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SPECIAL ISSUE ARTICLE

"War is destructive, but it reconstructs anew…:" Refugee Education and State Consolidation in Imperial Austria during the First World War

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Abstract

This article explores aspects of the organization of refugee education in imperial Austria during the First World War. Authorities in charge of refugees' control and their eventual assistance interpreted access to education in two ways. First, it was an avenue of relief through schooling, aimed to counter the effects of uprootedness and, thus, safeguard some continuity in refugee children's lives. Second, it was a way to ensure the making of productive and loyal citizens. In this context, this article looks at various policies regarding organization of schooling for displaced children. Moreover, it analyzes the ways language entered the realm of the refugee-focused classroom. Officials used schooling in refugee students' vernacular to relieve the effects of their displacement and to reinforce ethnonational classifications of imperial subjects. At the same time, education through refugee children's growing exposure to German language courses became a measure of a gradual inculcation of an imperial consciousness. Furthermore, it was a civilizing dimension of displacement management and, in this way, it became an avenue to consolidate a war-feeble state.

Keywords: Habsburg; refugees; schools; First World War

Introduction

In October 1916, administrators of the refugee program in the Oberhollabrunn district, in Lower Austria, reported on the establishment of a Croatian-language elementary school course in the village of Breitenweida. The report revealed the inner workings regarding the organization of this course: the headmaster and the only teacher assigned was one Anton Rajčić. He would teach 5 days a week for a total of 25 hours a week. German-teaching was also possible, with about 62 Croatian-speaking refugee students attending these language classes.[1] For the months to come, authorities repeatedly attempted to secure the teaching body that would be able to communicate in Croatian. It was a difficult task in and of itself due to the scarce pedagogical capacity that the war caused. Many teachers were on various war fronts; others were politically suspicious. This was the case of Marian Marchi from the Istrian village of Lauran/Lovran; the organizers of schooling in Croatian language in Oberhollabrunn thought he would have been a possible teacher for the refugee children living there; however, there were fears that he was interned in the camp of Göllersdorf in the very same Lower Austria, and, thus, he could have been a political prisoner.[2] In this context, they called on the Dalmatian provincial school board to help with the process of appointment of teachers of Croatian

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nationality to be sent to Oberhollabrunn to help refugee children, in the name of a cultural refugee welfare (Ger. *kulturelle Flüchtlingsfürsorge*).[3]

This article looks at the ways state authorities thought of and implemented education policies as a form of refugee assistance in wartime imperial Austria. The recorded scramble to secure schooling for Croatian-speaking refugees in Oberhollabrunn was, in effect, a conventional story of a practical tumult that the organization of refugee education entailed in this period. Total numbers regarding forcefully displaced people during the war have remained murky. However, historians have pointed to the high count of up to 2 million people who were forcefully and internally displaced across the monarchy (Thorpe 2011, 105; Frizzera 2018a, 62). Addressing this mass displacement then became a fundamental dimension of war policy on various home fronts. This meant control of people's movement, as well as provision of food, clothing, or healthcare. And, as the war went on, architects of displacement policy in Austria (i.e. officials of government in Vienna) believed that it also signified care for refugees' minds and their future. Feeding and curing people on an emergency basis was one way to address the humanitarian needs that displacement generated.[4] However, the impact of people's uprootedness on disruption of lives and what would happen with children once the war ended drove the thinking behind practices of refugee management as well.

In the fall of 1914, immediately after the war broke out, the Joint War Ministry and the Ministry of Interior implemented a program of evacuation of civilians who lived close to the war zones. Early on, most of the refugees were thus evacuated people of Galicia and Bukovina, as well as those people who independently fled the Russian invasion in the East of the monarchy. Once Italy invaded in the South in 1915, most refugees came from the Austrian Littoral or from the mountainous Trentino province. In official terms, at the beginning of the war, refugees were those citizens who were politically innocuous; in this way, authorities differentiated them from "internees," known to be potential danger to the state. It was as late as 1917 when legal bodies of the monarchy established an encompassing definition of refugees: "persons who left their permanent residence or are unable to return home," either through evacuation or through voluntary choice.[5] Still, in the early days of the war, refugees' status as feeble, innocent citizens, coupled with the realities of their high numbers and possible social and economic effects of their displacement contoured official policies of their confinement, resettlement, and assistance.

The Austrian part of the monarchy is at the center of this article's narrative. This is not by chance. A form of safe evacuation also meant organization of reception and establishment of spaces of refuge; in this context, the majority of refugees were placed in the Austrian hinterland, away from the war zones. Hungary was only a space of *temporary* settlement,[6] with authorities in Budapest claiming that refugees' Austrian citizenship placed the responsibility of management and care firmly on the government in Vienna (Mentzel 2013; Kuprian 2011; Stibbe 2014; Malni 2001; Malni 1998; Kosi 2016). In this context, imperial Austria saw a shift from a temporary and emergency-driven refugee policy to one with medium- and long-term agendas on behalf of displaced *citizens*. Thus, as this article shows, refugee education and the related cultural welfare schemes then became part of a vision of social reconstruction.

In more practical terms, officials initially chose a system of classification of the displaced, based on economic capacity, nationality, and confession. This, they believed, would ease the organization of resettlement, albeit temporarily. On 6 September 1914, just a few days after the fall of Lemberg/L'viv/L'vov, the Ministry of Interior distributed a number of instructions that local and police authorities were to follow.[7] Refugees were to be separated based on their financial potential: some were registered as *bemittelt*, with sufficient means to support themselves. But most were *mittellos*, without proven financial means. Those with a demonstrated budget of about 200 crowns were to live in various communities in cities, towns, and in villages. Those without means were placed in quickly built barracks that eventually led to the making of a veritable network of refugee camps (Cretu 2022; Zahra 2017; Klein-Pejšova 2014; Thorpe 2011; Mentzel 1997).

If economic capacity implicated some monetary standards, the categorization based on nationality was arguably diffuse. These classification methods for refugees echoed the bureaucratic "ethnic

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boxes" of the nineteenth century. Then, historians Rok Stergar and Tamara Scheer have shown, the Habsburg state helped propagate notions that "its inhabitants belonged to one or another nation that could be defined by language use" (Stergar and Scheer 2018, 576). This idea was present in the initial management of the displaced during the First World War as well. However, in the case of these refugees, officials turned to the practicalities of wartime informality to establish nationality among imperial subjects (Cohen 1981; King 2003; Judson 2006; Zahra 2008), rather than a specific set of bureaucratic criteria (Stourzh 2007). Some refugees carried proof of their seeming "belonging" to a nationality (i.e. birth certificates, marriage certificate, school certificates). However, with many running in haste, it was what they *declared* as their language of communication or their religion that was taken at face value. As historian Julie Thorpe has noted, "no consideration could be given to whether the family were Polish- or Yiddish-speaking Jews, nor to the multilingualism of the children of a Ukrainian-speaking Catholic married to a German-speaking Catholic" (Thorpe 2011, 107).

Refugee policy architects used the classification methods for various purposes. It was first designed to fundamentally control refugees' numbers and their location, and, in the case of those placed in camps, to strictly contain and even segregate them from locals. At the same time, officials motivated this policy as a way to ensure a form of continuity in refugees' disrupted livelihoods; according to this logic, it was by living within their own ethnic and linguistic communities, a form of artificial *Heimat*, that they could appease the dramatic effects of war and of displacement. In the process, they thus further replicated the ways legislators and policymakers previously construed belonging to an ethnolinguistic nation as intrinsic to imperial subjects' identity. In this way, refugees' resettlement through classification fed into pre-war ideas of the Habsburg empire as a "family of nations," diverse in language and/or religion, brought together through history and a shared dynasty (Moore 2020).

Refugee management also meant the conceptualization and provision of assistance. The war's progression, the military battles on multiple fronts, and subsequent growth of refugee numbers enabled a re-thinking of what displacement-focused policymaking should entail. Classifications were almost ad-hoc bureaucratic measures of population control that aimed to convey military and administrative self-assurance. However, the rise of epidemics and high child morality, poverty and homelessness, and a fully-fledged hunger crisis among the displaced created a backdrop for the making of humanitarian relief in response to various emergencies. The state was the generator of this relief work *par excellence*, as officials primarily attached to the Ministry of Interior gradually addressed health and nutrition crises on an emergency basis. In the refugee camps, the state and affiliated committees (e.g. Aid Committee for Refugees from Bukovina and Galicia; Aid Committee for Refugees from the South) organized on behalf of various ethnic and religious groups (e.g. Ruthenians, Italians, Jews) took the reins of relief work.[8] In the bigger cities, as well as smaller towns and villages, however, non-state societies also mobilized resources and charity work to address refugees' urgent plight (Klein-Pejšova 2014; Rechter 2008; Hecht 2008; Malni 1998).

Officials in charge of refugee policy blueprints also turned to the medium- and long-term effects of the provision of assistance. *Kulturelle Flüchtlingsfürsorge* or "cultural refugee welfare" delineated the reasoning behind a *refugee assistance-state consolidation* nexus. A 1915 Ministry of Interior-published document described the meaning and scope of cultural refugee welfare, largely focused on provision of education and schooling for refugee children. Accordingly, authorities explained that it was a *necessary* act to enable schoolchildren to continue their interrupted education and keep them "busy" in an attempt to alleviate any form of "depression" caused by war and displacement. However, initially, this proved possible only for the benefit of a small number of refugee children, given the available schools and teaching staff and language difficulties in the early days of the war. In this context, officials in charge of refugee policy looked to expand the scope of cultural refugee welfare. It included refugees from all parts of the monarchy. This implied an expansion of logistical capacity and mobilization of resources among teachers. It also meant a practical organization of

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what seemed to be a temporary measure of refugee assistance, through the establishment of primary and secondary schools, gymnasia, as well as handicrafts and agricultural schools.[9]

This article is an analysis of two dimensions of cultural welfare as it explores how authorities organized schooling for wartime refugees as a measure of state consolidation. I argue that the multiple facets of refugees – as war sufferers, as "foreigners," and as citizens – in imperial Austria shaped the approach and the meaning of educational policies. First, people's displacement meant disruption; in this case, the school was to be a method to address their intrinsic suffering and its effects on their minds. Second, refugees were not just victims, but they were also foreigners resettled in the midst of various host communities. In this context, I suggest that, at times, organization of group- and language-specific schooling reinforced the containing and segregationist scope of their nationality-based classification. Third, refugees in imperial Austria were also citizens. In this context, cultural welfare entailed a medium- and long-term civilizing vision. The engineers of refugee policy believed that the displacement crisis allowed for the state's growing interventionist role in shaping future citizens. Access to schooling, Vienna-based authorities believed, would be one way for refugee children to become socially and economically useful upon return to their homeland. Furthermore, it was a way to reinforce imperial consciousness and loyalty to the monarchy. Ultimately, refugee education policy fed into ethnonational categorizations that defined displacement management and, in this process, attempted to reinforce patriotism and civilization in the name of state consolidation.

Historians of the Habsburg empire have long looked at education and schooling as measures of state potential and an avenue to strengthen it in different eras. Scholars have then analyzed various reform packages, the relationship between state and society through the realm of the school, the transformation and, more generally, the modernization of the monarchy through various educational policies that targeted different classes (Moore 2020; Cohen 1996; Judson 2006; Bruckmüller 2007). The era of the First World War has also received attention in the literature. How did the war shape access to education? How did it enter the school realm? These are the core questions that some historians of the period have addressed, with increased attention on how the war breached the school curriculum (Hämmerle 2015; Auer 2008; Healy 2004). In this sense, in their various studies, they showed how children thus became objects of an inherent war mobilization.

Refugee-oriented education policy in wartime Austria-Hungary is yet to be explored more extensively. Certainly, the theme of displacement has increasingly found space in the literature on the final years of the monarchy, with scholars particularly observing the experience of flight and the suffering that the movement of specific populations generated (Ruszała 2020; Frizzera 2018b; Malni 1998; Kosi 2016; Svolšjak 2010; Verginella 2015). The empirical strides that this literature has made are undeniable. However, this scholarship would benefit from a dissection of the vision, the policies, the meanings, and the implementation of assistance as a systematic dimension of refugee management that bridged emergency needs and the eventual fate of displaced citizens. Indeed, a deeper understanding of state authorities' conceptualization of refugee management gives a poignant insight into ways displacement ultimately shaped wartime policy and how it disrupted or reinforced pre-war social and institutional structures in Austria-Hungary.

This article builds precisely on the state officials' and, at times, local administrators' point of view as it disentangles how they perceived displacement and the way they used education and schooling as measures of refugee assistance in imperial Austria. While certainly part of the larger story, I consciously do not primarily focus here on refugees' own voices and the ways they negotiated and shaped the conditions of their assistance and of their schooling in particular. Furthermore, instead of focusing on one specific community or a certain camp or area of resettlement for displaced people, I look at a broad picture of the shifts and turns of refugee policy across various groups and spaces. Thus, I move the narrative from one camp to another, from one district to another, from a village to a city. By taking this *macro* approach and, therefore, by focusing on the archives of the state and of local administration, I seek to shed light on the conceptualization and implementation of a multifaceted refugee policy in wartime Austria. More specifically, I aim here to highlight ways

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pre-existing schooling structures pervaded refugee management policy and, conversely, how displacement and its effects fundamentally infused official perceptions regarding education as a pillar of state consolidation.

Displacement as Rupture: The School as Continuity

In August 1916, Luigi Faidutti, then governor of Gorizia and Gradisca, wrote a note regarding a worrying increase in refugee numbers. During the war, Faidutti was a supporter and lobbyist for the cause of refugees from the Austrian Littoral and this document was no exception. In this, he claimed that the number of school-age children of Slovenian nationality increased. Many among these refugees had found accommodation in the town of Bruck an der Leitha, as well as in parts of Lower Styria and Carniola. In this context, Faidutti, in the name of the Gorizia provincial committee (Ger. *Landesausschuss*), called for the authorities in Vienna to help refugees to continue schooling as quickly as possible through immediate opening of elementary and middle schools in some of the various settlements for children of Slovenian nationality.[10] It was an instance of locally-charged political pressure, as Faidutti spoke and lobbied on behalf of the provincial elected representation.[11]

Faidutti's note was of the time and targeted. The Vienna-based government had already approached implementation of education for refugees and various forms of schooling as an immediate form of assistance. As previously noted, the disturbance of refugees' lives lay at the heart of the so-called cultural welfare. For officials, keeping refugees busy and relieving them of the thoughts of the strokes of fate they had suffered mattered. In this context, they conceived of the potential of the school to address refugee children's wartime suffering and the need for them to maintain a continuously mindful and moral activity, even in a context of extreme disruption. The core of refugee policy was the recreation of a *Heimat* away from home and this was reflected in the practical organization of education on an emergency basis.

Refugee children's access to schooling functioned based on multiple principles. First, it was mandatory. This was an instance of a carry-over from pre-existing education laws into the realities of a wartime state and society. Compulsory education in the Habsburg empire had been established under Empress Maria Theresa in the late eighteenth century. The Theresian education laws marked a shift particularly through the inclusion of the lower classes. Importantly, the law's main accomplishment was to establish several one-or two-class primary schools in children's declared vernacular across the monarchy. These schools had modest goals; however, the use of students' spoken languages became necessary in the framework of this legislation in order to ensure wide access and interest in schooling (Viehhauser 2019, 19).

Refugee education in wartime Austria functioned based on these tenets by and large. For one, refugees that were both *bemittelt* and *mittellos* were to attend schools, in a move that disregarded any class discrepancies among refugees. The compulsory nature of refugee schooling was to be strictly implemented, when possible. This was noticeable in the case of Ruthenian children living in the camp of Gmünd, in Lower Austria, where in April 1916 a service order was issued for the teaching staff. Every Ruthenian child in the camp was obliged to attend school; in case of doubt, the doctor would decide on the child's ability to attend classes (Hermann 2017, 174). Similar ideas were circulated in the case of the Mitterndorf camp in Lower Austria in 1916, where a majority of Italian-speaking refugees from Trentino lived. In a report presented in July, Maximilian Freiherr von Mersi, President of the Tyrolean Provincial Culture Council (Ger. *Landeskulturrat der Gefürsteten Grafschaft Tirol*) and an inspector of the camp, lamented the potential lack of school attendance if measures were not in place. He suggested bonuses (financial or otherwise) to be given to children who attended. At the same time, he believed in the power of penalties for children's parents and a strict supervision process even *outside* school in order to ensure attendance.[12]

A second dimension of refugee education related to its institutional and logistical organization. The compulsory nature of schooling could, after all, only be implemented once children had tangible access to educational institutions. Refugee camps were newly and quickly erected spaces of

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resettlement for the displaced. However, as previously noted, state officials and camp administrators gradually invested in the practical establishment of elementary schools, gymnasia, and technical and agricultural schools for refugee children. Many of these institutions were already completely similar to normal public schools in terms of internal organizations and in the teaching methods. This was a scheme that fit these refugee camps, which were contain*ed* and contain*ing* spaces where large numbers of people lived. In non-camp communities where many refugees relocated, local officials sought to expand pre-existing local schools and hire new teaching staff. The inclusion of refugee children in local communities became an option to ensure the continuity in education for refugees scattered across various districts of the monarchy. For some authorities, schooling also benefitted the integration of these seeming "foreigners" coming from different parts of the monarchy within their host communities.[13] In this context, school specialists from the most war-affected regions, namely from Galicia, Bukovina, and the Austrian Littoral, became active in organizing and supervising the teaching of refugees on the ground; this was an instance that, once more, saw the agency of local institutional bodies in managing displacement effects on their communities. And, lastly, children studying in refugee schools could take state-approved examinations before special boards, in an attempt to maintain pre-war schooling schemes.[14]

In practice, beyond the blueprints and the vision of organizational capacity of refugee education, access to school was haphazard at times, given the logistical difficulties caused by the war and people's displacement in and of itself. Local authorities, camp administrators, or teachers themselves noted the struggles that the numbers of refugees and the poor available logistics caused in the practical organization of schooling. This was particularly poignant in the case of refugee camps. Adjusting to the school children's needs led to a gradual reinforcement of infrastructure in these spaces of refuge, where, indeed, most displaced people lived. Local officials, camp administrators, and state authorities purposefully removed refugees from constant direct interaction with locals through the creation of these camps. However, it was precisely this segregation that, some authorities believed, would affect encamped children, who were placed in a more serious risk of disruption of their education. Thus, officials decided on establishing in-camp educational tools that were to include illiteracy schools, elementary schools, and middle schools in particular. Additionally, some training for handicraft, sewing or farm work was included in the larger camps.[15] With the number of refugees ever growing particularly in the first two years of the war, authorities had to adapt. In this context, they gradually readjusted the scope of assistance via schooling, as they built hundreds of institutions in quick succession in the first months of refugee encampment, mostly out of necessity.[16] Logistical difficulties, as well as the practical mobilization of existent resources were evident in the camp of Mitterndorf. At first, children could be placed in a school building with 7 classrooms. The ever-increasing numbers of refugees living in Mitterndorf (up to 20,000), however, led to the construction of two more school buildings. Reports subsequently wrote that "the most urgent needs were provisionally taken care of by the successful adaptation of barracks."[17] In a few months, 22 classrooms were then available and the possibility of a regulated, albeit limited school operation was established in this camp.

The third principle of refugee education in wartime imperial Austria was its organization according to the classification scheme that authorities preferred as a method of displacement management. State authorities sought to organize schools and courses based on refugee children's declared nationality and language of communication precisely as a measure of assistance and alleviation of displacement-related suffering. This measure remained in tune with pre-war legislation. The 1867 Constitution explicitly wrote in its Article 19 that "the state recognizes the equal rights of all current languages in schools, administration and public life." Moreover, it stipulated that "…each member of an ethnic entity should have adequate opportunity to receive education in his/her own language."[18] In the following years, the state reinforced legal tools for its citizens to choose and declare their vernacular and ease access to schooling according to these preferences (Judson 2016, 310; Burger 1995, 100-110). These pre-war ideas of opportunity to schooling in a

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declared and chosen language were present also in the organization of schools for refugees during the First World War.

A significant dimension regarding the use of language in education policy targeting displaced citizens was the logistical and administrative organization of the teaching body. Hiring teachers who were able to communicate with students' vernacular in camps, as well as in towns and other communities of resettlement became the backbone of refugee schooling. Much like in the case of the aforementioned Croatian-speaking refugees from the Oberhollabrunn district, archives of the Ministry of Interior or local administration archives are filled with documents that note an evident struggle to find, hire, and pay teachers with linguistic skills and specific nationalities that would cover refugee children's own needs. In some instances, this quest for teachers was successful. Officials were certainly pleased in the case of one Maria Castenetti, an instructor for white sewing in the refugee camp in Steinklamm, in Lower Austria. Castenetti was notably fluent in German and Italian with a "Slavic dialect of the Trieste area. "[19] It was an effective hiring in a camp where a majority of thus declared Italian-speaking Slovenian refugees coming from the Austrian Littoral lived.

The quest for teaching and maintaining a nationality-based classification was present in the larger cities as well. For instance, officials authorized the establishment of an elementary school and a gymnasium course with Polish as the language of instruction for refugee children of Polish nationality from Galicia who were then resettled in Bohemia. Representatives of the Ministry of Interior, state school inspectors, as well as teachers who were familiar with the Galician elementary school system were brought on board to organize this form of schooling in Prague.[20]

Measures for schooling organization were taken also in smaller towns and districts. For instance, in the town of Mistelbach, in Lower Austria, in February 1916, authorities committed to quickly place children in classrooms; they had fled the war and found themselves in a new environment. Therefore, officials reasoned, it was only for their benefit to find some scope and emotional continuity in the space of a classroom. At the same time, local worries about these suddenly present "foreigners" reportedly abounded. Upon registration, refugee children were to prove their vaccination status and their overall health via a municipal report issued by a doctor. It was only in this way that children who were war refugees were to be placed in public schools of the local district. And there, Italian-speaking children were to have separate lessons, whereas Ukrainian refugees were to be taught by teachers who were able to speak the language.[21]

The case of Jewish refugees from the eastern part of the monarchy further reflects the official approach to ensure an uninterrupted access to education. Refugee camps that housed most of Jewish refugees coming from Galicia and from Bukovina saw an arguably augmented intervention from Jewish philanthropic associations. The Baron Hirsch Foundation, in collaboration with the *Israelitische Allianz zu Wien* and the state government, took the reins of education and schools in camps of Nikolsburg/Mikulov, Pohrlitz/Pohořelice, Gaya/Kyjov or Deutschbrod/Německý Brod/Havlíčkův Brod in Moravia. Not only were children in these camps taught in their declared vernacular (e.g. Ukrainian, Polish), but their stated confessional affiliation further made the object of the school curriculum which included lessons on the Torah. Teachers were to be hired in an official manner (if they had state teaching certification), brought in from Galicia or Bukovina if needed, or were refugees themselves (Mentzel 1997, 386).[22]

As previously noted, finding teachers for refugees had difficulties. Some were already on the war fronts, others were politically suspicious, or others simply did not want to relocate.[23] Thus, officials believed that for education and schooling to remain in-sync with the preferred classification schemes was for them to use resources that the refugees themselves could bring. Thus, employment of those displaced and resettled was fundamental to the scope of cultural welfare schemes. Following the logic of keeping the displaced busy, those in charge of managing assistance encouraged refugees to actively participate in the organization of their resettlement, albeit temporarily so.[24] In this context, education and schooling policies enabled refugees' own agency in the conditions of their encampment or their general placement in various host communities.

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Some of the complex dynamics around the organization of teaching emerged in the case of various refugees in the Salzburg province. One such instance was in the short-lived and small camp of Grödig, in the Salzburg-Umgebung district, where Ruthenian refugees relocated temporarily. In August 1916, the Aid Committee for Ukrainian refugees requested that an elementary school course and various workshops would have to be established after the completion of suitable barracks. However, they insisted on the immediate and nationality-oriented preparing of courses, enrolment of the students, procurement of teaching staff and of teaching materials. In specific terms, the Aid Committee believed in the benefits of finding teachers among refugees, albeit in collaboration with Ruthenian district school inspectors and with the Bukovina provincial authorities.[25] A similar approach was for refugees coming from the southern part of the monarchy. Besides working on helping with food and housing, the Aid Committee for Refugees from the South lobbied and attempted to establish schools in various municipalities around the city of Salzburg. In this context, the committee report wrote that "teachers were sought among the refugees themselves and have already been found for the schools in question, (…) the primary concern was to keep the children busy…"[26]

The attempt to maintain a form of refugee classification had, however, its ambiguities and led to tensions between the vision of schooling access and its practical implementation. This can be seen in the case of a group of children from Istria, aged between six and thirteen, who were initially resettled in the camp of Wagna, in Styria. They declared Croatian nationality. However, they were Italian speakers. At first, authorities decided their placement in the camp of Gmünd, in Lower Austria, where Croatian nationality refugees lived by 1916. However, schooling in Italian did not exist in Gmünd for primary school children. This ultimately led to refugees' request for a transfer in another camp, in Potterndorf-Landegg, where some Italian-speaking refugees lived and where schooling was, therefore, possible.[27] The fate of these children once arrived in Potterndorf-Landegg and after the end of the war remains unknown. However, this case gives an insight into the limits of the official classification system for refugees; at the same time, it shows a level of state officials' attempted adaptability to ensure schooling access for these uprooted citizens.

In other instances, the state was less willing to adapt. This was certainly the case for children of Ukrainian intelligentsia that had mostly fled Russia and found initial refuge in the eastern part of Galicia. The choice to move to that area had much to do with families and other acquaintances who lived there. Furthermore, access to education in children's mother tongue remained a consideration in terms of where to find refuge. Once the war started, precise access to education remained problematic. With east Galicia being in a precarious situation, these refugees called for support specifically in the name of continuation of education in children's mother tongue. However, these "external" refugees were refused any form of state aid, as authorities in Vienna remained concentrated only on displaced *Austrian citizens* and their access to schooling. It was a decision that the relief association Ukrainian State Aid Committee for Evacuees in Lemberg protested, claiming that it would have been more productive to unify "these refugee categories in the refugee communities envisaged by the government. (…) This measure will certainly not save money for the state treasury; on the contrary, apart from the completely unnecessary complication of the question provisioning," the committee representatives pointed out. For them, access to schooling for these children of the Ukrainian intelligentsia was a matter of immediate relief; at the same time, they believed that education would be a way to ensure the survival of this group and its language. In this context, they offered some pragmatic avenues, namely attempted access to schools in the cities of Vienna or Prague on an emergency basis. When not possible, refugee aid by means of schooling for those remaining in east Galicia could have been an option.[28] The outcome of this episode remains relatively undiscovered, precisely due to the murky dynamics of classification that authorities in Vienna preferred. However, this case shows the limitations of the state's proposed refugee aid, its organization, and how this fundamentally shaped the meaning, use, and outreach of schooling and education in wartime Austria.

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Displacement meant disruption. This was what the makers of refugee policy during the war used as a motivation to establish assistance schemes. In the first few months of the war, access to schools became a way to alleviate the shock of ruptures: refugees' sudden flight away from their homes and their arrival in new communities and spaces of refuge. Schools were conceived as metonyms for continuities. This was the logic that followed the organization of education for refugees at the beginning: it was to replicate, as much as possible, the conditions of refugees' *Heimat* via use of their own languages in teaching and learning. Furthermore, authorities claimed that they attempted to integrate these uprooted people in local communities across the Austrian hinterland. From this perspective, refugees' status as war sufferers of the state pervaded much of the organization of schooling in imperial Austria during the war. It was a way for the state to perform its care towards its citizens. However, for authorities, the condition of displacement also proved to be an opportunity to strengthen a war-suffering state.

Displacement as Opportunity: The School as Civilization

In 1915, an article in the cultural newspaper *Österreichische Rundschau* gave an insight into how government officials thought of the potential of what could be considered a civilizational educational policy for the monarchy's displaced citizens. Accordingly, by ensuring access to school, backward, illiterate, economically underdeveloped Slavs and Italians were to be made Austrians against a backdrop of flight from the peripheries of the monarchy into the hinterland. The article was mostly about the life of Ruthenian refugees in the camp of Gmünd in Lower Austria. It wrote of conditions of encampment in enthusiastic terms, comparing it to a "city in America administered by Germans," intended to offer refugees protection, in order to then "encourage them to be more civilized" as a measure of state-driven, west-like modernization:

> They were not only taken care of in these barracks, they were also educated by the state: they were encouraged to be clean, orderly, and to do the right job. They were ready to be educated, eager to learn, these were people who just want to be treated properly. (…) These people have taught us who they actually are, what you can do with them if you really want to and treat them (…) accordingly. In Neu-Gmünd the air is New Austria.[29]

As emphasized in the previous section, refugee education policy relied on ideas of continuity in schooling *qua* relief for the many children who had to flee their homes. Being taught in the languages they knew best, by people with shared nationality, was officially a way to alleviate the effects of war and of forced displacement. However, in the terms of cultural refugee welfare, school was also meant to be a microcosm of civilization and displacement, even if tragic in cause and effect, was to be an opportunity to shape the future of imperial subjects and state citizens.

This approach in education as a civilizing power was nothing new. Once again, it was as early as the time of Maria Theresa when ideas of making people useful penetrated much of the organization of mandatory education across class. As Pieter Judson notes, the rationale behind the reform in late eighteenth century was to provide "requisite moral and economic training (for children) to become productive and orderly members of society" (Judson 2016, 40). It was a concept that followed refugee schooling during the First World War as well, as education was not intended only to keep children busy, but also to shape them into proactive and useful citizens during – but especially after – the war, in a time of potential reconstruction.

One way to ensure the civilizing nature of schooling and its role as a pillar of state consolidation was to inculcate what I would call an *imperial consciousness.* By looking at Viennese children, historian Maureen Healy has noted that authorities used schools during the war to create "young patriots" who would come to the aid of "the fatherland in its time of acute need" (Healy 2004, 244). It was a war-oriented form of education that was to mobilize children's labor and economic resources in the name of an emotional connection with a suffering state. The rhetoric of a state

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that would take care of its children pervaded refugee education as well. The school emerged as a space where a war-battered state could intervene to help its subjects, and, in this way, guarantee its reconstruction once peace was to be achieved. For this to be possible, children were to be committed to the state's cause. Mobilization of imperial patriotism and dynastic loyalty had already been present in pre-war and peace time education (Moore 2020). However, the conditions of war and the mass displacement of citizens made the strengthening of state and society relationship even more urgent. In this context, authorities explicitly sought to educate refugee children "in fear of God, in reverence for the emperor and the imperial family, in respect for the laws and the state order…"[30] (Hermann 2017, 174).

Furthermore, schooling had much to do with the image of a state that was to assist its subjects of many nationalities, under the same umbrella of centralized refugee care. Organization of education for displaced populations fleeing underdeveloped parts of the monarchy became an official example and proof that the empire should and could be considered a unitary state. This is what Friederich Wiser, a deputy secretary in the Ministry of Interior, signaled in the same *Österreichische Rundschau*; he wrote that through education and schooling, refugees living in camps in particular were to learn that this state was "not a mere conglomerate of peoples, not a mere historical-geographical concept, not a mere constitutional and economic political structure but a unit, an animated vital organism in whose (…) power we may trust."[31]

A practical example of the state's intentional intervention in refugee education was the after-school center named "Kronprinz Franz Josef Otto," organized for ten- to fourteen-year-olds in the camp of Mitterndorf. According to official statements, the goal of this project was to instill "independence and enthusiasm" in these children and finally "to educate loyalty to the emperor and love of the fatherland." Various forms of reward were used as a means of education. If the above-mentioned patriotic "virtues" were not evident, then this would entail the loss of the badge of honor, presentation before the disciplining commission, and even exclusion from school. In this system, these refugee children's welfare was conducted according to what historian Walter Mentzel has described as a "military model" (Mentzel 1997, 333). It was a decidedly paternalistic organization of refugee schooling that tapped directly on ideas of "fixing" people in the name of an ideal state.

The civilizing dimension of refugee education intertwined with ambitions of inculcated patriotism and imperial consciousness. Some officials believed that these aspirations could become real once refugees could learn German. This was an idea that lay at the heart of a report on refugees' lives in the large camp of Gmünd. In September 1915, a Vienna-based journalist published a report about the life of Ruthenian refugees living in this camp in the northern part of the monarchy. The author was reportedly particularly impressed by the sense of loyalty and allegiance towards the spirit of the empire that he saw at play in this camp and how it was manifested through an unexpected use and learning of German language:

> The voices of the women's choir, made of teachers and nurses, rise luminously from the dark. The national anthem is intoned and then they all sing the "Heil Dir im Siegerkranz" and the "Wacht am Rhein" in Ukrainian. More than ever, the impenetrability of an alliance that has passed into the language and hearts of tribes so fundamentally different from each other becomes evident. And a speaker who knows German more with the heart than with the tongue, stands up and enthusiastically praises German culture. War is destructive, but it reconstructs anew and more beautifully than before.[32]

If ensuring access to schooling in refugee students' declared vernacular was a continuation of pre-war legislation and organization of education, attempts to instill imperial consciousness through access to German signaled an important shift. Up until the war, diverse ethnonational and linguistic identity mattered in the making of a so-called family of nations and in the making of what historian Scott Moore has called a "supranational Austrian identity" (Moore 2020, 2). In this understanding,

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allegiance to their national and linguistic group was a manifestation of loyalty towards the state. Ultimately, using one's own language was also a measure of patriotism and imperial consciousness by and large. However, officials attempted a change in tune for the uprooted citizens of the state during the war. Ideas of overarchingly *Germanizing* Austria through the inclusion of German language and related patriotic pedagogy had already blossomed in conventional schooling during the war (Rauchensteiner 2014, 501; Cornwall 2012, 30-50). Those in charge of managing the crisis of displacement also framed German language knowledge as *vital* for a post-war state consolidation and for the strengthening of the relationship between a claimed individual ethnonational identity and a form of imperial attachment.

German language lessons were not, in theory, mandatory for the monarchy's refugees. The idea of a welcome option rather than coercion was intrinsic to the policy of inclusion of German as a dimension of refugee education. Learning it was to be "a favorable opportunity that will probably never come their way," wrote one official regarding the inclusion of German for refugees based in the Salzburg area.[33] In fact, officials claimed that "(refugee children's) request, enlightenment, and admonition would work towards (their) consideration to participate in the German language lessons." (Mentzel 1997, 386).

A program in the case of Ruthenian refugees living in Gmünd delineated the conditions and effects of a school curriculum that included German lessons. Once more, in this instance, officials noted that learning German was encouraged, but not mandatory and pressure was not to be applied. More practically, the Ministry of Interior was to pay for the costs that such courses would require. By March 1917, authorities believed that the project was a valid achievement: the camp of Gmünd included courses for both children and adults and reportedly had a significant increase in interest since their incipience in the spring of 1915. Accordingly, 120 participants quickly registered to receive German lessons and for school-age children German was taught in Gmünd from the third grade onward to the same extent as classes in their language of communication (ca. 6 hours).[34]

Authorities deemed the implementation of German courses for refugees a success in various circumstances. Scattered documents found in state archives, as well as refugees' own recollections show their interest in accessing German lessons. It is perhaps not surprising then that some representatives of the Ministry of Interior claimed that this was an instance of an explicitly *wanted* civilization coming from refugees themselves. As seen in Gmünd, numbers supported ideas of this seeming feat. In the case of refugees placed in districts around Salzburg, reports mentioned that German lessons were "extraordinarily large" and even numerous adults also joined the courses.[35] Moreover, in the case of the same camp of Gmünd, repeated requests for access to German lessons signaled accomplishments. An official document noted that refugees of Polish, Ukrainian, Italian, Romanian, Slovenian and Croatian nationality

> …gladly make use of the opportunity offered to them to learn the German language, which is particularly valuable for their economic advancement and for the expansion of their education. (…) From an economic and cultural point of view, these endeavors deserve the most emphatic support from the state administration, because it sustains the development of lively economic and social relations between the border areas and the hinterland of the monarchy and indirectly promotes a feeling of harmony togetherness.[36]

The reported numbers, as well as various anecdotes also point to some refugees' interest in accessing German language courses in the name of social mobility and potential opportunity to overcome their condition during and after the war. Franz Peric (sic) was a refugee from Pola/Pula and was initially based in the camp of Steinklamm, in Lower Austria. In December 1915 he wrote to authorities to request a move from the camp in Steinklamm to Oberhollabrunn due to the fact that children could have easier access to German school, as lessons were yet to be provided where he was already based. It is possible that Peric simply wanted to relocate from the precariousness of a refugee camp into a private home as his wife had been ill and he was able to pay for a private apartment; in

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fact, in his letter, he claimed that this was a better opportunity for both "self-preservation and (…) better health." However, it is a clear instance that shows that access to German courses mattered for some refugees as an additional opportunity to overcome their condition.[37] This was also evident in the requests that one refugee teacher living in Mitterndorf received. Known to be both an Italian and German speaker, other refugees asked for her help for their children to take language lessons in order to improve life in camps and in the name of future prospects.[38]

However, not all refugees believed that German access was fundamentally a measure of civilization and opportunity. Authorities became aware of tensions towards their proposed access to German lessons in the town of Lilienfield in Lower Austria, where Italian-speaking refugees lived. Local elementary school teachers offered German for 4 hours a week once these refugees arrived in 1915; it was an intense course that gradually led to officials' conviction that Italian-speaking children could already join local schools in the 1916-1917 school year. However, the elimination of school in Italian language led to refugees' protest and accusations that officials in charge were, indeed, trying to *Germanize* them. Parents then refused to send their children to the public schools in Lilienfeld. Authorities refuted these accusations, claimed that learning German was merely for these children's future, and believed that Italian would never disappear since they were engaging with their peers and families in this language.[39]

In other instances, authorities believed that any antagonism to their schooling policy and refusal of German learning to be a clear proof of backwardness. This was the case for a group of Ruthenian refugees who were housed in local administrative areas in the town of Pöggstall in Lower Austria. German courses were easily available, an official report noted. However, the majority of refugees opposed the existence of German lessons for their children and attendance in the course was limited. This case, officials thought, was merely an instance of a "low level of education"[40] among these refugees. Furthermore, similar criticisms targeted some refugees of Slovenian nationality and housed in communities around Sankt Pölten in the same Lower Austria. "As far as the Slovene nationality is concerned, they generally do not show any particular interest either in German language or in work,"[41] a report curtly noted.

Officials in charge of refugee management reinterpreted displacement as an opportunity. While forced uprootedness was tragic in effect, they believed that educating refugees coming from the peripheries of the monarchy would fundamentally contribute to the improvement of society. In this sense, they used the space of the school, albeit temporary and incomplete, as an arena of molding citizens who would emotionally be attached to and contribute to state consolidation. They attempted to inculcate a form of imperial consciousness by connecting refugee education to a better understanding of its unifying capacity across nationalities. At the same time, they believed that opening refugees of different nationalities to the use of German lessons would fundamentally have a civilizing effect for this state's citizens.

Conclusion

In December 1915, just a few months after the Russian invasion in the eastern part of the monarchy and the flight of refugees from Galicia and Bukovina, the newspaper *Wiener Zeitung* published an article on the general welfare efforts for the displaced. In writing about education and access to school, the article claimed that the pre-war effort to reform and the mobilization to assist citizens in need was to have positive effects: "An extraordinary amount has been achieved in the last few years, as can be seen from everything that has been taught to the refugees. When they return to their homeland, they will take with them the progress that has been made here through the tireless work of the refugee schools and the diligence of the refugees (themselves). "[42]

The article in *Wiener Zeitung* was, in effect, an early and ambitious prediction of what education signified in refugee policy blueprints in imperial Austria. Assisting those in need had multiple features in times of war. There was a want of food, of housing, of clothes, and of medicine. But in the eyes of refugee policy architects, there was also a need to support refugees' mind and spirit.

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Schooling for displaced refugee children was, in their view, one way to stabilize them. And, in this process, they believed in the beneficial effects of education for the future of society and of state. In this context, refugee schooling as a form of cultural welfare, driven and shaped by a preferred ethnonational classification of displaced populations, emerged as a dimension of state consolidation in wartime imperial Austria.

I have argued in this article that authorities imagined and implemented refugee education through the lens of the multiple statuses of the displaced. First, they were war sufferers. Thus, access to schooling became, in officials' eyes, a necessity for refugee children not to become idle and for them to be relieved of the suffering that the war and the loss of home (even if perhaps temporarily) signified. Second, they were "foreigners," coming from the so-called peripheries of the empire into the hinterland. Third, they were the state's citizens. Therefore, officials attempted to find ways to control this movement, as well as contain displaced people together, and establish common ground with local communities. They used a classification method, according to financial capacity, nationality, or confession. Education policies were thus in-sync with this form of control, as state authorities, as well as local institutions attempted to ensure schooling in refugees' vernacular. At the same time, opening and encouraging access to learning German became a way to seemingly integrate them into their host communities and to open opportunities for them to become productive citizens back in their homeland. Access to school was, in this sense, to be a meshing of familiarity and novelty. It was to help refugees, but also mobilize them in the name of a battered, bruised, but hopeful state.

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Notes

1 Niederösterreichisches Landesarchiv (NÖLA), Präsidialakten (Präs) "P" 1918, Karton 340, Kroatischer Volksschulkurs, Errichtung, Oberhollabrunn, 16 October 1916.
2 NÖLA, Präs "P" 1918, Karton 340, Kroatischer Flüchtlingsfürsorge; kroatischer Volksschulkurs in Oberhollabrunn, Wien, 20 August 1917.
3 NÖLA, Präs "P" 1918, Karton 340 Kulturelle Flüchtlingsfürsorge in politischen Bezirke Oberhollabrunn, Volksschulkurse, Wien, 27 December 1916.
4 K. K. Ministerium des Innern, *Staatliche Fürsorge in Kriege 1914/15* (Wien: K.K. Hof- und Staatsdruckerei, 1915).
5 "Gesetz betreffend den Schutz der Kriegsflüchtlinge," Beilage 487, Stenographische Protokolle des Hauses der Abgeordneten, 22nd Session, 12 July 1917.
6 The general refugee policy in Hungary, as well as in Bosnia Herzegovina requires more scholarly attention beyond the purposes of this article.
7 Österreichisches Staatsarchiv (ÖStA), Ministerium des Innern (MdI), Allgemeines Verwaltungsarchiv (AVA), allg. 19, Karton 1921, Instruktion betreffend die Beförderung und Unterbringung von Flüchtlingen aus Galizien und der Bukowina, 15 September 1914
8 A more in-depth analysis of these relief committees is beyond the immediate purposes of this article. However, I caution against an understanding of these bodies as homogeneously and primarily led by nationalist activists. For one, the relief committees I mention here functioned in

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collaboration with and in the name of the central state. Furthermore, parts of their respective leadership claimed anti-nationalist stance; for instance, Luigi Faidutti and Alcide de Gasperri, significant figures leading the relief in the Committee for Refugees from the South distanced themselves from nationalist and irredentist ideologies regarding the fate of Trentino or Gorizia/Görz/Goriška. More research on the political tone of members of relief committees is certainly needed. However, at this point, I claim that nationalism was not the fundamental impetus for refugee-oriented relief organization.

9 K. K. Ministerium des Innern, *Staatliche Fürsorge in Kriege 1914/15*, 17-18.

10 ÖStA, MdI, AVA, allg. 19, Karton 1966, Luigi Faidutti Letter, 24 August 1916.

11 With thanks to the peer reviewer who suggested this line of interpretation and its emphasis.

12 NÖLA, Präs "P" 1917, Karton 722, Bericht des Delegierten Maximilian Freiherr von Mersi über seine Besichtigung des Barackenlagers in Mitterndorf a/Fischa am 9. Juli 1916, 10 July 1916.

13 ÖStA, AVA, MdI, allg. 19, Karton 1945, Fürsorge für südliche Flüchtlinge, Salzburg,22 September 1915; Moravský zemský archiv (MZA), Moravské Místodržitelství-Presidium, B13, Box 1172, Schulbesuch der Flüchtlinge, Ansuchen um Zuweisung von 2 kroatischen Lehrern, 16 August 1915.

14 Hilfsaktion für Flüchtlinge, *Denkschrift, Erster Teil*, 292; *Zweiter Teil*, 238; *Dritter Teil*, Seite 197

15 K. K. Ministerium des Innern, *Staatliche Fürsorge in Kriege 1914/15*, 17–18

16 K. K. Ministerium des Innern, *Staatliche Fürsorge in Kriege 1914/15*, 17–18

17 NÖLA, Präs "P" 1917, Karton 722, Hofrat Bonfioli Letter, Mitterndorf, 25 July 1916.

18 "Staatsgrundgesetz vom 21. December 1867, über die allgemeinen Rechte der Staatsbürger für die im Reichsrathe vertretenen Königreiche und Länder," *Bundeskanzleramt Österreich.* Accessed at www.ris.bka.gv.at/Dokumente/Erv/ERV_1867_142/ERV_1867_142.pdf

19 ÖStA, AVA, MdI, allg. 19, Karton 1955, Beschäftigungsanstalten, Instruktorin für das Lager in Steinklamm, 8 March 1916.

20 ÖStA, AVA, MdI, allg. 19, Karton 1969, Errichtung von Unterrichtskursen und Erziehungsveranstaltungen für Flüchtlingskinder polnischer Nationalität in Böhmen, 27 September 1916.

21 NÖLA, Präs "P" 1917, Karton 722, Kulturelle Flüchtlingsfürsorge, Mistelbach, 9 November 1916.

22 Also see MZA, Moravské Místodržitelství -Presidium, B13, Box 1227, Kulturelle Fürsorge für jüdische Flüchtlingskinder, Volksschulkurse, Mitwirkung der Baron Hirsch-Stiftung, 22 November 1916; MZA, Moravské Místodržitelství -Presidium, B13, Box 1227, Kulturelle Fürsorge für jüdische Flüchtlingskinder, Volksschulkurse, Mitwirkung der Baron-Hirsch-Stiftung, 20 December 1916.

23 Kroatischer Flüchtlingsfürsorge; kroatischer Volksschulkurs in Oberhollabrunn, 20 August 1917; NÖLA, Präs "P" 1917, Karton 722, Kulturelle Flüchtlingsfürsorge, Bestellung der Lehrer Zuccon und Zmak für den kroatischen Volksschulkurs im Lager in Steinklamm, 14 March 1917.

24 ÖStA, AVA, MdI, allg. 19, Karton 1966, Lschkapt. Henkl, Besichtigung des Flüchtlingslagers, 26 August 1916.

25 ÖStA, AVA, MdI, allg. 19, Karton 1966, Kulturelle Fürsorge für die Flüchtlinge aus Galizien und der Bukowina, Organisation von Schulkursen, Lehrpersonalbeschaffung, Schulaufsicht, 29 August 1916.

26 Fürsorge für sudliche Flüchtlinge, Salzburg,22 September 1915.

27 NÖLA, Präs "P" 1916, Karton 710, Flüchtlingskinder aus Pola im Lager bei Leibniz und in Gmünd, Schulunterricht, 28 December 1915; NÖLA, Präs "P" 1916, Karton 710, Hilfskomitee in Pola Letter.

28 ÖStA, AVA, MdI, allg. 19, Karton 1976, Ukrainische Landeshilfskomite für Evakuierte in Lemberg Letter, 15 February 1917.

29 Nk, Das Barackenlager bei Gmünd, *Österreichische Rundschau*, 1 October 1915.

30 Taken from a 1916 rulebook of the teaching staff in the Gmünd barracks.

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31 Friedrich Wiser, "Staatliche Kulturarbeit für Flüchtlinge," *Österreichische Rundschau*, 1 October 1915.
32 "Zwei Tage unter den Flüchtlingen der Ukraina," *Illustriertes Wiener Extrablatt*, 22 September 1915.
33 Fürsorge für sudliche Flüchtlinge, Salzburg, 22 September 1915.
34 NÖLA, Präs "P" 1917, Karton 722, Kulturelle Flüchtlingsfürsorge; deutscher Sprachunterricht, 23 March 1917.
35 Fürsorge für sudliche Flüchtlinge, Salzburg,22 September 1915.
36 Kulturelle Flüchtlingsfürsorge; deutscher Sprachunterricht, 23 March 1917
37 NÖLA, Präs "P" 1915, Karton 702, Franz Peric (sic) Letter, 22 December 1915.
38 Filomena Boccher, *Diario di una maestria in esilio nel "Lager" di Mitterndorf* (Trento: Cassa Rurale, 1983), 94.
39 NÖLA, Präs "P" 1918, Karton 340, Kulturelle Flüchtlingsfürsorge, Bezirk Lilienfeld, 6 October 1917.
40 NÖLA, Präs "P" 1917, Karton 722, Kulturelle Flüchtlingsfürsorge, 24 April 1917.
41 NÖLA, Präs "P" 1917, Karton 722, Kulturelle Flüchtlingsfürsorge; deutscher Sprachenunterricht, 15 May 1917.
42 "Kriegshilfe. Ausstellung der Flüchtlingsfürsorge," *Wiener Zeitung*, 23 December 1915.

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