

The Soviet Red Cross participated in broader attempts to foster cooperation between the USSR and the DRV. In early 1956, the Soviet Red Cross sent a delegation to Hanoi to deliver a gift of 100,000 rubles to support victims of a recent devastating typhoon, meet with various state officials (including Ho Chi Minh), and develop plans to open a Soviet Red Cross hospital in the country.[57] The planned hospital was part of broader efforts on the part of socialist European states to assist in the construction of socialist healthcare in the DRV.[58] The Soviet Red Cross opened the 150-bed hospital in May 1956, which was staffed by Soviet doctors and nurses, as well as Vietnamese medical personnel.[59] The Soviet Red Cross ran the hospital for two years before it was officially handed over to the DRV Ministry of Health in 1958.[60]

As well as material aid, the Soviet Red Cross were vocal supporters of the North Vietnamese within the international Red Cross movement. The DRV Red Cross society were frequent guests of the Soviet Red Cross and attended various events in the USSR, including a number of All-Union

[53]Ilya V. Gaiduk, *Confronting Vietnam: Soviet Policy toward the Indochina Conflict, 1954–1963* (Woodrow Wilson Centre Press, 2003), 57–8.

[54]Christopher Heurlin, 'Authoritarian Aid and Regime Durability: Soviet Aid to the Developing World and Donor–Recipient Institutional Complementarity and Capacity', *International Studies Quarterly* 64 (2020): 972. See also Gaiduk, *Confronting Vietnam*, chs 4 and 5. Before 1965, almost two-thirds of the economic aid given to the DRV by the Soviets was in the form of long-term credits; Luong Thi Hong, 'Centre and Periphery in the Cold War: Soviet Economic Aid to Vietnam, 1954–1975', *International History Review* 46, no. 2 (2024): 179.

[55]This figure accounted for almost half of all Soviet aid to the DRV during the period 1955–71, Luong Thi Hong, 'Centre and Periphery in the Cold War', 183.

[56]Christina Schwenkel, 'Socialist Mobilities: Crossing New Terrains in Vietnamese Migration Histories', *Central and Eastern European Migration Review* 4, no. 1 (2015): 16–21; Natalia Kraevskaia and Nora Annesley Taylor, 'Moscow's Outreach to Hanoi: Artistic Ties between the Soviet Union and Vietnam', *Art History* 45, no. 4 (2022): 952–73.

[57]'Vo V'etname' (In Vietnam) *SKK*, 1 (1956), 27–8.

[58]Young-sun Hong, *Cold War Germany, the Third World, and the Global Humanitarian Regime* (Cambridge University Press, 2015), 121–4; Bogdan C. Iacob, 'Paradoxes of Socialist Solidarity: Romanian and Czechoslovak Medical Teams in North Korea and Vietnam (1951–1962)', *Monde(s)* 20, no. 2 (2021): 117–40.

[59]'Gospital' Sovetskogo Krasnogo Kresta v Khanoe' ('The Soviet Red Cross Hospital in Hanoi') *SKK*, 5 (1956), 27.

[60]'Serdechnaia blagodarnost' Kitaiskikh i Vietnamskikh druzei' ('Heartfelt gratitude from Chinese and Vietnamese friends') *SKK*, 3 (1958), 21.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1740022824000184 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Red Cross conferences and international youth Red Cross events.[61] Throughout the 1960s, the Soviet Red Cross issued numerous public appeals detailing the atrocities of the US military in the DRV, calling on the US government to respect the Geneva Conventions, and imploring the ICRC and League to speak out against American aggression.[62] In December 1967, Soviet Red Cross chairman Miterev wrote a long and emotionally charged letter to the American Red Cross imploring them to speak out against the war and detailing the destruction wreaked on the DRV by American air raids.[63]

Moral support for the North Vietnamese was not just offered by the leadership of the Soviet Red Cross. Instead, the organisation provided a channel for grassroots expressions of solidarity by ordinary members and, in doing so, became a participant in the broader international DRV solidarity campaigns that swept across state socialist Europe in this period.[64] The Soviet Red Cross's magazine became another platform for the flood of propaganda against the Vietnam War that became so familiar to Soviet audiences throughout the late 1960s and 1970s.[65] One 1966 issue of the magazine included a message from schoolchildren in Grodno to their Vietnamese counterparts. 'We, young activists of the Red Cross, together with the entire Soviet people, join our voices in protest and say, "Hands off Vietnam!"', the appeal read, before reminding Vietnamese children that they would always be their 'true friends'.[66]

The Soviet Red Cross's relationship with the North Vietnamese meant that the organisation could act as an intermediary for the League and ICRC, even during periods when Geneva-Hanoi relations were particularly frosty. Both the League and ICRC had attempted to provide assistance to victims of US bombing raids since 1965, but their offers had been declined or ignored by the DRV government and the National Liberation Front (NLF, Viet Cong).[67] The Soviet Red Cross helped to establish contact between the ICRC, the League and the NLF because the latter had a representative based in Moscow.[68] Both League and ICRC representatives met with the NLF while in the USSR to attend the Soviet Red Cross's centenary conference in May 1967.[69]

As well as acting as a mediator between the NLF and Geneva, the Soviet Red Cross were one of the main points of contact for coordinating and transporting humanitarian aid to the DRV.

[61]RGANI, f. 5, op. 28, d. 457, l. 61 ; *SKK*, 4 (1959), 16–17; ICRC Archives, B AG 121 128-011.01, 'Rapport de M. Bordier sur sa mission a Moscou' ('Report by Bordier on His Mission to Moscow'); LVA, f. 1416, ap. 1, l. 28, lp. 22; 'Nezabyvaemoe' ('Unforgettable') *SKK*, 1 (1972), 6.

[62]For example, 'Prekratit' zlodeianiia vo V'etname' ('Cease the atrocities in Vietnam') *SKK*, 3 (1965), 10.

[63]IFRC Archives, box R50962653, Appeal by Grigorii Miterev to American Red Cross President James Collins, December 1967.

[64]James Mark et al. '"We Are with You, Vietnam': Transnational Solidarities in Socialist Hungary, Poland and Yugoslavia', *Journal of Contemporary History* 50, no. 3 (2015): 439–64; Jill Massino, 'Eastern Promises: Romanian Responses to the War in Vietnam' in *The World Beyond the West: Perspectives from Eastern Europe*, ed. Mariusz Kalczewiak (Berghahn, 2022), 221–42; Idesbald Goddeeris, 'Between Anti-Imperialism and Anti-Communism: Poland and International Solidarity with Vietnam' in *Protest in the Vietnam War Era*, ed. Alexander Sedlmaier (Palgrave, 2022), 113–39; Julie Hessler, 'The Soviet Public and the Vietnam War: Political Mobilization, Public Organizations, and Activism, 1965–1973', in *Protest in the Vietnam War Era*, ed. Alexander Sedlmaier (Palgrave, 2022), 90–1; Jessica Dalljo, '"Solidarity Is a Matter of the Heart": Anti-Imperialist Solidarity Donations in GDR Children's Magazines', *International Review of Social History* 69, no. 32 (2024): 159–76.

[65]Kristin Roth-Ey, 'Solidarity and the Aesthetics of Pain: Soviet Documentary Film and the Vietnam War', *International Review of Social History* 69, no. S32 (2024): 43–61.

[66]T. Shaulina, 'Ogonek druzhby' ('The spark of friendship') *SKK*, 3 (1966), 10.

[67]Keith D. Suter, 'The Work of the ICRC in Vietnam: An Evaluation', *Instant Research on Peace and Violence* 4, no. 3 (1974): 127–8; Françoise Perret and François Bugnion, *From Budapest to Saigon: History of the International Committee of the Red Cross, 1956–1965* (International Committee of the Red Cross, 2018), 345–53; IFRC Archives, box R50962653, Letter from Beer to Miterev, 20 March 1967.

[68]The Soviet Red Cross facilitated contact between the ICRC and the NLF in summer 1966, ICRC Archives, B AG 121-219-010, Correspondance Générale, 'Entretien privé du Président du CICR avec le Président de l'Alliance' ('Private meeting between the President of the ICRC and the President of the Soviet Red Cross') 10 June 1966.

[69]ICRC Archives, B AG 121-219-011.01, Centenaire de la Croix-Rouge soviétique, généralités, 'Rapport de M. Bordier sur sa mission à Moscou' ('Report by Bordier on his mission to Moscow'); IFRC Archives, box R10345437, Beer 1965–1969, 'Memorandum: Notes from the Soviet Red Cross Centenary', 30 May 1967.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1740022824000184 Published online by Cambridge University Press

The ICRC sent shipments of medications to the NLF through Moscow from 1966.[70] The Soviet Red Cross assumed formal responsibility for shipping relief provided by the League to North Vietnam in summer 1967 and helped to transport 237,000 Swiss francs worth of materials and medication through Moscow by the end of that year.[71] A delegation from the Soviet Red Cross also visited the DRV's Red Cross Society in late 1967 and reported back to the League on the urgent medical needs of the local population.[72] Beer made his first visit to Hanoi via Moscow in May 1969 to negotiate assistance to the North Vietnamese.[73] Beyond the ICRC and the League, the Soviet Red Cross helped other national societies ship humanitarian aid to the DRV through Vladivostok.[74]

The North Vietnamese regarded the Soviet Red Cross as a reliable partner and sought their assistance in transferring aid from various countries to Hanoi. In February 1968, the NLF representative in Moscow asked the Soviet Red Cross to arrange the transportation of tonnes of medication from the Egyptian city of Alexandria to Odesa by ship and then on to Hanoi by aeroplane.[75] In September 1970, the ambassador of the Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of South Vietnam (the puppet government of the North Vietnamese) asked the Soviet Red Cross to help transport blood plasma from Berlin to Hanoi via Moscow.[76] The plasma had been donated to the Vietnamese by citizens of Britain and the GDR as part of broader solidarity campaigns centred around blood donation.[77] The GDR Red Cross agreed to transport a shipment of plasma to Moscow once a month, after which the Soviet Red Cross agreed to transport it by plane along the Moscow-Tashkent-Vientiane-Hanoi route. Within this context, Moscow became an important transit point for international solidarity initiatives and the Soviet Red Cross took on a central role in broader global efforts to ship relief to North Vietnam.

Vietnam was central to the USSR's projection of itself as a global humanitarian leader, but this was just one of the many contributions that the Soviet Union made to the international Red Cross movement in this period. The Soviet Red Cross were enthusiastic participants in the League's Development Programme from its inception in the early 1960s. The League regularly sought feedback from Soviet Red Cross leadership on the Programme's planned activities during its initial stages and the Soviets regularly contributed money, materials, and expertise.[78] The Soviet Red Cross sent experts to numerous African countries on behalf of the League to gauge the needs of local national societies in order to tailor the Development Programme to meet them.[79] Whereas the Soviet Red Cross faced obstacles from their government when attempting to obtain additional funds for League activities, this was less of a problem when it came to the Development Programme. The League's General Secretary Henrik Beer did not hide his surprise when the

[70]The International Committee and the Vietnam Conflict', *International Review of the Red Cross* 65 (August 1966): 410, 415–16.

[71]IFRC Archives, box R50962653, Henrik Beer's notes on a meeting with Professor Miterev in Moscow, 27 June 1967; RGANI, f. 50, op. 60, d. 534, ll. 8–9.

[72]IFRC Archives, box R50962653, Letter from Beer to Miterev, 10 January 1968.

[73]IFRC Archives, box R50962653, Letter from Beer to Miterev, 3 June 1969; RGANI, f. 5, op. 61, d. 627, l. 33.

[74]IFRC Archives, box R50962653, Notes on talk with Miterev on Vietnam, 17 April 1968.

[75]RGANI, f. 50, op. 60, d. 534, l. 16.

[76]RGANI, f. 5, op. 62, d. 636, ll. 171–2.

[77]Gregory Witkowski, 'Between Fighters and Beggars: Socialist Philanthropy and the Imagery of Solidarity in East Germany' in *Comrades of Colour: East Germany in the Cold War World*, ed. Quinn Slobodian (Berghahn Books, 2015), 78; On blood donation campaigns organised by the British Medical Committee for Vietnam, see the following summary on Frontline States https://frontlinestates.ltd.uk/blood-donor-sessions/ (accessed 12 February 2024).

[78]IFRC Archives, box R50962653, Letter from Beer to Miterev, 5 July 1965; Memorandum: Matters to bring up from the League side with Professor Miterev, 2 March 1964.

[79]For example, the Soviet Red Cross sent A. Liubov to Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, and Zambia on behalf of the League in February and March 1968, RGANI, f, 5, op. 60, d. 534, ll. 22–30. V. Kardashev was sent to Senegal on behalf of the League in January 1969, IFRC Archives, box R50962653, Letter from Miterev to Beer and Kai Warras, the chairman of the League's Development Programme, 17 March 1969.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1740022824000184 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Soviets immediately promised to provide one million rubles (including 360,000 rubles in hard currency) to the Programme in 1965, despite recently complaining about their inability to access enough hard currency to pay their ordinary contributions to the League.[80]

The Soviet Red Cross's strong financial commitment was likely because the League's Development Programme echoed Soviet visions of development in the Global South. In contrast to Western models of development, Soviet economic aid was focused on strengthening the public sector of the target country while channelling capital into the Soviet economy, which usually meant supporting large-scale industrial and infrastructural projects that drew upon Soviet materials and expertise.[81] The Soviet Red Cross too participated in overseas development initiatives, most notably through the construction of hospitals, training of medical personnel, and delivery of technical and material aid to national societies in the Global South. The bilateral work of the Soviet Red Cross in this regard was recognised by the League as an important component of development. For example, the equipment and personnel given by the Soviet Red Cross to the Algerian-Soviet Friendship hospital in Lakhdaria was included in the League's Development Programme for 1968.[82] Just like the USSR and the UN, the Soviet Red Cross and the League operated on the premise of shared 'goals, modernist ideals, and aesthetics in development work', which made Soviet participation in a non-communist organisation possible.[83]

The Soviet Red Cross leaned into the links between the Development Programme and the Soviet government's foreign policy goals when pushing for additional funding for their League contributions. In a 1973 report prepared for the Central Committee of the CPSU, the Soviet Red Cross noted that the Soviets were severely lagging behind capitalist countries in their donations to the Development Programme and encouraged the Party to make funds available for an even bigger contribution, noting that the Programme was an 'important channel for influencing, promoting, and strengthening [the Soviet Union's] position in developing countries'.[84] Within this context, Soviet Red Cross leadership presented multilateral engagement within a humanitarian organisation like the League as an important diplomatic channel for increasing Soviet influence in the Global South.

The Soviet Red Cross also provided the League with the resources, manpower, and importantly, the enthusiasm required to organise large international seminars, workshops, and conferences. The League and the Soviet Red Cross co-organised a Red Cross seminar on blood donation as part of the 12th International Congress on Blood Transfusion that took place in Moscow in August 1969. The seminar was funded by the Soviet Red Cross and was attended by participants from twenty-three countries, including representatives of the United States, Belgian, Czechoslovakian, Finnish, French, Greek, Hungarian, Ivory Coast, Japanese, Dutch, Peruvian, and Philippine Red Cross societies.[85] The Soviet Red Cross also hosted numerous international events for junior Red Cross volunteers, including the 1965 International Red Cross meeting held at the Artek Youth camp in Crimea and the International Red Cross Youth Conference of 1971 in Moscow.[86]

In May 1979, the Soviet Red Cross and the League co-hosted the International Red Cross Seminar on Primary Health Care for the Developing Countries of Africa, Asia, and Latin America in Frunze, the capital of the Kyrgyz SSR. The seminar was a follow-up event held one year after the momentous 1978 International Conference on Primary Health Care, convened in Alma-Ata in the Kazakh SSR by the WHO and UNICEF. Unlike Alma-Ata, the Frunze seminar was geared

[80]IFRC Archives, box R50962653, Letter from Beer to Miterev, 5 July 1965.

[81]Sanchez-Sibony, 'The Cold War in the Margins of Capital', 62–3.

[82]IFRC Archives, box R50962653, Letter from Miterev to Beer and Kai Warras, the chairman of the League's Development Programme, 17 March 1969.

[83]Banks, 'The Ruble Lever'.

[84]RGANI, f. 5, op. 66, d. 966, l. 100.

[85]IFRC Archives, box 999642, Dr. Z. S. Hantchef, Transfusion Sanguine, Moscow I (Part 1/2) 1966–9. List of participants representing the Red Cross; RGANI, f. 50, op. 60, d. 534, ll. 149–50.

[86]'IuKK-71 Moskva' (Youth Red Cross '71, Moscow) *SKK*, 12 (1971), 16.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1740022824000184 Published online by Cambridge University Press

specifically towards countries in the Global South with the explicit goal of helping new national societies implement primary health care programmes.[87] Seventy-six national societies attended the 1979 seminar and the stakes of the event were high for both co-hosts. For the League, Frunze presented the chance to showcase the key role of Red Cross and Red Crescent societies in delivering primary health care worldwide, a topic that had not been paid sufficient attention at Alma-Ata.[88] For the Soviets, Frunze offered opportunities to correct mistakes made at Alma-Ata in 1978, specifically the central government and media's failure to promote the landmark event, respond adequately to criticism levelled against the Soviet health care system, and highlight what they regarded as the Soviet origins of primary health care.

In organising the Frunze seminar, the League and the Soviet Red Cross had to work together flexibly to navigate the political constraints under which the latter organisation operated. During the planning stage, the League took issue with the Soviet invite list because it excluded a 'considerable number' of national societies from the Global South and included many from socialist Eastern Europe, despite the event being organised specifically for 'developing' countries.[89] The rigidly centralised foreign policy of the Soviet Union meant that those at the highest ranks of Soviet Red Cross—just like their counterparts in other international organisations like the WHO—could not invite delegates without the explicit approval of the highest-level Soviet governing bodies.[90] The Soviet Red Cross told the League in confidence that they could not obtain permission from their government to invite representatives from 'unfriendly' countries with whom they did not have diplomatic relations, such as Chile, South Africa, and South Korea.[91] Nevertheless, Henrik Beer asked the Soviet Red Cross chairman Valerii Baltiiskii to revise their invite list to include all national societies that were members of the League. Here, the Soviet Red Cross had to walk a tightrope between the League's demands for universality and the foreign policy priorities of the Soviet government.

The Frunze seminar went ahead so we can assume that the Soviets and the League came to an agreement on the attendance issue. Perhaps the Soviet government made concessions because the Frunze seminar explicitly focused on the Global South and was therefore oriented towards their broader foreign policy goals. From the mid-1950s onwards, the Soviet government began to reengage with the Global South, driven by a mixture of anti-imperialist sentiments and a desire to convince elites of newly independent countries to adopt socialist development models.[92] A substantial portion of this engagement was channelled through the so-called Soviet South, and the republics of Central Asia and the Caucasus were instrumentalised to advance narratives about Moscow's commitment to anti-colonialism, championing of national cultures, tolerance of religion, and the achievements of Soviet development to an international audience.[93] The Central Asian republics (and especially Uzbekistan) were heralded by Soviet leadership as successful examples of the meshing of socialism with traditional cultures and therefore models for Global South countries emerging upon the landscape of the new postcolonial world order.[94] Within this

[87]Andrei Kisselev and Yuri E. Korneyev, 'Health Care Ten Years after Alma-Ata', *International Review of the Red Cross* 28, no. 267 (1988): 519–20.

[88]IFRC Archives, box R50962653, Letter from Beer to Valerii Baltiiskii, 21 March 1977.

[89]IFRC Archives, box R50962653, Letter from Beer to Baltiiskii, 20 July 1978.

[90]Venediktov, the Soviet delegate to WHO, faced similar difficulties when organising the Alma-Ata conference, despite the fact that he was a favourite of the Minister of Health Boris Petrovskii and personal physician of Leonid Brezhnev, Birn and Krementsov, '"Socialising" Primary Care?', 6.

[91]IFRC Archives, box R50962653, Memorandum: Confidential note for the record, Frunze seminar, 14 November 1978.

[92]For an overview, see ch. 2 of Iandolo, *Arrested Development*.

[93]Artemy M. Kalinovsky, 'Writing the Soviet South into the History of the Cold War and Decolonisation' in *Eastern Europe and the Postcolonial World*, eds. James Mark, Artemy M. Kalinovsky, and Steffi Marung (Indiana University Press, 2020), 189–208; Albina Muratbekova, 'Soviet Science Diplomacy: How Central Asia was Instrumentalised in Soviet Foreign Policy', *Journal of Eurasian Studies* 14, no. 1 (2023): 30–42.

[94]Riccardo Mario Cucciolla, 'Sharaf Rashidov and the International Dimensions of Soviet Uzbekistan', *Central Asian Survey,* 39, no. 2 (2020): 186.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1740022824000184 Published online by Cambridge University Press

context, culture and science became increasingly important tools of diplomacy and channels for fostering connections between countries in the Global South and Soviet Central Asia.[95]

Health care was an integral component of Soviet South-Global South engagement. The Soviets had selected Alma-Ata as the location of the 1978 conference because it presented opportunities to advance narratives about the modernising impulses of the Soviet health care system and 'display "health and development" activities germane to the majority of WHO member states'.[96] Similarly, when the Soviet Red Cross organised a UNICEF seminar on child welfare in the USSR in 1967, the Uzbek SSR was chosen as the best location to display 'the successes [of the Soviet system] that have been achieved in conditions similar to those in Asia and Africa'.[97] The Soviet Red Cross saw the 1979 Frunze seminar as serving a dual purpose: to determine the role of the Red Cross in delivering primary health care globally and to demonstrate 'the achievements of the Kyrgyz SSR in the construction of socialism and the socialist health care system'.[98] Alongside panels and roundtables, the seminar's programme included visits to factories, medical institutions, and schools in the cities of Frunze and Osh, as well as rural regions of the Kyrgyz SSR, where delegates met with and observed the work of local Red Cross committees.[99] Illustrated trilingual (Kyrgyz, Russian, English) informational booklets on the work of regional Kyrgyz Red Cross committees were also published and distributed to seminar participants.[100]

The Frunze seminar gave Soviet officials opportunities to advance claims about the superiority of the Soviet system to their target audience in the Global South, while also addressing criticisms of their health care system that had arisen at Alma-Ata. During the preparations for Alma-Ata and even at the conference itself, Western proponents of primary health care—including the WHO Director-General—had critiqued Soviet health care as overly medicalised and centralised, something which they believed prevented community participation.[101] The Frunze seminar allowed the Soviets to showcase the community-driven aspects of the health care system that were primarily delivered by Soviet Red Cross and Red Crescent committees. Local branches trained millions of people as first aiders and at-home carers for people with disabilities and the elderly. Individuals then put this training to use and became part-time volunteer carers or joined voluntary first aid teams at their educational institutions, industrial enterprises, schools, and state/collective farms, which were known as sanitary squads (*sanitarnye druzhiny*) and sanitary posts (*sanitarnye posty*). In his speech at the Frunze seminar, Soviet Red Cross chairman Baltiiskii explained the centrality of Red Cross and Red Crescent volunteers to the functioning of the country's health care system. Not only did Soviet volunteers deliver first aid and assist in disaster relief efforts following floods and earthquakes, but they also cared for the elderly and disabled and were active participations in environmental protection efforts.[102]

Alma-Ata received lukewarm coverage in the Soviet press and no high-level Party functionaries or diplomats attended the conference. This was likely because it was primarily organised by the Western-dominated WHO, which was only marginally important to Soviet visions of international collaboration in the field of health care.[103] In contrast, Frunze was attended by Aleksei Kosygin—a member of the Politburo and prominent Soviet statesman—and numerous

[95]Masha Kirasirova, *The Eastern International: Arabs, Central Asians, and Jews in the Soviet Union's Anticolonial Empire* (Oxford University Press, 2024); Muratbekova, 'Soviet Science Diplomacy'; Rossen Djagalov and Masha Salazkina, 'Tashkent '68: A Cinematic Contact Zone', *Slavic Review* 75, no. 2 (2016): 279–98.

[96]Birn and Krementsov, '"Socialising" Primary Care?', 6.

[97]ERA.R-2032.2.234, lk. 221.

[98]ERA.R-2032.2.289, lk. 45.

[99]ERA.R-2032.2.289, lk. 51.

[100]IFRC Archives, box 999541, USSR – Manuals.

[101]Birn and Krementsov, '"Socialising" Primary Care?', 12.

[102]IFRC Archives, R510536924, Assistance Volunteers Services, V. Baltiiskii, 'The Role of the Soviet Red Cross in the Provision of Primary Health Care for the Population', Frunze, 1979.

[103]Birn and Krementsov, '"Socialising" Primary Care?', 11–12.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1740022824000184 Published online by Cambridge University Press

articles on the event appeared in central and regional newspapers.[104] Parts of the seminar were aired on republican television and the All-Union television programme *Vremiia* (*Time*), and the latter's film crew prepared a fifteen-minute film on the event entitled *The Soviet Union in the Eyes of Foreign Guests*.[105] The Soviet Red Cross magazine dedicated an entire issue to the seminar, which included dozens of photographs, reports on seminar activities, and articles written by representatives of the League, WHO, UNICEF, and Kyrgyz Communist Party, as well as interviews with delegates from various countries, including Costa Rica, Cuba, India, Vietnam, and Zambia.[106] The increased attention on the Frunze event was likely because the Soviet government regarded the League as a useful international organisation for meeting their foreign policy goals. The Soviet Red Cross consistently emphasised the fact that engagement in the League offered them opportunities to establish contact with Red Cross societies in the newly independent countries of the decolonising world, who came to dominate the League's membership from the 1960s onwards.[107]

Bringing Geneva home: Soviet internationalism for a domestic audience

The Soviet Red Cross's various engagements with the League and their participation in the international Red Cross movement served an important domestic function and were used by the organisation's leadership to advance narratives about the USSR's leading role in global humanitarian politics to its vast reserve of volunteers. This framing reflected the hierarchical nature of Soviet internationalism, wherein the Soviet Union was placed in a dominant position as the arbiter of internationalist initiatives or projects.[108] Beyond this, Soviet Red Cross leadership encouraged their volunteers to regard themselves as part of a global international community of humanitarians with a shared history. The celebration of Soviet achievements all while fostering visions of a global community that cut across political divisions reveals the complex interplay between national pride and internationalist values that underwrote Soviet post-war internationalism.[109]

The primary vehicle for advancing these narratives was the Soviet Red Cross magazine, *Sovetskii Krasnyi Krest*, a lively illustrated periodical that published news and articles on the activities of the Soviet Red Cross across the various republics and regions of the USSR. The magazine also published letters from readers, cartoons, and photographs, held competitions for best stories, posters, and articles, reported on Red Cross events within and beyond the Soviet Union, and introduced its readers to international branches of the Red Cross around the world. By 1964, the journal had just over 111,000 subscribers and by 1967 circulation had reached 260,000.[110] In 1969, the magazine doubled its publication frequency to twelve issues per year.[111]

Readers of *Sovetskii Krasnyi Krest* were constantly informed about the essential contributions that their national society made in discussions of the League's Board of Governors. Soviet delegates within the League also placed themselves at the forefront of the global struggle for peace, claiming responsibility for starting off discussions that eventually led to adoption of the principles of humanity by the Council of Delegates in 1961 and the resolution 'The Red Cross as a Factor in

[104]ERA.R-2032.2.289, lk. 58–9.

[105]ERA.R-2032.2.289, lk. 58.

[106]*SKK*, 8 (1979).

[107]ERA.R-2032.2.298, lk. 19–24. By the mid-1960s, there were over 100 national societies in the League and most were located in the Global South, Wilkinson, 'The League of Red Cross Societies' Development Programme', 766–7.

[108]Kalinovsky, *Laboratory of Socialist Development*, 11.

[109]Stefan B. Kirmse, 'Internationalist Nation-Builders: Youth under Brezhnev in the Soviet South', *Europe-Asia Studies* 74, no. 7 (2022): 1254–77.

[110]ERA.R-2032.2.208, lk. 147; ERA.R-2032.2.234, lk. 51.

[111]ERA.R-2032.2.234, lk. 73. Increasing the frequency of the magazine had been a topic of discussion since at least 1955, ERA.R-2032.2.62, lk. 83.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1740022824000184 Published online by Cambridge University Press

World Peace', adopted in Geneva in 1963.[112] When the League and ICRC were jointly awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1963, the Soviet Red Cross celebrated this as *their* victory, noting 'with particular satisfaction that the Peace Prize has been awarded to an international organisation in whose activities it takes such an active part'.[113]

Discussions of the League also offered opportunities to construct a hierarchy of humanitarianism that benefitted the USSR. One article on the League's history and activities published in *Sovetskii Krasnyi Krest* drew sharp divisions between the work of Red Cross and Red Crescent societies in capitalist and socialist countries. The author claimed that Red Cross work was more significant in socialist countries because national societies tended to collaborate with their respective health authorities, whereas in capitalist countries socio-medical programmes tended to take on a more 'philanthropic character', meaning relying on funding from private donors.[114] Readers of the article would have immediately recognised 'philanthropic' as negative, given that charity was used only in reference to 'bourgeois' societies in Soviet public discourse.[115] In dismissing Red Cross work as 'philanthropic' in capitalist countries, the Soviet Red Cross presented socialist humanitarianism as something distinct from, and superior to, capitalist humanitarianism.

Visits of the leaders of the League to the USSR also served as an opportunity to present the Soviet Red Cross—and the Soviet Union in general—as a key player in international humanitarianism and global health politics. In 1962, the League's General Secretary Henrik Beer visited Moscow, as well as the Latvian and Uzbek SSRs (Figure 1). A correspondent from *Sovetskii Krasnyi Krest* interviewed the so-called 'guest from Geneva' just before he left the country and the interview was published in the magazine shortly after.[116] Beer apparently praised the USSR's 'new economic successes' and disease prevention efforts in collective farms and factories, as well as the 'impressive' development of what he referred to as the 'previously very backward' region of Central Asia. Here, he repeated longstanding Orientalist tropes that were common in Soviet public discourse and rooted in Soviet racial hierarchies, which placed European and Slavic peoples in a dominant position and presented people from southern and eastern regions as in need of modernisation.[117] Beer continued in this vein in commenting that the Soviet development of Central Asia could serve as an example for the newly independent countries of the decolonising world, and by remarking that 'before my trip to the USSR, it seemed to me that every citizen mastering sanitary knowledge was a distant ideal. But when I came to your country, I saw that this ideal was being realized'.

Given that a transcript of the interview does not exist, it is difficult to confirm whether the translator or the editors at *Sovetskii Krasnyi Krest* distorted Beer's words to bring them into line with Soviet health propaganda. The IFRC Archives hold Beer's notes on his 1962 trip to the Soviet Union, and his account mainly celebrates Tashkent's multiculturalism, his appreciation of Uzbek food, and how impressed he was by the Uzbek SSR's Red Crescent society. Beer's account makes no mention of the region's apparent 'backwardness' and instead remarked on the cultural achievements of the region's inhabitants before Russian conquest in the nineteenth century, as well as the groundbreaking contributions of eleventh-century Islamic scholar and polymath Ibn

[112]M. S. Vetrov, 'Mezhdunarodnye sviazi sovetskogo krasnogo kresta' ('International connections of the Soviet Red Cross') *SKK*, 5 (1962), 11; 'Nobelevskaia premiia mira – mezhdunarodnomu krasnomu krestu' ('The Nobel Peace Prize is given to the International Red Cross') *SKK*, 2 (1964), 19.

[113]'Nobelevskaia premiia mira', 19.

[114]L. Cherkasskaia, 'Krasnyi krest mozhet sdelat' mnogo' ('The Red Cross can do many things') *SKK*, 9 (1976), 26.

[115]Anne White, *Democratization in Russia under Gorbachev, 1985–91: The Birth of a Voluntary Sector* (Macmillan Press, 1999), 2.

[116]'Liga rabotaet v pol'zu mira – govorit Khenrik Beer' ('The League works for peace, says Henrik Beer') *SKK*, 6 (1962), 19.

[117]On Soviet ethnic hierarchies, see Anna Whittington, 'Contested Privilege: Ethnic Russians and the Unmaking of the Soviet Union', *Journal of Modern History* 95, no. 4 (2023): 892–901.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1740022824000184 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Figure 1. Henrik Beer with Red Cross volunteers at the Tashkent Textile Kombinat (top) and with junior Red Cross members at a school in the Red Uzbekistan collective farm (bottom), during his visit to the Uzbek SSR in summer 1962. IFRC Archives, box R509626484, Visite de Beer, 1962.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1740022824000184 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Sina to the field of medicine.[118] Regardless of whether the Soviet Red Cross reported Beer's impressions accurately or not, his visit provided the organisation with an opportunity to not only celebrate their achievements, but also to reinforce official narratives about the benefits of Soviet development in Central Asia, as well as the supremacy of Soviet socialism in the arena of global health.

Similarly, an interview appeared in the Soviet Red Cross's magazine after the League's President José Barroso visited the Soviet Union in 1967. As well as Moscow and Leningrad, Barroso's trip also included a visit to Yerevan in the Armenian SSR, presumably with the intention of showcasing development in the Soviet South. Barroso apparently told the magazine that the Soviet Red Cross was the largest national society within the League and that its 'activities were organised in the best possible way'. He also remarked that the Soviet Red Cross ought to be 'properly represented on the League's Executive Committee, on several of the advisory committees, and on the Permanent Commission of the International Red Cross'.[119] It is highly unlikely that Barroso said this, given that the League frequently pushed back against accusations of pro-Western bias and socialist under-representation. Only one part of Barroso's interview included a verbatim statement in quotation marks, which was his expression of gratitude to Soviet Red Cross and to his hosts for their exceptional hospitality. Therefore, it is likely that the longer interview was edited to encourage readers to regard the Soviet Red Cross as one of the most important national societies in the world, an idea apparently legitimised by a prominent foreign visitor.

Beyond advancing narratives of Soviet supremacy, articles on the League's activities encouraged Soviet Red Cross activists to regard themselves as part of a broader global community of humanitarians. One article reporting on the autumn 1964 meetings of the League's Executive Committee explained to readers that the Soviet Red Cross's main activities (such as first aid training, recruiting blood donors, and the training of nurses) were also carried out simultaneously by dozens of Red Cross and Red Crescent branches on different continents.[120] Readers were also informed that across the world, young volunteers were being taught the importance of 'humanitarianism and international solidarity', just like young Soviet Red Cross volunteers. Soviet volunteers were encouraged to regard the history of the international Red Cross movement as *their* shared history. A 1962 issue of *Sovetskii Krasnyi Krest* included a calendar celebrating the centenary of the International Red Cross and an infographic informing Soviet Red Cross volunteers that they were part of a community of 170 million people worldwide.[121] The back cover of a 1971 issue of *Sovetskii Krasnyi Krest* included a poster to celebrate World Red Cross and Red Crescent Day. Entitled 'Round-the-clock action', the poster reminded volunteers in the Soviet Union that 'in every corner of the globe there are people—men and women, boys and girls—who are ready at any moment to respond to someone else's misfortune ... Activists of the Society are always on duty.'[122]

Representations of the League also offered Soviet citizens a window to the world beyond the USSR. One article about the September 1959 meeting of the League's Board of Governors in Athens included descriptions of 'the blue sea, the hot capital, and the lively and freedom-loving Greek people', as well as the wonders of the Ancient world that awed the Soviet delegates.[123] The write-up of another Board meeting in 1961 included long descriptions of 'Golden Prague' with its

[118]Henrik Beer 'Memorandum, 25 September 1962', IFRC Archives, box R510345437, Beer 1960–2.

[119]'Pust' vse liudi stanut brat'iami' ('Let all people become brothers') *SKK*, 1 (1967), 21.

[120]L. Cherkasskaia, 'Sessiia ispolkoma ligi obshchestv' ('A session of the Executive Committee of the League of Red Cross Societies') *SKK*, 6 (1964), 25.

[121]*SKK*, 6 (1962), 16–17.

[122]'Vsemirnyi den' krasnogo kresta, krasnogo polumesiatsa, krasnogo l'va i solntsa' ('World Red Cross, Red Crescent, Red Lion and Sun Day') *SKK*, 5 (1971), 33.

[123]G. Miterev, 'V dukhe druzhby i edinstva' ('In the spirit of friendship and unity') *SKK*, 1 (1960), 25–6.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1740022824000184 Published online by Cambridge University Press

'warm, sunny weather, and lush golden foliage in gardens and parks'.[124] *Sovetskii Krasnyi Krest*'s coverage of the 1963 International Red Cross Congress opened with a poetic ode to Geneva:

> Thousands of seagulls, like a snow-white cloud, circle over Lake Geneva and the blue Rhône. Swans majestically glide across the clear water. Whole flotillas of doves hurriedly scurry about. It seems like just a stone's throw to the dazzling white of the crowning peak of Mont Blanc. Surrounded by mountains on three sides, Geneva is pushed towards the lake. Its boundless blue and slightly hazy expanse beckons.[125]

These descriptions of the beautiful lands beyond the Soviet Union and the promotion of internationalism sat uneasily alongside the fact that most Soviet citizens were not permitted to travel abroad and generally had limited contact with foreigners. From 1955, a Soviet Central Committee resolution introduced the possibility of permitting Soviet citizens to temporarily leave the country, something which had long only been the purview of diplomats, trade officials, journalists, and cultural figures.[126] However, Soviet citizens had to be thorough vetted in order to travel, and securing permission to travel abroad depended upon officialdom's assessment of their political reliability and moral qualities.[127] Despite rising numbers of Soviet tourists throughout the 1960s and 1970s, international travel was prohibitively expensive for most Soviet citizens.[128] The number of foreign visitors to the Soviet Union significantly increased in the same period, but international visitors tended to cluster in major cities like Moscow, Leningrad, and Kyiv.[129]

Soviet Red Cross volunteers had greater opportunities than most in this regard, as republican branches of the organisation frequently hosted foreign delegations. When foreign national societies visited the USSR, they met with representatives of regional Red Cross committees, as well as Red Cross volunteers in industrial enterprises, collective farms, and universities. However, given Soviet officialdom's anxieties regarding unregulated contact between Soviet citizens and foreigners, meeting foreign delegations was a privilege only granted to a select number of volunteers. The vast majority of the tens of millions of Soviet Red Cross members did not travel abroad or interact with foreigners, therefore their participation in the international Red Cross movement was principally through reading and writing in to *Sovetskii Krasnyi Krest.*

Nevertheless, discussions of the League in *Sovetskii Krasnyi Krest* encouraged Soviet volunteers to identify with a broader international community that transcended political divisions and linguistic barriers. Just as print culture encouraged the development of imagined national communities throughout the nineteenth century, discourse on international organisations like the UN, and also the Red Cross, functioned in a similar way throughout the twentieth century.[130] Just like with other international organisations, representations of the League offered Soviet citizens a 'window open on the world' that was 'framed in visions of world governance, world civic duty, and international community'.[131] The League and the Soviet Red Cross shared a vision of internationalism that was future-focused, utopian, and rooted in the transfer of knowledge and skills in the field of health care. These shared visions created space for the Soviet Red Cross's participation in the international Red Cross movement and made it possible to integrate the

[124]G. Miterev, 'Zdorov'e narodam – mir miru' ('Health to the people and peace to the world') *SKK*, 1 (1962), 18–19.

[125]L. Cherkasskaia, 'Forum stoletiia' ('Forum of the centenary') *SKK*, 1 (1964), 20.

[126]Anne Gorsuch, *All This Is Your World: Soviet Tourism at Home and Abroad after Stalin* (Oxford University Press, 2011), 10–12.

[127]Gorsuch, *All This Is Your World*, 17.

[128]Diane Koenker, *Club Red: Vacation Travel and the Soviet Dream* (Cornell University Press, 2017), 241–2.

[129]Alex Hazanov, 'Porous Empire: Foreign Visitors and the Post-Stalin Soviet State' (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2016), 4–5.

[130]Glenda Sluga, *Internationalism in the Age of Nationalism* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 153–5.

[131]Louis H. Porter, '"Our International Journal": UN Publications and Soviet Internationalism after Stalin', *Russian Review* 80 (2021): 654.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1740022824000184 Published online by Cambridge University Press

actions of volunteers in the USSR within the broader global movement. Soviet Red Cross volunteers celebrated World Red Cross Day on 8 May alongside millions of volunteers around the world. In the Estonian, Moldovan and Ukrainian SSRs throughout the 1970s and 1980s, local Red Cross committees marked World Red Cross Day by organising gatherings, film screenings, photography exhibitions, and television/radio broadcasts that celebrated the work of local Soviet Red Cross volunteers and their international counterparts.[132]

Conclusion

The relationship between the Soviet Red Cross and the League worked because the two organisations shared a vision of humanitarianism centred upon internationalism and development in the Global South. The Soviet Red Cross and the League had vastly different perceptions of the goals and purpose of the Red Cross movement, but they agreed upon prioritising the development of national health care systems in the decolonising world. Shared visions of humanitarianism enabled the Soviet Red Cross to participate enthusiastically in a non-communist international organisation, despite the various challenges that this participation generated.

Looking between Geneva and Moscow offers fresh insight to the global history of humanitarianism in showing how the Soviet Union was not a peripheral actor, but instead an important link in the global chain of humanitarian aid and a trusted partner within multilateral humanitarian networks. More broadly, in the context of the Cold War, collaboration between socialist states and international organisations was essential for the delivery of humanitarian aid and health care. Exploring the contours of the mutually beneficial relationship between Moscow and Geneva allows us to rethink the spatial dynamics and relationships of the Cold War era, as well as the 'plurality of socialist globalisations'.[133] The international Red Cross movement both reinforced and blurred Cold War bipolarity in providing a bridge between socialists in the East and South, as well as a way for Soviet citizens to imagine themselves as part of a global community that transcended political divisions. The circulation of humanitarian aid shows how international organisations headquartered in the capitalist West could be important nodes in the global networks connecting socialist projects across the world.

Acknowledgements. This research was generously supported by the Wellcome Trust under grant 224717/Z/21/Z. I would like to thank Sarah-Joy Maddeaux and Grant Mitchell at the IFRC Archives in Geneva for their help in accessing the archive's collections and reproducing materials. Thanks also to the *JGH* editors, especially Heidi Tworek, and the anonymous reviewers for their insightful comments and critiques. I am very grateful to Alison Bennett, Freddy Foks, Laura Forster, Thom Loyd, Samuel O'Connor Perks, Stefan Ramsden, Aleksei Titkov, Alexandr Voronovici, and Talia Zajac for commenting on the first draft. An early version of this work was presented to students enrolled on the LEAP programme in Humanitarian Practice at the University of Manchester's Humanitarian and Conflict Response Institute and I am enormously thankful to the group for their thought provoking questions and helpful comments.

Financial support. The research for this article was supported by the Wellcome Trust (grant 224717/Z/21/Z).

Competing interests. The author declares none.

[132]ERA.R-2032.1.104, lk. 26; ERA.R-2032.2.288, lk. 9; Arhiva Organizațiilor Social-Politice a Republicii Moldova (Archive of Social and Political Organisations of the Republic of Moldova), f. 3042, inv. 1, d. 879, ff. 14; 22–3, 26, 40–3; Tsentralnyi derzhavnyi arkhiv vyshchykh orhaniv vlady ta upravlinnia Ukrainy (Central State Archive of Supreme Bodies of Power and Government of Ukraine), f. 4616, op. 1, spr. 810, ark. 62, 130, 135.

[133]James Mark, Artemy M. Kalinovsky, and Steffi Marung, 'Introduction' in *Alternative Globalizations. Eastern Europe and the Postcolonial World*, eds. James Mark, Artemy M. Kalinovsky, and Steffi Marung (Indiana University Press, 2020), 4.

Siobhán Hearne is a historian of the Soviet Union and a Wellcome Trust Research Fellow at the University of Manchester. Her current project, 'Red Humanitarianism: The Soviet Red Cross and Public Health, 1953–1991' explores the meaning and scope of medical volunteerism in the post-Stalin Soviet Union. She is the author of *Policing Prostitution: Regulating the Lower Classes in Late Imperial Russia* (Oxford University Press, 2021), and her work has appeared in the journals *Past & Present, Slavic Review*, *Russian Review*, *English Historical Review*, and the *Journal of Social History*, amongst others.

Cite this article: Hearne S. 2025. Between Moscow and Geneva: The Soviet Red Cross and the International Red Cross Movement. *Journal of Global History* 20: 61–81, doi:10.1017/S1740022824000184