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Tetiana Perga

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8725-3451>

WASTE FOR CHARITY? THE CASE OF THE UKRAINIAN RED CROSS AND OTHER HUMANITARIAN ORGANIZATIONS IN UKRAINE IN THE 1920s

The article argues that the Ukrainian Red Cross (URC), the Central Commission for Aid to Children under the All-Ukrainian Central Executive Committee (CCAC), and the Committee for Aid to Sick and Wounded Red Army Soldiers (AUCCASWRAS) played a key role in launching waste recycling activities in Ukraine in the early 1920s. At that time, waste recycling was seen as a promising source of income, and these humanitarian organizations needed funds to carry out their activities, such as combating child homelessness, supporting and treating demobilized wounded and sick Red Army soldiers, providing assistance to the population of famine-affected areas, etc. This activity was possible due to the accumulation of large amounts of waste in Ukraine and the lack of systematic work on its collection and recycling. The author shows the role of these humanitarian organizations in the creation and operation of one of the largest waste collectors in Ukraine – the company Ukrutilzbir. It is concluded that the Soviet authorities tried to exploit the idea of charity, which was to be implemented in the form of free transfer of waste by enterprises to Ukrutilzbir, but it did not take root, as it contradicted the ideology of rationalism and pragmatism and economic relations of the NEP period. At the same time, the idea of creating Ukrutilzbir as a business project that generated dividends was implemented quite successfully. The achievements of Ukrutilzbir are considered in the context of the waste collection problems in an economy of deficit and the limited ability of the population and enterprises to produce large amounts of waste. The author concludes that the connection of waste collection with the idea of charity is one of the distinctive features of the early Soviet waste regime in Ukraine. This study is based on the use of previously unknown archival documents and reveals unexplored pages of waste recycling activities and sources of funding for humanitarian organizations in Ukraine during the early Soviet period.

Keywords: *waste recycling, charity, Ukraine, USSR, Ukrainian Red Cross (URC), the Central Commission for Aid to Children under the All-Ukrainian Central Executive Committee (CCAC), the Committee for Aid to Sick and Wounded Red Army Soldiers (AUCCASWRAS).*

Introduction

At the beginning of the 21st century, numerous charitable organizations are implementing various initiatives related to waste reuse. For instance, Terracycle, in collaboration with Avon, collects empty cosmetic containers, and the proceeds from their recycling support breast cancer research initiatives. Food Cycle gathers surplus food from supermarkets and other locations and distributes it to volunteers who prepare nutritious meals for those in need, addressing both food waste and food poverty. I:Collect partners with retail fashion stores to establish collection points for used clothing and footwear. The collected items are either recycled or resold, with a portion of the proceeds supporting environmental and social projects. There are many such examples.

In Ukraine, similar initiatives have existed for over a century, and the idea of charitable — free of charge — donation of waste to humanitarian organizations was quite prevalent. The study of this historical experience is particularly relevant today due to the exacerbation of social problems in Ukraine resulting from the full-scale Russian aggression that began on February 24, 2022.

The activities of humanitarian organizations in early Soviet Ukraine have been studied fragmentarily. Due to the absence of archival documents of the Ukrainian Red Cross (URC) from the 1920s to the 1940s, which have evidently been lost or remain undiscovered in the collections of other organizations, research on this period of the organization's work is lacking. Certain aspects of the activities of the Central Commission for Aid to Children under the All-Ukrainian Central Executive Committee (CCAC; original title in archival documents – *Tsentral'nyy Komitet Pomdet*) in combating homelessness have been examined in articles by M.O. Bondarchuk, H.M. Starodubets [1; 8], I.M. Vlasyuk [2], T. Bukreeva [3] and others; the activities of the All-Ukrainian Central Committee for Aid to Sick and Wounded Red Army Soldiers (AUCCASWRAS, original title in archival documents – *Vseukrainskiy tsentral'nyy komitet pomoshchi*)– by O.V. Vilkhovyk [4], N. Lavrushyna [5] and others.

This scholarly investigation is based on previously unexplored archival documents of the CCAC and AUCCASWRAS, housed in the Central State Archive of Supreme Bodies of Power and Government of Ukraine (TsDAVO). In addition to various documents characterizing the activities of these organizations, they include several documents from the Ukrainian Red Cross, particularly correspondence regarding joint humanitarian actions, including waste collection initiatives.

Using the concept of Hungarian researcher Zsuzsa Gille, we consider the period between the First and Second World Wars as the early Soviet waste regime, which refers to a specific time characterized by a unique understanding of waste, methods of its generation and disposal, and the policies related to various aspects of this activity.

The purpose of this article is to analyze the use of waste to address social problems in Ukraine in the 1920s by three humanitarian organizations: the Ukrainian Red Cross (URC), the Central Commission for Aid to Children under the All-Ukrainian Central Executive Committee (CCAC), and the Committee for Aid to Sick and Wounded Red Army Soldiers (AUCCASWRAS). This topic, as well as the broader context of the relationship between charity and waste reuse in the USSR and Ukraine in particular, has not yet attracted the attention of researchers. The main research question of this article is: how did the Soviet leadership utilize humanitarian organizations in the 1920s to seek additional sources of funding for solving social problems? What form did the idea of a charitable waste donation for humanitarian purposes take in Ukraine during this period?

In this article, humanitarian organizations are understood to be those that provide targeted, direct, and free assistance to the most vulnerable segments of the population. Humanitarian aid is defined as targeted, direct, and free assistance in

monetary or in-kind form, which can manifest as voluntary donations or assistance in the form of performing work or providing services motivated by humanitarian considerations for the most vulnerable groups. Humanitarian aid is a type of charity, which is understood as voluntary personal and/or material assistance that does not involve the donor receiving profit and has a broader range of manifestations. These include the management of charitable endowments; the execution of wills, bequests, and inheritance agreements for charitable purposes; conducting charitable auctions, non-cash lotteries, competitions, and other charitable events not prohibited by law, among other activities [6].

Activities of the Ukrainian Red Cross, the Central Commission for Aid to Children under the All-Ukrainian Central Executive Committee, and the All-Ukrainian Central Committee for Aid to Sick and Wounded Red Army Soldiers in Ukraine

In the early 1920s, social problems in Ukraine, which became part of the USSR in 1922, significantly intensified. This was due to prolonged military-political upheavals – the First World War (1914-1919), the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, and the Russian Civil War (1917-1921). The implementation of the policy of War Communism, which involved the nationalization of all enterprises, militarization of labor, extensive centralization, requisitioning of agricultural products, elimination of market relations, payment in kind, and equal distribution of material goods, considerably worsened the material conditions of many Ukrainians. The situation was further exacerbated by the catastrophic drought of 1921 and the famine in Ukraine from 1921 to 1922. The most severe conditions were in the Katerynoslav, Zaporizhzhia, Odesa, and Mykolaiv provinces, which were the main grain exporters before the First World War. Approximately 7 million people were starving, and a cholera epidemic was rampant [7]. The republic saw a large number of wounded and sick Red Army soldiers who required medical assistance and were unable to support their families due to health issues, lack of employment, or education; the number of homeless children also increased significantly. Within just one year (from January 1922), the number of homeless children in Ukraine nearly quintupled, rising from 102,500 to 500,000 [8].

Several humanitarian organizations assisted Soviet authorities in addressing social problems, particularly those affecting vulnerable groups such as homeless children, demobilized sick and wounded Red Army soldiers, the unemployed, residents of famine-stricken areas etc. Among them were the three humanitarian organizations that are the focus of this study.

The Ukrainian Red Cross (URC) was established in Ukraine in 1918 and officially became part of the Union of Societies of the Red Cross and Red Crescent of the USSR in 1923 [9]. In the Ukrainian SSR, its objectives included providing medical and sanitary assistance to sick and wounded Red Army soldiers and sailors, meeting their material needs during wartime, offering medical and sanitary aid to the

population during natural disasters, assisting prisoners of war, and combating social diseases [10, p. 93].

The Central Commission for Aid to Children under the All-Ukrainian Central Executive Committee (CCAC) was founded on December 6, 1922, to combat child homelessness, improve the living conditions in children's institutions, provide public child nutrition for those in need, and facilitate the re-evacuation of children to their homeland who required it [11].

The All-Ukrainian Central Committee for Aid to Sick and Wounded Red Army Soldiers under the All-Ukrainian Central Executive Committee (AUCCASWRAS) was established based on the Committee for Aid to Sick and Wounded Red Army Soldiers on October 1, 1921, with the aim of caring for these individuals and their families [12].

To fulfill their missions, these organizations required substantial funding, which they sought from various sources. For example, the funds of the Ukrainian Red Cross were composed of: fees granted to the society by the current Soviet legislation, including those from theatrical, consular, railway, water, and air transport services, membership dues, general and special-purpose donations, revenue from exhibitions, excursions, concerts, performances, etc., income from the exploitation of properties and various society-owned institutions and enterprises, proceeds from the sale of its publications [10, p. 97].

In the course of expanding their activities, these organizations gradually increased their membership, and consequently, their funding. For example, the membership of the Ukrainian Red Cross grew from 234,000 in 1924-1925 to 400,000 in 1926-1927. The organization's budget amounted to 2,443,249 rubles in 1924-1925, 3,313,606 rubles in 1925-1926, and 4,123,778 rubles in 1926-1927. In 1925 alone, 239,956 patients were treated through URC facilities, resulting in 511,469 medical visits [13].

The All-Ukrainian Central Committee for Aid to Sick and Wounded Red Army Soldiers (AUCCASWRAS) corresponded with hospitals and various companies across Ukraine regarding the provision of medical services and food to sick and wounded Red Army soldiers. Particularly, it engaged in communication with the commission of the People's Commissariat of Food of the USSR known as the "Red Gift", conducted "Weeks of Aid to Sick and Wounded Red Army Soldiers", engaged in publishing activities, operated stamping enterprises, sought funding to provide scholarships to disabled individuals studying at universities, and so forth [12].

In addition to maintaining several children's homes and other initiatives, the Central Commission for Aid to Children under the All-Ukrainian Central Executive Committee (CCAC) undertook, like the Ukrainian Red Cross (URC), extensive efforts to generate revenue from the entertainment industry. For instance, regional committees for aid to children opened various establishments such as a totalizator [14, p. 5] and casino in Poltava [14, p. 6], a lottery in Romny [14, p. 12], a game called "Bull" in Zinovyivsk [14, p. 26], and a mechanical hippodrome in Mohyliv-

Podilskyi [15, p. 42]. A percentage of the profits from these ventures was allocated to the organization's needs. They also sold badges, including mourning badges and those featuring Lenin's image [14, p. 20]. The Poltava Regional Committee for Aid to Children even proposed imposing taxes on the sale of alcohol, such as vodka and beer [14, p. 66]. As casinos, clubs, and lotteries contributed a certain percentage of their earnings to the activities of the CCAC, the latter appealed to the People's Commissariat of Finance to exempt them from state taxation. However, the existing fiscal regulations did not allow for this [14, p. 14]. Among the previously unknown initiatives was the collection and sale of waste to Soviet enterprises, with the proceeds from these operations directed towards addressing social problems in early Soviet Ukraine.

The establishment of "Ukrutilzbir"

The understanding of the value of various unnecessary and unused items and objects came to the attention of Soviet authorities as early as 1918 when the Department for the Utilization of Unusable Items was created under the Higher Council of People's Economy (VRNG) in the RSFSR. This department was tasked with identifying and accumulating such items for the needs of the Red Army. Soon, similar departments were established in all territories controlled by the Bolsheviks, including Ukraine. After the end of hostilities, amidst resource shortages, waste began to be viewed as valuable raw material for Soviet enterprises.

On August 28, 1923, Eduard Ivanovich Simson addressed the branch of the Ukrainian Red Cross with a letter in which he wrote: "In the production of various types of paper, the by-products of paper pulp production include: trimmings, paper cut-offs, spoiled paper, etc. Paper mills and glass factories in recent years have been in great need of these additional resources and obtain them through various means, mostly through private individuals. Meanwhile, before our eyes, in just the city of Kharkiv alone, these unnoticed treasures are being destroyed... because couriers cannot litter yards and premises with unnecessary scraps. For example, take government offices... by the end of the working day, almost every employee accumulates almost a whole basket of various unnecessary torn paper under the table, which is thrown away by couriers into garbage pits or burned in furnaces. If we look at warehouses... we will see that broken glass, along with garbage, is taken to landfills, where it is irretrievably lost. If this was profitable in the past, it seems that at present, with a shortage of raw materials for our domestic industry, the collection of paper scraps and other waste, as well as broken glass, will be not only profitable but also practically and beneficial to the state in general".

Drawing an analogy with the past, when various charitable organizations "maintained children's shelters, homes for the disabled, and other institutions with money raised from scraps", he proposed that "every citizen collect every piece of unnecessary paper... trimmings, broken glass, or household bottles... and by handing them over to the collectors of the Red Cross, give them the opportunity to gradually achieve their goals and objectives, and give factories and plants the opportunity to

continue production without interruption due to a lack of raw materials”. He concluded the letter with the following words: “Be that as it may, entrepreneurs and raw material collectors have not yet deeply enough rooted themselves, so the moment has come, which should not be feared”.

Simson proposed the creation of a special department in Kharkiv under the Ukrainian Red Cross, which would operate on the principles of self-sufficiency and would be engaged in waste collection both in the city itself and would extend its activities to the periphery [16, p. 9-10].

It's evident that this idea intrigued not only the leaders of the Ukrainian Red Cross but also the regulatory bodies of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic (USRR). On December 5, 1923, the Presidium of the All-Ukrainian Central Executive Committee (VUTsIK) and the Council of People's Commissars of the USRR issued a resolution to establish the Administration of the Authorized Central Committee for Assistance to Children, the Central Committee for Assistance to Sick and Wounded Red Army Soldiers, and the Ukrainian Red Cross under the name “Ukrutilzbir” (Waste Collection).

The tasks of the Administration were: 1) the monopolistic collection of paper, rags, bones, glass, and other waste (excluding scrap metal) in all state, professional, and public institutions and enterprises, with the prohibition of such collection by other institutions and organizations; 2) the purchase, sale, and disposal of paper, rags, bones, glass, and other waste through processing and realization [16, p. 8].

The distinctive feature of Ukrutilzbir was its hybrid nature. On the one hand, it was a private company and did not receive state funding. Although its founders were humanitarian organizations working to address social problems in the Soviet Union, they had to independently seek funds for the company's operations. At the same time, Ukrutilzbir was required to work on orders from regulatory bodies of the Soviet government (the People's Commissariat of Trade of the USSR and the People's Commissariat of Trade of the USRR) and fulfill their plans and tasks.

In waste collection, the main emphasis was placed on installing containers in organizations, institutions, factories, warehouses, and other locations. Wholesale batches were to be collected through contracts with counterparties, while retail collections were to occur at markets, households, and private individuals. For this work, it was planned to involve unemployed individuals from the labor exchange, branches of humanitarian organizations, private individuals, and cooperatives, as well as to create special teams of waste collectors [16, p. 6].

The circulating capital amounted to 2500 rubles and consisted of contributions from co-founders – three humanitarian organizations, of which the Ukrainian Red Cross allocated 500 rubles. Profits from waste operations were to be distributed as follows: 30% equally among the co-founders, 30% into the reserve capital, and 40% into the circulating capital [15, p. 3].

In a certain sense, Ukrutilzbir was a joint business project of three humanitarian organizations that recognized the potential profits from industrial and household

waste operations. By the early 1920s, Ukraine had accumulated large stocks of various waste materials, yet systematic efforts to collect them were lacking. “The entire matter of waste collection during the revolutionary period had been forgotten, and prior to the establishment of the Ukrutilzbir organization, there was no organization in Ukraine engaged in this matter on correct and organized principles. In the conditions of economic recovery, industrial development, and economic revitalization of the country, undoubtedly, there are significant reserves of waste materials in Ukraine and significant opportunities for their collection”, evaluated Abram Kanevsky, the first head of the Kyiv branch of Ukrutilzbir [16, p. 25].

Conducting monitoring of the waste market in Kyiv, Kanevsky discovered significant reserves of various items that were unused and had remained in enterprises and warehouses of various ownership since the times of the Russian Empire and the Civil War. These items included military equipment, textile products, footwear, leather goods, and so forth, which were gradually pilfered or deteriorated due to improper storage or negligence. “In Bila Tserkva of the Kyiv Governorate, on the warehouses of Rokytnyanska Street, there are about 4,9 t of woolen rags and about 65,5 t of old galoshes, which are under the control of the Ukrtekstyltrest in Kharkiv. The woolen rags on the top layers are unsightly, and those at the bottom are suspicious in quality (some of the woolen rags have been in storage for over 10 years and may have decayed). They are stored in two sheds—stone and wooden. We could purchase all the woolen rags in the stone shed, where they are better preserved...” [16, p. 29].

In the Kyiv region, there also existed a large quantity of agricultural waste, primarily bones, which were not purchased by the state enterprise Zhyrkist. Only artisans ordered small batches for their needs. Kanevsky estimated the potential quantity of sausage bones at 49-82 t per month, which was a decent starting point for operations. He also recognized the potential of urban landfills as sources of various waste materials, where “waste from the entire city flowed”. He found significant reserves of broken glass in Kyiv, which he proposed to include in Ukrutilzbir’s waste catalog [16, p. 18]. Such a situation was typical for many regions of Ukraine.

The charitable transfer of waste to humanitarian organizations

From the analysis of archival documents, it can be concluded that to fulfill their objectives, the organizations – co-founders of Ukrutilzbir – attempted to monopolize the waste market in Ukraine. They lobbied higher executive bodies for the adoption of resolutions granting them priority access to waste from various institutions. Indeed, this was the main idea behind their operation to utilize the umbrella of exclusive representation of state power for conducting commercial activities aimed at extracting the maximum amount of waste for the needs of the Soviet economy and, simultaneously, acquiring funds to address social issues. On December 5, 1923, the Acting Chairman of the People’s Commissariat for Trade of Ukrainian SSR, Vuzdalin, issued Instructions for the Implementation of the Resolution of the All-Ukrainian Central Executive Committee (VUCIK) which stated:

“Taking into account the responsible tasks entrusted to the higher appointed organizations by the Soviet government, all state, especially economic, trade union, and public institutions, enterprises, and organizations must provide full support [to these organizations] in their work... Establishments, enterprises, and organizations that provided free delivery or sale of waste, even irregularly, but in quantities not less than, in total, 3,3 t per year for each type of waste or had their existing stocks, were obliged after the publication in the official body of the local Gubvukonkom [regional executive authority] of information about the creation of a local ... body for waste collection or the institution that replaced it, to immediately [within a 7-day period] notify with a return receipt to the specified body... about all the waste available to them that is subject to free delivery or sale...” [16, p. 33]. However, they failed to monopolize the Ukrutilzbir market, as, during the New Economic Policy (NEP), the model of the Soviet economy envisaged the existence of many companies with different forms of ownership and other manifestations of market relations. Therefore, they used this resolution as a marketing tool, attempting to create preferential conditions for themselves when purchasing waste.

The correspondence between various organizations regarding the establishment of Ukrutilzbir and its operations in the initial months demonstrates the utopian belief of the Bolsheviks in the idea of charity and the free transfer of waste to the company. This belief was based on the notion that waste collection with humanitarian purposes – such as combating child homelessness and aiding sick and wounded Red Army soldiers, veterans, and other vulnerable populations – would influence enterprises to donate their waste to Ukrutilzbir instead of selling it, thus contributing to the cause without cost.

In the informational leaflet distributed by Ukrutilzbir at the beginning of 1924, this idea is articulated through the following phrases: “Citizens!... From every household and yard, numerous unnecessary waste items are discarded daily, such as bones, various papers, newspapers, boxes, scraps, bottles, broken glass, old boots, and more. No one considers that all these items can be utilized beneficially and represent greater value – as raw materials for our industry. By decree of the Central Executive Committee of Workers, Peasants, and Red Army Deputies (VUCVK), Ukrutilzbir has been granted priority in the collection and purchase of various waste materials. The income from these operations goes towards aiding homeless children, sick and wounded Red Army soldiers, assisting the disabled, the unemployed, and those affected by natural disasters... It is your duty to respond to this immense need, which we are combating, and to support our efforts in every possible way. Do not dispose of the aforementioned items in garbage pits. Donate them to homeless children, the sick, injured Red Army soldiers, and the disabled!” [15, p. 28].

The authorized head of the company, Simson, emphasized on multiple occasions that alongside commercial activities, employees should intensify efforts to obtain waste materials free of charge [18, p. 41]. Some organizations did donate small batches of waste to Ukrutilzbir as a charitable contribution in the early 1920s. For

instance, in mid-December 1923, the People's Commissariat of Education of Ukrainian SSR (Narkompros) provided unnecessary items for disposal to the company free of charge [16, p. 25]. However, such initiatives were few.

Iryna Skubii notes that the idea of charity contradicted the ideology of rationalism and pragmatism of the Soviet government [18]. In our view, it also contradicted the practices of that period and the market relations that allowed for relatively free (though with certain limitations) trade during the New Economic Policy (NEP). In conditions of total resource scarcity and the need for survival, neither enterprises nor private individuals could afford to "squander" "unused treasures". In the totalitarian state that was beginning to form in the Soviet Union, ideas of charity were quickly ideologized and commercialized. The principles of war communism regarding the requisitioning of raw materials for the benefit of the Bolsheviks, which Simson attempted to extend through this decree in a somewhat modernized form, no longer found support among market actors.

The commercialization of waste collection for humanitarian purposes

The establishment of Ukrutilzbir legalized the idea of collecting waste for humanitarian purposes, but it was not a pioneer in this field. Even before its founding, CCAC had a workshop for making paper bags from waste, which it sold independently on the market. After the establishment of Ukrutilzbir, with the aim of eliminating duplication of activities, it transferred this business to the latter [15, p. 27].

While the idea of charitable waste donation did not gain traction in early Soviet society, the utilization of profits from waste operations by Ukrutilzbir was much more successful. Throughout years of operation, from 1923 to 1930, the shareholders of the company – specified humanitarian organizations – received profits in the form of dividends. For instance, in the year of operation from 1925 to 1926, Ukrutilzbor generated a profit of 667,737 rubles [19, p. 8]. Thus, the total dividends received by (URC, CCAC and AUCCASWRAS constituting 40% of the profit, amounted to 267,000 rubles. Central Commission for Aid to Children under the All-Ukrainian Central Executive Committee, which sold its shares in Ukrutilzbor to the Vacot company on October 1, 1928, received 85,200 rubles for them [20, p. 13].

The Ukrainian Red Cross invested not only money but also human resources in the creation of Ukrutilzbir. Several employees of the company had previously worked in the URC. Among them were the company's secretary Nikitina, legal consultant Heinrich Bukhman, and the first and second directors of the Kyiv branch, Abram Kanevsky and Grygoriy Tverdokhlib, with the latter having previously headed the factory of the Ukrainian Red Cross. After the closure of Ukrutilzbir, some employees were redirected to work for the State Trade Organization of Ukrainian SSR.

URC, CCAC and AUCCASWRAS not only established Ukrutilzbir but also formed its statutory capital, albeit very limited. They also invested in the establishment of branches of the organization in the periphery.

The first year of Ukrutilzbir's operation demonstrates a tendency to use the war communism policy methods. Without investing a penny in their development, located in Kharkiv Board, built the company's management on principles of strict centralization. However, local branches were obliged to comply with all its directives, plans, and tasks. This paralyzed the work of the branches that began to be established. Therefore, in the autumn of 1924, the Board decided to decentralize Ukrutilzbir's activities and proposed that local branches of co-founders – establish local organizations called "Utilzbir", which would cooperate with the Board on contractual terms. However, humanitarian organizations participated in this process depending on their commercial interests.

The Donetsk Utilzbir was established in May 1924 and had agencies in Mariupol and Stalino. CCAC and AUCCASWRAS contributed an initial capital of 920 rubles to its operation, but the Ukrainian Red Cross refused to participate. Since these funds were insufficient, CCAC contributed an additional 2000 rubles to its capital. During the operation of the Donetsk Utilzbir, the following sales were made: scrap iron – 835 t, cast iron – 360 t, glassware – 360 t. The net profit amounted to 7,610 rubles, with 98,2% purchased from state authorities and 1,8% from private individuals [15, p. 74].

The Poltava Utilzbir commenced operations in June 1924 with an initial capital of 1500 rubles, contributed by the CCAC and the Ukrainian Red Cross. AUCCASWRAS declined to become a shareholder, citing the unprofitability of the enterprise. Due to the inadequacy of these funds, the Utilzbir was reorganized into a joint-stock company with a capital of 10,000 rubles, which enabled extensive operations. The Poltava branch focused on collecting black and colored metal scrap. With a market orientation and private capital, it mainly sold metals to private individuals, who offered higher prices – 51% of the general sales, with only 19% sold to state authorities. As of March 1, 1925, it had earned a profit of 11,594 rubles. In the Poltava province, as in many others, there were numerous other actors engaged in waste collection. Due to the presence of independent branches of the Central Commission for Aid to Children and the Ukrainian Red Cross engaged in these activities in rural areas, the Poltava Utilzbir operated only within the city limits [15, p. 75].

The Podil Utilzbir was established in January 1924. All three humanitarian organizations contributed to its working capital, each providing 750 rubles. Waste was sold to government agencies – 92%, and private individuals – 8%. To gain experience and generate income, it opened a soap-making factory, which yielded a 15% profit. As of March 1, 1925, the branch dispatched 1065 t of metals, 14 railway cars of bones, 33 t of paper, prepared 5000 pairs of horns, and 295 t of glass. An artisanal workshop was established for metal dismantling; however, due to a lack of funds, the work there was treated as voluntary and unpaid [15, p. 74].

The Krasnogorod Utilzbir commenced operations on April 1, 1924, with a modest charter capital. Although there were 8 shareholders in the branch, only the CCAC and

AUCCASWRAS allocated 300 rubles each for working capital. This forced the Utilzbir to focus solely on collecting black scrap metals. Over the years of its operation, the branch sold 82 t of iron, 2,7 t of lead, and 78 t of cartridges, copper, brass, and cast iron, as well as 122 t of bones and 1,2 t of rags, yielding a gross profit of 2700 rubles. However, due to a lack of funds, the branch did not engage in the extensive collection of rags and bones, although their resources were estimated at around 819 t annually.

The Volyn Utilzbor commenced operations on April 1, 1924. Of the three shareholders, only the Ukrainian Red Cross and CCAC contributed 400 rubles each to the working capital. The branch operated exclusively within the city. Rag scraps amounting to 49 t were purchased by military units. Additionally, 19,6 t of paper, 82 t of metal scrap, 82 t of cast iron scrap, and 49 t of bones were collected. However, the ancillary activities proved unsuccessful – operations at the woolen and glue factories incurred losses amounting to 1,500 rubles. Therefore, the profit was modest, totaling only 1,700 rubles [15, p. 75].

During the first year of operation, all local branches focused on collecting waste paper and metals, which did not require significant initial capital. The main customer for paper waste, Ukrpapirtrest [state trust responsible for paper production], provided advances, which they used to purchase waste paper in bulk from printing houses, publishing houses, and state institutions. Scrap metal was in demand by Soviet enterprises, always had a market, and generated the highest profits. The collection of other types of waste, such as rags and bones, began to develop after the establishment of warehouses and receiving points, and the engagement of collectors on commission-based terms.

However, most local branches were weak in organizational and financial terms. The capital allocated by the co-founders for the establishment of branch offices was insufficient, making it impossible to fulfill plans. To survive, local Utilzbir companies purchased various random materials, allowing them to obtain maximum benefit with minimal expenses and thus accumulate working capital for expanding their operations. However, this activity was at best unprofitable and at worst resulted in losses. Market relations during the NEP period facilitated the survival of the most viable branches, but they were few in number.

Therefore, the leadership of CCAC, AUCCASWRAS, and URC decided to re-register Ukrutilzbir as a joint-stock company, which opened up broader prospects for financial operations than was possible under the legal form of an authorized entity of three humanitarian organizations. The restructured company emerged on October 1, 1925, with a significantly larger authorized capital of 300,000 rubles. By 1927, out of the 31 shareholders of the company who owned 3,000 shares, the largest were CCAC (745 shares), the AUCCASWRAS (745 shares), and UCHX (705 shares) [21, p. 452].

By October 1, 1926, the Joint-Stock Company Ukrutilzbir already had 5 branches, with centers in Kharkiv, Kyiv, Artemivsk, Odesa, and Dnipropetrovsk. District offices existed in Vinnytsia and Mykolaiv [20, p. 1], and representations were

established in Katerynoslav (Ukraine) and Moscow and Leningrad (RSFSR) [22, p. 577]. In just a few years of operation, Ukrutilzbir transformed into one of the largest waste collectors in Ukraine. For the years 1925/1926, it collected scrap black metals – 20,858 tons, paper – 3,118 tons, rags – 1,700 tons, bones – 1,114 tons, scrap colored metals – 699 tons, glass cullet – 688 tons, and the least – rubber – 60 tons [20, p. 1]. Overall, Ukrutilzbir collected and sold almost 80% of all paper collected in Ukraine. The expansion of its activities is indicated by the fact that by 1930, it was supposed to collect 12,000 tons of rags, 20,000 tons of paper waste, and 6,500 tons of bones [23, p. 772]. By that time, its network consisted of 10 offices and 133 warehouses (with the highest number of warehouses in Kyiv – 62, Odesa – 17, Artemivsk – 16, Dnipropetrovsk – 9, Mykolaiv – 8, and in Kharkiv – 4).

To evaluate these indicators and the efforts made to collect waste, it is important to consider the challenges faced by Ukrutilzbir in the 1920s. The Soviet economy of that time can be characterized, using Kornai's term, as an economy of scarcity. In the 1920s-1930s, there was a shortage of many industrial goods. As Sheila Fitzpatrick writes, "With the transition to centralized planning [the introduction of planned economy and the beginning of the first five-year plan of development of the USSR] in the late 1920s, the shortage of goods became an integral feature of the Soviet economy". [24, p. 54]. This was associated with uneven recovery of industrial enterprises, economic disparities, shortage of raw materials, underdeveloped trade, and emphasis on heavy industry development. There was a shortage of almost everything, especially basic food products, clothing, housing, and footwear. From 1928 to 1936, due to a food crisis in the USSR, centralized distribution of food products was introduced, significantly limiting the consumption of meat, and consequently, the production of bones. In 1931, shoes cost 11-12 rubles in regular stores (although they were impossible to buy), while in commercial stores, they ranged from 30 to 40 rubles [25, p. 72]. Meanwhile, in 1932, the average wage of a worker in Moscow, where it was on average higher than in the USSR, was 115 rubles [25].

By the end of 1925, a significant percentage of workers' families in Ukraine, especially women, were still not adequately provided with warm clothing, and the stocks of bed linen, which were being replenished, were minimal – averaging no more than two pairs. The shortage of warm clothing was eliminated by 1927, and the stocks of bed linen doubled, but the supply of hosiery was still insufficient (2,5-3 pairs per person per year), while the number of sets of outerwear averaged 3 "assembled" suits for men and 6 dresses for women. However, there was a catastrophic shortage of woolen products. Apart from 1-2 woolen sets, the rest consisted of cotton clothing, which wore out quickly [26, p. 29-30]. In these conditions, the population sought to prolong the service life of items as much as possible, resorting to repair practices, which complicated the collection of waste textiles.

During this period, the waste collection plans that Ukrutulzbir received from the People's Commissariat of Trade of the Ukrainian SSR (Narcomorg) were continually increasing, especially during the industrialization drive that began in 1928. These plans were often difficult to fulfill, in particular, this applies to the collection of bones and rags.

In this context, the waste collection plans received by Ukrutylzbir from the People's Commissariat of Trade of the Ukrainian SSR consistently increased, especially during the industrialization period that began in 1928 and was not always fulfilled. The most challenging aspect was to execute the plans for collecting rags and bones.

By the end of the 1920s, Ukrutylzbir workers, like other collectors, began participating in large-scale collective campaigns for waste collection, intended to engage broad segments of the population in this activity and ensure the implementation of waste collection plans during industrialization. At the same time, other branches of the Ukrainian Red Cross also participated in these activities. On December 31, 1928, the All-Ukrainian Central Executive Committee appealed to the Central Committee of the Ukrainian Communist Youth League with a proposal to organize all members of the Komsomol branches existing in Ukrainian factories to participate in the clean-up of enterprise territories. The Central Committee of the Ukrainian Red Cross decided to utilize this initiative. Its chairman, P. Lynchenko, secured the approval of the chairman of the All-Ukrainian Central Executive Committee, Sukhomlyn. In a letter to 13 organization branches, he proposed discussing this idea, adding, "These scraps, such as old iron or scrap metal, through Ukrutylzbir, will be transferred to our industry as necessary raw materials". [27, p. 443]. The branches of the Ukrainian Red Cross also participated in many other mass waste collection campaigns, even after the closure of Ukrutylzbir in 1930.

Conclusions

The history of Ukrutulzbir in Ukraine (1923–1930) is a narrative of survival for a non-state company whose activities were regulated by the higher echelons of Soviet power amidst fierce competition for waste materials, driven by an economy of scarcity. This history illustrates the methods by which the emerging totalitarian Soviet regime of the 1920s sought to utilize humanitarian organizations to broaden their sources of revenue to address various social issues, as well as to bolster their economic and ideological agendas.

However, the model of waste management developed in Ukraine, which incorporated elements of a planned economy during the NEP period, fostered competition among the humanitarian organizations that founded Ukrutylzbir – Ukrainian Red Cross, Central Commission for Aid to Children under the All-Ukrainian Central Executive Committee, the All-Ukrainian Central Committee for Aid to Sick and Wounded Red Army Soldiers. Often it was manifested in unethical business practices. Despite being co-founders of Ukrutulzbir and receiving dividends from its profits, these organizations established branches that did not operate on a

contractual basis with Ukrutilzbir but conducted independent and unauthorized waste collection activities. This created challenges in meeting the plans set by regulatory bodies. It remains unclear whether the central bodies of these organizations were aware of the “illegal” activities of their local branches. Most likely, it was a local initiative driven by the desire of some branch leaders to find additional sources of funding to fulfill their social missions.

The exploitation of the idea of charity and humanitarian aid through “waste” had its limits and was ultimately exhausted in 1930 with the closure of Ukrutilzbir. From that point on, waste operations were taken over by state companies that had no connection to humanitarian activities. Although the closure of Ukrutilzbir was driven by economic reasons – namely, the existence of numerous collectors on the Ukrainian market created competition and obstacles to fulfilling plans, which was unacceptable in the context of industrialization - it is important to note that by the late 1920s, the severity of social problems had been alleviated, and mentioned above organizations had largely fulfilled their functions. By then, stable sources of funding for their activities had been established, and the need to earn money through waste operations, which yielded minimal profits, had diminished.

Thus, it can be asserted that the origins of waste recycling in Ukraine in the 1920s were rooted in humanitarian organizations and closely linked to the idea of charity, which is a distinctive feature of the early Soviet waste management regime.

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Перга Т. Відходи для благодійності? Кейс Українського Червоного Хреста та інших гуманітарних організацій в Україні у 1920-х роках.

У статті стверджується, що Український Червоний Хрест (УЧХ), Центральна комісія допомоги дітям при ВУЦІК (ЦК Помдет) і Комітет допомоги хворим і пораненим червоноармійцям (Всеукрцекомпом) відіграли ключову роль у започаткуванні діяльності з вторинного використання відходів в Україні на початку 1920-х рр. У цей період операції з відходами розглядалися як перспективне джерело отримання прибутків, а ці гуманітарні організації потребували коштів для своєї діяльності – боротьби з дитячою безпритульністю, підтримки і лікування демобілізованих поранених і хворих червоноармійців, надання допомоги населенню території охоплених голодом тощо. Ця діяльність була можлива внаслідок накопичення в Україні великої кількості відходів і відсутності системної роботи з їхнього збирання і вторинного використання. Показано роль цих гуманітарних організацій у створенні і роботі одного з найбільших заготувачів відходів в Україні – компанії Укрутильзбір. Зроблено висновок, що радянська влада намагалась експлуатувати ідею благочинності, яка мала реалізовуватися у вигляді безоплатної передачі підприємствами відходів Укрутильзбору, однак вона не прижилась, адже суперечила ідеології раціоналізму та прагматизму й економічним відносинам періоду НЕПу. Водночас ідея створення цієї компанії як бізнес-проекту, що приносив дивіденти, була реалізована досить успішно. Здобутки Укрутильзбору розглядаються в контексті проблем збирання відходів в умовах економіки дефіциту й обмеженої можливості населення і підприємств продукувати велику кількість відходів. Автор приходить до висновку, що зв'язок збирання відходів з ідеєю благодійності, є однією з відмінних рис ранньорадянського режиму поводження з відходами на території України. Це дослідження проведено на основі використання невідомих раніше джерел і розкриває невідомі раніше сторінки діяльності з утилізації відходів та джерел фінансування гуманітарних організацій в на території України періоду раннього СРСР.

Ключові слова: благодійність, вторинне використання відходів, гуманітарні організації, Україна, СРСР, Український Червоний Хрест (УЧХ), Центральна комісія допомоги дітям при ВУЦІК (ЦК Помдет), Комітет допомоги хворим і пораненим червоноармійцям (Всеукрцекомпом).