

### **Solidarity and Humanitarianism in the Global South between Decolonization and the Cold War (1960s–1980s)**

**Veranstalter:** Agnes Bresselau von Bressendorf, Berliner Kolleg Kalter Krieg am Institut für Zeitgeschichte München-Berlin; Silke Mende, Centre Marc Bloch; Caroline Moine, Université Paris-Saclay, CHCSC/MPI für Bildungsforschung; Bernd Rother, Bundeskanzler-Willy-Brandt-Stiftung  
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References to solidarity have been extremely popular in political discussions in the last months and the term has experienced an even greater boom than during the early months of the large-scale arrival of refugees in Europe in 2015. In their introduction to the workshop, Caroline Moine and Silke Mende (both Berlin) took up the common parlance as a starting point for a scholarly analysis of practices of solidarity. Mende asked how historians might shed light on current issues and their emergence by historicising solidarity and humanitarianism. Additionally, the participants were asked to compare the two concepts and relate them to each other. Moine suggested three focal points of analysis in order to place both concepts in the history of decolonisation and the East-West conflict: the interplay of local, regional and global events; the influence of norms and principles of solidarity; and, finally, the local practices in the Global South. For this purpose, the workshop brought together researchers from different countries and fields of research like history, social sciences or legal studies.

The speakers of the first panel offered nuanced answers to the question if a humanitarian order emerged from universal norms. JAKOB SCHÖNHAGEN (Freiburg) presented the reorientation of the UN refugee regime in the 1960s as a contested and incomplete attempt to universalise the refugee relief system. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) increasingly regarded forced migration as a structural world problem and not as a temporary and regional is-

sue. When the UNHCR gave up on a permanent solution and turned to emergency relief instead, humanitarian aid gradually replaced international law as a means of dealing with forced migration. Schönhausen thus challenged the view that the 1960s should be understood as the breakthrough decade in international refugee politics.

MARCIA C. SCHENCK (Potsdam) showed how the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) refined international law by adopting the OAU Refugee Convention in 1969 in the context of international discussions about refugee protection, anticolonial solidarity in Africa due to the struggles of decolonisation, and a specific moment in the Cold War. The OAU aimed at expanding the Geneva Refugee Convention by taking into account specific experiences in Africa. Therefore, the OAU Convention included group rights or questions of asylum and de-Europeanised refugee politics. Both Schönhausen and Schenck emphasised how African actors shaped international refugee politics by applying pressure to the UNHCR and by transforming international law.

Analysing the actions taken by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in Yemen during the civil war of the 1960s, JIHANE CHEDOUKI (Berlin) presented a case study in which the alleged universal norms of the ICRC clashed with local realities. She revealed continuities between a colonial mindset and the concepts of the ICRC who seemed to interpret the Geneva Convention as a civilising tool for underdeveloped areas.

While the 1960s did bring changes in international law and debates about refugees and humanitarian aid, the panellists agreed that there were many continuities on the local level, be it in the management of refugee camps in Africa as Schenck had shown or be it in the work of the ICRC.

After discussing the impact of norms and international law, the participants turned to local case studies of humanitarianism. Two lecturers showed how so-called South-South solidarity could be used as a powerful instrument both of foreign policy and for a country's or party's self-promotion. MARIA FRAMKE (Berlin/Rostock) argued that the Indian National Congress' (INC) eagerness

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to give humanitarian aid to Indians in other parts of the British Empire in Southeast Asia arose not only from moral considerations. The INC also understood the aid as an opportunity to demonstrate its own readiness for self-government. The British colonial authorities tried to circumscribe the INC's growing influence: For example, it consented to the INC's medical mission to Malaysia but denied a similar mission to Burma.

DORA TOT (Bologna) analysed the work of Yugoslavian medical professionals in Algeria in the 1960s. While the Yugoslavian government presented its aid as a manifestation of socialist solidarity in order to improve its own image in the Global South, the Algerian government took advantage of the Yugoslavian commitment. Although the Yugoslavian government emphasised that it gave aid to a partner of equal rank, Tot highlighted that the Yugoslavian medical professionals understood their mission as help for an underdeveloped country, thus revealing a gap between the principle of solidarity among equals and the reality of continuing prejudices.

AGNES BRESSELAU VON BRESSENSDORF (Berlin) identified a rapid increase in forced migration in the Middle East at the end of the 1970s. Focusing on border regions instead of nation states she unpacked the complex and often competitive interplay of a plethora of humanitarian agencies during the Afghanistan War. Her paper stressed the network character of humanitarian work as well as the importance of local knowledge and public attention for successful campaigns and fundraising.

TOBIAS HOF (Munich) took a closer look at musicians' efforts during the Ethiopian famine in the mid-1980s. He criticised the widespread image that especially Live Aid and Band Aid put forth simplistic, exclusionary and emotional visions in order to reach a broad public and to promote themselves. While some narratives in fact returned to colonial clichés, Hof also traced accounts that considered more complex and political explanations of the famine. The differences depended on multiple factors ranging from national backgrounds and musicians' personal agendas to the music genres.

The following discussion revolved around

the relationship between NGOs and states, and questions about forms of fragile statehood and a retreat of state regulation. However, the hypothesis of apolitical or continuously depoliticised aid was rejected. Concerning the relationship between NGOs or several humanitarian agencies, the question arose whether competition was more important than networking and cooperation.

The latter point was also taken up in the third panel which investigated political and non-governmental initiatives of European actors claiming to act in a spirit of solidarity. MICHELE DI DONATO (Pisa) and GABRIELE SIRACUSANO (Rome) compared the so-called Eurocommunist parties in Italy and France in the 1970s and 1980s. They argued that the parties' different trajectories could be better understood by examining their positions towards the economic crisis, European integration, and, first and foremost, towards the Global South and the socialist parties of Western Europe than by looking at their relationships to Moscow.

LUCILE DREIDEMY (Toulouse/Vienna) analysed the work of the Friedrich Ebert foundation (FES) in Kenya in the 1960s and emphasised its close connection to West German as well as US foreign policy, and to the Kenyan government. Since the FES often responded to Kenyan demands, Dreidemy raised the question whether the work of the FES and humanitarian agencies could be described as intervention by invitation.<sup>1</sup> Like Bressendorf, Dreidemy highlighted a competition between humanitarian agencies, in her case between the FES and the northern European NORDIC.

FRIEDERIKE APELT (Hanover) demonstrated how the Nicaraguan Sandinistas tried to mobilise solidarity by emphasising the participation of women in their fight against the Somoza dictatorship. By producing pictures not only of suffering women, but also of „courageous mothers“, „heroic women“ and guerrilleras they managed to create broad support. This, however, did not necessarily guarantee unity between the Sandinistas

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<sup>1</sup> The phrase adapts Lundestad's „Empire by invitation“, cf. Geir Lundestad, *The United States and Europe Since 1945. From „Empire“ by Invitation to Transatlantic Drift*, Oxford 2003.

and activists from Europe. As Apelt showed, discussions about gender politics between the Sandinistas and West German female activists rather often revealed diverging points of view.

KATHARINA WOLF (Gießen) dealt with a different kind of female engagement and new career paths for women in humanitarian aid. She traced the story of the expansion of the SOS Children's Villages from a conservative Catholic project for orphans in Tyrol in the post-war years to an international development organisation. The organisation described itself as an apolitical distributor of aid that followed moral obligations and applied an allegedly universal model of child welfare – a family centred around a mother in a patriarchal village – to the Global South. Wolf pointed out the discrepancy between the organisation's self-image and the reality of multi-layered political and institutional interests that were closely connected to the promotion of Austria as a neutral power, as well as to colonial and missionary traditions. Finally, the story of the villages' early years exposes a tension between emerging post-colonial power relations and the continuation of missionary traditions and colonial thinking.

In the following discussion both Apelt and Wolf underlined that solidarity and humanitarian aid in their case studies were not only a matter of help, but also a powerful promotional strategy – both for actors from the Global South and for European organisations – and a means of active contribution and change.

In her concluding remarks, CHRISTINE HATZKY (Hanover) suggested that research on solidarity helped to understand how a certain kind of globality had been produced. The conference had shown that different case studies of humanitarian aid could illuminate how the concepts were transmitted and adapted, how aid was demanded or implemented, and how cooperation and conflicts could arise between and within groups of actors in the Global North and the Global South. Furthermore, she raised the question whether the provision of aid always produced hierarchies or whether it could be given among equals. As Hatzky pointed out, solidarity and

humanitarian aid could be both a political tool and moral concern that revealed a lot about the self-perception of those giving aid. In line with the findings of the workshop, she proposed to decentre the history of the Cold War and to pay close attention to colonial continuities, especially in ways of thinking. Framke highlighted, however, that solidarity and humanitarianism were not exclusively Western concepts and practices.

One major point of the final discussion was the impact of the East-West-conflict and decolonisation. Bernd Rother (Berlin) doubted the dominance of a „global Cold War“ and referred to older lines of conflict or beliefs that preconditioned humanitarian aid or solidarity. Furthermore, he demanded to analyse the costs of giving solidarity since many countries of the Global South could not afford to give material solidarity beyond declarations. Arvid Schors (Cologne) suggested to understand the Cold War as a flexible structure that needed to be thoroughly measured in each case. The same would be true for solidarity as a rhetorical tool which made it necessary to consider not only the proclaimed motives but also domestic contexts and foreign relations. Schenck returned to Hatzky's remark on producing globality and asked whether practices of solidarity could be understood as both a consequence and a driving force of globalisation – similar to what has been argued regarding decolonisation. Hatzky agreed but pointed out that solidarity and humanitarianism were more emotionally charged than decolonisation.

By analysing both local case studies and international discussions about norms, the workshop highlighted three major findings that can be starting points for further research: First, the workshop underlined the complex character of solidarity and humanitarianism. Solidarity was not only an empty phrase or a moral obligation, but could also be used as a powerful rhetorical strategy to mobilise support, either by emotional appeals and identification or by generating allegedly undeniable evidence for a political demand.<sup>2</sup> Humanitarian aid can be seen as emergency relief or

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<sup>2</sup>See also the upcoming volume of the Archiv für Sozialgeschichte 60 (2020) on ideas and practices of solidarity.

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as an extension of colonial practices, but from a critical perspective can also be understood as a means to privatise statehood. A second major topic was power relations. The workshop showed how actors demanded, gave, or mobilised solidarity. It became apparent that it was not always the richer or more powerful actor that determined practices of aid, but that recipients could shape the emergence and outcome in crucial ways. Finally, the participants shed light on emerging new fields of activity, new roles and career paths in developmental aid, especially for women, from the 1960s onwards. In these ways, research on solidarity and humanitarianism can refine our understanding of internationalism and the emerging postcolonial global order.

#### **Conference overview:**

Silke Mende (Berlin): Begrüßung

Caroline Moine (Berlin): Einführung

*Panel I: Universale Normen? Auf der Suche nach einer internationalen humanitären Ordnung*

Moderation: Arvid Schors (Köln)

Jakob Schönhagen (Freiburg): Die umkämpfte Universalisierung. Die westliche Staatengemeinschaft, die Neuausrichtung des UNHCR und die Überarbeitung der Genfer Flüchtlingskonvention in den 1960er Jahren

Marcia C. Schenck (Potsdam): Aiding freedom fighters? The Organization of African Unity's Refugee Convention of 1969 in the making

Jihane Chedouki (Berlin): The normative power of the International Committee of the Red Cross: the case of the civil war in Yemen (1960–1970)

*Panel II: Humanitarismus vor Ort: Akteure und Praktiken in (post-)imperialen Räumen*

Moderation: Bernd Rother (Berlin)

Maria Framke (Berlin/Rostock): Medical aid as foreign policy tool. The Indian National Congress' relief work in Southeast Asia in the context of WWII and decolonization

Dora Tot (Bologna): Obligated to solidarity? Yugoslav medical professionals in Algeria

(1962–1965)

Agnes Bresselau von Bressensdorf (Berlin): Zwischen Weltordnungsfrage und humanitärem Regime. Flucht im Mittleren Osten seit den späten 1970er Jahren

Tobias Hof (München): „We are the World“ – Visions of humanity during the Ethiopian famines 1984/85

*Panel III: Politische und gesellschaftliche Initiativen westeuropäischer Solidarität*

Moderation: Carlos Haas (München)

Michele Di Donato (Pisa) / Gabriele Siracusano (Rom): Eurocommunism and the Global South. French and Italian communists facing social democracy and north-south questions

Lucile Dreidemy (Toulouse/Wien): Zwischen Solidarität und Imperialismus. Die Entwicklungshilfe-Leistungen der Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung in Kenia in den 1960er und 1970er Jahren

Friederike Apelt (Hannover): Solidarität, Geschlecht und der Kalte Krieg. Die bundesdeutsche Solidaritätsbewegung mit der sandinistischen Revolution in Nicaragua

Katharina Wolf (Gießen): Hilfe für Kinder als grenzenlose Solidarität? Österreichische Kinderwohlfahrtspolitik im Kalten Krieg am Beispiel von SOS-Kinderdorf, ca. 1960–70

Christine Hatzky (Hannover): Gesamtkommentar

*Abschlussdiskussion*

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