

International Workers' Aid Association Soup Kitchen (November 8, 1923)

Abstract

This 1923 film sequence shows various soup kitchens run by the International Workers Aid Association [Internationale Arbeiterhilfe, or IAH], a Berlin-based organization closely aligned with the Communist Party. Scenes show women ladling soup and helping mothers to get food vouchers for themselves and their children, highlighting the Communists' social-service outreach to the unemployed and working poor. The camera underscores that message even further by zooming in at one point on a propaganda poster that proclaims, "Only communism can save us." In addition to German soup kitchens, the Cyrillic intertitles also identify shots of a Dutch and a French one, which illustrates the European-wide reach of the IAH.

Founded in Berlin in 1921 to alleviate a severe famine in the Volga region of the Soviet Union, the IAH served as a political counterweight to the American Relief Association and other international aid organizations, whose efforts, Lenin feared, generated too much global good will for bourgeois capitalism. As postwar unemployment and runaway inflation began to impoverish more and more Germans, the IAH launched soup kitchens and other relief activities in Germany itself in 1922 and gradually expanded throughout Europe. The media entrepreneur Willi Münzenberg served as the IAH's secretary and, under his leadership, expanded its film production and propaganda operations in order to generate support for the organization and for communism in general.

Source

Source: Soup kitchen; International Workers Health Org, USHMM: RG-60.3783, Accessed at United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Bundesarchiv

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