FAMINE FIGHTERS: AMERICAN VETERANS, THE AMERICAN RELIEF ADMINISTRATION, AND THE 1921 RUSSIAN FAMINE

Andrew Brooks Huebner, B.A.

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APPROVED:

Olga Velikanova, Committee Chair
Graham Cox, Committee Member
Geoffrey Wawro, Committee Member
Jennifer Jensen Wallach, Chair of the Department of History
Tamara L. Brown, Executive Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences
Victor Prybutok, Dean of the Toulouse Graduate School

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This study argues that the American Relief Administration (ARA) operationally and culturally was defined by the character and experiences of First World War American military veterans. The historiography of the American Relief Administration in the last half-century has painted the ARA as a purely civilian organization greatly detached from the military sphere. By examining the military veterans of the ARA scholars can more accurately assess the image of the ARA, including what motivated their personnel and determined their relief mission conduct. Additionally, this study will properly explain how the ARA as an organization mutually benefited and suffered from its connection to the U.S. military throughout its European missions, in particular, the 1921 Russian famine relief expedition.

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CHAPTER 1

SACRIFICIAL VOLUNTEERS: INTRODUCTION

> *The great majority of them were volunteers- not for a day, but many of them for years. Many were men in uniform from our armed forces. Their scant remuneration from the United States Government constituted them as sacrificial volunteers… Their children, and their children's children, should know of their devotion, their sacrifices, and their service.*
>
> Herbert Hoover

This study argues that the American Relief Administration (ARA) operationally and culturally was defined by the character and experiences of First World War American military veterans. The historiography of the American Relief Administration in the last half-century has painted the ARA as a purely civilian organization greatly detached from the military sphere. By examining the military veterans of the ARA scholars can more accurately assess the image of the ARA, including what motivated their personnel and determined their relief mission conduct. Additionally, this study will properly explain how the ARA as an organization mutually benefited and suffered from its connection to the U.S. military throughout its European missions, in particular, the 1921 Russian famine relief expedition.[1]

Although the ARA maintained missions in over twenty countries from 1919 to 1924, this study will focus on the most famous ARA mission, the 1921 Russian famine. As one of the most heavily reported relief missions, a rich base of archival material exists on the volunteers. The 1921 Russian famine mission was the largest staffed ARA mission during the existence of the relief organization. It provides a large, contained list

[1] Famous cases include the Estonian relief mission which substantially interacted with the White forces of General Nikolai Iudenich.

of volunteers numbering at 381, of which over two-thirds of them were First World War veterans in some capacity. The impact of the relief mission also has major repercussions – saving over 50 million civilians from starvation and disease. Few ARA missions are suitable for such a focused personnel study as the 1921 Russian mission.

The present study argues that the volunteers within the ARA come from more military backgrounds than previously asserted by historians. U.S. military logistical support played an instrumental role in the formation of the ARA and its operations, including transportation, supplies, and, most importantly, personnel. Although thought of as an expedient measure, the influence of the U.S. military within the ARA persists throughout its European operations. Neither did the end of Congressional funding nor the demobilization of the American Expeditionary Force throughout 1919 dampened but did not completely free the ARA from these influences. The Russian mission in 1921, one of the last relief operations conducted by Hoover's organization, continued to run on a hybrid of civil-military operational procedure. The mission retained numerous military veterans who had served both in the First World War and a headquarters staff core composed of active-duty officers. The connotations here are clear: the ARA as an organization was built on the collective war- and peacetime experiences of American veterans and distilled by Hooverian humanitarian philosophies.

No less than Herbert Hoover himself recognized the military characteristics of his largest relief organization, the American Relief Administration. In the final chapter of his book trilogy *An American Epic*, Hoover is explicit in referring to the ARA workers not as civilians but soldiers and officers. From the appearance of uniformed soldiers to the

characteristic strict-and-orderly writing styles in telegrams, Hoover fully recognizes how influential military veterans were in his organization.[2]

However, the historiography of the American Relief Administration in the last 60 years since Hoover's writings almost always paints the ARA as a purely civilian organization greatly detached from the military sphere. To be sure, Hoover himself was a promoter of this theme, particularly to encourage his ideals of non-partisanship. The ARA, after all, was founded in February 1919 as the continuation of the civilian-run U.S. Food Administration, almost in itself its own separate branch within the American government. Its eventual reconstruction as a non-government entity upon the official termination of the ARA missions put an official division between it and the U.S. government. Additionally, recognition of the influence of the doughboys within the ARA would instantly undermine the non-partisanship narrative Hoover sought to promote U.S. foreign policy. The 1921 Riga Agreement, which officially sanctioned the relief mission to Russia, did not prevent the ARA from employing veterans or military personnel. Negative tones from the Soviet delegates, however, made it apparent how they distrusted military personnel. In short, it was easier to spin the image of an agency composed of business managers over an organization directly tied to both the American government and the U.S. military. The ARA made attempts to obscure the military image in its ranks and, based on its treatment by scholars over the years, has succeeded in this mission.

Within the last several decades, military history and humanitarianism have developed a complex relationship with each other. Often humanitarianism in wartime is

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[2] Hoover, *An American Epic, Vol. III*, 529-536

viewed in terms of medical or resources distributed to civilians behind or near combat zones. Coordination of humanitarian efforts, especially between non-government organizations and the military, is intensely debated. Nevertheless, as it has been proven by scholarly research on the ARA, humanitarian goals can align with foreign policy goals of nation states. Military forces, as major actors in conflict zones, also play a critical role in humanitarian operations as relief providers.[3]

Scholarship over the years has pointed to the contradictory message Hoover's ARA tried to set for itself as a nonpartisan entity. Works on U.S. foreign policy during the Armistice period rightfully have pointed out the strong connection the ARA had to American goals. Namely the ARA followed Woodrow Wilson's pursuit to "make the world safe for democracy" by spreading democracy and securing international economic interests. Others have demonstrated how the ARA, even after it officially became a non-government entity in 1919, still retained substantial ties to the American government and its interests abroad. The financial support the ARA received throughout its existence switched from Congressional budgets in 1919 to private donations from groups like the Rockefeller Foundation, and back again to federal funding during the 1921 Russian famine. Foreign governments at the time and in the years since have called into question the humanitarian goals of the ARA. Ranging from doubt to outright accusations of international interference, the ARA served not just humanitarian interests but economic, political, and even security interests in favor of the Allied powers. All this considered, the ARA merits repeated scrutinization as an organization with political,

[3] For more on this debate, see Jennifer N. Boone's "Military Humanitarianism in Historical Perspective: The Militarization of International Humanitarian Aid and the Humanization of the U.S. Military." Thesis. 2006.

social, economic, and national security goals beyond its stated mission for nonpartisan relief aid.

The first chapter starts with a brief overview of the historiography and related interdisciplinary fields. Chapter two will analyze the American military service members in Europe and their increased role in humanitarian operations after the First World War. Chapter three establishes the general criteria the ARA recruited and prepared its personnel for its relief missions, utilizing the 1921 Russian famine relief mission as an example. Military veterans' motivations for participating in the Russian mission constitutes the bulk of chapter four. Finally, chapter five will analyze the performance of military veterans within the organs of the ARA's 1921 Russian famine relief mission.

The diverse primary and secondary sources utilized in this study will demonstrate that the ARA from the beginning was a product of the American military experience in the First World War through the personnel it employed. The success of the 1921 relief mission to Russia, like all the ARA missions, was determined by the traits and qualities of veterans.

Note on Terms

In this study, I use the definition of veterans as "someone who has military experience." Although the historiography frequently refers to experienced relief workers as 'veterans', I reserve the label of veteran purely for those with military experience. This label does not inherently factor in combat experience, only whether an individual served in any capacity within the U.S. military.

Since most of the military personnel and veterans serving in the ARA held officer or non-commissioned officer (NCO) ranks, distinctions are made regarding their status

at the time of their ARA service. ‘Active duty’ and ‘Regular Army’ refer to men still holding active rank and service within the U.S. military.

‘Civilians’ in this work refer predominantly to ARA employees who, at the time of their involvement in the ARA, had no previous or active service in the U.S. military.

‘Volunteers’ generically refers to all ARA employees regardless of military background. All ARA personnel are considered volunteers due to the organizational requirement that all relief workers accept employment into the ARA without forced coercion.

Although the majority of the ARA personnel were male, most references to individuals will avoid gendered terminology unless gender is explicitly known or relevant.

CHAPTER 2

HISTORIOGRAPHY

> *One of the beauties of the Russian job is you never know what is going to happen.*
>
> – Elmer G. Burland

The end of the First World War and the dawn of the new world order in the twentieth century was a complex matter, and few examples attest to this more than the historiographical fields of this study. This work sits on the edges of several valuable and intertwined fields each with their own historiographical debates. Although this thesis predominantly focuses on American veterans as humanitarians, this work will address several historiographies, including military, foreign policy, European, and social history. Several of the historiographies do not contain lively debates but are fertile grounds for expanded research. This historiography is not an attempt to recount every book in their respective fields but the most significant ones that pertain to the work presented here. The major fields covered include the 1921 Russian Famine, American Foreign Policy, International Humanitarianism, and the American military in the First World War.

The 1921 Russian Famine

Although few books discuss the 1921 Russian famine and the American Relief Administration, the few books on the subject are of high quality. The famine, witnessed by millions in Russia and the Soviet states, received little scholarly attention from Russia due to internal suppression by the Bolshevik government. Public memory of the 1921 famine is vague at best, overshadowed by the famous 1931-1933 Ukrainian famine, known as the Holodomor. Naturally scholars have made comparisons between

the two famines, particularly on whether the 1921 famine was manmade or naturally caused.

The debates on the exact causes of the famine, started by reporters and public officials, puts blame onto the Bolshevik government itself for mishandling their countermeasures to the disaster. As a foreign policy curiosity and colossal human disaster, the 1921 famine received plenty of attention in the West, particularly from the perspective of the American Relief Administration and its taskforce sent to Russia from 1921-1923. Before the ARA began closing its foreign missions the organization created a Historical Division tasked with documenting the activities of the ARA in every country. Although various ARA missions produced histories, many were never made with the intention of publication. Residing at the Hoover Institute Archives at Stanford University is one of the most overabundantly rich archives on the subject.

The official ARA historian, Harold H. Fisher, is one of the significant voices of the ARA Russian mission and is the first Western academic to place the blame of the 1921 famine on mixed factors. His 1928 work, *The Famine in Soviet Russia, 1921-1923*, is the official published ARA history of the relief operation. Although his primary focus is on the organizational and logistical aspects of the American mission, Fisher dedicates a section to examining the causes of the famine. In it he argues that the famine suffered from already terrible agricultural conditions, poor farming techniques, bouts of bad weather, constant warfare, and harsh Bolshevik grain requisition policies. Fisher reasons the state mismanaged their response to the famine with uneven grain distribution and repressive policies that impeded aid and only left the peasantry more destitute than before. It is both one of the earliest and most complete English works on

the 1921 Russian famine and American relief during the crisis.[4]

The 1921 Russian Famine is inseparable from the American narrative, but several notable works do exist that focus purely on the Russian experience in the famine. Among the most popular is in Orlando Figes' 1996 book *A People's Tragedy: A History of the Russian Revolution*. Figes places the famine within the context of a thirty-year period of Russian social history, including the First World War and the Russian revolutions. Like Fisher, Figes attests that the cause of the famine occurred from years of economic stress on the Russian peasantry and disruption of warfare. Another work of his, his 1989 work *Peasant Russia, Civil War: The Volga Countryside in Revolution 1917-1921*, focuses explicitly on the peasant experience during the Russian Civil War. Figes attests in this book that the peasant uprisings – and the brutal state response – destroyed much of the agricultural industry and set the stage for famine. Wasyl Veryha contributed greatly with his 2007 work *A Case Study of Genocide in the Ukrainian Famine of 1921-1923: Famine as a Weapon* which emphasizes the manmade nature of the famine crisis. Unlike Figes and Fisher, Veryha explicitly states that the famine was utilized as a tool of repression against the rebellious peasantry and became a trial run for developing repressive methods utilized in the 1931-1933 Ukrainian famine.[5]

Fisher's work for decades remained the official narrative of the 1921 Russian Famine and the work of the ARA. George F. Kennan wrote several works on U.S.-Russian relations but only analyzed the ARA mission in passing, noting how critical the

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[4] Harold H. Fisher, *The Famine in Soviet Russia, 1919-1923: The Operations of the American Relief Administration.* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1935).

[5] Wasyl Veryha. *A Case Study of Genocide in the Ukrainian Famine of 1921-1923: Famine as a Weapon*. (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2007), 7.

relief aid was to stabilizing Soviet Russia.[6] Benjamin M. Weissman, in his 1974 work *Herbert Hoover and Famine Relief to Soviet Russia: 1921-1923,* added to the discussion by primarily focusing on the role Herbert Hoover had in negotiating with the Bolshevik government. Weissman goes into detail on the famine relief mission to Russia, but his greatest contribution centers on the political and diplomatic aspects of how Soviet and American officials negotiated the famine relief mission.

In the last two decades the ARA and the 1921 Russian famine have resurfaced as a topic of interest to academia. Bertrand Patenaude wrote perhaps one of the most-influential studies on the ARA in his 2002 monograph *The Big Show in Bololand: The American Relief Expedition to Soviet Russia in the Famine of 1921*. Patenaude demonstrates how the 1921 Russian famine relief mission was a microorganism case study of U.S.-Soviet relations in the early 1920s. His analysis of the social aspects of the relief mission reveals the influence of military veterans including the dynamics between active duty and former servicemen. One of the more recent studies on the ARA by Bruno Cabanes, *The Great War and the Origins of Humanitarianism,* briefly but succinctly places the ARA 1921 Russian famine relief mission within the context of international humanitarianism. In both these works the causes of the famine are directly attributed to the social and economic conditions of Soviet Russia under war communism. Furthermore, like Fisher both Cabanes and Patenaude blame inadequate Bolshevik relief measures on making the famine worse in Russia. In modern scholarship, the causes of the 1921 Russian Famine remain firmly entrenched on the

[6] See George Kennan's *Russia and the West Under Lenin and Stalin*. (Boston, MA: Little, Brown and Co, 1968), 179-180.

idea that a collision of mostly manmade, albeit unintentional, factors caused the famine.

American Foreign Policy

Among the major American foreign policy debates of the early twentieth century is the early tensions between the United States and Bolshevik Russia. The October Revolution and the fall of the Provisional government severed official connections between Russia and the United States until 1933 when the U.S. diplomatically recognized the Soviet Union. The rise of the United States as a superpower is catalyzed by the Russian Revolution, as Adam Tooze argues in his 2014 monograph *The Deluge: The Great War, America, and the Remaking of the Global Order, 1916-1931*. In his detailed study, Tooze analyzes how critical the early stages of U.S.-Soviet relations in 1917 were as a catalyst in transforming the United States of American into a global superpower. The American response to Bolshevism, containment of Russia and support for Western European nations, ultimately garnered the United States a domineering economic and political influence over Europe. Norman Gordon Levin Jr.'s 1968 work *Woodrow Wilson and World Politics: America's Response to War and Revolution* is one of the first to argue that American foreign policy was ideologically focused on creating environments conducive to liberal democracies throughout Europe and especially in Russia. Woodrow Wilson's policy decisions, Levin argues, substantially influenced President Warren Harding's responses towards Russia during the 1921 famine.

The largest recent study done on U.S.-Russian foreign relations is in Norman Saul's four-book series in the early 2000s. In the series, Saul traces foreign relations between the two nations beginning from the American Revolution and through to the Second World War. His third book, *War and Revolution: The United States & Russia,*

1914-1921, published in 2001, contends that the United States had a mixed foreign policy towards Russia during the turbulent years of war and revolution. The indecisive nature of President Wilson's policy towards Russia ultimately led to the widening gap between the two nations. His following book, *Friends or Foes? The United States and Russia, 1921-1941,* demonstrates how policies between the two nations shifted throughout the 1920s and 1930s. The Russian 1921 famine takes a significant role in Saul's work as a U.S. attempt to both bring relief to the destitute populations and entertain the possibility of open dialogue for economic and diplomatic exchanges between the two nations.

David Foglesong, in his 1995 work *America's Secret War against Bolshevism: United States Intervention in the Russian Civil War, 1917-1920* takes a negative view on early U.S.-Soviet foreign relations. Writing at a time when the Soviet Union had just fallen apart, Foglesong shows that from the beginning of the 1917 October Revolution the Wilson administration carried out policy decisions designed to undermine the Bolshevik government. The American Relief Administration plays a critical focus in Foglesong's work as an agency conscripted by the U.S. government to disrupt the progress of the Russian Civil War and funnel supplies to the White Russian armies. Among the most prominent works to argue against the antagonistic policies towards Soviet Russia in the postwar period is David W. McFadden's *Alternative Paths: Soviets and Americans, 1917-1920*. McFadden proposes that despite the failures of the Wilson administration to make a decisive diplomatic policy towards Russia, American diplomats and politicians did attempt to bridge the gap between the two nations.

Overall U.S.-Soviet relations, mired in confusion and ideological hardlines, were

unable to come together during the 1917-1923 period. Despite Soviet willingness to establish diplomatic ties with the United States, American antagonism towards Bolshevism and internal political divisions prevented the U.S. government from granting recognition to Soviet Russia. The American relief mission to Russia in 1921, although a significant event with far-reaching diplomatic connotations, never fully realized the economic or diplomatic connections between the two states, nor brought about political change against Bolshevism in Russia.

International Humanitarianism

Over the last several decades, the field of humanitarianism has rapidly expanded but remained disconnected from the historical field. In other interdisciplinary fields such as political science and foreign policy much of the discourse focuses on the disastrous Balkan wars of the late 1980s and 1990s. However, in the early 21st century studies have come out that take on a historical approach to the spread of humanitarianism. One of the first works to bring in this broader approach is Michael Barnett's 2011 work *Empire of Humanity: A History of Humanitarianism* which examines international humanitarianism from the early nineteenth century to the late 1990s.

Several sets of works offer extensive information on American relief in the 1910s. One of the largest is Frank M. Surface and Raymond L. Bland's 1931 book *American Food in the World War and Reconstruction Period: Operations of Organizations Under the Direction of Herbert Hoover 1914 to 1924* which remains as one of the best sources for economic and logistical numbers for relief delivered. Suda Lorena Bane and Ralph Haswell Lutz, both ARA workers themselves, published in 1944 an extensive collection of primary documents on the vast ARA operations in their work *American Relief*

Operations in Europe, 1918-1919. Perhaps the most famous of these works on American involvement in humanitarian operations during the period is Herbert Hoover's *An American Epic* trilogy. Written in the early 1960s as his academic narrative on the period from 1914-1924, *An American Epic* spans all of the major American relief operations from his Committee of Relief to Belgium to the American Relief Administration. The trilogy not only is the largest examination on the subject, but it is also influential in shaping the tone of American humanitarian relief and specifically the ARA to this day. Hoover portrays American relief in dry but boastful terms, stating how it was American relief that ultimately changed the course of world history in Europe. Hoover geared the perspective towards his own self-benefit, but he does utilize archival material from the Hoover Institute archives as well as his personal papers. Ultimately Hoover's trilogy is foundational in studying American relief operations of the period.

The First World War era particularly has received much attention with the centennial commemorations of the conflict. One of the most recent pieces to revive the discussion on the conflict as a watershed for international humanitarianism is Bruno Cabanes' 2014 book *The Great War and the Origins of Humanitarianism, 1918-1924.* Cabanes argues that the First World War era was the real beginning of international humanitarianism by using five case studies as proof of its emergence. Cabanes focuses on the ARA Russian relief mission as a demonstration of how America exercised international solidarity and its 'right to assistance' in providing humanitarian relief to Soviet Russia.[7] Julia Irwin's *Making The World Safe: The American Red Cross and a*

[7] Bruno Cabanes. *The Great War and the Origins of Humanitarianism, 1918-1924.* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 243-245

Nation's Humanitarian Awakening argues that through the American Red Cross (ARC) and the First World War, the United States becomes increasingly involved in international humanitarianism. Published in 2013, in her book Irwin widely focused on the ARC's public mobilization activities from Washington D.C. to grassroots movements to support how American interest in relief became a part of its national culture. The ARC, as the nation's official relief organization, held massive sway over U.S. humanitarian operations during the First World War in a similar fashion that the ARA did in the postwar Reconstruction period.

Another work that expands on this argument is John Branden Little's *Band of Crusaders: American Humanitarians, the Great War, and the Remaking of the World*. His dissertation focuses more widely on American involvement in the First World War outside of warfare, including the Committee of Relief to Belgium (CRB) and the Rockefeller Foundation. Little also is the closest to conveying the integral role the military played in American humanitarianism, arguing that the inclusion of military personnel in various non-combat roles broadens American involvement to 1914. Additionally, he argues that many of the CRB volunteers later became instrumental volunteers in the armed forces upon America's entry into the First World War.[8]

First World War Veterans and Postwar Europe

An understanding of the U.S. military experience during the First World War is necessary, though the historiography is not as contested as in the previous fields. Studies into military veterans in the First World War are very limited but provide

[8] Branden Little, "Band of Crusaders: American Humanitarians, the Great War, and the Remaking of the World," PhD Diss., (University of California, Berkeley, 2009), 121, 126.

illuminating glimpses into how the conflict impacted veterans. Recently there is a shift in the discipline to viewing First World War veterans as significant social and political actors. The only overall academic work on Great War veterans is James Diehl and Stephen Ward's 1976 work *The War Generation: Veterans of the First World War*, which broadly examines five major participants (Great Britain, United States, France, Italy, Germany) and the post-First World War activities of their veteran crowds.

Though for the United States the debate is still developing, a few significant works pave the way for studies into military veterans. David Kennedy's *Over Here: America in the Great War* is the best survey of the United States in the 1910s, including its participation in the conflict and its relations with Europe. Kennedy demonstrates how the memory of the First World War in American troops was significantly biased and slanted towards a positive view of the conflict. Other works, including Jennifer D. Keene's *Doughboys, the Great War, and the Remaking of America*, Mark Meigs' *Optimism at Armageddon*, and Steven Trout's *On The Battlefield of Memory* support this, specifically supplanting American veterans as activists in shaping public memory of America's role in the Great War. Each one takes a different perspective on how the conflict influenced American veterans and, in several ways, how the veterans influenced the legacy of the conflict. Keene's work focuses on the social influences of the U.S. military and the Great War on American service members both during and after the conflict. Meigs focuses on how American troops responded to the conflict as they witnessed it, demonstrating how American service members were the products of an optimistic age in American history. Trout touches on both of these themes in his work but argues that veterans shaped their cultural memory of the conflict in optimistic tones

similar to how Americans portrayed the Second World War in positive terms. Also critical to the discussion is *The Red Scare: A Study in National Hysteria, 1919-1920*, written during the height of the Second Red Scare in the 1950s. In *The Red Scare,* Robert K. Murray argues that the American opinion of Soviet Russia was at its worst during 1919 despite the causes of the Red Scare being sourced from domestic issues. Significantly the veterans' organization, the American Legion, led the way in anti-Bolshevik sentiments across America, at times leading into violence and an open call to arms against the threat of strikers.

Extensive case studies on the soldiers' experience in the American Expeditionary Force during the Great War are few but deep in breadth. Laurence Stallings, himself a Great War veteran, wrote in 1963 the first work on the American soldier's experience in the conflict as a narrative mixed with individual stories titled *The Doughboys: The Story of the AEF, 1917-1918*. A few years later, in 1968, Edward M. Coffman's *The War to End All Wars: The American Experience in World War I* provided a major academic study examining the American soldiers' Great War experience came in the 1950s. Coffman examined the Doughboys from mobilization in the United States to their final demobilization in 1919-1920. Though several smaller studies were published in the coming decades, it is not until Richard Faulkner brought an expanded and updated examination in his 2017 book *Pershing's Crusaders: The American Soldier in World War I*.

American combat performance also has limited discussion, demonstrating the harsh lessons the AEF learned from their engagements on the Western Front and how it applied not only to American military thinking but the behavior of its personnel in

reacting to tasks such as relief work. Mark Grotelueschen's *The AEF Way of War* provides great insight into how the AEF coped with combat problems, in particular, their open warfare doctrinal training and the adoption of trench warfare tactics. The author stresses that the AEF succeeded most of all in its adaptability to combat situations and lessons from its limited combat experiences. Complementary to Grotelueschen's work is Richard Faulkner's 2012 work *The School of Hard Knocks: Combat Leadership in the American Expeditionary Force*, which focuses on how military commanders adjusted to the strains of trench warfare. Faulkner's work demonstrates that the ill-prepared training of American junior officers limited the combat performance of the AEF. Geoffrey Wawro's *Sons of Freedom: The Forgotten American Soldiers Who Defeated Germany in World War I,* rebuts critics who downplay America's military significance in the Great War. Wawro conclusively asserts that America and Gen. John Pershing's AEF, despite constant struggles and imperfect performance, contributed decisively to the Entente's victory over the Central Powers.

The historiography of the postwar era remains vast and complicated, but several works deserve attention. Joshua Sanborn's 2014 work *Imperial Apocalypse: The Great War & the Destruction of the Russian Empire* argues in his book that the turmoil of the First World War and the Russian revolutions started decolonization within the empire that eventually created breakaway states in Eastern Europe. Robert Gerwarth's 2017 work *The Vanquished: Why The Great War Failed to End, 1917-1923* provides perhaps the most detailed look at the fallen nations of the First World War that would all serve as the most chaotic operational areas for the ARA: Russia, Germany, Austria-Hungary, and the Ottoman Empire states. Gerwarth contends with the idea that the post-WWI

period is what ‘brutalizes’ Europeans to later adopt fascism and totalitarianism in the 1930s.[9]

The historiography of the Great War is a crowded field, but one that only recently has broadened its scope to include the postwar years. The numerous social and military conflicts within postwar Europe remains widely untapped as a field. Likewise, the importance of the American military in the conflict is recognized mostly for its wartime service with little credence given to its postwar role in Europe.

[9] Gerwarth’s thesis heavily builds off George Mosse’s Brutalization Theory which asserts that the First World War was a catalyst that ‘brutalized’ the German veterans and people, making them more prone to adopt fascism throughout the 1920s. For more on the Brutalization Theory see George L. Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).

CHAPTER 3

EXCHANGING RIFLES FOR BABY BOTTLES: THE PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN THE U.S. MILITARY AND THE AMERICAN RELIEF ADMINISTRATION, 1919-1923

> *Most Interesting Experience in Child Fund Work: Dodging shells and bombs and being shot at by a German Aeroplane during the… siege in Riga lasting a month's time.*
>
> – Lieutenant Thomas D. Howard's

Throughout military history, and no less the First World War, soldiers created nicknames for themselves and those around them. "Doughboys," "Tommies," "Poilus," "Frontschwein," the list goes on with no shortage of irony and down-to-earth wit. Among the nicknames, one stands out for its non-military association: "Professional Babyfeeders," or relief workers working in the American Relief Administration (ARA). No one knows who first came up with the nickname, but what is clear is its popularity within the American Relief Administration and its odd similarity to the myriad of common soldier nicknames.

In the summer of 1919 thousands of American troops passed through ARA offices to become "professional babyfeeders," rebuilding Europe on behalf of the United States. Though the ARA claimed to be a purely civilian organization, the figures that Europeans saw in the ARA mission headquarters hardly resembled the label "civilian." Recalling the ARA headquarters in Paris, Herbert Hoover described the "fifty rooms full of men" who worked around the clock "mostly in Army or Navy uniform." In Latvia the ARA coordinators, still donning their officer ranks, were often lovingly known to children as "our American uncles."[10]

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[10] Herbert Hoover, *The Memoirs of Herbert Hoover: Years of Adventure, 1874-1920*. (New York: Macmillan, 1961), 428; Thomas J. Orbison, *Children Inc.: The Post-War "Administration" of the Whole Child Life of One Baltic State in Its Critical Period*, (Boston, Mass: Stratford Co., 1933) 257.

How thousands of American veterans became “professional babyfeeders” is a critical piece to the story of humanitarianism in the postwar reconstruction of Europe and in turn a unique piece of the American military experience. The ARA, like many other relief aid organizations, offered American Expeditionary Force and Naval veterans both a role in American foreign policy and an occupation that transitioned soldiers back into civilians. Although organizations like the American Red Cross garnered the greatest mass appeal in the United States, the ARA stands out as not only one of the most effective relief organizations in the Reconstruction period but one of the largest employers of AEF veterans in Europe outside of the American Red Cross. Even then, the ARC found itself diminishing its operations to medical aid relief while the ARA only saw rapid expansion from 1919 to 1923. It is only through the close and open collaboration between the ARA and the AEF that effective humanitarian aid was delivered.

“God helping her, she can do no other” [11]: American humanitarianism and the Great War

Though the relationship between humanitarian relief and the armed forces goes back many years, the aftermath of the First World War created a new chapter for international humanitarianism. Previously humanitarian operations in foreign lands were conducted on smaller scales than seen in the Great War. Humanitarian missions often fell into two categories: either civilian organizations lending charity to devastated regions out of a spirit of humanitarianism or military task forces specifically sent to

[11] Quoted segment from Woodrow Wilson’s declaration of war speech. Woodrow Wilson, *War Messages*, 65th Cong., 1st Sess. Senate Doc. No. 5, Serial No. 7264, Washington, D.C., 1917; 8

render allied aid as a part of foreign policy or strategic matters. The Great War ushered in new humanitarian movements more permanently geared towards globalization. Organizations now framed their missions in broader terms, from religious obligation to an international duty. Specifically, in America, humanitarianism was framed as an outpouring of national goodwill and the perceived superiority of democracy. Through food relief Americans could demonstrate the power of democratic ideals.[12] As Julia Irwin argues in her research on the American Red Cross, American humanitarianism provided an outlet for Americans to show off their compassion on the international stage. At the same time, relief aid to Europe was a form of mass diplomacy that the United States could utilize to spread its national influence, both moral and economic. To the American public humanitarianism, therefore, was an outpouring of generosity and a continuation of America's 'Manifest Destiny'.[13]

Mobilization for relief work began early in the conflict. As Brandon Little pointed out in his work, the nearly chaotic evacuation of over 120,000 American refugees from Europe throughout the early months of the war in 1914 prompted Americans to be rapidly involved in the Great War. Mass appeals across the nation directed many citizens to eventually take to the front lines of the Great War not only as volunteer soldiers but as humanitarians. Long before American policymakers made concentrated moves towards war, advertisements rang in newspapers about the devastation in Belgium. Individuals like Herbert Hoover established professional aid organizations

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[12] See Emily Rosenberg, *Spreading the American Dream: American Economic and Cultural Expansion, 1890-1945*. (New York: Hill & Wang, 1982). Also see Frank Costigliola, *Awkward Dominion: American Political, Economic, and Cultural Relations with Europe, 1919-1933*. (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1988).

[13] Julia Irwin, *Making the World Safe: The American Red Cross and a Nation's Humanitarian Awakening*. (London: Oxford University Press, 2013), 9-10, 125.

such as the Committee of Relief For Belgium in 1914 to channel the American people's desire to be involved in the "war to end all wars." American voluntarism towards the administrative side differed little from the emotional appeals made to volunteers enlisting in the armed forces.[14] They were also just as effective: about $400 million worth of relief aid and tens of thousands of American volunteers sent overseas before America formally entered the conflict in 1917.[15]

Once the United States formally declared war on the Central Powers on 6 April 1917, American humanitarian involvement subsided into the background of the Great War. At least as far as media coverage is concerned American energies shifted from fighting starvation and disease towards fighting the armies of 'the Hun'. Relief workers in the CRB and ARC or ambulance drivers deployed with the French forces in the American Field Service were the first to go. Many of the volunteers, young educated men, left their relief work to join the masses of Americans in the U.S. military. The First World War brought into Europe one of the largest military buildups up to that point in U.S. history: over 1 million American troops and 5 million tons of food supplies would flood into Europe from 1917 to 1919. Of this impressive army of fresh troops though, only a fraction of them witnessed the terrors of the First World War in a mere eighteen month-long period in what many would ironically call "the show."[16] Many of these troops,

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[14] Branden Little, "Band of Crusaders: American Humanitarians, the Great War, and the Remaking of the World," PhD Diss., (University of California, Berkeley, 2009), 65; Robert D. Cuff, "Herbert Hoover, The Ideology of Voluntarism, and War Organization during the Great War," *The Journal of American History,* Vol. 64, No. 2, 1977, pg. 359-360.

[15] Numbers calculated from Commission for Relief in Belgium records. Frank M. Surface and Raymond L. Bane, *American Food in the World War and Reconstruction Period*, (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1931), 13.

[16] David Kennedy, *Over Here: The First World War and American Society,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 185.

a great mixture of volunteers and draftees, had better odds in seeing the glistening streets of 'Paree' than the bomb-sodden trenches of the Western Front.[17]

The collapse of Imperial Germany and the peace armistice shocked everyone in the AEF. While many were glad to avoid fighting, many found themselves spurred on by a huge wave of opportunism now that the 'Big Show' was over. At the end of the First World War the American Expeditionary Force, prepared to wage a near-total war for all of 1919, suddenly found itself in an awkward peacetime standing. The full force of American now proved unnecessary. With over one million uniformed Americans and hundreds of stocked warehouses sitting in France, it would take more than all of 1919 to demobilize the entire AEF and send them back to America.

The demobilization efforts could not work fast enough to send troops back to the United States, nor even find much for them to do in peacetime Europe. AEF General Headquarters took ready notice of this problem and sought to make the most of their armies' plight. Many veterans coveted assignments to the American Expeditionary Forces University program in French campuses such as Beaune or Paris. YMCA workers frequently hosted tour groups in Europe, along with a variety of activities to keep soldiers occupied and away from running loose across France. Staff workers already on assignments in Paris openly begged for continued employment. Some troops, intrigued by their German opponents, volunteered for service in the Army of Occupation in Germany. Despite these measures, many soldiers found themselves

[17] One of the best treatments of the American doughboy experience can be found in Richard Faulkner, *Pershing's Crusaders: The American Soldier in World War I*. (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2017). Also see Geoffrey Wawro, *Sons of Freedom: The Forgotten American Soldiers Who Defeated Germany in World War I.* (New York: Basic Books, 2018), 482-489.

simply trying to whittle away their time before demobilization.[18]

What proved a hardship for the AEF was a blessing to relief aid organizations who now were beginning to wage their own war on famine, disease, and Bolshevism. In Washington D.C. and Paris, American policymakers were making plans to approach the great challenge of reconstruction. Herbert Hoover, head of the U.S. Food Administration and a critical player in the Armistice discussions in Paris, was among the first to advocate for reorienting America's willpower from war to rehabilitation. Hoover viewed the importance of humanitarian aid through several lenses. First, Europe without rehabilitation will remain unable to operate as an economic partner. Except for the United States, almost all of the Entente nations were exhausted by the Great War and had incurred great debts to American businessmen. Second, humanitarian aid was necessary to reinforce and stabilize nations in Eastern Europe, particularly fledging nations like Poland or Estonia. Uprisings and civil wars plagued Eastern Europe and threatened Europe with the specter of communism, viewed by Hoover and many likeminded American policymakers as nothing short of anarchy. "Bolshevism is steadily advancing westward," he once wrote. "It cannot be stopped by force but it can be stopped by food." Without relief aid, he feared the chaos caused by the end of the Great War could spread further west into Germany or France. To Hoover food could win both the Great War and the war against Bolshevism.[19]

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[18] Mark Meigs, *Optimism at Armageddon: Voices of American Participants in the First World War*, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1997), 69-70.

[19] Benjamin M. Weissman, *Herbert Hoover and Famine Relief to Soviet Russia, 1921-1923.* (Stanford, Calif.: Hoover Institute Press, 1974), 29; Harold H. Fisher, *The Famine in Soviet Russia, 1919-1923: The Operations of the American Relief Administration.* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1928), 25; Bertrand Patenaude. *The Big Show in Bololand: The American Relief Expedition to Soviet Russia in the Famine of 1921.* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2002), 31-33; Quoted from Bruno Cabanes. *The*

Finally, to the American policymakers, humanitarian aid could legitimatize its place at the table of peace negotiations. The United States was uniquely positioned to conduct humanitarian operations in Europe with its surplus of provisions, equipment, and manpower. The United States could utilize its resources to contribute towards its role in the armistice talks. Woodrow Wilson heartily agreed to Hoover's proposals and on 7 November 1918, approved for Hoover to begin the formation of a new food relief organization. Hoover retained his pervasive powers as Food Administrator, including the ability to coordinate with the State Department, Agricultural Department, and the War Department. However, the job was far from easy for Hoover's organization was tasked with distributing relief to not just select countries, but virtually the entire European continent. The U.S. Food Administration, only equipped to handle American and allied nations, now required far more resources to carry on its expanded mission.

Few men sympathized or supported him as one of the unlikeliest humanitarians: the overall commander of the American Expeditionary Force, General John "Blackjack" Pershing. Known for his military exploits, Pershing was also a man for European Reconstruction and relief efforts. His self-consciousness prompted the AEF commander-in-chief to turn down YMCA offers to use his name in war fundraising campaigns so as not "to give the impression of putting myself forward."[20] Notwithstanding, several distinct factors set Pershing's relationship with the ARA relief on different grounds. First, General John J. Pershing personally respected Hoover for

Great War and the Origins of Humanitarianism, 1918-1924. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 212.

[20] John J. Pershing. *John J. Pershing Papers: Diaries, Notebooks, and Address Books, -1925; Diaries; Set 1; 1918, Sept. 2-1919, Jan. 27*. 1918. Manuscript/Mixed Material. https://www.loc.gov/item/mss35949004/.

his previous work in helping the shipping crisis for the AEF in August 1918, one that Gen. Pershing accredited to saving over one million lives by ending the war that year. For his efforts, Hoover developed a strong working relationship with the AEF commander and even agreed to co-sponsor the famous “invisible guest” fundraising dinners in New York City.[21]

Secondly, Pershing felt strongly about the well-being of his men, both professionally and personally. To be sure, Gen. Pershing was like Hoover in being a master of efficiency, unsparing towards any officers who he felt did not meet proper standards. Along with an extensive system for reclassifying officers lacking in initiative or efficiency, his reputation brought fear to his subordinates.[22] Yet Pershing’s activities for soldiers and veterans range from supporting the creation of American military cemeteries, postwar veterans activist groups, to even moral regimentation of troops to keep them away from debauchery and sinful behavior.[23] Memoirists almost always reflected on Pershing as a commander who was deeply involved with his men, frequently telling any soldiers he came across, “Your country is proud of you.”[24] With the demobilization of the AEF, Pershing certainly believed in making the transfer for millions of Americans into civilian life as smooth as possible.

It comes as no surprise then what happened when Hoover telegrammed Pershing on 12 December. Four days later, on 16 December 1918, Hoover went to the AEF General Headquarters to talk to Pershing. The meeting went over several issues,

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[21] Herbert Hoover, *An American Epic: Vol. II. Famine in Forty-Five Nations – Organization Behind the Front, 1914-1923.* (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1959), 162-170; Vol. III, 256.

[22] Faulkner, *Pershing’s Crusaders,* 183.

[23] Meigs, *Optimism at Armageddon*, 76.

[24] Everett T. Tomlinson, *The Story of General Pershing*, (New York: D. Appleton, 1928), 209.

among which was the scale of the relief operations over which Pershing noted “Mr. Hoover is rapidly becoming exasperated.” The immense amount of logistical issues blocking the initiation of operations put immense pressure on Hoover, and it was critical, therefore, for the U.S. military to grant support. Pershing instantly supported his requests on personnel, adding “if you will let me know what background experience you want, I will have some of them selected for you to choose from.” Pershing also added more to his offer: all military volunteers could remain in uniform during their relief work and even keep their military pay while serving in the ARA. Assistance also came from the U.S. Navy whose job would be to send not only volunteers but also naval escort services. Hoover’s request to Navy Admiral William Benson came back with similar results to the AEF offer: the ARA received free rein “of the entire personnel of the Navy except the men needed to keep the idle ships in order.”[25] In 1919, the newly formed ARA found itself with a ready pool of trained professionals who could be directly sent to work. Of the gigantic AEF forces in Europe, almost 2,500 American troops were requisitioned to assist the ARA in its various missions.[26]

The U.S. Army and Navy personnel provided multiple benefits critical to the ARA. Firstly, the U.S. Army and Navy promoted professionalization among their officers, advocating for constant education and high standards of efficiency.[27] The training and adaptability of the selected volunteers provided a suitable equivalent to the high standards the ARA pressed on its personnel. Soldiers already used to fluid situations

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[25] Hoover, *An American Epic*, Vol. III, 535.

[26] Hoover, *Years of Adventure*, 294.

[27] Richard S. Faulkner, *The School of Hard Knocks: Combat Leadership in the American Expeditionary Forces*. (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2012), 13-14.

and working independently in an organization proved critical out in the ARA areas of operations. Secondly, the ability of these relief workers to continue to wear their military uniforms supplemented a familiar yet strong message to European governments. The practice is significant as many supporting humanitarian organizations such as the American Red Cross and the YMCA received special permission to issue and wear military uniforms.[28] Unlike both the ARC and the YMCA, the uniformed personnel of the ARA were legitimate active Regular Army or Naval personnel. Although the American relief efforts were conducted by civilian organizations, the ability to have uniformed personnel carried over the same message that the American government was running the relief operations. In addition, the uniform opened unexpected avenues – on several occasions, ARA workers would have run-ins with paramilitary forces who only complied with them because of the perception that the paramilitary commanders could engage in a 'soldier-to-soldier' talk.[29] Sidearms were mostly barred from being carried, although frequently personnel brought their weapons with them in notably dangerous areas. The financial relief of sustained military payrolls for AEF volunteers helped the ARA divert federal funding towards other areas, including paying civilian administrative personnel. Finally, the payrolled AEF volunteers now had more incentive to continue their relief work for the ARA without exhausting their personal funds.

Hoover, as a figurehead, also had a unique appeal to military veterans. As a familiar face to many Americans, Hoover represented a heroic figurehead for the American spirit promoted during the Great War. At the same time, Hoover was

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[28] Irwin, *Making the World Safe*, 119-121.

[29] Orbison, *Children Inc*., 99-101.

incredibly demanding to those who served in his organization; his staff was to be obedient, efficient, and highly professional both in work and personal character. As a leader in American humanitarianism, few could argue against the fruits of his system which stabilized food production for the U.S. through the Great War. Much like a polished, endearing commanding officer, Hoover seemed like a man who got things done. The “Food Czar” and his work ethics were highly attractive to military personnel who despised the bureaucratic tendencies of the armed forces. Hoover served as a role model to military veterans wanting to utilize their humanitarian passions and inner spirit of adventure. Indeed, many veterans would become ‘Hooverites,’ remaining loyal to Hoover for their entire lives.[30]

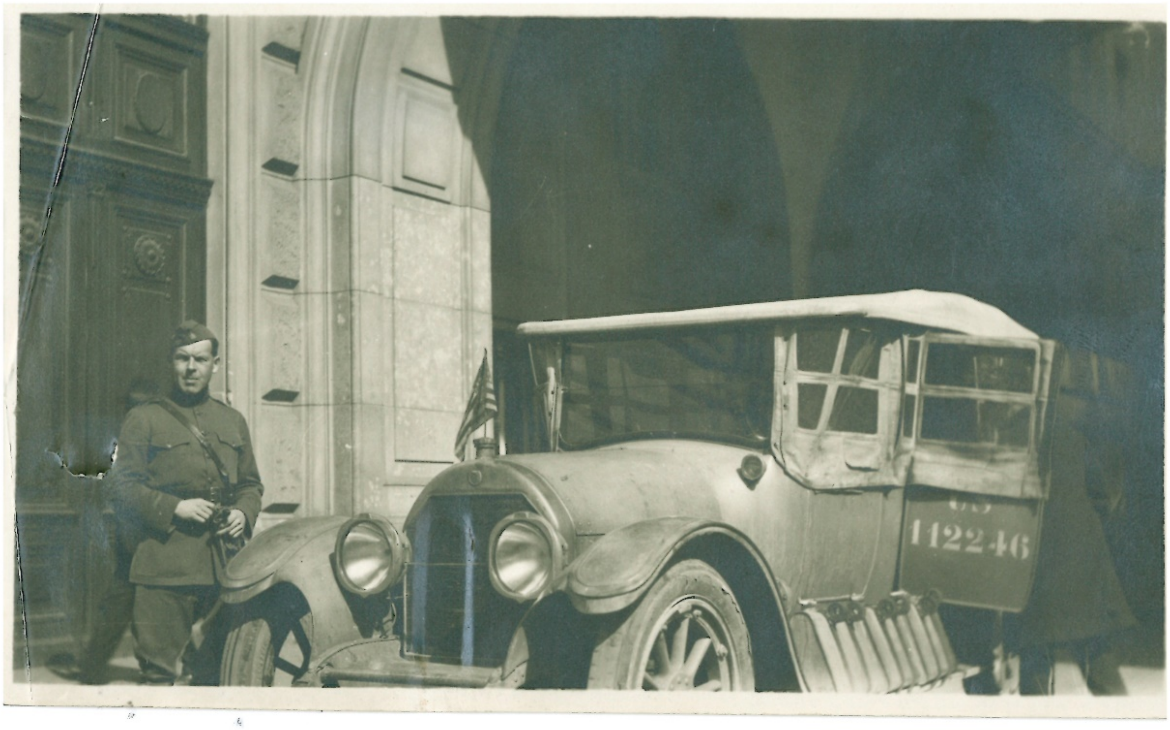

Figure 1. Major Philip Carroll, later a member of the 1921 Russian famine relief expedition, serving with the A.R.A., c.1919. Courtesy of Hoover Presidential Library

[30] Patenaude, *The Big Show in Bololand*, 593-594.

ARA Missions

Although the ARA was formed in only 1919, it quickly began maintaining missions in almost every European nation. In total almost eighteen nations would have ARA offices ranging from neutral to belligerent nations. Spread among each area were hundreds of feeding kitchens and warehouses staffed by thousands of locally employed workers on a food payroll. A Parisian office building on 18 Rue de Tilsitt street soon became the central ARA office from where the organization sent out relief workers across Central Europe. The ARA headquarters expanded in the following months to include its own signals department, map room, motor pool, and round-the-clock staff.[31]

Even Hoover himself admitted his struggle in imagining the scale of his relief operations throughout Europe. The ARA established considerable missions in Germany and Austria where masses of destitute refugees, prisoners of war, and communities required substantial relief aid. The Near East Relief Mission, established previously by American private charities in 1915, served in Serbia, Armenia, Turkey, and Georgia. The ARA largely adopted the mission in 1919 after reports revealed that local administrators were funneling supplies into the black market instead of the starving villages, prompting extra policing and security checks.[32] Other critical missions included Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Hungary, and Romania, all along the still active hot zones of the collapsed First World War Eastern Front. From the peaceful valleys of Italy to the shell-pocked battlefields of Latvia, the ARA played a role in every part of the reconstruction of Europe: transportation, communications, economical advising, and so

[31] Hoover, *An American Epic*, Vol. III, 531.

[32] Hoover, *Years of Adventure*, 386.

on. For soldiers sick of being stuck in a peacetime army being ordered by less-than-pleasant officers, the ARA seemed like a wonderful opportunity to escape the dull military bureaucracy and embark on risky adventures – even if only for a brief period.

The conduct of these missions utilized the skillsets provided by American veterans who came from a wide array of branches and backgrounds. Officers trained in organizing and maintaining combat units were put to assignments organizing feeding kitchens and supply routes. Signal Corps officers were deployed both in Paris and throughout Europe, maintaining or repairing damaged communications lines between major cities. The ARA frequently requested engineers and transportation experts for rebuilding transportation infrastructures while drivers or even pilots were brought in to act as couriers where the roads permitted travel. Naval personnel who had previously served in shipping lanes were also special requested for port staff to bring in food convoys escorted by U.S. Navy destroyers. Medical personnel frequently went on ARA missions but due to limited trained personnel were employed only in the worst regions such as Poland to control typhus outbreaks among incoming refugee columns.[33] Although not prioritized, the ARA recruited individuals with language skills or backgrounds such as Private Thomas Andrews who was requested for the Near East mission specifically because of his diverse language background.[34] Finally, some personnel were selected to go across the European missions to photograph and record

[33] Gaines M. Foster, *The Demands of Humanity: Army Medical Disaster Relief*, (Washington: Center of Military History, 1983), 84-85.

[34] "List of men desiring to serve with Col. Atwood in service of the U.S. Food Administration, undated." American Relief Administration European Operational Records, Box 302, Folder 4, Hoover Institute Archives.

the work of ARA personnel out in the field.[35]

Hoover personally enjoyed recounting tales of the bravado and can-do attitudes of his soldier volunteers. In his official account of the ARA relief operations, Hoover repeatedly mentions the actions of soldier volunteers, crediting them with stellar performance. Perhaps his favorite was that of First Lieutenant George P. Harrington who in organizing relief in Latvia managed to not only deliver the first trainload of American food to Riga on largely destroyed railways but acted as an intermediary in negotiating an armistice between the Estonian and the Freikorps troops of Rudiger von der Goltz on July 2 1919. Reportedly even President Wilson, upon hearing of Lt. Harrington's actions, stated: "We need a lot of Harringtons and his sergeants at home."[36] Another unique character, Captain Joseph C. Green, was credited with negotiating a ceasefire on behalf of the United States between two Montenegrin armies months after the war had ended. When the anxious, overstepping officer was later called in to meet with Hoover, the only exchange that came out of it was about the swords from the surrendered generals – one went home with an unpunished Capt. Green, the other with Hoover. In his way Hoover attributed the soldierly performance of such men as Lt. Harrington as carbon copies of his personal attitudes towards accomplishing the mission.

Once in the field, ARA workers underwent a variety of regional challenges ranging from political to ethnic issues. Within the Middle East, ARA workers tended to be in more pleasant environments where operations concentrated purely on nourishing

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[35] "Extract of Special Order #150, 24 May 1919," American Relief Administration European Operational Records, Box 301, Folder 1, Hoover Institute Archives.

[36] Hoover, *An American Epic*, Vol. III, 47.

famine-starved families and distributing medical attention to locals. Towards Eastern Europe, however, the tales of ARA workers tended to grow far grimmer and riskier. Within Finland, Estonia, Lithuania, Romania, Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia, constant uprisings and small wars raged in areas the ARA was tasked to conduct feeding operations. Local governments came under constant threat of capitulation, causing issues with how the ARA was to conduct its business, as was the case for Colonel William N. Haskell upon his arrival to Armenia. “The Ministry has resigned. We have no government,” telegraphed Col. Haskell, to which Hoover supposedly replied, “Refuse to accept their resignations.” He did, evidently prompting the Armenian government to continue its existence. While Hoover’s answer might have been exaggerated, the attitude certainly strikes a true chord for those who served in the ARA.[37]

Threats loomed everywhere for the ARA volunteers: elsewhere in Armenia, a group of inspectors touring the countryside was robbed at gunpoint, a story not uncommon in other ARA missions. Constant pillaging of relief supplies by local Armenians prompting Hoover to request British military police from the local British foreign mission to protect the food trains from thieves. In Lithuania an incident occurred almost as soon as the ARA established its main office in Kaunas – a group of armed German ex-soldiers attempted to break into the barely moved-in ARA office. Before the Germans found any of the Americans a fight broke out between an embittered mob of civilians and Lithuanian guards, ending with one dead guard and the arrest of multiple

[37] Hoover, *Years of Adventure*, 388.

German instigators.[38] In the Polish ARA mission, volunteers frequently secured sidearms and pistols from various sources. Almost a year later the kitchen staffs on the Polish mission were forced to evacuate to the main mission headquarters in Warsaw during the Polish-Soviet War. Some volunteers narrowly escaped on evacuation trains as Red Army soldiers stormed city streets. A select few workers negotiated with the Bolshevik government to send inspectors behind enemy lines to ensure the Polish ARA supplies – now in enemy territory – were going to children and not soldiers' mess tins.[39] In a manner, the humanitarian line of work was fraught with dangers that made it an addictive attraction to some veterans.

Not everyone viewed the ARA's military personnel in a positive light. The complicated image of trained, highly-skilled warriors from the U.S. government participating in relief work worried weak foreign governments who feared deep American intervention. In the Baltic missions around Finland the entirety of the ARA staff was military personnel which raised concerns to what degree the U.S. government was involved in relief work.[40] Russia in particular viewed the ARA as nothing less than a Trojan horse for capitalist military endeavors. In May 1919, a proposal for food aid to Russia was turned down by the Bolsheviks over suspicions that the terms, which included a ceasefire period between the Bolshevik 'Red' forces and the anticommunist

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[38] Tomas Balkelis. *War, Revolution and Nation-Making in Lithuania, 1914-1923*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 1.

[39] See Matthew Lloyd Adams, *Cadillacs to Kiev: The Story of the American Relief Administration in Poland, 1918-1922*, (Savannah, Georgia: Kortusphere Press, 2017); Weissman, *Herbert Hoover and Famine Relief to Soviet Russia, 1921-1923*, 38.

[40] Previously the ARA had been accused of using "food as a weapon" particularly by Hungary and Russia. The best treatment on this subject can be found in David S. Foglesong, *America's Secret War against Bolshevism: United States Intervention in the Russian Civil War, 1917-1920*. (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1995).[41] Ibid, 243-244.

'Whites', would undermine Lenin's government. Additionally, with the Allied Intervention Forces in Northern Russia is poised to threaten Petrograd, the Bolshevik government found little with which they could trust the Americans.[41]

The ARA took care of its relief workers just as well as it did the civilian populations it fed. Most personnel kept their military pay while serving in the ARA with the ARA covering travel, lodging, and food expenses. One group of men traveling to Prague were even given recommendations on where to get food along the railways, suggesting that some establishments were 'unsatisfactory' to ARA standards.[42] When it came time for relief workers to be released from their duties for demobilization, the ARA offered to pay each person a stipend of 250 francs for purchasing civilian clothes once they returned to Paris, primarily to respect a new order forbidding demobilized veterans to wear military uniforms as civilians.[43] The ARA also provided veterans with an opportunity to continue their humanitarian work. In April, ARA staff proposed that after fifteen days enlisted men signed onto the ARA could be offered further employment and almost instantaneous discharge from the AEF if found to be good, capable workers. The ARA would provide a base pay of $60 per month along with an expense account while working outside of Paris.[44] Interestingly this offer was not given to commissioned officers as the AEF found itself in a dilemma of losing too many officers than it could

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[41] Ibid, 243-244.

[42] "Memorandum for American Relief Administration, Paris from Capt. Joseph T. Shaw, 17 April 1919," American Relief Administration European Operational Records, Box 301, Folder 3, Hoover Institute Archives.

[43] "Letter from Robert Taft to Capt. T.C. Gregory, 7 June 1919," American Relief Administration European Operational Records, Box 301, Folder 2, Hoover Institute Archives.

[44] "Cablegram from James McKnight to Mr. Alderman, 14 April 1919," American Relief Administration European Operational Records, Box 301, Folder 2, Hoover Institute Archives.

afford to lose.

Eventually, the effects of the AEF demobilization caught up with the ARA before 1919 was over. Federal funding for the ARA was set to end in July of 1919, necessitating the ARA to either disband or transition into a private, civilian organization. Within both the AEF and the ARA, there was an expectation that ARA relief missions end by the end of the summer. Discussions progressed throughout July of recalling all enlisted volunteers back to France for demobilization and officers by September. Plans were made to close down all missions except the worst-case scenarios, such as those overseen by the Near East Relief Mission in Romania and Serbia. Reality dashed these hopes of an easy and quick humanitarian withdrawal: reports from Eastern Europe painted still grim figures of fragile governments threatened by Bolshevik forces within and along the borders. Many nation-states still struggled to recuperate their agriculture and economic industries. Every day new crises formed and intermingled with persisting issues: refugee migrations, banditry, revolutions, famine, all of which had no easy, fast end in sight. The mission of the ARA was far from over – in fact, it would be another four years before the ARA would truly finish its work and disband.

Although officially the ARA had become an independent civilian organization at the end of 1919, their connection to the U.S. military hardly diminished. Hoover continued to call upon his connections within the U.S. Army to help staff its missions throughout Europe. The most famous ARA mission, the 1921 Russian famine relief mission, was led primarily by active-duty officers such as Colonel William Haskell of the 26th Infantry Division. Indeed, many soldiers enjoyed the work to the degree that regularly officers were requested by the ARA for multiple missions and some sent

requests to be discharged to continue relief work in the ARA.[45]

The ARA's goal was to feed civilians, and most memorably, children – yet at the same time, it helped transition thousands of talented AEF veterans into productive world citizens. As a highly coveted line of work, relief work provided the AEF with the opportunity to utilize its manpower and logistical support in peacetime. The employment of AEF officers in the ARA provided Hoover's organization with the support it needed to conduct its massive operations. The partnership also mutually benefited the volunteers with practical work in foreign affairs and international humanitarian actions. The ARA staff included individuals who would go on to hold esteemed positions ranging from heads of corporations to one even serving as President Dwight Eisenhower's Secretary of State.[46] Many officers continued in the military, achieving high command ranks such as William N. Haskell, becoming a Major General before his eventual retirement. The loan fund established by the ARA after its liquidation never saw frequent use – eventually the fund capital doubled and found its use in other ARA operations. While the fates of the 'professional babyfeeders' are exceptional to those who quickly demobilized, their success can be contributed to the ARA operations across Europe. "Never was there such an exhibit of power of the American way of life as these men presented, and they got a kick out of it – despite the surrounding tragedies."[47]

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[45] "Cable 506, Rickard From Brown," American Relief Administration Russian Operational Records, Box 354, Folder 14, Hoover Institute Archives; "Cable Groome to Fuller," American Relief Administration European Operational Records, Box 301, Folder 3, Hoover Institute Archives.

[46] Christian A. Herter served as an assistant to Herbert Hoover in the ARA and in future roles under Hoover. In the Eisenhower administration he served as U.S. Secretary of State from 1959-1961.

[47] Hoover, *An American Epic,* Vol. III, 350.

CHAPTER 4

RECRUITING THE ‘BABYFEEDERS’: ARA STAFF SELECTION AND THE 1921 RUSSIAN FAMINE

> *All of your friends, my friends, the office boy’s friends and everybody’s friends want to get a job in Russia. [We’re] overloaded with them.*
>
> -Frank K. Lane

In the summer of 1921, the American Relief Administration (ARA) received from its ‘Chief’ one of its biggest jobs to date: providing aid to Russia, at the time perceived across the United States as the most hostile nation in the world. Few ARA ‘babyfeeders’ believed the ‘Russian job’ was going to be easy or simple, but fewer expected the massive flood of applications and requests for a spot on the mission. Almost daily, the ARA offices in New York, London, and Paris received inquiries for any job involved in the mission. Before September was over the ARA had received nearly 15,000 applications.[48] Only 381 Americans ever set foot in Russia, as representatives of the ARA and the physical embodiment of the United States of America. Each one of these Americans, therefore, demonstrates the final product of a vague yet demanding selection process.

Of the hundreds of thousands of ARA archival documents, no clear recruitment criteria seemed to exist for not only the 1921 Russian relief mission but also for any of the twenty-three relief missions the ARA conducted during its years of operation from 1919 to 1924. What qualities or factors, then, did it take to become one of the lucky few

[48] “Clapp Diary,” American Relief Administration Russian Operational Records, Box 107, Folder 12, Hoover Institute Archives.

privileged to participate in one of the most ambitious and complicated humanitarian missions of the early twentieth century? For the 1921 Russian relief mission, Herbert Hoover's ARA picked talented personnel that embodied not only the heartfelt passion of American idealism but the ironclad professionalism of American efficiency.

Hoover and the staff of the ARA reshaped the image of American relief workers from idealistic, occasional international Good Samaritans to professional humanitarians who rebuilt destroyed nations for a living. The personnel composition of the ARA set a high standard hardly matched by any other relief organization of the time save the American Red Cross (ARC). Even then, the ARA could work in areas where the ARC could not. How the ARA managed its staff demonstrates not only the demands of American humanitarianism but a polished image of Americans as both caring idealists and foreign policy actors.

A Piratical State for Benevolence: The Organizational Origins of the ARA

The American Relief Administration was the final iteration of Hoover's ongoing quest for perfecting the art of providing relief. How Herbert Hoover, a successful mining industry businessman, got into relief work is far from a mystery. Tapped by the U.S. London embassy in 1914 to help extradite gatherings of displaced American travelers to the U.S., Hoover's original mission of a few hundred civilians ultimately flourished to over 200,000 Americans. This accidental job launched Hoover directly into the reinvigorated field humanitarianism and, ultimately the world of politics.[49] After he learned about the threat of mass starvation in blockaded Belgium, Hoover established

[49] See Michael N Barnett, *The Empire of Humanity: A History of Humanitarianism*, (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2011).

the Committee for Relief for Belgium (CRB) in late 1914. A private, independent organization, the CRB had to negotiate the tangled diplomatic and political web between Great Britain, Germany, and Belgium to complete its mission. The organization would ultimately feed over 11,000,000 Belgians throughout the war and pave the way for further American involvement in European relief efforts.[50]

From the very beginning Hoover took an unorthodox approach to carry out his relief work by using a clever combination of networking and volunteerism. What some viewed as an innovative system garnered criticism from European officials as a "piratical state organized for benevolence."[51] Hoover's personnel exploited every avenue they could to provide relief for the people of Belgium, everything from extracting subsidies from depleted British and French treasuries to even creating a unique, internationally-recognized flag for its private fleet of cargo ships. Under the direct command of Hoover, the CRB began as a collection of what stereotypically would be the least likely group of Good Samaritans: bankers, engineers, economists, and businessmen. In coordination with local organizations and authorities, selected representatives would then work to transport food, establish kitchens, and distribute resources to the populace. The CRB model hardly followed the traditional grassroots character that many relief organizations took; rather, it took on a very top-down approach to the business of relief.[52]

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[50] For more information on Herbert Hoover and the CRB, see Herbert Hoover, *An American Epic: Vol. I: The Relief of Belgium and Northern France, 1914-1930* (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1959). Also see George H. Nash's *The Life of Herbert Hoover: The Humanitarian, 1914–1917,* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1988).

[51] Harold H. Fisher; George I. Gay. *Public Relations of the Commission for Relief in Belgium: Documents, Vol. 1*. (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 1929), i.

[52] Branden Little, "Band of Crusaders: American Humanitarians, the Great War, and the Remaking of the World," PhD Diss., (University of California, Berkeley, 2009), 305.

Due to the crisis at stake in Belgium, the demands placed on the CRB staff reflect an organic while specific set of criteria in order to accomplish the job. As Emile Francqui, one of the founders of the CRB, put it when speaking to Hoover about Belgian relief: "We must have leaders to organize and conduct this matter. They must be men of wide administrative experience and knowledge of the world. They must be neutral and they must be Americans. They must have the confidence of the American Ambassadors."[53] The demands placed on the organization established a necessity for more than just a simple willingness to work – nearly a quality over quantity demand. Despite the immense logistical workload, the CRB was a small organization run purely on the principle of volunteers. Hoover and his staff believed that volunteerism ensured an individual's commitment to neutrality and more personal investment in the relief effort. Voluntarism itself propelled individuals not only to assume a risky job but to commit to the work on an ideological level.[54]

Hoover specifically recruited personnel for the CRB through his business contacts instead of already well-known relief organizations like the American Red Cross. The nature of the CRB began as an ad-hoc organization intent on performing its best. The first team of Americans sent by the CRB into Belgium was far from the specifically selected personnel seen in later years. However, the quality of the workers was exceptional – the earliest group of volunteers were primarily young, enthusiastic Rhodes scholars from Oxford University. Men like Perrin C. Galpin, who would go on to

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[53] Herbert Hoover. *The Memoirs of Herbert Hoover: Years of Adventure, 1890-1920*. (London: MacMillan, 1951), 154.

[54] Robert D. Cuff "Herbert Hoover, The Ideology of Voluntarism and War Organization During the Great War." *The Journal of American History*, (Vol. 64, No. 2, 1977), 359, 368.

lead Hoover's Belgian-American Educational Foundation, were in Hoover's words "filled with idealism and keen on adventure."[55] Other recruits were also of a similar mold, highly adventurous, and from the upper class of American society. Many of them were also very naïve and woefully underprepared, frequently lacking in practical knowledge of localities, foreign language, work experience, or even proper passport credentials. Whether these volunteers had the proper experiences for the job took a backseat to the raw skill and determination they possessed. Many volunteers, including Hoover himself, believed the emergency would only last a few months once the war ended by 1915. As the emergency wore on, newer personnel arrived to replace the Rhodes scholars, eventually growing to a network of nearly 50,000 volunteers over the span of the CRB mission. How the CRB recruited personnel remains vague, but a rough sketch shows the volunteers as highly skilled, inexperienced individuals from various professional backgrounds.[56]

Time and time again, the CRB personnel were under the watch of both German and British military commanders, the latter at times demanding the expulsion of the entire relief mission. In one spectacular case in 1916, the CRB Rotterdam office received a hostile threat of expulsion by the German occupation forces after rumors spread that the American staff was committing espionage. Ultimately the investigation results told a far different story – select members of the American staff made a habit out of listening in and talking about anti-German gossip. Regardless after the investigations, Hoover sent the accused six back to America and requested one to be arrested,

[55] Hoover, *Years of Adventure*, 158.

[56] Fisher; Gay. *Public Relations of the Commission for Relief in Belgium: Documents, Vol. 1*, Document 314.

detained in the Tower of London for a brief period, then deported to America. In another case, a former CRB worker filed a complaint to the U.S. Senate accusing the CRB of breaking the 1799 Logan Act through unauthorized entanglement with foreign affairs. Although extreme cases like these seldom happened, such instances shaped future approaches to personnel selection.[57]

The next evolution of Hoover's organization began in 1917 with the entry of America into the First World War. The escalation of American involvement in the war prompted the U.S. government to create a flurry of new committees and branches to expedite the American war effort. Woodrow Wilson's administration quickly appointed Hoover as the head director of the United States Food Administration, a specialized branch of the Department of Agriculture concerned with rationing, food transportation, and distribution to both the United States and its European Allies. The U.S. Food Administration offered Hoover a different arena to experiment with his philosophy for the relief organization. Much like the CRB, to Hoover the U.S. Food Administration "every day must meet new problems. Therefore, my notion of organization is to size up the problem, send for the best man or woman in the country to who has the know-how, give him a room, table, chair, pencil, paper, and wastepaper basket – and the injunction to get other people to help and then solve it."[58] As an ardent "master of efficiency," Hoover preferred to rely on qualifications of personnel based on skill and knowledge over their seniority, rank, or position in the government. The emphasis on skill led to an incredibly diverse staff composed of everything from nutritionists to university presidents, all

[57] Hoover, *Years of Adventure*, 191-192.

[58] Ibid, 242.

working to utilize mass voluntarism and the battle cry “Food Will Win The War.”[59]

Leading up to the 1921 Russian famine, the ARA had many practice runs in various missions across postwar Europe. With the end of the First World War, Hoover’s humanitarian mission never wavered as he requested President Wilson to permit the transformation of the U.S. Food Administration into a postwar humanitarian mission. Hoover believed that with the war over the U.S. Food Administration had completed its mission, but as an organization could continue to serve American interests. In this era, Hoover believed that food and rehabilitation should be a major foreign policy focus of the United States, second only by the negotiations in Versailles. Food, Hoover argued, could bolster weakened European governments, strengthen relations with newly formed nations, and curb the spread of chaos – including Bolshevism – in Eastern Europe. Even when Hoover scaled the scope of relief operations to feeding children, his organization would unmistakably become a powerhouse in international politics. In the postwar period, American humanitarianism fully and irreversibly became integrated into political and foreign policy goals.[60]

Although the ARA transformed into a private organization after August 1919, the ARA maintained missions in almost all of Europe through 1924. In total, about eighteen nations would have ARA offices ranging from neutral to belligerent nations. Paris became the central ARA office from where the organization sent out personnel across Central Europe. The ARA operated considerable missions in Germany, Austria, the

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[59] For a shortlist of major U.S. Food Administration staff, see Hoover, *Years of Adventure*, 253.

[60] Benjamin M. Weissman, *Herbert Hoover and Famine Relief to Soviet Russia, 1921-1923.* (Stanford, Calif.: Hoover Institute Press, 1974), 29; David S. Foglesong. *America's Secret War against Bolshevism: United States Intervention in the Russian Civil War, 1917-1920*. (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1995), 236.

Baltic states, and the regions around the former Ottoman Empire. In each of these areas were challenges, including masses of destitute refugees, prisoners of war, and unstable governments.

The organizational capabilities of the ARA were massively strained during emergencies such as the Polish relief mission. The formation of Poland in 1919 resulted in a near humanitarian crisis with millions of refugees and various Eastern European ethnic groups. Furthermore, the Polish borders were constantly under threat from revolutionaries fighting in neighboring countries and the Russian Red Guard eager to retake lost land. The initial ARA survey team sent in late 1918 also confirmed suspicions that Poland needed urgent help, and Hoover himself saw during his visit that Poland needed "not charts and academic economics, but skilled men."[61] In August of 1919, the ARA established a permanent economics board to manage and direct the development of Poland's infrastructure. A sizeable mission, complemented by cars and trains, was put together and sent to Warsaw to head up Polish relief. Even when the Polish-Soviet War reached its highpoint in the Battle of Warsaw in 1920, ARA personnel were still stationed in the country.[62] The Polish mission set an example the ARA would revisit in the next year.[63]

The only other relief mission to rival the complicated scale of the Polish mission was the 1921 Russian famine. Plagued by constant warfare and political strife, Russia

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[61] Ibid, 361.

[62] For more information on the Polish-Soviet War, see Norman Davies' *White Eagle, Red Star: The Polish-Soviet War 1919-1920 and the Miracle on the Vistula*, (London: Pimlico), 2003.

[63] Matthew Lloyd Adams, "Herbert Hoover and the Organization of the American Relief Effort in Poland (1919-1923)," *European journal of American studies* [Online], Vol. 4, Issue 2, 2009. Accessed 01 November 2018. http://journals.openedition.org/ejas/7627.

was struck by a series of famines around the agricultural regions in the Volga and Ukraine. Further exacerbating the substantial crisis were harsh and misguided grain requisition policies meant to resolve the grain shortages. Although the ARA did send a relief offer to the Soviet government in the spring of 1919, it was turned down due to ceasefire terms that benefited the Russian counterrevolutionary armies. By the summer of 1921, Bolshevik Russia was suffering from the greatest humanitarian crisis of the era that would ultimately cost the lives of millions of civilians. Instead of making a public appeal, Vladimir Lenin's government downplayed the news reports in the cities until it was made internationally known by a public appeal from Maksim Gorky on 13 July 1921. Although no foreign government took up the call for aid, Hoover sent Lenin's government a proposal to provide food for one million children in Russia. On 20 August 1921, representatives from the Bolshevik government and the United States signed the Riga Agreement, which permitted the ARA as an independent organization to organize and deliver food for the Russian children. Under the agreement, the Bolshevik government provided transportation and covered ARA costs for relief supplies while the ARA bore the cost of operating kitchens, transporting food, and feeding children. The agreement also granted the ARA a substantial amount of freedom to choose its staff for the relief mission, native Russian, or foreign-born. In hindsight the initial goal of feeding one million children was too conservative; in September, the first reports sent back by the initial one hundred relief workers painted a grim image of millions of people at risk of starving to death. Cables going back to London and New York demanded a substantial increase in not only food remittances, but staff required to run the kitchens and district

offices.[64] By the end of the relief mission, the ARA fed daily an estimated 10.5 million Russian citizens, and the Russian mission staff increased twofold to over 200. The Russian mission pushed the organizational capabilities of the ARA to new heights.

Fit for the Big Show: Traits of an ARA Relief Worker

The Russian relief mission distinguishes itself from other ARA missions by broadening the demands required from its personnel in background, skills, and personal moral code. The civilians recruited for the ARA Russian mission held a variety of qualities and key requirements. The Riga Agreement, which was the first diplomatic negotiation between Soviet Russia and the United States, explicitly gave Hoover's organization the right to self-administration, including the hiring of personnel so long as those individuals did not openly conflict with political ideology. Though the Riga Agreement was generous in granting the ARA freedom to conduct independent operations, the Soviet government still did not trust the Americans to the degree that Lenin ordered a dramatic increase in surveillance and espionage targeting the ARA.[65] Lenin and his government viewed the ARA mission as anything but a true act of international altruism and believed the Americans had more capitalist goals hidden within the guise of famine relief. Indeed, they were partially right; the ARA was not only conducting international aid but also indirect diplomatic gestures on behalf of the United States. Under these circumstances, there was a more concentrated effort by the ARA offices to be more selective in their mission personnel.

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[64] "Cablegram from London to New York, 30 December," American Relief Administration Russian Operational Records, Box 69, Folder 2, Hoover Institute Archives.

[65] Document 75, "Note to Molotov", 23 August 1921, in *The Unknown Lenin: From the Secret Archive*. Ed. Richard Pipes. (London: Yale University Press, 1996).

As with the previous iterations of Hoover's relief efforts, the ARA offices selected staff outside of the realm of a "Chart of Organization." Hoover despised rigid committees and staff assignments as a mark of inefficiency to the degree that "nothing could raise my temperature faster than to be presented with these charts." Although attempts were made to organize staff lists and rosters for personnel, most personnel assigned were chosen for each situation as it arose. "As we built up the office with men, the organization gradually resolved itself," claimed Hoover, although this is taking for granted the precedent already established in the CRB and USFA.[66] The ARA found little need to appeal to mass voluntarism – many of the upper staff picked were CRB and USFA veterans. In the world of post-First World War humanitarian relief, there was little to no way to train new "professional babyfeeders" except by sending them to work in the field. The long lists of hands needed for the field required new staff in the face of normal turnover, especially as the ARA missions began to expand.

A quick survey of the ARA personnel reveals a starkly professional character to the volunteers. Stemming from the early days of Hoover's Belgian relief, the ARA always emphasized highly rated workers with a proven background. Many volunteers previously held jobs in professional areas such as academia, engineering, medicine, politics, communications, and business. The average relief worker had from between four to eight years of practical experience, some more based on their ages. Almost all of the men who served as district supervisors in the field came with high recommendations from other ARA staff or prolific figures. Many humanitarian workers were typically

[66] Hoover, *Years of Adventure*, 295.

prominent individuals who could help inspire people back home to maintain support.[67] Many also had previously held managerial positions and often were preferred over fresh recruits. However, the ARA also hired on a balanced mix of both older, veteran relief workers and young, inexperienced personnel.[68]

Relief workers came from three professional backgrounds: previous missions, the military, and civilian industry. The first group targeted by the ARA were those already present in their organization or other relief entities such as the American Red Cross and the YMCA. By 1921 American humanitarian missions spanned across Europe and had built up a valuable pool of volunteers already in the business. "Experienced babyfeeders are plentiful in Europe," one telegram warned the New York office with a suggestion to limit applicants from America unless they were exceptional.[69] In fact, several former ARA relief workers from the 1919 operations mailed inquiries to the ARA offices asking about positions on the newest missions. Unfortunately, by 1921, these relief operations were slowly downsizing as Europe began to show significant signs of stabilization. Furthermore, in emergency cases such as Poland or Russia, the scale of the missions required far more staff than the current ARA missions were able to spare.[70]

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[67] Little. *Band of Crusaders*, 107-109. [68] "Cablegram from London to New York, 30 December 1921," American Relief Administration Russian Operational Records, Box 69, Folder 1, Hoover Institute Archives.

[68] "Cablegram from London to New York, 30 December 1921," American Relief Administration Russian Operational Records, Box 69, Folder 1, Hoover Institute Archives.

[69] "Cablegram from London to New York, 22 December 1921," American Relief Administration Russian Operational Records, Box 69, Folder 1, Hoover Institute Archives.

[70] For an example of an inquiry letter by former ARA relief workers see "Letter from Carl Floete to Walter Lyman Brown, 22 August 1921," Floete, Carl 1921-1923, Box 112, Personnel Series, Hoover Presidential Library.

In the postwar period, the ARA broadened its recruitment to take advantage of a critical workforce: the military. The presence of military personnel in the ARA stems not from a formal demobilization program but rather a series of informal personnel loans. With over one million uniformed Americans and hundreds of stocked warehouses sitting in France, the AEF was busy demobilizing its forces throughout 1919. Meanwhile, rehabilitation of Europe began as early as November with the reclamation of communes once set upon the frontlines of the First World War, a process that would take years longer than it would to demobilize the AEF. In the face of postwar demobilization, many soldiers in the American Expeditionary Force clamored for work opportunities in Europe. General John J. Pershing agreed to Hoover's request for personnel, in the end, totaling almost 2,500 American troops requisitioned to assist the ARA in its various missions.[71] While military personnel had served in relief work for years through the Belgian relief effort, in 1919, suddenly, the newly formed ARA found itself with a ready pool of trained professionals who could be directly sent to work at a moment's notice. As soldiers, they were considered disinterested actors without personal agendas, able to 'make do' in constantly shifting situations where their quick decisions saved time, resources, and lives. Indeed, many men enjoyed the work to the degree that regularly officers were requested by the ARA for multiple missions, and some sent honorable discharge requests in order to continue relief work in the ARA.[72] Military personnel arguably fit Hoover's criteria of relief workers more than the crowds of hopeful civilian volunteers.

[71] Hoover, *Years of Adventure*, 294.

[72] "Cable 506, Rickard From Brown," American Relief Administration Russian Operational Records, Box 354, Folder 14, Hoover Institute Archives.

Despite this strong relationship, the ARA had reason to limit how 'military' their relief missions looked in order to preserve a civilian image of the ARA. In addition, the complicated image of trained warriors from the U.S. government participating in relief work worried foreign governments. In the Baltic missions around Finland, the entirety of the ARA staff were military personnel, which raised concerns to what degree the U.S. government was involved in relief work.[73] For the 1921 Russian relief mission, the presence of American military staff brought back to the Bolsheviks bitter memories of the AEF forces attached to the Allied Intervention and fears of a second attempt at invading Russia. ARA Staff in London warned the New York office about the risks, particularly upon the appointment of a Regular Army officer, Colonel William N. Haskell, to lead the mission.[74] Soviet officials routinely accused the ARA of being a military operation – "the wolf of capitalism under the sheepskin of charity."[75] As a result of these concerns, only about twenty-six regular army officers ever served in the over three hundred staff mission. Regardless, the recruitment of regular army soldiers had its drawbacks.

Business professionals and skilled industrialists factored in considerable attention in the ARA. Through Hoover's engineering connections, the ARA had an expansive network of skilled individuals in the business world. Relief work in the ruined

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[73] Previously the ARA had been accused of using "food as a weapon" particularly by Hungary and Russia. The best treatment on this subject can be found in David S. Foglesong, *America's Secret War against Bolshevism: United States Intervention in the Russian Civil War, 1917-1920*. (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1995).[74] "Cablegram from London to New York, 30 July 1921," American Relief Administration Russian Operational Records, Box 69, Folder 1, Hoover Institute Archives.

[74] "Cablegram from London to New York, 30 July 1921," American Relief Administration Russian Operational Records, Box 69, Folder 1, Hoover Institute Archives.

[75] Bertrand Patenaude. *The Big Show in Bololand: The American Relief Expedition to Soviet Russia in the Famine of 1921.* (Palo Alto, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2002), 676.

states of Europe required not only the distribution of food but total logistical support to help rebuild European markets and infrastructure. Many American companies had offices across the world as well as business interests run by talented managers or specialists. The Rockefeller Foundation, one of the earliest organizations to fund international relief missions, had personnel from its network apply for the Russian relief mission.[76] International Harvester, an agricultural manufacturer which ran several factories in Eastern Europe and Russia, was contacted by the ARA about any workers with language skills to act as interpreters.[77] Just like the early days of the Belgian relief, white-collar civilians played a critical role in Hoover's relief philosophy – only the best were demanded to run the business of relief aid.

The Rhodes scholars of the Belgian relief, while certainly exceptional in their case, established a precedent for bright, educated relief workers. Officially, a higher education background was not a requirement as many relief workers possessed a high school education, but a substantial number of applicants came from college backgrounds. Provincial managers often had a nominal educational background, including law school or graduate degrees, as was the case with Alexis Babine, an Ivy league-trained librarian.[78] Men who had served in the AEF as officers predominantly had university-level education, whether earned while pursuing a degree before the war or while going through officer candidate schools frequently hosted at universities.[79]

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[76] "Cablegram from New York to London, 12 September 1921," American Relief Administration Russian Operational Records, Box 69, Folder 1, Hoover Institute Archives.

[77] "Cablegram from New York to London, 16 August 1921," American Relief Administration Russian Operational Records, Box 69, Folder 1, Hoover Institute Archives.

[78] Alexis Babine received degrees from Cornell University and worked in institutions such as Stanford University and the Library of Congress. Patenaude, *Big Show in Bololand*, 419

[79] Faulkner, *The School of Hard Knocks*, 32-33.

The ARA also recruited young college students into the Russian mission. In a memo to the London office the ARA staff in New York preferred the Russian mission to include a balanced mix of older and younger ‘babyfeeders.’ Experience was a priority, but inexperienced personnel were also welcome, typically either men in their early 20s or university students, especially from Ivy League schools such as Stanford and John Hopkins. Particularly they looked for agricultural or engineering students whose practical expertise could drastically help the mission in the field. Interestingly a university education was never an overruling factor in selection; the ARA desired only those with practical experience who were “sound and surest giving maximum results in energy, intelligence, ideals.”[80]

Figure 2:"Mayer Raskin at Aleshki kitchen.” Raskin (center, right facing the camera), was a Sergeant First Class in the AEF during the First World War and served on the ARA Russian mission as district supervisor in Ukraine. Courtesy of Hoover Presidential Library

[80] “Cablegram from London to New York, 21 December 1921,” American Relief Administration Russian Operational Records, Box 69, Folder 1, Hoover Institute Archives.

For most ARA missions, foreign language proficiency was a highly desired skill. In the ARA, previously established language proficiency policies focused on utilizing local interpreters and ones provided by foreign governments. Most work conducted by American workers centered in district hubs where locally hired assistants communicated to the Americans in either English, French, or German. Only among provincial inspectors were the few language-savvy staff recruited, such as Frank Golder, a Stanford professor of Russian history. In most cases, American applicants with language fluency were desirable and remained in high demand. Noteworthy among the personnel hired for their language skill is Oscar Booman, a Latvian whose skill placed him as one of the main banking couriers for the ARA headquarters in Moscow.[81]

Among the Russian mission personnel was also a diverse toolbox of technical skills to face whatever challenges may arise. For example, in many Eastern European countries at the time, transportation infrastructure was unreliable and in a state of disrepair. Former pilots and garage mechanics received positions as couriers, mechanics, or, in the case of John Foy, as district inspectors. Based on mechanical and driving skills, Haskell recruited John Foy from the Near East Relief operation in Armenia for the Russian mission.[82] Engineers were readily put to work rebuilding or improving destroyed transportation systems. Any personnel with experience in communications such as telegraphers was always in demand. Journalism and media reporting was highly valued, as in the case of Floyd Traynham. Traynham, who later rose in the news

[81] "Rickard to Brown, 5 August 1921," American Relief Administration Russian Operational Records, Box 69, Folder 1, Hoover Institute Archives; Booman, Oscar 1921-24, Box 97, Personnel Series, Hoover Presidential Library.

[82] Patenaude, *The Big Show in Bololand*, 271.

reporting world to befriend famous writers like F. Scott Fitzgerald. As both the mission's motion picture man and photographer, Traynham captured striking footage that was featured not only in the ARA's 1922 newsreel "America's Gift to Famine-Stricken Russia," but also in Hoover's 1928 campaign reel "Herbert Hoover: Master of Emergencies."[83]

Soft skills, particularly in organizing and diplomacy, were in high demand for the Russian mission. The ARA system of relief heavily relied on cooperation with local authorities to distribute resources, recruit native staff, and rehabilitate infrastructure. Efficient distribution of food went down to not just delivery but total accountability of every single bag, can of milk, or even grain seed. Regardless of the state of local government, the ARA brought into its relief missions "real live Americans… who have enough punch and hard sense to surmount the existing transportation and distribution difficulties."[84]

Only experienced and capable representatives could be trusted to create an efficient organization on the ground in Russia, and district supervisors were required to have this skill. Colonel William Bell, decorated by the AEF in 1918 for his expertise in supply organization, received an immediate recommendation for the 1921 Russian mission due purely to his ability to negotiate and lead.[85] Diplomacy was also a critical skill, especially with government officials in Soviet Russia, as stated in the Riga Agreement. Soviet officials across Russia often proved unreliable and distrustful

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[83] Ibid, 505-506.

[84] "Cablegram from London to New York, 15 December 1921," American Relief Administration Russian Operational Records, Box 69, Folder 1, Hoover Institute Archives.

[85] Patenaude, *The Big Show in Bololand*, 521.

towards the American staff. Constantly on surveillance, the ARA could not afford for a small scuffle to become an international incident. Local politicians especially were troublesome – Arthur Ruhl, in a letter once wrote about how far more intolerable local officials were. “What might seem reasonable to [the ARA] in Moscow will be disputed by the second-rate representatives sent out by Moscow to the district.”[86]

Unlike other missions, the Russian mission also required a substantial medical staff not only for the Americans but to help assist Russian communities. Warfare and political strife left Russia stripped of medical experts who could properly manage hospitals and help nurture the population back to health. To resolve this, the ARA primarily derived its medical staff from the U.S. military under the guidance of Colonel Henry Beeuwkes, a veteran of the First World War and the ARA Armenian mission. Although the ARC had doctors available for service, the ARA chiefs harbored doubts about the “probable inefficiency the Red Cross doctors” and instead demanded U.S. Army Medical Corps doctors. The ARA contracted civilian doctors from the United States, specifically those with expertise in child health such as Dr. George Cornick from Texas.[87]

“Above Moral Criticism”: Personal Character in the ARA

Just as important as experience and skills, an individual’s character determined whether one’s acceptance into the ARA. As a powerful relief organization, the ARA not only set a standard of professionalism but moral conduct for relief work. While it seems

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[86] Weissman, *Herbert Hoover and Famine Relief to Soviet Russia, 1921-1923*, 119.

[87] For a detailed overview of the methodologies and medical work of the ARA Russian mission, see HenryBeeuwkes. *American Medical and Sanitary Relief in the Russian Famine, 1921-1923*. (New York: American Relief Administration, 1926). “Letter from Haskell to Brown, 2 January 1922,” General, Appeals, 1921-22, Box 5, Folder 4, Hoover Institute Archives.

obvious for humanitarian missions to be staffed with “good personalities,” the reality is that for many years relief work had been conducted poorly by previous relief missions. The Armenian mission, prior to the ARA’s adoption of the Near East Relief, was rife with corruption from local officials. Disorganized relief missions made for easy victims of corruption, inefficiency, or scandal. Even the American Red Cross, formerly the forerunner of American humanitarianism, received criticism as being disorganized gossipers and constant meddlers in regional politics.[88] Additionally, relief work had inherent political influence – how relief workers behaved as physical representatives of the ARA greatly mattered to Hoover and, indirectly, the United States as a nation. European governments, especially one as skeptical as Lenin’s, could not afford to be given any reason to distrust the moral character of the mission. Of course, the ARA could not control or spot every moral blemish of the staff it hires – indeed, many diary entries of the ARA men portray “honest men” committing unsavory acts including whoring, drunkenness, and even thievery.[89] To that end, the ARA considered numerous aspects during the hiring process for volunteers, even though there is no written list of requirements for eligibility.

Few seem to illustrate the character qualifications for the Russian mission, as Paul Clapp did. As one of the first relief workers to join the Russian relief mission, Clapp paraphrased one discussion from Col. Haskell while onboard a ship bound for Riga: “Talk little; express no political opinions; moral conduct must be above criticism. Wants

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[88] Irwin, Julia F. *Making the World Safe: The American Red Cross and a Nation's Humanitarian Awakening*. (London: Oxford University Press, 2013), 164.

[89] Numerous examples can be found throughout Patenaude’s *The Big Show in Bololand.* Also see “Confidential Letter from Michel Sniridov, 11 December 1921,” Saunders, Shelby 1917-22, Box 150, Personnel Series, Hoover Presidential Library.

a clean group of men. If any man is not willing to submerge his personality in this, wants to know as he can go home on same boat."[90] Moments like this, though rarely discussed in formal papers, demonstrate a deep concern for relief workers' thoughts and actions.

The individuals recruited for the relief mission demonstrate several 'Hooverite' values. Naturally, Hoover, as head administrator of the ARA, was barely involved in the actual process of recruiting. Yet, his influence deeply styled his relief organizations to circle around him as the central figure. Decentralized from the normal hierarchies of government organizations, Hoover's relief organizations hinged on the persona of its "Chief." Colonel Edward House, Woodrow Wilson's personal advisor, once described Hoover as "the kind of man that has to have complete control in order to do the thing well."[91] As Hoover's relief organizations expanded, so too did his persona as a benevolent humanitarian who gathered a grand following. Newspaper reporters routinely began to call him "The Food Dictator," "Food Czar," or "the Food Regulator of the World." Throughout Europe, a constant flood of gratitude letters, from poor peasants to nobles, streamed into Hoover's office. As a bigger-than-life individual, Hoover became a model for many aspiring relief workers.[92]

Hoover demanded from his staff total obedience to him and his directives, seeking to circumvent the deluge of committees to pursue as much efficiency as possible. Not only was this a workplace trait, but obedience represented a lifelong

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[90] "Clapp Diary," American Relief Administration Russian Operational Records, Box 107, Folder 12, Hoover Institute Archives.

[91] Quoted in David Burner. *Herbert Hoover: A Public Life*. (New York: Atheneum, 1984), 97.

[92] Walter Lyman Brown was the overall director of the European ARA operations. Patenaude*, The Big Show in Bololand*, 593.

commitment to Hoover. The consequences of disobedience often resulted in immediate removal and expulsion from the ARA, which also represented further condemnation from relief work. Disloyalty to Hoover also meant betrayal to the ARA men, and vice versa. In writing about Colonel Haskell, Walter Lyman Brown once wrote to a fellow employee that "a great deal of publicity has been built up around him, and on no account can we allow any friction to develop or any action which could possibly cause comment or scandal on the A.R.A. in America."[93] This attitude spread through the ARA, especially the upper-level ARA staff whom all developed a passionate loyalty to "the Chief." Despite the vast majority never once meeting the legendary humanitarian, the ARA workers continued to hold Hoover in high regard as a monumental figure throughout their lives. "There is an old saying among the ARA men," wrote Frank Golder, "that 'once you tie up with Hoover you can never quite shake him off.'"[94] The job of famine relief not only was for humanity but for the "Chief" himself.

Relief workers were expected to maintain an intensely American work ethic while keeping flexible. Workers were expected to be able to work independently for long periods of near isolation from other ARA staff. Consecutively, personnel had to be team players who could cooperate with new coworkers, often shifting from position to position based on orders from the main headquarters. Workers had to be more than willing to frequently travel across their assigned regions that sometimes spanned up to thousands of miles. Although time-management inherently typifies the American attitude towards work, ARA district supervisors had to be flexible and work with local time practices.

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[93] Ibid, 133.

[94] Ibid, 593-594.

James Rives Childs, district supervisor for Kazan, once recalled having to host a long planning meeting with local authorities planned for 9:00 PM, only to find the Russian committee of twenty-five finally arrived at his office at 2:00 AM.[95]

Although ARA staff shared a common belief in humanitarianism, relief workers were expected to adopt a very 'Hooverite' view of humanitarianism. In the postwar era, humanitarianism went through an evolution from a piecemeal effort of small communities to a massive collective effort propelled by the voluntarism of the First World War. Despite a sharp decline in American public support for international humanitarian operations in 1920, the draw of relief work brought in multitudes of individuals who believed in the righteousness of their work. Application letters frequently used romantic phrases about fighting famine for humanity or aiding the Russian people.[96]

This idealism, however, had to conform to ARA standards of efficiency. Unlike the stereotypes of overt empathy found in Red Cross and Quaker workers, the ARA men were business professionals first, humanitarians second. The American Relief Administration emphasized even in its own name the *administrative*, "white collar" approach to humanitarian relief. ARA workers were to show restrained selflessness – sympathy for the starving populace, but enough discipline to avoid changing standard practices. Every grain was to be accounted for and only distribute equal amounts of food, regardless of how desperate the local populace was. Unnecessary acts of

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[95] James R. Childs and Jamie H. Cockfield. *Black Lebeda: The Russian Famine Diary of ARA Kazan District Supervisor J. Rives Childs, 1921-1923*, (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2006), 37.

[96] Bruno Cabanes. *The Great War and the Origins of Humanitarianism, 1918-1924.* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 233.

"individual relief" like hasty food handouts or passing out extra rations were generally frowned upon and could mar a man as a "useless" ARA worker.[97] In one case, John Foy, a district inspector, was viewed with suspicion when he was withdrawing salary funds to help provide support to several peasant families, including seven schoolchildren. Relief workers had to either exhibit or quickly adopt a business attitude towards humanitarianism. One native Russian wrote how the Americans were very human characters who worked, "As if they are ashamed before their fellow-men to show that they are human… Such a combination of business-mind and great soul is very remarkable and beautiful."[98]

Excessive sensitivity towards suffering was also undesirable and typically resulted in the swift departure of an individual, both for the sake of the relief operation and the person's sanity. In most ARA relief missions, the horrible devastation of communities required personnel to have a significant degree of spiritual and moral endurance to carry out the work. Indeed, the ARA Russian relief mission came across a unique phenomenon that doctors called "famine shock" that demonstrated symptoms similar to mental and emotional weariness found in combat "shellshock" cases. Even veteran relief workers found the famine in Russia to be exceptionally overwhelming and a severe strain on their ability to work in the face of mass suffering. Whether small or large, idealism was recognized by many workers as a critical aspect to be an ARA worker, but to be an ARA 'babyfeeder' required emotional restraint – efficiency over feelings.

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[97] Patenaude, *The Big Show in Bololand*, 229.

[98] Ibid, 605; "Letter from Col. William Haskell to Mowan Mitchell, 21 October 1921," Foy, John 1922-26, Box 113, Hoover Presidential Library.

Political motives were one of the biggest boxes the ARA checked off when recruiting personnel. As outlined in the Riga Agreement, personnel were forbidden to openly discuss politics with Russians or be involved with any form of political activities. Most ARA personnel lacked any substantial political or social activist background, including labor union or political club membership. Politics to most ARA volunteers meant very little, thus circumventing the stipulation addressed in the Riga Agreement. Additionally, many of the veteran 'babyfeeders' had been outside of the U.S. working in the remote regions of Eastern Europe during the First Red Scare period. At the New York recruiting office personnel questioned candidates on their political beliefs, behaviors, and whether they knew about communism. Most Americans by 1921 were fully aware of Bolshevism but lacked any solid knowledge on the tenants of communism or its principles. Typically, what they did know was the destructive policies waged by Soviet officials, but until they were in Russia, most of this knowledge was based on secondhand stories or rumors. Usually, the less they knew, the more likely they were to be hired.

Again, exceptions to political activism did exist, as demonstrated by former governor Goodrich. James Putnam Goodrich was the most prominent politician to participate in the ARA mission. Goodrich served in a variety of roles in the state of Indiana, including governor during the First World War and a runner for the Republican presidential nomination against Warren Harding. Goodrich previously had no personal affiliation with Russia, though he frequently commented on foreign policy matters, especially regarding the Russian revolutions. Goodrich was also an early advocate of strengthening relations with the USSR and received scathing criticism from his

supporters in Indiana. It comes as a surprise then when the ARA contacted for a position as a special investigator for the Russian Relief Commission. When he received news of the offer, his reaction was dismissive – "I know nothing of Russian culture." It was this exact ignorance of Russian politics that appealed even more to the ARA.[99]

Undesirable Traits

While the ARA was intentionally vague in criteria for selection, the organization was nevertheless very explicit on the type of individual it did not want. Perhaps the strictest rule of ARA recruitment was the ban on women as official ARA staff. Women were permitted to hold stenographer positions in New York and London, but not as mission personnel or supervisors. It remains unclear exactly why this ban was maintained for years, but several possibilities exist. From the early days of Hoover's relief work, his staff was concerned about sending personnel to work in warzones, none the least in Belgium, where several infamous war crimes had occurred in 1914. In most countries, personnel lacked minimal protection even in regions where circumstances changed very quickly – robberies or kidnappings were not uncommon. As the postwar reconstruction period spurred on, the danger persisted as Eastern Europe writhed in social upheaval. Edgar Rickard, the manager of the ARA London office, denied many women applicants as they were considered too "risky and perhaps hampering in early stages" for Russia.[100] Even with qualified staff, the ban was maintained - in a telegram conversation between the New York and London offices, an inquiry was sent out about

[99] Patenaude, *The Big Show in Bololand*, 157.

[100] "Cablegram from London to New York, 3 September 1921," American Relief Administration Russian Operational Records, Box 69, Folder 1, Hoover Institute Archives.

an offer from the American Women's Hospital Service to send a small team of trained, experienced nurses from a Serbian mission to the 1921 Russian mission. Very promptly, the offer was turned down on the basis that the staff "see no reason to change" or lift the ban.[101] In another inquiry by an experienced ARA female relief worker for the Russian mission, the office responded that "under the disturbed conditions, great hardships and uncertain tenure of our Russian work, we should confine our personnel to men, no matter how good 'soldiers' some women, and you particularly, would be."[102] It should be noted that several organizations the ARA cooperated with utilized women as ambassadors such as Nancy J. Babb of the Friends in Russia relief committee.[103] In addition, and much to the irritation of the ARA offices, wives of relief staff regularly ignored the ban and on their initiative traveled to Russia.[104]

Recruitment also had to take into consideration religion in extreme circumstances. As an apolitical, nongovernment organization, the ARA avoided making appeals to religious convictions to recruit relief workers. Prior to the Russian famine most ARA missions carefully avoided the discussion of religion altogether to keep separate from regional politics. Russia changed this precedent in the face of Bolshevik antireligious campaigns. Preceding the war, Russian antisemitic pogroms were well-known internationally, thus inspiring the ARA to avoid recruiting Jewish people into the

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[101] "Cablegram from London to New York, 24 October 1921," American Relief Administration Russian Operational Records, Box 69, Folder 1, Hoover Institute Archives.

[102] "Letter from Walter Lyman Brown to Ms. Singer, 14 November 1921," Correspondence, 1921, Box 249, Personnel Series, Hoover Presidential Library.

[103] "Records with Photographs," American Relief Administration Russian Operational Records, Box 71, Folder 3, Hoover Institute Archives.

[104] Among the most famous cases was Col. William N. Haskell's wife. Patenaude, *The Big Show in Bololand*, 128.

mission. However, among the personnel who partook in the 1921 famine was Mayer Kowalsky, a Jewish priest, and several Eastern European Jews like Frank Golder whose family originally had fled Russia in the wake of the 1890s pogroms.[105]

Cultural backgrounds were another extra measure the ARA had to consider for the Russian famine relief mission. In the initial phase of recruitment, native Russians, former Tsarists, the bourgeoisie, and military personnel who had prior service in Russia within the previous decade were regularly passed over. Although such individuals had valuable skills, ARA staff felt was unlikely "if these attributes will overcome the disadvantages of having people schooled in the old way, and who still look upon Russia with a pre-revolution view point."[106] The risk was too great to readily employ them since their presence on ARA rosters could upset Soviet officials and give them cause to alienate the ARA as an international conspiracy. "Anyone of Russian descent in Russia will be judged as a Russian; those of American descent will be judged as something abnormal anyway."[107] Similarly, the ARA barely recruited any personnel who participated in the Allied Intervention in Northwestern Russia in 1918 or served as foreign diplomats for the American consulates in Russia. Exceptions do exist, such as James Somerville Jr. who was with the YMCA in the Allied Intervention or Leon Turrou,

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[105] Patenaude, *The Big Show in Bololand,* 50-51.

[106] "Letter Moscow to London, 12 September 1921," American Relief Administration Russian Operational Records, Box 69, Folder 1, Hoover Institute Archives.

[107] "Herbert Hoover Letter to Brown, undated," American Relief Administration Russian Operational Records, Box 415, Folder 5, Hoover Institute Archives.

a Russian-American who had served in the Tsarist army during the Russo-Japanese War and the First World War.[108]

The ARA staff that passed through Russia in 1921 represented a highly specialized and carefully groomed image of American humanitarianism hardly matched in its time. From idealistic Rhodes scholars to doughboys without a war, the ARA staff in Russia came to represent the best of American ingenuity mustered from the chaotic decade of the 1910s. The ARA matched the needs of foreign relief not with overwhelming charity but with the most skilled and qualified in the growing new field of humanitarian relief. Completely doing away with an exact list of qualifications freed the ARA to shape its staff to the raw demands of every relief mission. The ARA only wanted professionals with practical experience or technical skills like businessmen, office orderlies, translators, soldiers, or engineers. The ARA responded well to knowledgeable applicants who had letters of recommendations and practical European work experience over any but the most exceptional volunteers.

To become an ARA man meant emulating the specific idealism and discipline of Herbert Hoover, the "Master of Efficiency." It meant being able to work under immense pressure with great emotional restraint while being both flexible and self-sufficient. It also meant being thoroughly free of anything that could entangle an individual and in turn, the entire mission: gender (women), ethnic backgrounds (Jews and ethnic Russians), or political views (union workers). No matter how skilled an individual may be, the ARA turned away individuals who might be a liability in the famine zones. The

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[108] "Cablegram from London to New York, 15 December 1921," American Relief Administration Russian Operational Records, Box 69, Folder 1, Hoover Institute Archives; Leon Turrov, Box 160, Personnel Series, Hoover Presidential Library.

recruiting preferences of the ARA paradoxically brought the organization an abundance of talent but muffled the purity of charity. The personnel the ARA selected and sent to save the lives of Russian peasants were indeed average Americans, but ones still exceptional in skills, experience, and American ideology.

CHAPTER 5

ANGELS OR ADVENTURERS? MOTIVATIONS OF VETERANS IN THE ARA 1921 RUSSIAN RELIEF MISSION

> *Never was there such an exhibit of the power of the American way of life as these men presented…*
>
> – Herbert Hoover

In the summer of 1921, a New York City office building on 42 Broadway buzzed with activity. At the home of the American Relief Administration (ARA), office staff constantly worked to prepare for their largest relief operation ever. Everyone had heard the news: The Riga Agreement had just been signed between the ARA and representatives of Bolshevik Russia to conduct a feeding campaign for one million starving Russian children. For weeks everyone across the world had heard about a serious famine in Russia that was devastating the countryside. Likewise, the ARA staff knew that it was going to be one of the toughest missions thus far. However, few expected to receive the masses of applications for the 'Russian job.' In London, there were reportedly lines of applicants waiting outside to get an interview for the ARA. "Your mail and that of everyone else is being flooded with requests for jobs in Russia. What anyone wants to go to Russia for, I cannot see," complained Frank C. Page of the ARA New York office.[109]

Previously historians have pondered Page's very same question, but not thoroughly and with a special focus on the largest percentage of the 1921 ARA Russian mission's personnel: military veterans. The ARA, a titan in humanitarian relief, garnered

[109] "Frank C. Page to George Barr Baker, 28 July 1921," George Barr Baker Papers, Folder 5, Hoover Institute Archives.

the attention of everyone from Rhodes scholars down to small-town mechanics. Yet, the most common background represented in the mission was not youths or college students, but military veterans, both active duty and discharged. So many, in fact, were veterans that the ARA staff provoked concerns about appearing 'too military' to skeptical Soviet officials fearing an American invasion under the guise of humanitarian relief.[110]

Contextually the American veterans' postwar experience does not easily lend itself to interest in Russia. While the U.S. achieved a significant international standing during the First World War, by 1921, American international involvement was rapidly deescalating as it became apparent that war-torn Europe was well on its way to recovery. Most of the American Occupation Army had already demobilized and sent its troops back across the Atlantic to America. Many of these returning veterans not only found themselves jobless but in a country undergoing an economic recession in 1919. Labor strikes and the First Red Scare of 1919 reinforced an ironclad nonrecognition policy towards Russia while sowing in American minds long-lasting seeds of distrust towards communism – or anything labeled "unpatriotic." Few organizations spearheaded the mass hysteria of the Red Scare like the veterans organization the American Legion whose members routinely persecuted suspected communists. Finally, the 1920 election of Warren G. Harding as President of the United States brought with it an administration that preached a radical turn from "making the world safe for

[110] For an example, see Bertrand Patenaude. *The Big Show in Bololand: The American Relief Expedition to Soviet Russia in the Famine of 1921.* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2002); "Cablegram New York to London 7 December 1921," American Relief Administration Russian Operational Records, Box 69, Folder 2, Hoover Institute Archives; Benjamin M. Weissman, *Herbert Hoover and Famine Relief to Soviet Russia, 1921-1923.* (Stanford, Calif.: Hoover Institute Press, 1974), 38, 84.

democracy" to a "return to normalcy." Given all these circumstances, one must ask why then in mid-1921 were the ARA offices swarmed with thousands of applicants clamoring for appointments to the Russian relief mission. What propelled all these American warriors, both prior service and active duty, to want to go to Russia?[111]

In total, 381 Americans went to Bolshevik Russia, yet one could say there just as many reasons for each relief worker to serve in overseas work. Their motivations were so complex that, as historian Bertrand Patenaude notes in *The Big Show in Bololand*, "it is doubtful that any relief worker truly understood the particular mix of his own motivations at any given moment."[112] Neither is it easy to understand the various motivations of military veterans whose war experience had, for better or worse, a substantial impact on their lives. Among the ARA were general trends of personal motivation for relief work in relation to the 1921 Russian famine relief mission: service in the business of relief, idealism to "Hoover humanitarianism," and a sense of raw adventure. Of the 381 relief workers, five demonstrate variations of these motivations: Henry Beeuwkes, Walter L. Bell, Paul S. Clapp, Charles H. Veil, and James R. Childs.

The postwar reconstruction period in Europe gave rise to a critical shift in the development and creation of "professional humanitarians." During this period, humanitarian operations transformed from humble collectives of goodwill to highly influential reconstruction operations. Few organizations pioneered the art of the "business of relief" as the American Relief Administration. Spawned from the

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[111] For more context on post-WWI America, see David Kennedy, *Over Here: The First World War and American Society.* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980). Also, see Robert K. Murray, *Red Scare; a Study in National Hysteria, 1919-1920*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1955).

[112] Patenaude, *The Big Show in Bololand*, 50

foundations of the wartime United States Food Administration, the ARA departed from the stereotypical image of grassroots-driven "blue-collar" relief work to a business-like "white-collar" approach. Throughout 1919 the ARA exponentially grew to replace the American Red Cross as the humanitarian arm of the United States. Intent on creating an extremely efficient organization, Herbert Hoover's ARA recruited exceptionally skilled volunteers, so-called "professional babyfeeders," to conduct vast operations in over twenty different European countries.[113]

In the Reconstruction period, the ARA's main source of manpower came from thousands of American service members who embodied not only a wide variety of critical technical skills but also the idealism of American humanitarianism. Beginning from the November 11 Armistice, US food relief programs began to recruit from the surplus of AEF troops in Europe. Before the year was finished, Hoover began requesting from the AEF Supreme Command specific personnel to participate in various forms of relief work. Although the ARA became a private organization in 1919, active-duty personnel were still frequently requested throughout all of the ARA relief missions, including the 1921 Russian famine mission.[114]

Among these selected officers was Colonel Henry Beeuwkes, the epitome of one of these 'professional babyfeeders.' Born in 1881 in New Jersey, Henry Beeuwkes was the son of John C. Beeuwkes and Hendricka Koller. When Henry was fifteen in 1896,

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[113] For more information see Herbert Hoover. *An American Epic*. Vol II & III, (Chicago: H. Regnery Co, 1959). For contextual studies, also see Bruno Cabanes. *The Great War and the Origins of Humanitarianism, 1918-1924.* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014). On the American Red Cross, see Julia F. Irwin. *Making the World Safe: The American Red Cross and a Nation's Humanitarian Awakening*. (London: Oxford University Press, 2013).

[114] Herbert Hoover, *The Memoirs of Herbert Hoover: Years of Adventure, 1890-1920*. (London: MacMillan, 1951), 294; "Cablegram from London to New York, 21 December 1921," American Relief Administration Russian Operational Records, Box 69, Folder 1, Hoover Institute Archives.

his mother passed away, followed by his father in 1915.[115] Long before the First World War, Beeuwkes had distinguished himself among his peers when, in 1910, he graduated from the Army Medical School with honors, including the Hoff Memorial Medal.[116] Commissioned as a First Lieutenant in the Army Medical Reserves, upon America's entry into the Great War in 1917, Beeuwkes went into France with the AEF General Headquarters medical team. Although he was only an assistant to General Surgeon Colonel Alfred Bradley, Beeuwkes served as General John Pershing's private doctor and frequently was among the general's entourage.[117] As a part of General Headquarters, Beeuwkes never formally saw combat. However, as Inspector of Hospitals, he traveled frequently and indirectly participated in almost every major engagement with the AEF from the Second Battle of the Marne to the Meuse-Argonne Offensive. For his work as Inspector of Hospitals, Beeuwkes received the Army Distinguished Service Medal on 9 July 1919, the French Legion of Honor, and a promotion to lieutenant colonel.[118]

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[115] John C. Beeuwkes in New York County Marriage Records, 1847-1849, 1907-1936. Digital images. Ancestry.com. October 24, 2018. http://ancestry.com; John C. Beeuwkes in U.S. Find a Grave Index, 1600s-Current. Digital images. Findagrave.com. November 2, 2018. http://findagrave.com.

[116] Edgar E. Hume, *The Medals of the United States Army Medical Department and Medals Honoring Army Medical Officers*. (New York: The American numismatic Society, 1942), 12.[117] New York County Marriage Records, 1847-1849, 1907-1936. Digital images. Ancestry.com. October 24, 2018. http://ancestry.com.; "Roll of Military Forces of U.S. Disembarked From S.S. "Baltic" at Liverpool, June 8, 1917," U.S. Army Transport Service, Passenger Lists, 1910-1939 for Henry Beeuwkes. Digital images. Ancestry.com. October 24, 2018. http://ancestry.com.

[117] New York County Marriage Records, 1847-1849, 1907-1936. Digital images. Ancestry.com. October 24, 2018. http://ancestry.com.; "Roll of Military Forces of U.S. Disembarked From S.S. "Baltic" at Liverpool, June 8, 1917," U.S. Army Transport Service, Passenger Lists, 1910-1939 for Henry Beeuwkes. Digital images. Ancestry.com. October 24, 2018. http://ancestry.com.

[118] New York, Abstracts of World War I Military Service, 1917-1919, "Henry Beeuwkes" Digital images. Ancestry.com. October 26, 2018. http://ancestry.com; "Pershing's Personal Physician Prescribed for Russia's Ills; Medical Aid Saved Millions." Kingston Daily Freeman, July 17 1923. Digital images. Ancestry.com. October 24, 2018. http://ancestry.com.

As the war ended, Colonel Beeuwkes remained in Europe to continue his valuable medical work. He was a natural choice for the 1919 U.S. military mission to Armenia spearheaded by Major General James G. Harbord. As health and sanitation inspector, Beeuwkes reported on the conditions in Armenia and toured cities like Constantinople and the surrounding countryside devastated by warfare and genocide. The findings from General Harbord's commission advocated for further aid organized under Colonel William N. Haskell, head of the U.S. Military Armenian Relief at the time and future head of the 1921 ARA Russian mission. Col. Beeuwkes, however, did not take part in any ARA relief missions and was instead transferred back to the United States, where he was discharged from active duty and placed into the army reserves.[119]

Colonel Beeuwkes stands out from many other ARA workers in one key factor – he did not volunteer. Although the ARA did receive thousands of applicants for the Russian mission, it proved vital to the ARA to requisition personnel directly from the U.S. War Department to satisfy its staff needs. Col. Haskell, now head of the ARA Russian mission, specifically requested officers had previously served with him in Armenia or Romania. Additionally, many of the ARA staff at the time were not medical professionals because, in previous missions, the ARA heavily relied on local hospitals and doctors. The ARA advance party soon discovered the demands of the Russian mission required for not just more medical supplies but for an expedient medical staff. The solution came from long-standing connections in the military, particularly the U.S. Army Medical Corps. In total, about twenty-six regular army officers from the U.S. Army

[119] See James G. Harbord. *Conditions in the Near East. Report of the American Military Mission to Armenia*. (Washington: 1920), Pg. 9-11; U.S. Select Military Registers, 1862-1985, p.154, Digital images. Ancestry.com. October 24, 2018. http://ancestry.com.

served in the ARA Russian mission, with no more than nineteen in Russia at one time.[120]

Col. Beeuwkes also was personally selected by Herbert Hoover. While serving in the Office of the Attending Surgeon General in Washington D.C., Col. Beeuwkes met Hoover during one of the numerous meetings between Hoover and Chairman of the American Red Cross Dr. Livingston Farrand. Hoover was "greatly impressed with the Colonel's abilities" and requested his services specifically for the Russian mission. On 27 August 1921, Col. Beeuwkes received orders from the War Department, relieving him from his Washington duties with orders to report to the ARA New York Office. Assigned as head of the medical department for the ARA in Moscow, Beeuwkes went into Russia with Col. Haskell's party in late September.[121]

Col. Beeuwkes and his medical team, despite going in with little information on the Russian health and sanitation situation, were incredibly effective in saving millions of lives. Pouring in hundreds of tons of medical supplies, the small military medical team went to work organizing hospitals, vaccination stations, and sick wards. The work was certainly overwhelming for whole regions in Soviet Russia had deteriorated badly during the 1921 famine – "Crimea," stated Col. Beeuwkes, "has degenerated from a health resort into a hot bed of disease."[122] Malnutrition reached epidemic levels, made worse only by a nonfunctional hospital system ruined after years of revolution, war, and repressions. Despite these challenges, Col. Beeuwkes' staff provided not only life-

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[120] Patenaude, *The Big Show in Bololand*, 62-63; Harold H. Fisher, *The Famine in Soviet Russia, 1919-1923: The Operations of the American Relief Administration.* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1935), 436-439.

[121] Hoover, *An American Epic*, 467.

[122] Hoover, *An American Epic*, 471.

saving medical expertise and organization but drastically improved the quality of life for many Russian peasants. Perhaps Beeuwkes' most personal relief measure was organizing clothing allotments for newborn babies – two sets of flannel dresses, undershirts, stockings, with one pair of shoes, and six diapers with safety pins. According to Daily Mail reporter Frederick Mackenzie, this was the medical leader's proudest exhibit.[123]

As a character Col. Beeuwkes is hard to decipher since he wrote very little outside of professional reports. Although Beeuwkes was a married man, he evidently did not keep in constant touch with his family while overseas. From the scant evidence available, one senses that he was a strict and proud character. In Russia, Col. Beeuwkes was a part of a small incident where, while traveling on a train, his and his traveling companions were stopped, and their belongings thoroughly searched by local Cheka agents. Although Beeuwkes lost nothing in the incident, he bitterly protested the search as "a disgrace and an insult to the Administration." One must note that this incident was not particularly exceptional – throughout the entirety of the mission ARA workers had been subject to these surprise searches and were not overly shocked by them. In fact, during the search Beeuwkes witnessed, one of his companions reacted to every Cheka inquiry on every item – from blank film down to pillow feathers – with a snark "You can have it. I'm glad to get rid of it."[124]

Elsewhere in his life do we discern the kind of man Col. Beeuwkes was: a

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[123] Henry Beeuwkes, *American Medical and Sanitary Relief in the Russian Famine, 1921-1923*. (Cornell: New York, 1926), 30-31, 57, 66; Frederick Mackenzie, *Russia Before Dawn*. (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1923), 161.[124] Patenaude, *The Big Show in Bololand,* 679-80.

[124] Patenaude, *The Big Show in Bololand,* 679-80.

complex, stern yet caring personality. After the Russian famine mission, Beeuwkes continued his medical work in the U.S. Reserve Army at numerous training camps until 1925 when he formally exited the military. Hoover, still impressed by Beeuwkes' skill and efficiency, offered the former medical division chief a leading position forming the American Child Health Association (ACHA). Beeuwkes regretfully declined the position in order to participate in the Rockefeller Foundation's Yellow Fever Commission to West Africa.[125] As head of the mission Colonel Beeuwkes was so frugal that staff could not receive even new pencils until they turned in pencil stubs as proof. Regardless of his strict nature, his medical work in the Yellow Fever Commission proved extremely valuable enough for him to receive from the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine the Mary Kingsley medal in 1934. Later in life, when Col. Beeuwkes was in charge of the Valley Forge Veterans' Hospital, he reportedly chastised a newly-arrived clinician named Michael Lepore for using too much gas at the hospital's gas pumps. Lepore, who later became a pioneer in gastroenterology, viewed Col. Beeuwkes as a very severe and difficult man. However, as Beeuwkes' health declined, Lepore was chosen by the colonel to serve as his consultant. Interestingly, Lepore later learned of Beeuwkes' exploits when he served as President Hoover's physician. In reflection Lepore wrote that Beeuwkes, while a harsh and demanding character, did fine work that ensured "his place among the heroes of this century."[126]

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[125] Beeuwkes originally had been offered a position by the Rockefeller Foundation in 1923 but turned it down due to his military duties and his desire to be associated with Hoover's projects. Beeuwkes did not accept the 1925 offer until he had heard from Hoover regarding taking up the proposition. See Beeuwkes, Dr. Henry 1921-1949, Box 94, Personnel Series, Hoover Presidential Library.

[126] "Memo to Rickard, Sawtelle and Wright, 10 May 1935," Beeuwkes, Henry, Box 94, Personnel Series, Hoover Presidential Library; Michael J. Lepore, *Life of a Clinician*. (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2002), 171-173, 198.[127] Walter Duranty. *Duranty Reports Russia*. (New York: Viking

Nevertheless, Beeuwkes was just one man out of a small group of active duty officers chosen for the Russian mission. While almost all the ARA army volunteers received assignments to the mission, one exception did exist in Haskell's "officer crowd" – Colonel Walter Lincoln Bell. A tall, imposing man, Bell gained fame during the 1921 Russian famine as the district supervisor for Ufa, located near the edges of the Siberian wastes. What started as a feeding operation for 50,000 civilians eventually grew to a colossal 1.2 million Russian peasants encompassing the entirety of the Bashkir Tatars, at the time a relatively autonomous republic in the Soviet Union. Across Russia, everyone in the ARA knew about Bell's exploits and his growing fame as the 'Savior of the Bashkirs.' "If the United States ever recognized Russia," New York Times correspondent Walter Duranty once wrote, "and an autonomous Bashkir Republic was ever allowed to have a foreign representative, then Colonel Bell would be it."[127]

Colonel Bell's background is certainly unmatched by many ARA personnel. On 12 July 1874, Walter Lincoln Bell was born in Brooklyn, New York, to Thomas and Emily Bell. The son of a career cavalryman and American Civil War veteran, Walter Bell, studied veterinary medicine at McGill University in Montreal and graduated in 1898 just as the Spanish American War began. With haste, Bell volunteered in Troop 'C' of the New York Volunteer Cavalry as a horseshoe farrier. In the conflict, Troop 'C' saw extensive action around Coamo, Puerto Rico, where the unit captured bridges and

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Press, 1934), 35.[128] James B. Lyon, *New York in the Spanish-American War 1898: Part of the Report of the Adjutant General of the State for 1900. Vols. 1-3*. (Albany: State Printer, 1900), 274-276, 278

[127] Walter Duranty. *Duranty Reports Russia*. (New York: Viking Press, 1934), 35.[128] James B. Lyon, *New York in the Spanish-American War 1898: Part of the Report of the Adjutant General of the State for 1900. Vols. 1-3*. (Albany: State Printer, 1900), 274-276, 278

fought against entrenched Spanish forces.[128] After the brief war ended, Bell chose to remain in the cavalry service and obtained a commission as an officer in the New York National Guard. Outside of the military, Bell resumed his veterinary work in the state of New York, assisting research efforts into a vaccine for equine influenza. During the Great War, Bell assisted in the transport of horses bought by the Italian government in 1915 and later for the British government in 1916.[129]

When the United States entered the First World War, Bell was among the first group of American troops to land in France as a part of the Motor Battalion of the 102nd Ammunition Train, 27th Infantry Division. As the debarkation officer, Bell detrained troops from the ships and organized the division's salvage corps. When his unit moved to the frontlines in August of 1918, he became the motor transport officer of the 102nd attached at the time to the 79th Division during the Meuse-Argonne Offensive in the Verdun sector. During the offensive, Bell distinguished himself in maintaining an organized supply chain for the 79th Division, earning him a citation in the 27th Division's unit record. By the end of the war, Bell was made a colonel and continued his service back in the States as a part of the training base staff in Peekskill, New York. His service in the 27th Division was so remarkable that the divisional staff kept in constant contact with him during the Russian mission, from providing their own letter of recommendation

[128] James B. Lyon, *New York in the Spanish-American War 1898: Part of the Report of the Adjutant General of the State for 1900. Vols. 1-3*. (Albany: State Printer, 1900), 274-276, 278

[129] "Death of the Day; Major Thomas Bell," New York Times, 12 November 1900. Online. https://www.nytimes.com/search?query=archives; ARA Application letter, Bell, 24 August 1921, Bell, Walter L., Box 95, Personnel Series, Hoover Presidential Library.

for Bell's application to meeting him at the docks when he returned to New York two years later.[130]

For such a successful military careerist, it comes as a curiosity for him to participate in the ARA Russia mission. Unlike many of the ARA workers who volunteered earlier in the postwar period, Bell was strictly an army professional who had no overt inclination to relief work aside from Salvation Army drives and local community charities. Col. Bell's cover letter for his ARA application is almost completely devoid of any tinge of emotion, instead focusing solely on his specific qualifications. In most of his letters Bell intentionally leaves out personal matters or thoughts, instead, focusing mainly on his relief work. On the face value is an impression that Bell simply just acted on a whim and volunteered his services. Regardless, Bell's extensive application and accompanying recommendation letters caused quite a stir among the ARA – almost without hesitation, Rickard scrawled on the application 'will send immediately in next detachment.'[131]

In Russia Colonel Bell demonstrated an exceeding willingness to take on more people to feed surrounding his district despite his limited staff. In his reports to Moscow, Bell was not afraid to point out the desperation of the famine situation in his region, remarking that the ARA is "the only barrier between many of the hungry ones and death." Reports from district inspectors presented grim findings such as stories of

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[130]New York, Abstracts of World War I Military Service, 1917-1919 for Walter Lincoln Bell, WWI Officer Cards Barrett, A - Bennett, H (Box 669), National Archives. Nara.org; "Letter to Rickard," Bell, Walter L. – Personal, Box 95, Personnel Series, Hoover Presidential Library; "Hero of Famine", Col. Bell, Returns," Bell, Walter L. Correspondence, Box 95, Personnel Series, Hoover Presidential Library.

[131] "ARA Application letter, Bell, 24 August 1921," Bell, Walter L. – Correspondence, Box 95, Hoover Presidential Library; "Letter from Bell to Page, 21 December 1921," Bell, Walter L. – Correspondence, Box 95, Hoover Presidential Library.

priests begging for bread, not for themselves, but only to hold Communion for the dying. Particularly in his region – the Bashkir nation – Bell wrote: "As we are the only relief organization these latter people have ever seen and their economic situation is so extremely bad, the ARA is the only hope they have to save them from complete extinction." Bell certainly believed in the importance of his work and even took pride in the scale of it – in reference to another district supervisor, Bell once wrote, "We ought to see how this all compares to our friend [J. Rives] Childs."[132]

Colonel Bell also was endeared by the volunteers of the ARA, whom he found to be an efficient and outstanding collective of workers. After the mission Bell kept in close contact with several ARA workers, though he was not an active member of the ARA Association for former relief workers. Regardless, in one letter he openly confided his enduring admiration for the organization:

> My association with the ARA has been always the greatest pleasure and satisfaction of anything I have ever been connected with and the spirit of loyalty shown throughout the entire organization, as exhibited by the difficult and dangerous work in Russia, where only the motto seemed "Carry on" made it a great honor to have been a part of the organization.[133]

Likewise, "Ginger" Bell, as some of his old army comrades called him, had a very personable character. Almost everyone who worked alongside him found him to be an admirable character. From buying new spectacles for his interpreter to helping restart an old glasswork factory, Bell's character was genuine. "Colonel Bell is the prize of all

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[132] Patenaude, *The Big Show in Bololand*, 524-525; "Bell Memo 1 December 1921," Bell, Walter L. – Correspondence, Box 95, Personnel Series, Hoover Presidential Library.

[133] "Letter from Bell to Page, 23 September 1923," Bell, Walter L. – Correspondence, Box 95, Personnel Series, Hoover Presidential Library.

our people," remarked Frank Page from the ARA New York office.[134] Russian citizens, respectful of age, found the 50-year-old colonel to be an upstanding man and showered him with praise and honors. Even so, Bell certainly had his faults – late in 1921 Evelyn Bell, his wife, sent out a letter to the ARA complaining about how her funds were drying up and that Colonel Bell was refusing to give her financial support. The situation worried the ARA offices as in one letter Christian Herter noted that if Ms. Bell's plight were true, "I should imagine that the Colonel was not the type of man that we wanted on any of our staffs." While it is unclear if there was a resolution, it does appear that later in life, Bell was single.[135]

When one examines Colonel Bell's entire life, it is apparent he is constantly getting into new ventures and challenges, almost resembling a mid-life crisis. After returning from Russia in 1923, Bell never resumed veterinary medicine and instead inquired with the ARA New York Office about further work in Russia. "I am thoroughly fed up on idleness and anxious to get into something use up a lot of nervous energy. I am very anxious to go back to Russia at the earliest opportunity…"[136] Instead, Bell pursued various jobs and adventures throughout the remainder of his life. Among the highlights includes the founder of an aviation educational film company, a hotel purchasing agent, and a job in the 1924 Republican National Committee only

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[134] "Letter from Page to Burroughs, 9 July 1923," Bell, Walter L. – Personal, Box 95, Personnel Series, Hoover Presidential Library.

[135] "Letter from O'Ryan to Haskell, 23 August 1921," Bell, Walter L. – Personal, Box 95, Personnel Series, Hoover Presidential Library; "London to Moscow, 913," Bell, Walter L. PS, Box 95, Hoover Presidential Library; "Letter from Evelyn Bell to Herbert Hoover, 23 October 1921," Bell, Walter L. – Financial, Box 95, PS, Hoover Presidential Library; "Herter to Rickard, 28 October 1921," Bell, Walter L. – Financial, Box 95, PS, Hoover Presidential Library.

[136] "Letter from Bell to Frank Page, 23 October 1923," Bell, Walter L. – Correspondence, Box 95, Personnel Series, Hoover Presidential Library.

describable as “fighting against radicalism in this country.”[137] Bell also advocated for unrealistically big enterprises. One of his endeavors sought to organize another feeding operation for Ukraine and Russia during the Holodomor. Another endeavor, in 1940, proposed organizing an all-volunteer air ambulance escadrille to help Finland during the Winter War.[138]

Colonel Bell’s case, more than that of Haskell’s ‘officer crowd,’ inadvertently resembles the ‘Hooverite’ humanitarian that commonly staffed the ARA Russian mission. Many idealists looked up to Herbert Hoover, often referring to him as ‘Chief’ and demonstrating a fierce loyalty to the businessman-turned-humanitarian. Hoover’s style of organization was starkly dictatorial, centering most of the organization not on committees and councils but his persona. Newspaper reporters routinely called him “The Food Dictator,” “Food Czar,” or “the Food Regulator of the World.” Colonel Edward House, President Woodrow Wilson’s personal advisor, once described Hoover as “the kind of man that has to have complete control in order to do the thing well.”[139] As a leader in American humanitarianism, few could argue against his system which sufficiently supplied millions of dollars’ worth of aid to over twenty European countries. Hoover was incredibly demanding to those who served in his organization; his staff was to be obedient, efficient, and highly professional both in work and personal character. Much like an endearing commanding officer, Hoover served as a role model to military

[137] “Rickard to Dailey, 19 September 1924,” Bell, Walter L., Personnel Series, Hoover Presidential Library.

[138] “Sawtelle to Bell, 4 June 1931,” Bell, Walter L. – Personal, Personnel Series, Hoover Library Archive; Patenaude, *The Big Show in Bololand,* 736.

[139] Quoted in David Burner. *Herbert Hoover: A Public Life*. (New York: Atheneum, 1984), 97.

veterans wanting to utilize their humanitarian passions. Indeed, many veterans would become 'Hooverites,' remaining loyal to Hoover for their entire lives.[140]

Individuals like Paul Spencer Clapp convey this type of 'Hooverite' character. Born 29 July 1890, in Toledo, Iowa, Clapp grew up in a Presbyterian family. In 1913 he graduated from Iowa State College and worked as an engineer for Western Electric Company. During the First World War, Clapp was commissioned as a lieutenant in the Iowa State Guard in 1915 before joining the American Expeditionary Force in 1917. In the Signal Corps he was first tasked with field testing radio communications between infantry, artillery, and airplanes in the States. His greatest wartime assignment was to direct the construction of a production plant for small batteries in France. He was sent to France in September 1918 to oversee the factory, but the war ended before construction began. In the post-Armistice period, he frequently volunteered for the ARA, including missions all over southern and eastern Europe like Italy, Yugoslavia, Poland, Serbia, Austria, and Hungary. As a captain waiting to be demobilized, one of Clapp's primary jobs in the ARA was to head the ARA telegraph system across Europe. His service in the ARA was so noteworthy that in later years, Clapp eventually served as Hoover's personal aide in Washington and several high management positions in the gas and electric industry.[141]

Clapp certainly was one whom fellow relief workers characterized as a wholesome fellow. Standing at five foot seven, one worker described Clapp as a

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[140] Patenaude, *The Big Show in Bololand*, 593-594.

[141] Hoover, *An American Epic*, Vol. III, 264; Patenaude, *The Big Show in Bololand*, 602; "Paul S. Clapp, Ex-Utilities Official, Dies," New York Herald Tribune, 7 December 1953, Clapp, Paul, Box 103, Personnel Series, Hoover Presidential Library; "Training and Experience of Paul S. Clapp" memo, Clapp, Paul, Box 103, Personnel Series, Hoover Presidential Library.

"handsome, serious fellow who had his life completely mapped out..."[142] He earned the respect of several fellow workers through his persistent and methodical work. Clapp also was supercritical of others, especially of the officer crowd in Moscow for their overriding military character asserted onto the office. Among his complaints was the issue of damaged esprit de corps and a general confusion of ranks. Many of the officer crowd preferred to be referred to by their rank, which was a problem only made worse by the high concentration of officers in the Moscow office lacking military uniforms with tell-tale rank insignia. Although the ARA had a very strong connection with the military, most of the ARA's advance party in Moscow were accustomed to a very decentralized, flexible organizational system. The presence of active duty officers revived among the ARA's military veterans' resentful reminders of why they left the service after the Great War. One ARA worker complained that "a New York regiment was taking over headquarters" and decried Colonel Haskell as "our new Czar, chosen by Mr. Hoover."[143] Clapp's criticism might not have made him many friends in Moscow, but it did sympathize with many ARA workers who had once been in the armed forces.[144] Shortly after Haskell's arrival Clapp was assigned to the Volga region to work under Captain David Kinne in Saratov.

For several reasons, ARA workers viewed Clapp's Saratov assignment as equivalent to a "banishment." Although most ARA stations were supposed to be staffed by at least two Americans, at Saratov Clapp was entirely by himself. Additionally, in the

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[142] Charles Veil. *Adventure's a Wench: The Autobiography of Charles Veil*. (New York: Morrow & Company, 1934), 236.

[143] Ibid, 63, 227.

[144] Patenaude, *The Big Show in Bololand,* 63-65, 594.

Volga region, Clapp worked among the ethnically German population whose families had lived there since Catherine the Great first invited them to Russia centuries ago. Just as long as the Volga Germans had lived there, the Russian people also hated and, in times of crisis, persecuted them. Clapp's German-language background largely helped him win adoration from the locals – and scorn from jealous enemies. In his diary, his interpreter, a local communist named Schuster, tried to get Clapp transferred from the region on trumped-up charges of political activity with local priests. The reality was that Clapp was conducting interviews with local officials, which so happened to include priests. Although Clapp suspected that Schuster's real goal was to take control of the relief work in the area, Clapp was bitterly transferred out to Uralsk, a neighboring region.[145] Despite his skillsets, perhaps what one of his colleagues said was right – he had been thrown into the wild.[146]

Even in his "banishment" into a maze of inefficiency, Clapp persevered as a 'Hooverite.' Taking stock of the local resources, Clapp hastily opened kitchens throughout the Saratov area and began feeding immediately. He remained on the move throughout his district, checking on supply trains to ensure food had not been stolen or teaching kitchen staff how to bake bread with American flour. "The Russians surely cannot organize – they have no sense of order and coordination," Clapp once typed in seething frustration. As the months proceeded, Clapp's work paid off as life steadily

[145] "Clapp Diary," American Relief Administration Russian Operational Records, Box 107, Folder 12, Hoover Institute Archives. p.9-10.

[146] Veil, *Adventure's a Wench*, 235.

improved in the region. Eventually, he established orphanages, clothing distribution operations, and even street cleaning committees to employ adult residents.[147]

Beneath the stoic, businessman appearance, Clapp was genuinely passionate about his work. In brief and tight the wording, most of the diary includes all his official reports to the district headquarters. Almost all of them are tightly regulated and detailed on business matters: how much aid was received, how are the kitchens are being run, and relations with the locals. Occasionally the writing becomes curt and rife with corrected mistakes, a sign that the report was either written late into the night or while riding on a rickety food train as Clapp admits in his diary.[148]

Within the reports are anecdotes about how conditions improved for Russian citizens, taking moments to break his usual business formalities to talk about specific moments in good detail. At the end of the reports is occasionally a section labeled 'personal' where Clapp wrote down his thoughts. Frequently he writes about the exhaustion and stress he was under and in a few places betrays his draining willpower for the work. "The work here is extremely difficult. There are few compensations for hard effort except those which a man gets from within himself in the knowledge he is saving human lives."[149] There is no question about the harsh reality of the famine as Clapp witnessed the heart-searing exodus of orphaned children. "Many of these children will not live without help," he asserted. Few things seemed to make him happy quite like seeing children smile. "The little folks who get these clothes almost cry they are so

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[147] "Clapp Diary," Russian Operational Records, Box 107, Folder 12, Hoover Institute Archives, p.19.

[148] At least two times does he mention these circumstances. "Clapp Diary," American Relief Administration Russian Operational Records, Box 107, Folder 12, Hoover Institute Archives, p.38, 45.

[149] "Report Durcgatchee Ouesd. February 1 to February 9 1922, pg. 5," American Relief Administration Russian Operational Records, Box 107, Folder 12, Hoover Institute Archives.

happy. And, it would take a ton of dynamite to separate them from their clothes once they got them under their arm. You should see them going down the street with their new clothes… to show them to their mother." In another small entry he mentions accepting an invitation from the children to attend Christmas tree festivities.[150]

Among Paul Clapp's associates was a peculiar adventurer by the name of Charles 'Charlie' Veil. Few men in the ARA strike the same character as Charlie – he is one of the only ARA workers to be specifically mentioned in Walter Duranty's writings on the 1921 Russian famine.[151] Duranty characterizes "Weill" as a larger-than-life, highly skilled man who organized food transport in the farthest reaches of Russia. Even with Duranty's renown ability to embellish his subjects, Veil himself was an extravagant character who witnessed numerous events from the Polish-Soviet War of 1920 to the wars for independence in Turkey. In his own words, he summarized the highlights of his life to "Four Great Fs: Fun, Fighting, Flying, and Famine."[152] Veil's autobiography, titled *Adventure's a Wench,* speaks about not only his wild character but also the experience of American veterans.

Born in 1896 in Big Horn, Pennsylvania (although Veil claims the oddly-named town of Punxsutawney as his birthplace), Veil accredits himself as being "an ordinary snivel-nosed red-headed brat, adroit at school but with whom Sunday school and paternal precepts didn't take; that I was often in trouble but generally cunning enough to escape." Veil's description of his family starkly contrasts his bombastic nature as a very

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[150] "Clapp Diary," American Relief Administration Russian Operational Records, Box 107, Folder 12, Hoover Institute Archives, p. 25, 36.

[151] Walter Duranty, New York Times correspondent, is famously known later as a genocide denier and apologist of Joseph Stalin when he falsely reports the conditions in Ukraine during the 1930s famine.

[152] Veil, *Adventure's a Wench*, Forward.

average blue-collar, working-class family. His short run in a Wesleyan college was an utter failure as he constantly found himself unable to concentrate on his studies – in part because of sports and romantic endeavors. Irreverent and a natural competitor, Veil eventually ran off from his hometown to New York City, where he got a job on a Venezuelan merchant ship and "signed my covenant with Adventure."[153]

From there, Charlie's life took on the character of a pulp novel, always leading him from one situation to the next. When the war came Veil rushed over to Paris as a volunteer for the American Ambulance Corps but never completed the application process when he heard about the French Escadrille Lafayette squadron. Drawn in by the lure of aviation, Charlie trained among a host of other American volunteers and eventually assigned to the squadron on a plane lovingly – and conveniently – called "Lucky No. 13". On "Lucky No. 13" Charlie eventually received the Croix du Guerre, three confirmed kills, and a questionable tale of diving through the Arc de Triomphe during the official victory celebration parade in Paris. The same plane also brought Charlie hardship – not only did he lose comrades in combat, but he almost died after being shot down. Fortunately, French troops recovered Charlie and he flew again. Unfortunately, his lower jaw was entirely smashed in the crash, a grievous injury that resulted in him having a faux replacement jaw. Throughout Charlie's autobiography, the number "13" pop up time and time again as some literary motif of the high flyer – a strangely fitting one for the daredevil.[154]

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[153] Ibid, 6-8.

[154] Ibid, 54, 61, 66.

Notwithstanding how bombastic Veil was, his emotions on the end of the First World War strikes a unique and unorthodox sentiment few veterans might admit – regret. While the war took the lives of 50,000 Americans and forever changed millions of people, for fighters like Veil, the war represented a unique lifestyle and identity. Upon the announcement of the armistice, Charlie and his comrades felt

> that a dirty trick had been played on us by this armistice. Perhaps I was bluer than the rest. Fate had deprived me of the only occupation I knew, the only fun, the only excitement I had in life, the only thrill for a wreck of a man... The more I drank the sorrier for myself I felt. I was an empty hulk pushed out to sea, no sails, no power, becalmed in a deadly calm. "La guerre est finie," - the words which brought the sublimest joy to millions were a dirge to me... for fly-and-fight had become life itself and the breath of life.[155]

This despair regarding the end of the war is not an isolated incident either to American pilots. Fighting in the war was a crucial motivation for many doughboys. Seeing combat was a mark of distinction and a validation for young men short on life experiences. The end of the war closed the door on their chance at an experience they held in high regard. So coveted were war memories that some doughboys claimed to have experienced trench warfare, regardless of whether they ever did see them or not.[156]

The close of the First World War created a unique, hidden diaspora for thousands of Americans seeking either excitement or peace for themselves. Charlie Veil represented both of these desires. Drinking became a solace for many of the aviators, and as Charlie admitted, even “the idea of suicide had been on my mind”.[157] While on convalesce in southern France, he fell in love with a nurse even as his suicidal intent

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[155] Ibid, 111-112.

[156] See Steven Trout, *On the Battlefield of Memory: The First World War and American Remembrance, 1919-1941*. (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2012).[157] Veil, *Adventure's a Wench,* 122.

[157] Veil, *Adventure's a Wench,* 122.

steadily grew. Instead, Veil ended up pursuing more opportunities like many Americans who believed that their role in the world stretched beyond the war. Veil fell into various odd-jobs throughout the next few years ranging from an army entertainment coordinator to a courier pilot for the Polish government during the 1920 Soviet-Polish War. News about the ARA mission to Russia spread like wildfire, spoken about as the greatest new curiosity developing in the world. In one exchange noted by Charlie, a staff member warns him of the difficulty in getting a position. “Every adventurer in Europe is trying to get into Russia. Thousands of applications are ahead of you and the few jobs in Russia have been promised and repromised.”[158] Still, after a short interview, one Veil claimed lasted only three sentences, the adventurous high flyer was on his way to the curious world of the Russian ‘Bolos.’

Veil riled concerns and complaints during his whole service in the ARA, even before he arrived in Russia. His folder in the personnel series at the Hoover Presidential Library contains letters of complaints from various individuals. One tells of how Veil borrowed money and a highly-prized valise from a co-worker only never to return it; while also leaving several unpaid hotel bills for the co-worker. In another letter, ARA London wrote to Colonel Haskell about an English biplane that had been privately sold to the Russian Red Cross. Veil’s damnation finally came with a border incident during one of his routine courier trips. Several versions of the story exist, but most conclusively Veil, himself drunk, got into a fight with local Cheka agents during a surprise check on his train. Although he remained in Russia for a few more months after the incident, the

[158] Ibid, 216.

incident put him out of the courier role he originally had wanted, and by mid-November, he was transferred out of Russia and ARA employment.[159]

While not as boisterous as Veil, James Rives Childs certainly fits into the mold of an adventurer, albeit a tamer and more sensible one driven by curiosity. Childs, a native of Lynchburg, Virginia, was the oldest of two sons in a moderate working-class family. His father, John W. Childs, worked as a grocery agent, and his mother, Lucy Childs, taught public school. Following in the footsteps of his mother, James pursued higher education with the intent of becoming a teacher. At first, he pursued a bachelor's degree at the Virginia Military Institute but became disillusioned by the abusive, cold military culture at the academy. He transferred and ultimately finished his degree at his mother's alma mater, Randolph-Macon College in Ashland, Virginia. Eventually, after a few years of work as a newspaper journalist and a high school teacher, James Childs went to Harvard University to pursue a Master's degree in literature. At Harvard, he discovered a lifelong interest in literature, and over the course of his life wrote fourteen books on 18th century writers.[160]

In 1915, just as he finished his graduate work at Harvard, Childs heard a lecture from visiting journalist John Reed, a war correspondent who had covered the outbreak of the First World War in Russia. Reed's lecture, which covered the Eastern Front of the war, "stirred our thirst for like adventures." Enticed by the romance of war, Childs completed his degree that semester, and left for France in the summer of 1915 to

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[159] "Letter from Daniel Ellinger to ARA London Office, 22 September 1921,"; "Confidential Letter from Mowatt Mitchell to William N. Haskell, 26 October 1921"; "Letter from Col. William N. Haskell to Walter Lyman Brown, 10 November 1921," Veil, Charles, Box 160, Personnel Series, Hoover Presidential Library; Patenaude, *The Big Show in Bololand,* 668-669.

[160] James Rives Childs, *Let the Credit Go: The Autobiography of J. Rives Childs*. (New York: Giniger Company, 1983), 8, 12.[161] Ibid, 17-19.

volunteer as a civilian ambulance driver. Assigned to the American hospital in Neuilly, he and his other Harvard comrades made ambulance runs to the train stations at La Chappelle and Juilly. However, in roughly three months, Childs left France: an unexpected private tutoring job he had applied for in Illinois prompted him to leave for work immediately.[161]

Childs did not stay out of the war for long, for upon America's entry into the conflict Childs quickly enlisted and receive a commission as a First Lieutenant in the intelligence branch. Interestingly fate denied him the chance to see 'the Big Show' in full – bureaucratic confusion with a different 'Lieutenant Childs' accidentally put him in the Cipher Bureau working on cryptography. Despite his lack of training Childs adapted to the work and served well in the department including decoding one letter that earned his commander, Colonel Frank Moorman, the Legion of Honor. Childs was not upset by this lack of recognition for he wrote, "I had been disillusioned with medals" after he heard of an incident where medals meant for combat troops were mistakenly awarded to a group of sick call patients without any attempt to recall the awards. For his troubles and excellent work in one special case, Childs would be awarded the Medal of Freedom – over twenty years later in 1946.[162]

In 1919 Childs had his first run-in with the ARA as a part of a special recruitment program in cooperation with the AEF. As a Harvard-educated teacher and a self-taught cryptologist, Childs likely would have fared well on the job market back in the United States. However, Childs, like many American soldiers, had "seen Paree," and was

[161] Ibid, 17-19.

[162] Ibid, 37, 50.

captivated by the allure of Europe. Childs spent quite a bit of time in Paris with an assemblage of various opportunistic American servicemen, all of whom had simple holdover jobs in the Army. None the least a lover of culture and women, Childs actively participated in the wild party culture of Paris during the Armistice period which he recounts in detail in his autobiography. He was clearly shocked when weeks later, "the jig was up;" Childs had orders to report to his post for a transfer back to the United States. When Childs begged for and received a few extra days in Paris, he immediately applied for a position in one of the ARA missions. When asked about where he wanted to serve, he essentially went with his whimsical curiosity: "The Balkans were remote and romantic; I suggested Yugoslavia…"[163] In a matter of days he left Paris bound first for Trieste, Italy, then to the Balkans.

Childs generally had a positive experience working on his first tour in the ARA. Assigned to Salonika near Macedonia, Childs managed kitchens in the countryside out where telecommunications and rail lines were in a sordid state. Despite the devastation, Childs found the area all he had hoped for, being surrounded by simple gypsy music, "which so captivates the pessimistic, mournful soul of the Slav."[164] While serving in the field, Childs received an outpouring of love from the Yugoslavians he served. Frequently the locals he dealt with would refuse to take payment from him or would offer him and his comrades toasts or gifts. "We were awed and overcome by this manifestation of love and admiration for our country. We were moved by the depth of it and its unprecedented expression…" Almost jarringly in the same page, Childs demonstrates more of his

[163] Ibid, 43.

[164] Ibid, 20.

restless nature. When inquired about the possibility of staying on longer, he turned it down on the premise that “I was becoming impatient to take up a definite career.” Upon his resignation, he immediately ‘wrote up’ his own transfer orders to stop by Constantinople, a last act of fun before his demobilization in Paris in October of 1919. For his service, Yugoslavia awarded him a medal, but Childs “attached so little meaning to it that it soon disappeared.”[165]

A few years passed before the ARA popped into Childs’ head, this time in a French café in 1921. A successful Washington correspondent for the New York Times, Childs went to France searching for a foreign correspondent position when the news broke on the famine. “Instantly, my imagination was fired with the idea of going myself to Soviet Russia,” he wrote, “for that altogether new world had been a goal toward which my dreams had been directed since 1917.” One finds much of the same spirit of adventure, as seen in Charlie Veil’s own words, overridden only by intellectual curiosity about Russia. Indeed, Childs was a unique character in the ARA as he does demonstrate a curiosity for socialism. In his diary, Childs recorded a moment where he indirectly, and carefully, talks about politics with an insistent communist equally curious about democracy. In his official autobiography, Childs spent quite a bit of writing admiring Vladimir Lenin as an ‘indomitable man’ and reflection on the effects of the October Revolution in Russia.[166]

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[165] Ibid, 48, 50.

[166] Ibid, 62-64; J. Rives Childs, *Black Lebeda: The Russian Famine Diary of ARA Kazan District Supervisor J. Rives Childs, 1921-1923*. Ed. Cockfield, Jamie H. (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2006), 7-8, 139-141.

While a relatively rare basis for volunteering, Childs' curiosity about Bolshevik Russia is not at all unusual for the time. Officially rejected by almost all the Western nations in 1917, the Bolshevik state was a 'closed book' clouded in mystery and disinformation. Everything from underexaggerated tales of antireligious campaigns to completely fantasy stories about 'nationalizing' women as state wives plagued American and Western news. During the Red Scare of 1919 most Americans were spurred on by these fantastical stories, from the farm fields of Texas to the Congressional offices of Washington D.C. As a highly educated 'world citizen,' Childs "was taken hold incontinently of an impulse to go and see and satisfy myself of the truth or falsity of all that which I had read or heard about Red Russia." Thirty years later, Childs' published autobiography leaves out this crucial detail about curiosity. It seems likely that Childs did not want to admit later in his life that he too was a curious adventurer, or perhaps he felt his actions already said enough about what drove him from adventure to adventure.[167]

Interestingly Veil has a perspective also on Childs, albeit perhaps not an accurate one. He cites Childs as one of the first men to inform him about the mission after Childs, characterizing him as a likeminded adventurer. Veil claims that he first met Childs at a horse racetrack where Childs gathered a team of men to participate in a bounty hunting operation to kidnap famous draft-dodger Grover Bergdoll in Switzerland. Of course, the operation never happened because the operation was leaked before it could happen, but Childs and Veil both heard the news from one of the plotters about the famine. Childs decided to apply through Vienna while Veil decided to go to London

[167] Childs, *Black Lebeda*, 7.

to apply for the mission. Nevertheless Childs, the co-conspirator in a kidnapping operation, hardly mentions Veil in his diary and recollections nor of the bounty hunt operation. On the contrary, Childs heard about the ARA from an unknown American reading a newspaper at a French café. Neither does Paul Clapp, Veil's supposed partner in crime in the Saratov district, really mention Veil. In his diary, Clapp only refers to Veil in passing with a cursory note that was "Veil ordered home" on 29 November 1921, due to, among other questionable activities, a border incident caused by Veil drunkenly resisting Cheka border agents. Of course, with the dramatic writing in Veil's autobiography, hardly any more reason is needed to raise an eyebrow at the high flyer. His autobiography is filled with constant name-dropping, alleged run-ins with famous names of the day, and exaggerated incidents bordering on complete fiction. Indeed, in his way and as Haskell once wrote, Veil was "a dangerous man in Russia."[168]

The ARA claimed to be a distinctly civilian organization, but it was still a product of the people it within its ranks, and their motivations heavily drew from their life experiences as idealistic Americans and soldiers. Military experience for the men of the ARA meant more than they would probably themselves admit. Each relief worker had a strong, identifying motivation that brought them to the ARA in several categories. Relief work was an honorable line of work, one of which men like Dr. Henry Beeuwkes continually pursued throughout their lives. Hoover's relief operations motivated men like Paul Clapp to align their humanitarian idealism and military-taught skillsets towards a stable, heroic figure like Hoover. Finally, the Russian job was a fantastic opportunity for

[168] "Clapp Diary," American Relief Administration Russian Operational Records, Box 107, Folder 12, Hoover Institute Archives, 12; Veil, 213-216; Patenaude, *The Big Show in Bololand*, 670.

the legions of adventurers like James Childs to satisfy their curiosity about the world – and of course, saved lives at the same time. None of these are absolute answers for the 381 Americans and, certainly, they are even too wide of brushstrokes for each of the individuals examined. Bell, for all his stellar work in almost single-handedly saving a million people, could not be bothered to help his wife. Clapp, for his ardent efficiency and loyalty to Hoover, found his good intentions the target of scorn and bitterness from not only the people he was helping but allegedly his comrades. And Veil, for all his grandstanding, appears more like a broken man seeking to try to make light of life even when he sits the dark abyss of regret and mistakes. Moreover, these five men demonstrate three sets of motivations: duty to the United States and humanity, a desire for meaningful, satisfying work; and, an avenue for adventure and interesting experiences. These motivations undoubtedly became strained once these veterans crossed the border into Soviet Russia on that fateful August of 1921.

CHAPTER 6

ON THE FAMINE FRONT: MILITARY VETERANS AND THEIR EXPERIENCES IN THE 1921 RUSSIAN FAMINE

> *The A.R.A. Russian operation was in the strictest military sense of the word a campaign, and like the English at Gallipoli the Administration had to begin firing the moment it landed.*
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> – John Ellingston, Moscow, 1923[169]

The 1921 Russian famine hardly lacked an interesting cast of characters and events, especially for field reporters like Frederick Arthur Mackenzie. At the time a renown writer on East Asia and world affairs, Mackenzie also had a keenness on observing Americans. His role in the ARA mission was like many of his fellow reporters – to support the American Relief Administration through constant reporting and publications on the relief efforts. As an adventurous individual Mackenzie made it a point to travel into the devastated countryside and observe the relief work firsthand. Near Samara Mackenzie could not resist making several observations about the four relief workers he accompanied on a kitchen inspection tour. In detail he describes the aversion each man had to inefficiency, especially in one village where the local representatives failed to uphold the allotted rations for children. Accusing the priest and his assistants for permitting thievery, Mackenzie portrays the ARA workers as more than just business-minded 'Hooverites' but as stern commanders. He describes the attitude of the ARA district supervisor, likely ex-field artillery captain Will Shafroth, as having "the direct manner of a soldier who has been accustomed to work in the front

[169] Quoted in Bertrand Patenaude. *The Big Show in Bololand: The American Relief Expedition to Soviet Russia in the Famine of 1921.* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2002), 5.

lines." An imposing, strongly-built man, Shafroth overtly detested the casual attitude of the local representatives, especially when his series of interrogations failed to root out the thieves. Although Mackenzie admires the tenacity of Hoover, he readily associates the behavior of ARA men like Shafroth with the strict nature of soldiers. "The A.R.A. does not deal in sentiment, at least not in the famine area. The administrators are largely officers of the American Expeditionary Force, who saw real fighting in the Great War. It does not suppose that everyone who handles relief is an angel." Though Mackenzie may have overemphasized the drama of his story and the combat experience of the ARA men, his statements make no illusion about the military nature embedded in the ARA Russian mission.[170]

I argue that American military identity and experience among ARA relief workers played a substantial role in the conduct of American relief operations in the 1921 Russian famine. The activities of the ARA in Russia are well-documented, particularly their influence as relief workers and even disciples of capitalism. Less acknowledged is how militarized the Russian mission was – intentionally or not. The ARA men were a distinct composition of experienced administrators, patriotic 'Hooverites,' and First World War veterans. Of the three identities only the latter one, the veteran crowd, proved controversial for the mission. From the office culture of the 'babyfeeders' to foreigner assumptions on the relief workers, the ARA Russian relief mission bears unmistakable consequences from the collective military experience of its staff. The

[170] Frederick Arthur Mackenzie, *Russia Before Dawn*, 139-141; Patenaude skeptically views Mackenzie's story as possibly an exaggerated tale. See Patenaude, *The Big Show in Bololand*, 618-619.

American military experience in the Great War ultimately proved both instrumental and detrimental to the operational success of the 'Big Show' in Russia.

A New York Regiment in Moscow: The Regular Army vs. the Demobilized Veteran

The issue of military experience presents itself almost before a single relief worker ever stepped into Russia. From the beginning Vladimir Lenin's government demanded assurances that the relief mission being sent was in fact a civilian endeavor and not an ark for counterrevolutionary activity. Among the many fears the Bolsheviks had was another military intervention like the one witnessed in Northern Russia and Siberia during the Russian Civil War. Interrelated to the Allied Intervention were numerous attempts by the Allied powers to fund and supply the counterrevolutionary White Russian armies or anti-Bolshevik border states like Poland. American financial and material support for the White Russians also supplied the Bolsheviks with evidence that the U.S. had invested interest in seeing the Kremlin fall. The attempted 1919 ARA relief proposal as well as the 1920 food aid blockade on Bela Kun's Hungary prompted the likes of Maxim Litvinov to view American interventions as military-civilian operations which utilized "food as a weapon" instead of military actions. During the 1920 Polish-Soviet War negotiations with Soviet representatives were complicated by an aversion to military personnel on the ARA staff. By the time of the 1921 Riga negotiations it was clear to the ARA that the literal presence of uniformed officers only served to heighten fears among the Bolsheviks.[171] Yet the 1921 Riga Agreement was vague in how it

[171] David S. Foglesong, *America's Secret War against Bolshevism: United States Intervention in the Russian Civil War, 1917-1920*. (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1995), 270-1; Benjamin M. Weissman, *Herbert Hoover and Famine Relief to Soviet Russia, 1921-1923.* (Stanford, Calif.: Hoover Institute Press, 1974), 38.

interpreted what kind of personnel the ARA employed. The agreement did not state anything regarding the employment of active duty military personnel or veterans, only individuals who at any point since 1917 had been detained by the Bolsheviks.[172] Regardless, ARA staff such as Rickard were justified in pointing out that the Bolshevik government did not trust the ARA and any military personnel involved in relief work.[173]

The ARA of 1921 was in an evolved state from its past form when it opened up relief missions two years prior. The AEF-ARA working relationship, foundational to the organization since its inception in 1919, was by 1921 on paper a completely civilian entity. Many of the ARA workers now in employment were no longer in the armed forces, either demobilized or now professional 'babyfeeders'. With the end of the Congressional budget in the summer of 1919 the ARA had for years relied on private donations and food loans to keep its operations going. Only in 1921 did the U.S. government passed a Congressional vote granting the Soviet government a $20 million food aid remittance supplemented by with the ARA acting as the main distributor of food aid in Russia.[174] The pool of spare military personnel and supply warehouses in Europe had long since dried up in the face of the withdrawal of the American Expeditionary Force. Only the American Occupation Army in Germany, by now more of a headquarters camp based in Coblenz, remained.

Although the organization had changed, the ARA 'show' was far from a fully civilian entity. The majority of its staff were ex-service members who had demobilized

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[172] Ibid, 103-104; Ibid, 60, 74.

[173] "Cablegram from London to New York, 30 July 1921," American Relief Administration Russian Operational Records, Box 69, Folder 2, Hoover Institute Archive.

[174] Fisher, *The Famine in Soviet Russia*, Appendix A, Document VIII & X, 524-525.

only a year or two prior to the Russian famine. Several in fact had demobilized only months prior to arriving in Russia. It had been two years since the Treaty of Versailles had been signed, but the First World War was not a distant memory to the ARA 'babyfeeders' both in their collective personal experiences and the devastated environments they worked in. For some the entirety of their Great War experience, even while in the military, had been centered on relief operations. Only in early 1921 had the Russian Civil War finally ended and the Polish-Soviet War concluded with the signing of the Peace of Riga on 28 March that same year. Mission rosters still looked much the same after two years of service and only a few of the relief missions were beginning to downscale their operations. Several relief missions still maintained on their staffs active-duty officers, often holding special administrative positions such as Colonel William Grove who was head of the ARA mission in Poland. The presence of uniformed officers frequently served as physical proof of official U.S. government involvement in relief work.[175] It was clear that the ARA Russian mission required concentrated efforts by Hoover's staff to screen and rebrand the ARA on fully civilian terms.

Once the Russian relief mission was given the greenlight the ARA offices set to motion organizing relief and adjusting its rosters. The ARA Russian mission was the first case where military uniforms were discouraged. Applications for new passports came in a flurry with many ARA volunteers swapping out their old service photos for newer ones of them in civilian attire. Carefully the ARA offices examined personnel to determine if

[175] For a narrative on the post-First World War conflicts, see Robert Gerwarth, *The Vanquished: Why the First World War Failed to End, 1917-1924* and Norman Davies, *Red Star, White Eagle: The Polish-Soviet War*. For a recounting of the ARA operations in the Polish-Soviet War, see Harold H. Fisher, *America and the New Poland*, New York, 1928. Also see Matthew Adams, *Cadalliacs to Kiev: The Story of the American Relief Administration in Poland, 1921-22*.

they were ‘too military’ or not. Great emphasis was put on labeling the loaned army officers from the War Department as “civilian work being done in civilian attire” and ensuring “no equipment of a military nature was carried with us.”[176] Whether a ‘Sam Browne’ officer’s belt or a sidearm, few military items were permitted into Russia.[177] For Naval personnel no active officers were to be allowed to serve on the mission – only reservists or discharged individuals were accepted.[178]

Perhaps the most instructive case of the new ARA campaign against their past military image is seen in a letter delivered to Colonel William N. Haskell, the head of the ARA mission going into Russia. The letter, written on September 9, was from Colonel James A. Logan of the United States mission in Paris and chief of the ARA Paris headquarters. Both men shared similar backgrounds both as ARA insiders and regular army officers. However, Col. Logan, far more than his colleague, took the civilian nature of the job very seriously and was keenly aware of how the ARA had changed over the years. Among Logan’s concerns was the presence of Great War veterans – in fact, almost 60% of the relief workers on the Russian mission had once been commissioned officers.[179] In a letter Col. Logan talks in depth about how the Regular Army officers may impact the mission. At one point in the letter Logan quite literally lines out some advised guidelines to the Russian mission chief:

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[176] “Telegram from Mitchell to Allen, 19 December 1921,” Jackson, Thomas J. 1922-1943, Box 125, ARA Personnel Series, Hoover Presidential Library; “Famine Relief Work in Russia, 1921-1922,” Pg. 2, McCormick, T. C. 1922-1924, Box 132, PS, Hoover Presidential Library.

[177] ‘Sam Browne’ belts were a leather belt with a claw buckle and a cross-shoulder strap commonly worn by American military officers. For an example see Philip Carroll photo on page 29.

[178] “Cablegram from London to New York, 28 September 1921,” American Relief Administration Russian Operational Records, Box 69, Folder 1, Hoover Institute Archives.

[179] Number percentage based on personal estimation of a sample of 250 individual files of the Russian relief mission personnel.

> I therefore venture to suggest the following list of DON'TS viz:
> Don't wear a uniform yourself and don't allow anybody else to
> Don't use your military title – call yourself "Mister"
> Don't use your military form of letter writing or military language in your letters or instructions
> Don't take a military attitude in handling your men (I know you won't do this anyhow, but it is very important "Don't" to remember)
> ….
> To sum up, you are a DAMN GOOD SOLDIER but forget it while you are in Russia and be a DAMN GOOD MISTER.[180]

Although Col. Logan was justified in his sentiments, others in the ARA thought the letter too inflammatory for the esteemed Russian mission chief. There was a concern that Col. Haskell might take the letter as a criticism of his leadership and react unfavorably towards Col. Logan and the ARA. The ARA Chief of European Operations, Walter Lyman Brown, believed in the dangerous effects of the letter and ensured that Logan's never reached Col. Haskell.[181]

The importance of the 1921 Russian operation presented Hoover with a difficult choice between civilian leadership or, more traditional to ARA standards, a military one. The risks associated with an ARA mission into Russia were elevated above anything the ARA had previously experienced in over twenty countries including Poland, the Middle East, and the Baltic region. Stability in Russia was perceived to be questionable at best, devastated by years of warfare and revolution. Additionally, the necessity for professional organization required that only the best administrators could take on the task of feeding the starving Russian masses. The rigorous demands of the Bolshevik government forced the ARA to heighten their recruiting standards among its personnel from the lowest worker all the way to mission chief-of-staff. In circumstances such as

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[180] Quoted in Patenaude, *The Big Show in Bololand*, 120.

[181] Ibid, 120.

these the ARA fell on trusted military officers to oversee operations under the presumption that 1) military personnel were naturally nonpartisan actors who had no political or personal agendas, 2) by merit of training officers were highly adaptable to emergency situations, and 3) officers were efficient decision makers. The fact that Hoover went with Colonel William N. Haskell to head the critical Russian mission is very telling of how much faith he still had in the American officers to be efficient nonpartisan organizers.

Colonel William N. Haskell rightfully lays claim to being one of the most famous administrators in the history of the ARA. A veteran career officer, Colonel Haskell had served since graduating from West Point in 1901 including a stint commanding the 69th "Fighting Irish" regiment during its deployment to the Mexican border in 1916. The 69th regiment, eventually redesignated the 165th Inf. Regiment, evidently was a personal favorite command of his for several times during the Great War he would try in vain to regain the command. Unfortunately for him, Haskell was too valuable of a general staff officer to be placed in charge of a frontline infantry unit.[182] Yet as an administrator he was critical and was highly recommended by Colonel Logan for the American Relief Administration.

Despite the Chief's approval, Colonel Haskell sparked a great amount of controversary and murmured discussions. Although Col. Haskell had to his credit the Armenian and Romanian missions, his performance at both missions were less than perfect. In Romania, Col. Haskell had severe disagreements with his executive officer,

[182] Henry J. Reilly, *Americans All, the Rainbow at War: The Official History of the 42nd Rainbow Division in the World War*. (F.J. Heer, 1936), 111, 208; James O'Ryan, *The Story of the 27th Division. (*New York: Wynkoop Hallenbeck Crawford co, 1921), 38.

Major Joseph C. Green, – a Regular Army officer who despised Haskell. Maj. Green, known to Hoover for his fantastic story of negotiating peace between two Montenegrin armies, preferred to act independently and did not take too well to being subordinated to another officer. Another aspect to their quarrels was their backgrounds, as Col. Haskell previously had been a National Guard officer before his regiment was nationalized during the war. The rivalry between the two branches sourced from a series of problems formed during the rushed 1917 mobilization in the United States. National Guard and Regular Army officers frequently clashed over numerous issues, including leadership ideals, organization, and simply jealousies over promotions.[183] One can speculate that Col. Haskell, though an efficient taskmaster, could not escape these conflicts.

In previous years Col. Haskell also was the inheritor of a doomed relief mission established in Armenia. Armenia in 1919 was considered a prime example of Woodrow Wilson's freedom to self-determination on top of being one of the few remaining states along the Caucasus mountains sympathetic to the Allied governments. Although under the jurisdiction of the Near East Relief, corruption and volatile regional politics prompted the ARA to assign a taskforce to oversee relief operations. The Armenian mission Col. Haskell headed in 1919 fought a rigorous campaign to support the frightened Armenian government, feed the local populace, and revive the ruined infrastructure system. Although Col. Haskell employed a selected staff of regular army officers and coordinated relief as the Allied Commissioner to Armenia, it was not enough to keep the weak Armenian state afloat. The ARA mission floundered in 1920 as Col. Haskell, under advice from Paris headquarters, withdrew the mission shortly before Armenia was

[183] Coffman, *The War to End All Wars*, 62-65; Faulkner, *Pershing's Crusaders,* 537-38.

invaded by combined Azerbaijani-Georgian forces and dissolved as a state.[184]

Now in 1921 Col. Haskell made preparations for the Russian mission by putting together a special cadre of military officers. He requested from the War Department a list of fifteen active duty officers to be reassigned to his detail into Russia. Each of the officers were selected from various recommendations by Col. Logan, specific background experiences, and availability for reassignment. According to Captain Thomas C. McCormick word spread quickly about Col. Haskell's mission and soon the War Department was flooded with hundreds of telegrams from officers volunteering for the coveted assignment. In the end only the individuals personally selected by Col. Haskell or associated with Hoover received the assignment. Regardless, the appeals for further jobs in Russia persisted especially as officers, catching on rumors of personnel rotations, sent inquiries and requests for potential assignment to Russia.[185]

The officers Col. Haskell selected as his core staff for the Moscow headquarters also caused controversary. Col. Haskell had commanded many of the 'officer crowd' in earlier ARA missions. A few were highly recommended alone for their skill as was the case with Major Tom Lonergan, a veteran soldier, administrator, and relief worker. Others were skilled officers readily available for reassignment, as was the case of Major Philip Mathew, who was chosen not for any prior relief work experience but simply for his organizational ability. During the First World War Maj. Mathew served as the

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[184] Hoover, *An American Epic, Vol. III*, 397-410.

[185] "Famine Relief Work in Russia During 1921-1922, April 1965," McCormick, T.C. 1922-1924, Box 132, Personnel Series, Hoover Presidential Library; "Letter from Stetson to Myers, 17 Sept. 1921," Lonergan, Major Thomas C. 1921-1922, Box 131, Personnel Series, Hoover Presidential Library.

American operations officer in French Marshal Ferdinand Foch's headquarters.[186]

Yet this 'officer crowd' were men who brought in the very working traits that caused conflict. Unlike the majority of the ex-officers on the ARA Russian mission, mostly composed of hastily trained 'Ninety-Day Wonders,' Col. Haskell's 'officer crowd' were career officers.[187] None of Col. Haskell's selections were inefficient workers – they were in fact ones who during the war and the Reconstruction Period proved incredibly valuable throughout Europe. Regardless, they represented a way of work habits directly in conflict with the established work philosophies of the veterans now in service with the ARA. Many veterans were individuals who had temporarily volunteered or been drafted into the military in 1916-1918, not like the officers who pursued the military as a career. The army way of life was not favorable to many Americans, many of whom utilized relief work as an easy transition away from the hard-nosed hierarchy of the AEF. Strict obedience, curt reports, and observed respect to rank and position irritated the veterans of the ARA. The ARA men often viewed the U.S. military as its own purveyor of inefficiency and poor leadership organization. Added to this was the exclusivity of Haskell's 'officer crowd,' who were strictly Regular Army officers, while a significant portion of the ex-soldiers in the ARA Russian mission were Navy, Air Corps, YMCA, or ARC veterans. It seemed almost unavoidable that Haskell's selections would come into

[186] "Mathew is Transit Expert," New York Post, 28 May 1924, Mathew, Philip 1921-1936, Box 135, Personnel Series, Hoover Presidential Library.

[187] 'Ninety-Day Wonders' was a nickname given to officers from the wartime training camps which often trained cadets in 90 days. It was viewed both as a compliment in the incredible speed of their training, and as an insult to their lack of preparedness for military leadership.

conflict with the ex-service ARA crowd.[188]

All the warnings in Col. Logan's letter became a reality in Moscow when Haskell's staff arrived. It was reported that Haskell's arrival was met by the ARA advance team with cold indifference and no attempt to help secure or organize their new living quarters. Arguments arose over addressing others by their rank – a challenge made impossible by the strict ban on military uniforms. Several veterans still wished to wear their uniforms into Russia, and one ex-officer did acquire a uniform set without insignia. What alarmed the ARA offices more than the attempt to wear a uniform in Moscow was that the perpetrator had nearly succeeded in smuggling the uniform into Russia – his package was caught during its trip back to London for additional tailoring.[189] Critics from the experienced ARA workers likened Col. Haskell's officers to being slow and too hierarchical in their approach. Letters between ARA personnel in the States pointed out how the 'old A.R.A.' ways were more efficient. The situation grew worrisome enough that the New York office began citing letters of complaints from ARA workers beginning to lose the cohesion necessary for the Russian job. ARA workers grew disgruntled and disheartened like Paul Clapp who noted in his diary, "Office at Moscow very military… Espirit de corps is not very good. Questions of relative rank always popping up."[190] ARA district inspector and Stanford University Professor Frank

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[188] Edward M. Coffman, *The War to End All Wars: The American Military Experience in World War I*. (Lexington, Ky: University Press of Kentucky, 1998), 61-62; Faulkner, *Pershing's Crusaders*, 276-277; Patenaude, *The Big Show in Bololand*, 120-121, 571, 596.

[189] "Confidential No. 194, Moscow-Orenburg, 22 August 1922," Fitzgerald, Joseph B. 1922-1931, Box 112, Personnel Series, Hoover Presidential Library.

[190] Patenaude, *The Big Show in Bololand*, 63-65, 123, 596; "Clapp Diary," American Relief Administration Russian Operational Records, Box 107, Folder 12, Hoover Institute Archives, Pg. 6.

Golder put it bluntly when he wrote to a colleague illustrating the sharp conflicts among the ARA Russian mission staff.

> It was a mistake to put Col. Haskell and his military crowd in command here. The old ARA men chafe under it, and resent it, and as a result the morale is not what it should be. I am very much afraid of the reputation of the ARA. Here is hoping, for Hoover's sake, and for the sake of the United States, that it will work out better than I think it will.[191]

The conflicts between the two classes of relief worker came to a head with reports of disorderly conduct among the Regular Army officers. Several men such as Major Charles Telford and Captain Earl J. Dodge were caught speculating and smuggling tens of billions of rubles worth of jewels and valuables out of Russia. In one exceptional case, a worker in the Moscow office went missing from the office for several days, evidently found in a horribly drunken state in his apartment room. After six days of absence he finally entered the main office and demanded a discharge from the ARA for no apparent reason. "He had no reasons to give, was not dissatisfied with his work, and had no other cause for dissatisfaction." When asked to leave and return to work once sober, he refused and protested that he would remain drunk until he was discharged.[192] Reports came in that drinking on the mission became pervasive and that drunken episodes were being witnessed by Russian government officials. The grossest case was Major Tom Lonergan, the second-in-command at the Moscow headquarters. In the report, Lonergan nearly assaulted one of his subordinates and drank himself into a near coma-like stupor.

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[191] Quoted from Norman Saul, *Friends or Foes? The United States & Russia, 1921-1941*, (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2006), 59.

[192] "Discharge of C.H. McCall, Confidential, Moscow to London, 6 January 1922," McCall, Culberson H. 1919-21, Box 132, Personnel Series, Hoover Presidential Library.

Furthermore, ARA headquarters discovered that ARA personnel, including Maj. Lonergan and ex-officer Philip Carroll, used ARA shipments to smuggle in stocks of rum, whiskey, and hard liquor into Russia. Lonergan specifically caused a tremendous amount of trouble in the ARA mission for his overbearing, strict military attitude towards the Moscow staff. Many within the mission witnessed how he clashed with his superior, Col. Haskell, often writing his signature over his commander's and deriding relief workers. Even among the other Regular Army officers Maj. Lonergan became an object of disgust and hatred. It was not long before Hoover received word of Maj. Lonergan and insisted on him being replaced with Capt. Cyril Quinn, another active duty officer and an experienced ARA 'babyfeeder' like Col. Haskell himself. By March of 1922 Lonergan received his discharge alongside several other inefficient 'babyfeeders' – among them was Capt. David Kinne, district supervisor in Saratov.[193] The removal of the inefficient workers quickly improved relations and workplace harmony, but personal issues remained for the duration of the mission.

The Army Way of Relief: The Strategy for the 1921 Russian Mission

Beyond office attitudes and atmosphere, the strategy Col. Haskell implemented for the relief mission took several departures from the precedents set in other ARA missions. Past ARA missions often operated more as food remittance programs or purely technical missions focused on economic and logistical recovery. The goal of the relief missions centralized on stabilization for shaky local infrastructure and national governments. Administrative centers, typically established in the capital, deployed

[193] Patenaude, *The Big Show in Bololand*, 120-121.

district supervisors, each with a handful of staff members, into the provinces. The district supervisors administrated food distribution points from which the local populace, particularly children and women, received allotted meals or weekly rations. Organization of relief depended on close cooperation with regional representatives, as well as local transportation staff. Food deliveries passed through the capital warehouses and then distributed out into the various districts. In dire situations, the ARA established specialized committees to tackle specific problems, such as the technical mission to Romania in 1919 led by Col. William G. Atwood. Many 'babyfeeders' on the Russian mission mistakenly expected the work in Russia to be similar to the experiences in Central and Eastern Europe.

The 1921 Russian famine demanded greater centralization and resources than the ARA was prepared for. The rough state of Russia and the Bolshevik government, only recently in full control of the countryside, required a similar approach seen in the Polish relief mission or other crisis-level relief operations. Compared to the Polish mission, the Russian mission required eighteen districts encompassing regions occasionally the size of small nations. The massive scale of Russia absolutely prevented the staff from being able to utilize its traditional decentralized practices. The local infrastructures the ARA depended on, like political, medical, transportation, or even community leadership, was at best dubious in its reliability if not altogether nonfunctional. Even Hoover believed the Russian mission required a different approach, namely that centralization was critical to making 'the show go on.'[194]

The 1921 Russian famine challenged the old methodologies and forced the ARA

[194] Ibid, 122.

to take on a broader mission. Though the early focus of the ARA Russia mission was children's hunger relief, the food kitchens expanded their recipients to include parents and adults. The ARA required staff from both the ARA Central European missions and the U.S. military to reinforce the mission. Technical advisors rose in demand as the Russian transportation networks lagged in a state of disaster greater than seen anywhere else on the ARA missions. The U.S. Navy assigned a small destroyer flotilla, commanded by Admiral Mark Bristol, to assist in relaying communications and radio traffic between ports and food ships. The widespread typhus, cholera, and tuberculosis epidemics forced the ARA to add to its objectives medical relief. The ARA also requested from Coblenz, Germany a team of army doctors led by Colonel Henry Beeuwkes to combat the epidemics raging across the countryside.[195]

Due to the large number of army doctors on the mission, the ARA Medical Department was virtually run by the U.S. Army Medical Corps (AMC). Notably, the U.S. AMC approached the job using a blend of their own operating procedures and the ARA standards. Col. Beeuwkes assigned to each district a doctor, with two medical assistants, to oversee medical relief on the local level. As a policy, the ARA Medical Department departed from the usual 'model hospital' organization. Instead, the ARA supplied as many hospitals and medical stations as possible, believing it was better to have as many hospitals as possible running than to maintain a select list of well-stocked central hospitals. After all, hospitals in Russia remained in a deplorable state, some hospitals reportedly only having one thermometer in their facilities, while others serviced

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[195] Harold H. Fisher, *The Famine in Soviet Russia, 1919-1923: The Operations of the American Relief Administration.* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1935), 177, 283; Patenaude, *The Big Show in Bololand*, 152. Also see Henry Beeuwkes, *American Medical and Sanitary Relief in the Russian Famine, 1921-1923*. (Cornell: New York, 1926), 30-31.

hundreds of patients with only twenty beds.[196]

The ARA once more tapped into the U.S. Army to release stocks of surplus equipment and materials. Specifically, Col. Henry Beeuwkes, Chief of the Medical Division, requested the Army Medical Corps (A.M.C.) to provide the ARA spare medical supplies. The requests, a total of $4 million, were summarily approved by Congress to come from the U.S. War, Navy, and Treasury Departments but at a hefty price. Namely, all the military stocks given to the ARA had to come from America, specifically the supply depots in Atlanta, Georgia. Not only did it the supplies take longer to reach Russia, but the higher cost of transportation put more strain on the ARA financial departments.

In addition, another trouble rose up – namely in the nature of the supplies actually sent. In one letter addressed to ARA New York, Mowan Mitchell relayed complaints from Beeuwkes about the A.M.C. were sending worthless supplies to Russia. Among the list of incorrect items included hundreds of thousands of small combat first aid kits, and a large shipment of leather horse equipment, pistols, and whiskey, mislabeled as “Ambulance Company outfits.” Beeuwkes accused the Army Medical Corps of utilizing the supply requisitions as an excuse to offload old base warehouses of unusable equipment. Interestingly, this also occurred in other cases, such as in Poland where Col. Joseph W. Krueger’s outfit received half a train car full of whiskey. Based on earlier incidents of smuggling, one must wonder whether these

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[196] Bruno Cabanes. *The Great War and the Origins of Humanitarianism, 1918-1924.* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 226-7; “Letter from Capt. William R. Dear to Col. F.F. Russell, 17 April 1923,” Dear, William 1922-1927, Box 107, Personnel Series, Hoover Presidential Library; Gaines M. Foster, *The Demands of Humanity: Army Medical Disaster Relief*, (Washington: Center of Military History, 1983), 94-98.

shipments of whiskey and rum were truly 'accidental.' Regardless, the ARA Medical Division coped incredibly well with the lot thrown to them and received notes of praise for their performance.[197]

Other regular army officers took advantage of their connections with the A.M.C. to supplement their relief work. Col. Beeuwkes submitted requests to the Medical college for maps or loan copies of books. Dr. William Dear, an officer of the American Occupation Army in Germany, frequently wrote to his old army colleagues with requests for spare scientific journals and research books. Not only was Dr. Dear interested in improving the efficiency of his medical work, but he also loaned his reading materials to Russian intelligentsia. His favorite companion, former Kazan professor Dr. Girkin, sorely impressed him as a gentle intellectual despite living in a region where ice and packs of wolves frequently isolated his village.[198]

The ARA Russian mission staff were no strangers to chaotic supply lines – in fact, their wartime experience had prepared them for this very line of work. The most common military background of the ARA Russian mission staff was from those in the Service of Supply (S.O.S.) department, engineers, and Graves Registration Field Service. Logistical troops composed perhaps the largest number of personnel in the AEF. Due to General Pershing's demand that the AEF maintain its own independent structure from the French and British, the AEF organized its own logistics. The department in charge of it, Service of Supply, worked around the clock in an almost

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[197] "Mitchell to Baker, 4 May 1922," Mitchell, Mowan M. 1919-1941, Box 136, Personnel Series, Hoover Presidential Library; "Letter to Beeuwkes, 7 August 1922," Beeuwkes, Dr. Henry 1921-49, Box 94, Personnel Series, Hoover Presidential Library.

[198] "Letter from William Dear to Irwin Smith, 22 October 1922," Dear, William 1922-1927, Box 107, Personnel Series, Hoover Presidential Library.

hopeless struggle to distribute supplies to the frontline armies. The experience was anything but pleasant, for as Faulkner notes in his work, many AEF S.O.S. troops worked seven days a week and often late into the night. As the experience of frontline troops could attest, the S.O.S. work was critical but often found lacking in the face of organizational chaos. Likewise, the ARA Russian mission found itself relentlessly struggling against bureaucratic bottlenecks, ruined transportation networks, and Russian employees who frequently stole from food shipments. To individuals such as William Murphy, who served as a Quartermaster Sergeant in the S.O.S. in France, the Russian show was nothing new compared to the 'Big Show' in wartime France.[199]

ARA Personnel as the Bolsheviks Saw Them

Equally as difficult as the famine was the challenges the ARA workers faced from suspicious Soviet officials. Despite reassurances by Edgar Rickard on the demilitarized nature of the ARA personnel, many Russian communists still cast the ARA as a capitalist-military endeavor. At the IX Session of the All-Russian Soviet in Moscow, delegates claimed the famine prompted capitalist governments to send small military bands and investigation committees to take advantage of the disaster. The U.S. relief aid, claimed the Bolsheviks, was a moral victory for Russia, as they assumed the relief mission signaled America's willingness to recognize the legitimacy of Soviet Russia. Meanwhile they were still convinced that the grain being sent to Russia were merely 'crumbs' compared to the American surpluses, evidence that America was holding back

[199] Faulkner, *Pershing's Crusaders*, 353; Department of Records and History Profile, Murphy, William J. 1922-1924, Box 137, PS, Hoover Presidential Library.

and hoping to eventually "crush the life out of the proletariat."[200] No number of good works by the American 'babyfeeders' could change the Bolshevik perspective on them as agents of a hostile state.

Overall, the Bolshevik government in Moscow avoided open confrontations with the ARA relief work, while pursuing numerous avenues to undermine the Americans. ARA field inspector Prof. Frank Golder summarized the Bolshevik attitude towards the Americans when he noted that, "it seems to be the official policy of the [Bolshevik] government to pull the feathers out of the American eagle, perhaps in the hope of making him say something."[201] Well before the ARA arrived in Moscow, Lenin issued orders to conduct as much surveillance as possible within, and around, the ARA offices.[202] Moscow turned a blind eye towards lower-level Soviet administrators, permitting any criticism or denunciations of district relief efforts. Bolshevik officials frequently made false charges against the ARA workers ranging from military communications with counterrevolutionary forces to thievery. Prof. Golder received a baseless charge of working with White Russian commander Admiral Alexander Kolchak, on top of openly slandering the Bolshevik government.[203] Although most were easy to dispel, the false charges occasionally stirred enough controversary to force the recall of innocent ARA workers out of Russia. Many newspapers reporting the famine relief even ignored mentioning the ARA or the Americans, at best praising other foreign

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[200] Frank A Golder, and Terence Emmons. *War, Revolution, and Peace in Russia: The Passages of Frank Golder: 1914-1927*. (Stanford, Calif: Hoover Institution Press, 1992), 126.

[201] Ibid, 147.

[202] Document 75, Note to Molotov, 23 August 1921, *The Unknown Lenin: From the Secret Archive*. Ed. Richard Pipes. (London: Yale University Press, 1996).

[203] Golder and Emmons. *War, Revolution, and Peace in Russia*, 109, 113.

efforts or, at worst, outright claiming the American food relief as a Soviet operation. Unable to outright slander the American relief expedition, the Bolsheviks pursued anything that legitimatized their narrative against the ARA men.[204]

Soviet official and reporters frequently utilized composite images to stereotype the ARA workers. In the secret state police, the Cheka, Russian mission personnel were spied on and treated as predominantly counterrevolutionaries or formerly bourgeoisie, particularly (and rather accurately) among the Russian personnel.[205] One particular article for the Russian newspaper *Izvestiia* fabricated an entire scenario to undermine the ARA as a humanitarian, peaceful organization. In September 1922 Paul Clapp starred in a fantasized story published in that week's edition of *Izvestiia*. The validity of the story was questionable, none the least because the ex-army captain was dressed up as 'Colonel Clapp,' a "rough and haughty mannered man" who closed a kitchen over some trifle personal matter. Of course, the tale included a heroic communist official who, along with a hungry crowd, defied Clapp by returning unused meal tickets and refusing to visit the ARA kitchen. The article ends with 'Colonel Clapp' having a change of heart, and embarrassingly, groveling to resilient citizens to return to the kitchen. Although the Saratov mission telegrammed the ARA Moscow headquarters demanding the retraction of this "false and vicious attack," the tall tale evidently did not make any impression for nothing more was mentioned of it.[206]

Although the author states the case of 'Colonel Clapp' as exceptional, the article

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[204] Patenaude, *The Big Show in Bololand*, 644-648.

[205] Ibid, 693.

[206] "The A.R.A." Ivzestia, 4 September 1922, Clapp, Paul S. 1919-1953, Box 103, Personnel Series, Hoover Presidential Library; Saratov to Moscow, 5 September 1922, Clapp, Paul S. 1919-1953, Box 103, Personnel Series, Hoover Presidential Library; Veil, *Adventure's a Wench*, 235.

clearly paints Clapp as a caricature of the evil men running the ARA food kitchens. The district supervisor is portrayed as a rude, selfish, scheming military officer interested only in robbing Russia of her treasures, if not fomenting counterrevolutionary activity. It's uncertain if the writer knew about Clapp's previous AEF service, but clearly, they wanted to paint him as a member of the 'officer crowd' which suggests it was a stereotype of the ARA in the eyes of the Bolsheviks. "Many such examples from the ARA could be cited," the writer ends his article, although no more 'tales' of ARA colonels appear in print.[207] The ARA men constantly endured as the targets of criticism and accusations of being military-capitalist operatives.

However, the Bolsheviks also viewed the ARA as a demonstration of something they hoped to see adopted in their new Communist society: efficiency. The ARA was considered both an efficient organization on its own right and a symbol of American ethics and steadfast working habits. The New Economic Policy period, which lasted from 1921 to 1928, promoted more moderate economic policies compared to the highly authoritarian, dictatorial policies of War Communism during the Russian Civil War. Though the Bolshevik government seldom admitted it, the arrival of the American relief force stirred Russian interest in American business models and practices. Culturally, and ideologically, the Americans were an oddity on their own, but as workers the Americans were met with fascination. Even Mikhail Kalinin, the head of state in the Soviet Republic, maintained that the Moscow government "must look on America as at once the greatest friend but greatest (most dangerous) enemy." Regardless, Lenin's

[207] "The A.R.A." Ivzestia, 4 September 1922, Clapp, Paul S. 1919-1953, Box 103, Personnel Series, Hoover Presidential Library.

government refused to abandon Marxist ideology in the face of the efficient example set by the ARA. In short, the Russians maintained an odd affinity for American methods, only kept at arm's length by their revulsion to the negative effects of American capitalism.[208]

The party line promoted by Lenin's government hardly overshadows the overwhelmingly positive views the average Soviet citizen had towards the ARA. Naturally, the ARA workers were curiosities in Russia, individuals who came from a faraway, almost mythical land of plenty and prosperity they had only heard about in name until the ARA arrived. One ARA worker noted of the Russian peasantry "the world visualized by them consists of just two places, the village he knows and America from whose boundaries run streams of golden corn and tumble in disorderly array sled loads of canned milk, lard, flour, rice, cocoa and medicines."[209] Several villages came to believe the Americans as angels from heaven who had come to grant mercy to Russia during its divine tribulations. Russian employees within the ARA offices especially had well-defined opinions of the American 'babyfeeders.' Many disliked the curt, calculated nature of the Americans, resulting in no shortage of clashes in the offices and warehouses over productivity or cultural mindsets. Many though held the ARA men in high regards, as one housekeeper in Moscow noted. "The Americans have a misleading manner, also a misleading reputation. They are abrupt, efficient. They say, Yes and No, like drill sergeants. But underneath they are more idealistic than any other people."[210]

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[208] Patenaude, *The Big Show in Bololand*, 702-704.

[209] "Letter from Capt. William R. Dear to Col. F.F. Russell, 17 April 1923," Pg. 8, Dear, William 1922-1927, Box 107, Personnel Series, Hoover Presidential Library.

[210] Patenaude, *The Big Show in Bololand*, 501-503, 603-605.

The military nature of the ARA workers played a role, albeit a small one, in how generations of Russians remembered the ARA and America.

ARA Views on Russia

The American relief workers produced numerous stories, articles, and manuscripts on their experiences while in Russia, reporting their thoughts on everything from the swollen bellies of starved children to the curious presence of camels in the outer reaches of the countryside. Many of the relief workers entering the famine zones held a sense of adventure for a country known for its exotic curiosities, and its status as a tragic laboratory for communism. The veterans in the ARA approached Soviet Russia with fascination equal to when they first landed in France in 1917 and 1918. The ARA babyfeeders, like the AEF troops, also partially embodied a tourist role, making it a point to see both the cultural highlights and famine horrors in Europe. The overwhelming presence of photo cameras in trunks, and frequent visits to the Moscow Bolshoi Theater, demonstrated the Americans' desire to lay witness to everything during their great undertaking. American newspapers regularly published interviews of ARA relief workers throughout the duration of the famine. Letters sent back home, though brief and often on irregular delivery schedules, described the hardships and at least a few notes on the tragedy of the famine. All of these actions distinctly resemble anything an AEF soldier touring the Great War battlefields of the Western Front would have done. The veterans' experience in the ARA was just as much about tourism as it was about performing a job amid human tragedy.[211]

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[211] Mark Meigs, *Optimism at Armageddon: Voices from American Participants in the Great War*, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1997), 69-70.

Regular run-ins with Red Army personnel prompted several American relief workers to comment on them from a veterans' perspective. It should be noted that, though the Riga Agreement barred most ARA workers from making any open remarks on the Bolshevik systems, a few did, such as news correspondent Austin Patrick Corcoran. An Irishman from Dublin, Corcoran served in the British Expeditionary Force on the Western Front. He was a dispatch rider who rose to the rank of captain until his medical discharge from injuries in 1916. Unable to contribute as a soldier, Corcoran adopted journalism, and later relief work with the ARA. When the ARA Russian mission began its expansion in late 1921, Corcoran quickly volunteered his services, including an offer to pay his own way while in Russia, despite ARA insistence he be on the payroll. He was an instantly popular character among the Americans, and his services as a correspondent highly regarded by the ARA staff, including Col. Haskell.[212]

Among Corcoran's interesting articles is one focused on the officers' academies in Moscow. In the article, Corcoran makes an overt criticism of the academy, remarking on the odd nature of the Red Army officer academies as institutions that supported educated leaders yet did not offer cadets a salary while in school. Corcoran especially was intrigued by saluting, as cadets were forced to salute enlisted while the latter were not required to return it. As a former officer himself, Corcoran did not resist musing over the mental image of, "[General] "Black Jack" Pershing saluting a buck private and being ignored some afternoon on Pennsylvania Avenue."[213] Corcoran's writing demonstrated

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[212] ARA Department of Records and History File – Corcoran; "Capt. Corcoran Finally Laid To Rest" 28 March 1928, New York Times, Corcoran, Austin P. 1922-1924, Box 104, Personnel Series, Hoover Presidential Library; Memorandum to Baker, 30 October 1923, Corcoran, Austin P. 1922-1924, Box 104, Personnel Series, Hoover Presidential Library.

[213] "Officers Told to Salute Privates in Topsy-Turvy Creed of "Red West Point," Chicago Tribune, Corcoran, Austin P. 1922-1924, Box 104, Personnel Series, Hoover Presidential Library.

that he believed the Red Army was a chaotic mess and hardly the forefront of military innovation. However, others in the ARA had different opinions on the Red Army. Childs, a former army intelligence officer serving as a district supervisor in Samara, noted how disciplined the Red Army soldiers were, and his belief that the Red Army symbolized the eventual recovery of Russia.[214]

One incident in particular occurred that blatantly overstepped the line and dove into pure intelligence gathering on the behalf of an ARA worker. The incident occurred not with an ARA employee but with a naval officer on one of the U.S. destroyers escorting ARA food ships. In September 1921 at the port of Novorossisk, a destroyer, the U.S.S. Gilmer, had docked and permitted some of its crew a short liberty in the port. While on leave one of the lieutenants took notes on the port, gathering information on the local government and, most importantly, defensive plans, including the layout of shore batteries and minefields. The report made its way to the regional U.S. Naval Detachment before the ARA caught wind of the act. Interestingly, the incident never received a serious response, and further illegal reports made their way through the U.S. Navy intelligence channels to Washington D.C. Eventually Hoover pulled the plug when, on 24 October 1922, he requested Secretary of War Hughes to discontinue U.S. Navy escorts for ARA ships, citing both the end of the famine and the illegal investigations by Naval personnel.[215]

Other officers commented on the Russians to the public, such as Major Philip

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[214] J. Rives Childs, *Black Lebeda: The Russian Famine Diary of ARA Kazan District Supervisor J. Rives Childs, 1921-1923*. Ed. Cockfield, Jamie H. (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2006), 50.

[215] Weissman, *Herbert Hoover and Famine Relief to Soviet Russia, 1921-1923*, 90; Benjamin Rhodes, "American Relief Operations at Nikolaiev, USSR, 1922-1923," *The Historian*, (Vol. 51, No.4, 1989), 626.

Mathew, district supervisor in Kharkov. In an editorial to the New York Times shortly after the closing of the Russian mission, Mathew openly criticized the Bolshevik government as one "based on lies and misrepresentation." He criticized conflicting reports from diplomats to Russia who paint an overly positive picture of Lenin's government, stating they had been deceived by the likes of Leon Trotsky and the Cheka agents. He goes on to detail the cruelties of Soviet life and the attempts by the Bolsheviks to undermine or steal credit for the food relief work.[216] Maj. Mathew is an exceptional case, as the vast majority of ARA men who were interviewed during and after the relief mission nonpolitically emphasized either the hardships of their work or the end results of what they had accomplished. Most ARA workers seemed more interested in the grandeur of the relief mission rather than the specifics of its conduct or the evils of the Soviet government.[217]

By the end of the relief mission, opinions among the American staff turned generally negative. Although the relief mission was a massive success in terms of lives saved, the personnel felt divided on their opinions of Soviet Russia. Several active-duty officers on the mission believed the whole enterprise, while noble, only served to help sustain a tyrannical government. Many came to admire the Russian people and supported U.S. recognition of the Soviet state. Unfortunately, most found themselves encountering the same problems their comrades in 1919 did during demobilization: issues of employment, readjustment to regular American society, and psychological

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[216] "Russia's Course Under The Soviet," 28 August 1923, New York Times, Mathew, Philip 1922-1943, Box 135, Personnel Series, Hoover Presidential Library.

[217] The ARA offices took care to write up and have articles published of the relief workers, particularly as the mission wrapped up and relief workers headed back to America. For an example of an interview article, see the article draft in McMahon, William C. 1922-1925, Box 133, Personnel Series, Hoover Presidential Library.

issues from the pervasive horrors witnessed in Russia. Dr. Dear summarized it best when he wrote on his memories of the Volga relief that "so harrowing were they that even a physical separation of thousands of miles the lapse of several months and the interjection of new experiences have failed to efface their memory, which now seems almost as fresh and more painful than when we were on those long snow trails.[sic]"[218]

Doughboys on the Famine Front: Army Material Culture and the ARA

The average veteran on the ARA Russian mission came from a specific category of experiences and backgrounds. The most common occupation of an ARA worker was a clerk, salesman, or student prior to the Great War. Interestingly about 20% of the veterans in the ARA previously had served overseas prior to the Great War in various volunteer positions. The largest group serving in relief duties such as the American Ambulance with the American Field Service in France, but a minority also served in combat roles such as in the British Expeditionary Force or the French Lafayette Escadrille. In addition, about roughly 15% of the relief workers served in combat zones or had been a part of the general mobilization on the Mexican border during the Punitive Expedition.[219] Nearly all the relief workers held high school diplomas and 70% had college education. Divided up, about 30% of the military veterans were connected to the Army Air Service, with about 10% of them having flown or trained as pilots. Most of the veterans had associations with Supply of Service duties, including transportation or engineering. Between Army and Navy veterans, the Army veterans compose an

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[218] Patenaude, *The Big Show in Bololand*, 736-737; "Letter from Capt. William R. Dear to Col. F.F. Russell, 17 April 1923, Pg. 8," Dear, William 1922-1927, Box 107, Personnel Series, Hoover Presidential Library.

[219] The Punitive Expedition and the Mexican border force buildup occurred from 1916-1917 in response to the paramilitary forces of Francisco "Pancho" Villa during the Mexican Revolution of 1910-1920.

overwhelming portion of them having served in the AEF.[220]

Figure 3: "Our Moscow Group: Blake, Renshaw, McGuiggan, Raymond, Nickelson." c.1921-1923. Note the boots on two of the men. Courtesy of Hoover Presidential Library.

In the field the equipment and uniforms of the old ARA still appeared amid the business attired staffs. Although the ARA discouraged military attire among its employees on the Russian mission it provided little direction on proper attire. Naturally, as the mission proceeded, clothes wore out and had to be replaced or substituted from various sources. Many men took to purchasing suits from local tailors or adopting traditional Russian winter gear to combat the cold. Others resorted to their old military uniforms as a cheap and easy supplement to their wardrobes. Harold Fleming, an assistant in the Moscow headquarters, wore his old ROTC breeches through the city streets, and even higher echelon administrators, like William Kelley, continued to use

[220] Statistics based on a survey of nearly 250 ARA relief workers.

his officer's trench coat for warmth. Riding boots and breeches appear regularly in photos of the various mission staffs. Several workers took with them to Russia old mementos from their wartime days, including service pistols, photos, or miscellaneous papers. Prof. Alexei Yakovlev, in an unpublished manuscript, describes the first four relief workers to arrive in his Russian village as, 'men garbed in olive drab.'[221] In one satirical memo, an ARA relief worker working in Ukraine details the suggested equipment for each ARA relief worker out in the field. The list includes: "1 Regimental Kitchen, 1 Sled and Dog Team complete, 2 Fur coats, 6 Pairs arctics, 1 Doz. Pairs of riding breeches, 1 Gross O.D. shirt, 3 Sweaters, 1 Gas Mask, 1 Can Baked Beans, 1 Box hardtack." The writer goes on to also suggest, "Leather puttees, a Sam-Browne belt, and a poncho," as potentially useful, another obvious jab familiar to former military officers in the ARA. Another comparative list, rated as 'highly recommended,' included dress suits, a Rolls Royce car, women's stockings, and cases of scotch.[222] Despite its overt attempts, the ARA at times still could not shake off the image of its old uniformed days.

The ARA, just like the individuals who staffed its relief missions, was hardly far removed from the American military experience of the Great War. The U.S. military had a substantial influence on the conduct and behavior of ARA relief missions throughout 1919 and 1920. Its staff were predominantly uniformed, its logistical resources provided by the AEF, and its internal communications always orderly and emotionless. Although

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[221] Weissman, *Herbert Hoover and Famine Relief to Soviet Russia, 1921-1923*, 82.

[222] "Letter dated 22 August 1922," Harold Fleming Papers, Folder 4, Hoover Institute Archives; Patenaude, *The Big Show in Bololand*, 237; Johnson, Charles 1922, Box 125, Personnel Series, Hoover Presidential Library.

by 1921 the organization looked different from its early 1919 days, the experience of the Great War continued to impact its relief work. The divide between Col. Haskell's 'officer crowd' and the demobilized veterans did more than inconvenience the mission – it nearly threatened the stability of the greatest ARA relief mission in its existence. Even in terms of materials and clothing, the former Doughboys in the ARA still carried on as they had during the Great War and the Reconstruction period. Though far from a military organization, the ARA was unquestionably a home to Great War veterans, intentional or not.

Soviet Russia provided a harsh environment for the ARA veterans to work in which demonstrated the benefits and drawbacks of the veterans in the ranks of the relief mission. The massive scale of the mission virtually forced the ARA to redesign its relief operations more as a hard campaign against devastation amid a hostile country. It also forced the ARA to return to its old connections with the War Department, bringing into play the services of the U.S. Navy and the Army Medical Corps. Though the ARA tried to maintain a civilian and nonpartisan image, the Bolsheviks still viewed the relief workers and the mission as a dogmatic military-capitalist operation. In turn the ARA workers were disillusioned by their experiences even as they received laurels of gratitude from the Soviet population. The experienced ARA veterans and the military connections of Hoover's relief agency ensured the salvation of millions of Russians but tainted the ARA forever as anything besides a true altruistic humanitarian organization.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSIONS

> *I indeed share in your grief and I trust that solace may come to you in that your son has given his life that many thousands others might be saved. His courage and devotion have made possible the service of America in Russia and he has given his life for his country on the battlefield of famine a sacrifice to ideal no less than upon the battlefield.*
>
> – Herbert Hoover

The ARA was critically defined by the personnel it employed, most specifically the American military veteran crowd who composed its most significant base of relief workers. For years the history of the American Relief Administration retains an image of civilian humanitarianism and the triumph of American ingenuity. However, the ARA was a product of the First World War era and the ARA men entirely treated their work as nothing short of a humanitarian war. Their war, one that began in 1919, spanned across Europe with millions of lives at stake. As a mutual effort to push back starvation and economic chaos, the ARA successfully deployed humanitarian and logistical support in its various campaigns across Europe. It seems almost inevitable that the ARA eventually made its final drive into Soviet Russia, considered by many as the epicenter of chaos that, in their eyes, uprooted much of Eastern Europe. From the offices in Paris to the frozen streets of Ufa, the ARA defined its mission as a conflict on the battlefields of famine. The American military experience of the First World War, including its urgency and haphazard nature, critically defined the ARA and its effective relief work throughout the disaster zones of Europe.

The core foundations of the ARA rested upon the military personnel it actively recruited in 1919. American foreign policy demanded Herbert Hoover to take on the task

of delivering food and logistical relief to all Europe. Although Hoover, the “Master of Efficiency,” could have relied on the logistical organization of the U.S. Food Administration, he efficiently utilized American military personnel and his own practices to create a brand-new relief organization. The result was a partnership that embedded the U.S. military into American humanitarian and foreign policy actions during a contentious period of European history. Without the American Expeditionary Force and the U.S. Navy, it would have been a greater challenge for the ARA to expand its missions as quickly as possible in a short span of time. The effects of this early foundation had long-term consequences in the ARA and how it conducted its relief work.

The 1921 Russian famine tested the ability of the ARA to organize and consolidate its mission personnel through a myriad of recruitment policies and demands. Ultimately, the ARA was a business-minded organization like its earlier iterations, the Committee for Relief to Belgium and the U.S. Food Administration. It sought in its relief workers a marriage between American moral idealism and business efficiency only embodied best in its “Chief” Herbert Hoover. The demands of the Russian mission highlighted the immense amount of skill power and moral standards the ARA ‘babyfeeders’ either had or adopted to hold the job. Many military veterans successfully passed the criteria, which explains why veterans make up a large portion of the relief workers in the ARA. While the ARA maintained ambiguous organizational recruiting practices reliant on volunteerism, the final roster of personnel were the products of a demanding process that yielded only the best professional humanitarians.

The American military veterans who entered Russia in 1921 were motivated by a

unique blend of professional duty, personal idealism, and a sense of adventure. The three categories cannot define every relief worker, but they help to explain the popularity of the ‘Russian job’ among American veterans who otherwise would not want to ever help the Bolshevik government. It also defies any interpretations that seek simplified answers to the driving forces behind the relief workers: they were idealistic Americans of their era, but not blinded by ideology; they were experienced professional workers, but not fully prepared for the immense work in Russia; they were curious about Bolshevik Russia, but not selfless in everything they did. Almost all the men were intelligent and determined to see their way into Russia on the ARA ticket. Their motivations strongly dictated how they behaved once on the frontlines of the Russian famine, taking in a strange new land and seeing through the toughest relief mission conducted by the ARA.

The 1921 Russian famine mission benefitted and suffered from the First World War-era American military experience. It bore one of the most exceptional cases of conflict between two types of staff organization, full military or fully ‘Hooverite.’ In no earlier missions did conflicts arise such as the ones seen in Moscow between Regular Army officers and demobilized veterans. It did not register with Hoover that the ‘officer crowd’ he permitted Col. William N. Haskell to create was any different than what had been organized in 1919 where military personnel composed most of his relief workers. Nor was it apparent that by 1921 the ARA staff had matured into a strictly professional, ‘Hooverite’ band of administrators deeply rooted in a culture of veterans both as humanitarians and ex-service members. The ARA’s severe miscalculation nearly tore apart the mission both logistically and spiritually. Although the ARA succeeded in

conducting its relief work, it returned to its military roots in order to succeed amid the stress of the hostile Soviet environment, bringing on U.S. military organizations as auxiliary support systems. The ARA men, veterans of both the Great War and relief work, were branded by the Bolsheviks under the military-capitalist definitions the ARA had tried to avoid. Even after years of humanitarian work as a non-government entity, the ARA was irredeemably defined by the American military experience.

In conclusion, the story of the ARA is best explained by the dominance of American military veterans within its ranks. Their First World War military experience clarifies the issues of the ARA, including its core values, who it wanted (and turned away), its methodologies, and culture. The ARA was not a veterans' organization, but it was shaped by veterans whose war experience represented the best to come out of the First World War. Likewise, the ARA represented to many American veterans a ready complement to their war experience if not an outright substitute for field service in the Great War. The 1921 Russian Famine was just as much a major campaign as the deadly skirmishes of the 1918 Meuse-Argonne Offensive. It is valuable to treat the ARA 'babyfeeders' more as the soldiers of humanity they were than simply good-willed relief workers.

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