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"Lest They Perish": The Armenian Genocide and the Making of Modern Humanitarian Media in the U.S., 1915-1925

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"Lest They Perish": The Armenian Genocide and the Making of Modern Humanitarian Media in the U.S., 1915-1925

Abstract

Between celebrity spokesmen and late night infomercials, international humanitarian aid organizations use multiple media strategies to generate public interest in their programs. Though this humanitarian media has seemingly proliferated in the past thirty years, these publicity campaigns are no recent phenomenon but one that emerged from the World War I era. "Lest They Perish" is a case study of the modernization of international humanitarian media in the U.S. during and after the Armenian genocide from 1915 to 1925. This study concerns the Near East Relief, an international humanitarian organization that raised and contributed over \$100,000,000 in aid to the Armenians during these years of violence. As war raged throughout Europe and Western Asia, American governmental propagandists kept the public invested in the action overseas. Private philanthropies were using similar techniques aimed at enveloping prospective donors in "whirlwind campaigns" to raise funds. The Near East Relief was among the earliest philanthropic organizations to undertake these publicity blitzes. After Armistice, the NER established relief operations that dispensed humanitarian services in cities throughout Asia Minor. It is in this latter period that the media appeal for humanitarian aid for witnessing publics solidified into a consumer-centered model of advertising. From the NER's earliest fundraisers, images were crucial tools that bridged the distance between the spectators--the prospective donors--and the sufferers. Images of starving children were used to power philanthropic giving. Rather than focus on the reception of these images, the project is concerned with the production of this media and vehicles for its message. This perspective reveals considerable overlap between advocacy campaigns and the actual relief work. The dissertation finally reflects on the emerging role of private enterprise in sponsoring humanitarian relief. By this point, the rise of public relations had turned donors into consumers and Armenians into their objects of pity.

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“LEST THEY PERISH”: THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE AND THE MAKING OF MODERN
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“LEST THEY PERISH”: THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE AND THE MAKING OF MODERN
HUMANITARIAN MEDIA, 1915-1925.

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Jaffa L. Panken

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ABSTRACT

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Jaffa L. Panken

Kathy Peiss

Between celebrity spokesmen and late night infomercials, international humanitarian aid organizations use multiple media strategies to generate public interest in their programs. Though this humanitarian media has seemingly proliferated in the past thirty years, these publicity campaigns are no recent phenomenon but one that emerged from the World War I era. “Lest They Perish” is a case study of the modernization of international humanitarian media in the U.S. during and after the Armenian genocide from 1915 to 1925. This study concerns the Near East Relief, an international humanitarian organization that raised and contributed over \$100,000,000 in aid to the Armenians during these years of violence. As war raged throughout Europe and Western Asia, American governmental propagandists kept the public invested in the action overseas. Private philanthropies were using similar techniques aimed at enveloping prospective donors in "whirlwind campaigns" to raise funds. The Near East Relief was among the earliest philanthropic organizations to undertake these publicity blitzes. After Armistice, the NER established relief operations that dispensed humanitarian services in cities throughout Asia Minor. It is in this latter period that the media appeal for humanitarian aid for witnessing publics solidified into a consumer-centered model of advertising. From the NER's earliest fundraisers, images were crucial tools that bridged the distance between the spectators—the prospective donors—and the sufferers. Images

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Introduction

Blame the wind. In some places it swoops in without warning, sending houses and cows swirling through the air. At Smyrna on the Aegean Coast there was no such caprice. The wind was as certain as the seasons. So when the air picked up one early Fall afternoon, the arsonists knew the direction it would choose. It was the thirteenth of September 1922, four days after the Turkish Army returned to Smyrna and the day the city began to burn. A block of houses near the Southeastern corner of the Armenian Quarter went up in flames. The wind caught the blazes, spreading Northwest throughout the Armenian and Greek Quarters, driving most of the Christian inhabitants down to the quay.¹ For eleven days, refugees remained trapped between the fiery blaze behind them and impassable waters at their toes. Many suffered from hunger, dehydration, exposure, and the violence inflicted by Turkish soldiers. In the final week of September, Greek ships received permission to begin evacuating an estimated 150,000-200,000 Ottoman Christians from Smyrna to Greece.²

Where the Armenian refugees went, so too would the Near East Relief. Founded in 1915 as an ad hoc committee raising emergency funds for Armenian relief, the Near East Relief expanded in concert with the devastation wrought by the Armenian genocide and World War I. Within two years, the philanthropic organization oversaw a network of state and local offices from its national headquarters in New York City. After Armistice, the NER established relief operations that dispensed humanitarian services in cities throughout Asia Minor. Working with government officials, churches, and mission

¹ Under orders to maintain neutrality, Allied fleets stationed just offshore refused to intervene as an unknown thousands of Armenians and Greeks amassed at the harbor.

² Norman N. Naimark, *Fires of Hatred: Ethnic Cleansing in Twentieth-Century Europe* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 52.

stations, the Constantinople-based administration acquired facilities for warehouses, schools, hospitals, clinics, and orphanages. Allied withdrawal and changing battle lines during the Greco-Turkish War of 1919-1922 kept the population in constant flux. After months of stalemate outside Ankara and no diplomatic solution in sight, the Greek Army began retreating from Anatolia in March of 1922. Hundreds of thousands of Armenians and Greeks fled in their wake. Many of the refugees settled in and around Smyrna, adding substantially to those trapped on the quay. Providing the Smyrna refugees with food, water, and medical attention depleted NER warehouses and nearly bankrupted the organization.

Stakes were unthinkable high when philanthropic and civic leaders convened in New York to generate a joint statement responding to the Smyrna disaster. Under their advisement, President Harding formed the Near East Emergency Fund to aid the NER's recovery efforts. Motion Picture Association of America chief Will H. Hays was appointed to head the national committee. Hays, in turn, worked his connections to combine philanthropy with Hollywood magic. A lot at United Artists' Studios was transformed into a circus rivaling any Ringling Brothers' production. An open invitation promised the requisite clowns, acrobats, elephants, a bearded lady, daring equestrienne, and Jackie Coogan, child star and main attraction. Admission would cost a "bundle of clothing" or "not less than two pint cans of milk" to benefit the NER.³ Though any brand of canned milk was accepted, the NER preferred Borden brands because the company matched every can of Borden milk donated to the NER with a second can.⁴ For his many fans, the chance to watch Coogan in action was well worth the contribution. Best known

³ "Near East Circus to be Larger." *Los Angeles Times*, Dec 5, 1922, 1.

⁴ The Milk Route," *New Near East* 6, no. 8 (May 1921): 7.

as “The Kid” in Charlie Chaplin’s 1921 box office hit, Coogan enjoyed immense popularity managed by a cavalry of press agents. The ‘real life circus’ was an elaborate set for Coogan’s portrayal of Toby Tyler, a boy who runs away to join the circus. While other children enjoyed a day of frivolity, ‘His Majesty of Boyhood’ was hard at work selling lemonade and peanuts. Later, the crowds would assemble under the Big Top to watch Coogan “ride a horse around the sawdust and . . . do bare-back stunts.”⁵ Hays proclaimed the benefit a huge success, thanking the 7,500 attendees and the Jackie Coogan Production Company for underwriting the costs.⁶

Several thousand batches of clothing and milk would not have lasted a day on the quay. The intangible proceeds were expected to yield far more than supplies. In modern marketing parlance, Jackie Coogan’s Publicity Circus exhibited cross-promotion, vertical integration, product placement, corporate sponsorship, and celebrity branding. These modern commercial methods illustrate the sophistication of NER fundraising techniques. At the height of the silent-film era, the culture of cinematic celebrity was firmly entrenched. Coogan represented the vanguard of an emerging class of entertainer whose influence extended beyond his acting. If his image could sell peanut butter, paper dolls, caps, and biscuits, why couldn’t it sell the NER? Huge crowds of fans greeting Coogan with bundles and cans of Borden milk for Armenians made far better news than his aggressive publicists. Just as the NER celebrated Jackie Coogan’s good deeds or emphasized Borden milk’s nutritional value, these cooperative campaigns likewise promoted the Near East Relief “brand” of humanitarian aid.

⁵ “Benefit Circus ‘Real Thing,’” *Los Angeles Times*, December 1, 1922, H12. “Jackie’s Circus is Great Hit.” *Los Angeles Times*, Dec 10, 1922, 1,

⁶ “Jackie Coogan’s Circus,” *New Near East* 8, no. 5 (April 1923), 8.

This dissertation traces the NER's development and adaptation of commercial techniques to publicize the Armenian plight. Beyond the press, the NER used advertisements, parades, illustrated posters, car cards, billboards, plays, photographs, and films in appealing to the American public. Rather than focusing on popular reception, this project considers the production of humanitarian publicity. Here, 'production' encompasses both material resources and creative processes. When placed within a chronological framework, NER media reflect the organization's increasing reliance on experienced admen and publicists. From 1915-1925, NER publicity improved drastically in quality and refinement. Long explanations of Armenian history were excised in favor of tales of sorrow, heroism, and redemption. Until 1917, the NER circulated reports and updates on the Armenian situation to the individuals on their mailing lists. After Armistice, the NER offered opportunities for journalists to tour their relief operations and write about their experiences. These articles were published in *National Geographic*, *American Review of Reviews*, *Asia* and other reputable periodicals. Rather than rely on illustrators to add visual interest, these accounts were often accompanied by photographs taken by NER professional photographers. Early cinematographers filmed newsreel while Hollywood studios released movies sponsored by the NER. Despite these forays into professional media, I contend that NER changed little in its commitment to a 'politics of pity.'

The NER embraced a 'politics of pity' by emphasizing Armenian suffering and promoting its alleviation through humanitarian aid. In her essay *On Revolution*, Hannah Arendt described a 'politics of pity' as a conceptual framework derived from distinctions

between sufferers and non-sufferers who observe the former in a *spectacle of suffering*.⁷ Within the politics of pity, spectators of human suffering have a moral obligation to help these unfortunates. French Sociologist Luc Boltanski complicates this model by considering the moral and political implications of distant suffering. Just as described in this dissertation, Boltanski suggests a case in which the spectator is thousands of miles away from the sufferers.⁸ Therefore, intermediaries are necessary to describe suffering using “mode of expression which mixes a depiction of inner life (emotion) and a description of the outside world” to inform the spectators while instilling sympathy for the unfortunate.⁹ These choice statements and images must “propose to the spectator a definite mode of linguistic and conative emotional commitment” so that he may act accordingly.¹⁰ NER acted as intermediary and agent between the American public (the spectators) and the Armenian refugees (the sufferers) by inspiring spectators to act through donations to NER agents. This dissertation argues that the NER adhered to these politics of pity, encouraging spectators to identify and sympathize with the sufferers. By examining and analyzing NER handbooks, instruction manuals, internal reports as well as publicly circulated articles, advertisements, and visual media, I will show the means by which the NER produced a spectacle of the Armenians’ distant suffering.

The ‘politics of pity’ help reconcile the NER’s sentimental appeals for funds to save the ‘Starving Armenians’ with the complex political, social, and economic turmoil behind these conditions. Boltanski contends that the intermediary or agent must convey

⁷ Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1990), 59-114.

⁸ Luc Boltanski, *Distant Suffering: Morality, Media and Politics*, trans. Graham D. Burchell (Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 2.

⁹ Boltanski, *Distant Suffering*, 86.

¹⁰ Boltanski, *Distant Suffering*, 149.

the spectacle of suffering with sympathy for the spectator to pity the sufferer. If the agent instead focuses on the perpetrators and their misdeeds, he will promote indignation rather than pity. Indignation diverts attention away from the sufferers to make calls for justice or--in this case--intervention.¹¹ While the Armenian Genocide provoked both pity and indignation in certain individuals, the NER took pains to appear neutral in public. After 1919 fundraising material bolstered this claim in emphasizing the sorrowful state of the Armenians themselves over the actions that caused their distress.

NER pleas for humanitarian aid seem naive in consideration of the harsh realities of the Armenian Genocide. From 1915 to 1923, Turkish nationalists attempted to claim ‘Turkey for the Turks’ by eliminating Armenian Christians and other non-Turkish minorities from their lands. The Armenian genocide officially began with the April 1915 arrests of prominent Armenian men. Within days, Ottoman authorities launched a campaign of mass violence against Armenians throughout the Anatolian Peninsula. From Constantinople’s Bosphorus strait to Mount Ararat in the East, Turkish gendarmes massacred the majority of Armenian men in raids on their communities. The women, children, and elderly left behind were deported from their homes and forcibly marched through the Turkish Interior and Syrian Desert. Many succumbed to starvation and illness while others endured beatings, theft, and rape. Attractive young women and girls were often taken into Turkish homes as wives or servants.

A handful of American diplomats and missionaries witnessed this near decimation of a people from posts throughout the former Ottoman Empire. As Turkish censorship closed the borders around them, these firsthand accounts were secretly transmitted and

¹¹ Boltanski, *Distant Suffering*, 77.

publicized to the outside world. Operating beneath the watchful eyes of the Turkish authorities, this network became instrumental in providing limited humanitarian aid to the surviving refugees until their exile in the wake of the U.S. joining the Great War. At the other end of this pipeline was the Near East Relief, an alliance of well-connected philanthropists and religious leaders. Though the violence scaled back around 1917, the surviving Armenians still contended with renewed massacres, physical deprivations, and limited resources for years afterwards. They were not alone in their suffering as the war had devastated the Ottoman Empire and left its peoples reeling. Even with humanitarian relief programs, many refugees were lost--some to disease, others to Turkification programs. When the dust settled in 1923, an estimated 1.2 million Armenians had perished in addition to hundreds of thousands of Greek Christians, Syrians, Kurds, Nestorians, Arabs, and Turks.¹²

Perpetrated in the shadow of the Great War, the aftermath of the Armenian Genocide reverberated beyond Armistice. Western Europe turned towards recovery but the Greco-Turkish War from 1919-1923 prevented similar efforts in the Near East. Instead, violence, starvation, or epidemics continued to plague the region. Relief operations were established overseas during the brief respite after the Allied Victory and

¹² Taner Akçam, *The Young Turks' Crime Against Humanity: The Armenian Genocide and Ethnic Cleansing in the Ottoman Empire*. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2012), Ronald Grigor Suny, Fatma Muge Göçek, and Norman M. Naimark (eds.), *A Question of Genocide: Armenians and Turks at the End of the Ottoman Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), Taner Akçam, *A Shameful Act: The Armenian Genocide and the Question of Turkish Responsibility* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2006), Simon Payaslian, *United States Policy Toward the Armenian Question and the Armenian Genocide*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), Vahakn N. Dadrian, *The History of the Armenian Genocide: Ethnic Conflict from the Balkans to Anatolia to the Caucasus* (Oxford, UK: Berghahn Books, 2004), Merrill D. Peterson, *'Starving Armenians': America and the Armenian Genocide, 1915–1930 and After* (Charlottesville, Va.: University of Virginia Press, 2004), Peter Balakian, *The Burning Tigris: The Armenian Genocide and America's Response* (New York: Harper Collins, 2003), Jay Winter, ed. *America and the Armenian Genocide of 1915* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003), Richard G Hovannisian (ed.), *The Armenian Genocide: History, Politics, Ethics* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992).

continued throughout the conflict. In the U.S., the NER's in-house Publicity Department used professional advertising methods to produce media and fundraising events. Each year, the organization embarked on these whirlwind campaigns until international diplomatic intervention helped stabilize the crisis in the mid-1920s.

The chapters are ordered chronologically with some concessions to thematic unity in the latter half. By necessity, there is considerable overlap during the Great War years to avoid switching between different sets of issues and experiences. Chapter One considers the establishment and early years of the Near East Relief in light of its relationship to ecumenical Protestant organizations. The chapter begins by describing the founding of the NER, offering insight into the violence that sparked its formation. This narrative continues by following the committee's early attempts at publicizing the Armenian Genocide and its evolution into an organized fundraising campaign with help from the Laymen's Missionary Movement.

This emphasis on the Laymen's Movement as an ecumenical Protestant organization refutes previous historiography that placed the NER's origins solely in 19th century missions to the Ottoman Empire. While missionaries for the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions were essential as witnesses of the Armenian Genocide and distributors of limited humanitarian aid, it was the business-oriented Laymen's Missionary Movement and its ilk that dominated the NER's publicity and fundraising in the U.S. This contention is supported by a discussion of the Laymen's Movement's collaboration with the newly founded organization in spreading its message through the reports, bulletins, and pamphlets produced in advance of the 1916 Campaign. Analyzing these documents reveals the caution with which the NER guarded the disturbing narratives provided by the missionaries, consuls, and victims in this period. This chapter also examines several important individuals who helped define the

NER, including members of its early Executive Board and American Ambassador to Turkey, Henry Morgenthau. These men offer insight into the political and social connections that supported the NER's work.

Chapter Two attempts to understand the influence of Belgian Relief upon the Armenian Relief Movement. Historian Nicoletta Gullace rightly points out that the response to German atrocities against Belgian civilians overshadowed the response to the Armenian Genocide during the Great War. Gullace further asks—and this chapter begins to answer—why? The chapter begins by describing the German invasion of Belgium as well as its portrayal in the Anglo-American media as the “Rape of Belgium.” Analyses of Belgian Relief posters and other publicity materials will reveal its extensive reliance on accounts of sexual violence against mothers and adult women. This aggressive propaganda on Belgium's behalf challenged the public's threshold for fund drives. As a result, the NER avoided any comparisons by minimizing the considerable sexual violence perpetrated against Armenians with euphemisms and focusing on orphaned children.

The second part of the chapter concerns Herbert Hoover's Commission for Relief in Belgium, the Belgian equivalent and immediate predecessor to the Near East Relief. Hoover, a private citizen, gained the authority to negotiate with British and German officials to grant food aid to the starving Belgians. At the same time, the situation in Belgium was nowhere near as severe as that in the Near East. This section analyzes the political, social, and cultural distinctions that made Belgium a priority and the Armenians an afterthought.

Chapter Three begins with a general view of American wartime propaganda and its role in shaping the NER's 1919 Campaign for \$30,000,000. In April of 1917, President Wilson reversed his prior neutrality and asked Congress to declare war on Germany. Once obliged, the President who "had kept us out of war" steeled himself for backlash by a resentful public. While the American military prepared to ship out, Wilson laid the groundwork for a domestic campaign fought with word and images rather than guns and subs. Executive order 2594 established the Committee for Public Information to produce propaganda that would inspire the public to support the much-reviled war effort. At the helm stood George Creel, an unexceptional journalist and public relations man who exceeded all expectations by building a veritable publicity machine. The Creel Committee's prodigious output of effective propaganda arguably defined the historical legacy of World War I in the United States and heralded the birth of mass media. Some of the Creel Committee's most talented artists would contribute compelling, evocative works of art. The chapter focuses on three Division of Pictorial Publicity (DPP) illustrators whose posters appeared in the NER campaign. W.T. Benda, Douglas Volk, and Ethel Franklin Betts represent the breadth of DPP artists with respect to their training, previous work, and their rendering of Armenian relief.

The 1919 Campaign was the last Near East Relief fundraiser that centered around poster art. Once treasured tools in the publicity arsenal, illustrated images were rapidly supplanted by photography. After armistice, representatives from various American relief agencies surveyed the desperate conditions throughout the Near East to plan an extensive humanitarian operation. These committees brought back numerous photographs, some of which were passed on for publicity purposes. From then on, visual

publicity was dominated by images of Armenian refugees sent by relief workers, journalists, and professional publicity photographers. These resources and the advent of mass culture set new rules in a quest for consumer appeal in humanitarian work.

Chapter Four follows NER operations and the experiences of relief workers in the Near East after Armistice. In February 1919, the Leviathan departed New York with the first group of NER personnel aboard. Among them were ABCFM missionaries, physicians, nurses, fresh college graduates, a group of Mennonite Conscientious Objectors, and other volunteers. Using internal reports, staff newsletters, personal correspondence, journals, and other unpublished sources, this chapter reconstructs the human side of humanitarian work. Examining a selection of personal papers reveals meaningful differences in backgrounds, experiences, and opinions. In the weeks after arriving in Constantinople, the NER took over former Red Cross relief stations as the wartime organization withdrew from civilian service. Though the American Red Cross continued providing nurses and other professionals, the NER now directed all humanitarian operations in the Near East. Likewise, the American Women's Hospitals (AWH) supplied female physicians who joined the NER medical relief program. AWH staff took orders from the NER, but wore uniforms and received salaries from their sponsoring organizations. As representatives of a small-scale organization, AWH physicians had the added responsibilities of generating publicity materials. Dr. Mabel E. Elliott also contributed to the AWH coffers through her evocative letters and as the ministering angel to a malnourished child in a photograph. This chapter looks at this photograph as an iconic image of Armenian Relief.

Chapter Five examines NER fundraising activities after Armistice in the U.S. As relief operations began in Turkey, the Publicity Committee in New York were wrapping up the 1919 campaign and gearing up for this new era in the organization. The CPI and other wartime publicity departments had spurred the professionalization of advertising and publicity. With the end of war, these agencies were dissolved and many of their former staff members set up shop as experienced admen. While this industry catered to commercial interests, firms continued to work with philanthropic organizations at reduced rates. Though NER's Publicity Committee occasionally consulted with outside agencies, the in-house staff included its own admen, writers, speakers, and artists. This chapter analyzes publicity methods unique to the post-Armistice period: film, celebrity spokesmen, and cooperative marketing with food producers.

Children were key figures in post-Armistice publicity. NER photo-plays like *Ravished Armenia* and *Alice in Hungerland* dramatized the plight of motherless Armenian children in the organization's first forays into film. Children's plays, stories, and contests were published in *The New Near East* to provide entertainment for the younger generation. The Boy Scouts of America and other groups for children repeatedly organized milk drives and bundle days to collect old clothes for the Armenian orphans. Their accomplishments resulted in accolades by the NER as well as local officials. Child star Jackie Coogan was part of this effort to reach children as he was commissioned to lead a "Children's Crusade for the Near East" in 1924. Coogan traveled across the country drawing crowds and collecting donations for a cargo ship he would escort to the Near East. In announcing the tour, Jack Coogan Sr. discussed his edifying intentions in exposing his son to the "hardships and suffering other children of his own age have had

to endure” so that he might realize “the common duty of all mankind to one another.”¹³

As Armenian orphans provided lessons in humanity, NER wards also confirmed nutritional value in advertisements for food products. Food cooperatives such as the Dairyman’s League, Inc., and Association of Corn Products as well as certain branded food companies are listed as generous contributors to the NER’s Golden Rule Campaign. Those brands include Borden’s Condensed Milk, Sun Maid Raisins, Carnation Milk, and Tharinger Macaroni.¹⁴ In 1923, the NER and President Coolidge asked Americans to observe International Golden Rule Sunday on December 2nd by eating at least one meal “approximating that which is used every day in the orphanages of the Near East.”¹⁵ The provided guidelines confirm the commercial collaboration between food manufacturers and the NER. The chapter will thus demonstrate how the NER’s child-centered publicity facilitated parental obligations to nourish American children physically and morally. Thus, the NER pitiful rendering of “Starving Armenians” paradoxically helped sustain the American way-of-life: a triumph of humanitarian salesmanship.

After the Republic of Turkey declared independence in 1923, the League of Nations relocated the Armenian and Greek populations from Turkey to Greece. Upon welcoming the newcomers, the Greek Government, Allied Nations, and various organizations reduced NER responsibilities. With the Armenians’ survival ensured, the organization found other opportunities to dispense humanitarian aid. Years of collecting canned milk and pleas on behalf of malnourished orphans, however, imparted a collective concern for the “Starving Armenians.” Depicted outside the context of genocide, these

¹³ "Jackie Coogan to Aid Tots," *Los Angeles Times*, Mar 17, 1924.

¹⁴ Charles V. Vickrey, “Advertising and Golden Rule Sunday” (New York: Near East Relief, 1924).

¹⁵ “International Golden Rule Sunday,” *New Near East* 8 no. 12 (December 1923), 19.

children were wholly defined by unending hunger. This dissertation asks not why, but how these images came to be. In answering these questions, I argue for the historical importance of humanitarian media in American cultural life.

Humanitarian media defined the way Americans saw the tragedies occurring outside their own domain. The images of suffering shaped Americans' perspectives of the world and, in turn, their understanding of the United States in the world. In campaigns by the Near East Relief, Americans perceived the wretchedness of the Armenian situation to contrast with their own comforts and privileges. Armenians wandered through the desert or squatted in overcrowded cities under the constant threat of continuing or renewed violence. Meanwhile, Americans remained safely across the Atlantic from the perils of warfare in the Near East and Europe. Geographic isolation, however, did not obviate their compassion for their fellow human beings. If anything, U.S. neutrality and, later, distance from the war conferred an added duty to contribute to the various wartime relief projects. Americans were constantly called upon to give of their plenty to civilians suffering in Belgium, France, Serbia, and other places ravaged by World War I. Only in the Armenian case did they call for humanitarian relief because of violence conducted against a people by their fellow citizens.

This project, therefore, reflects upon the American cultural experience of genocide at the beginning of the deadly 20th century. Other scholars have discussed the political ramifications of the U.S. government's refusal to intervene in the Armenian Genocide. Political analysis of the American response to the Armenian Genocide often fails to note the prominence of the cause among the public. Through enormous amounts of publicity material, church-sponsored programs, and public advocacy, the Armenian

Relief Movement ensured that the American public was well aware of the intense suffering endured by the Ottoman Armenians. The fact that Americans were aware of Armenian suffering did not mean that they had to take action, there are plenty of instances in which knowledge of an even does not lead to humanitarian intervention. In the case of the Armenian Genocide, information about the genocide was accompanied by stories and images that influenced the public to contribute to the NER. From 1915 to 1930, the Near East Relief raised over \$100 million dollars—the equivalent of \$1.2 billion dollars today.¹⁶

While it would be unwise to attribute that entire sum to the publicity given the organization, it would be equally wrong to dismiss the power of humanitarian media in persuading so many Americans to give to Armenian relief. This dissertation considers the very fundraising material that helped make such a sum possible. By doing so, it considers questions that plague humanitarian campaigns to this day. In particular, how does an organization provide the graphic details necessary to move the public without overwhelming them with desperation? What is the right amount of sensationalism? Who has the proximity to access effective materials? How do we project our authority as humanitarians? The Near East Relief addressed all of these concerns and more during their publicity campaign on behalf of the Armenian refugees. In understanding their approach to these issues, we perceive the development of these publicity campaigns and their influence in shaping perceptions of the “Starving Armenians” as a people totally defined by their unmet needs.

¹⁶ “Near East Foundation: Timeline,” <http://www.neareast.org/whoweare/timeline> (accessed 21 July 2014).

CHAPTER 1

The Early Years of the NER, 1915-1917

From its establishment in 1915 to the U.S. declaration of war in April 1917, the American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief (ACASR) was closely affiliated with the Protestant evangelical networks at home and in the Ottoman Empire. Historical literature on the American response to the Armenian genocide usually begins with the relationship between American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) stations in the Ottoman Empire during the 19th century and the 20th century ACASR.¹ It was the ABCFM who sponsored the vast majority of missionaries who witnessed the Armenian genocide from their posts throughout the Ottoman Empire. While the ABCFM and other denominational mission boards sent missionaries into the field, ecumenical Christian organizations recruited candidates and facilitated financial support for foreign missions at home. Non-denominational Protestant groups such as the Laymen's Missionary Committee, Student Volunteer Services, and the Y.M.C.A. rose to

¹ See Flora A. Keshgegian, "'Starving Armenians': The Politics and Ideology of Humanitarian Aid in the First Decades of the Twentieth Century" in *Humanitarian and Suffering: The Mobilization of Empathy*, eds. Richard Ashby Wilson and Richard D. Brown (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2009): 140-155; Simon Payaslian, *United States Policy Toward the Armenian Question and the Armenian Genocide* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); Merrill D. Petersen, *"Starving Armenians": America and the Armenian Genocide, 1915-1930 and After* (Charlottesville, Va.: University of Virginia Press, 2004); Peter Balakian, *The Burning Tigris: The Armenian Genocide and America's Response* (New York: HarperCollins, 2003); Jay Winter, ed., *America and the Armenian Genocide of 1915* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Eleanor H. Tejirian, "Faith of Our Fathers: Missionaries and NGOs: The Transition" in *Altruism and Imperialism: Western Cultural and Religious Missions in the Middle East*, eds. Eleanor H. Tejirian and Reeva Spector Simon (New York: Middle East Institute, Columbia University, 2002): 295-315; Suzanne Elizabeth Moranian, "The American Missionaries and the Armenian Question, 1915-1927" (PhD dissertation: University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1994); Joseph L. Grabill, *Protestant Diplomacy and the Near East: Missionary Influence on American Policy, 1810-1927* (Minneapolis, Minn.: University of Minnesota Press, 1971); Robert L. Daniel, *American Philanthropy in the Near East, 1820-1960* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1970).

prominence during the “Mission Revivalism” of the 1880s.² Where ordained ministers and former missionaries ran the mission boards, faithful laymen with business expertise headed the latter organizations. By the turn-of-the-century, American Protestantism embraced a Liberal Christianity that exhorted followers to channel their faith into philanthropic endeavors. American missionary educational and medical institutions operated in Armenian communities with support from business-oriented laypeople promoting Christian causes in American communities. In the aftermath of massacres in 1894-6, 1909, and 1915, American missionaries took up humanitarian work while the Protestant evangelical movement promoted Armenian relief at home. This chapter investigates these intertwining modes of Protestant evangelism to reassess their role within the ACASR.

By arguing that the Protestant Ecumenical community—and not the Protestant mission boards—was responsible for ACASR publicity, this chapter will demonstrate that there is less continuity between 19th century mission work and 20th century humanitarian work than originally suggested. In addition, there were businessmen who associated with the organization from its founding to become the inner circle of the executive board. These businessmen were often involved in missionary causes as well, but they were members of boards based in the U.S. Their involvement in the NER speaks to the initial elitism of the organization, mainly asking donations from society types in New York City and its environs. This chapter will continue to discuss the expansion from the higher echelons of New York society to church publicity networks in the

² Ian Tyrrell, *Reforming the World: the Creation of America’s Moral Empire*, (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2010). Tyrrell notes that the Y.M.C.A. preceded the revival, but the organization was transformed by the movement.

organization's early years. Such a transition was reflected in the publicity materials sent out to the ACASR's representatives and supporters. After demonstrating how ACASR appealed to individuals through the churches, we will identify and discuss the nature of those campaign materials. What do they say? What do they leave out? Why might the ACASR have chosen to emphasize certain items? This will lead to an evaluation of the first publicity campaign of 1916 using booklets, pamphlets, letters, and other materials sent out by the organization. Focusing on these publicity campaigns will help analyze how ACASR functioned in its early years, as well as its intentions in making these appeals.

Background

The history of ACASR often begins with the Protestant Evangelical movements of nineteenth-century America. In the heyday of itinerant preachers and camp meetings, the Congregationalists of New England embraced the religious revival that had taken hold of the country.³ Founded on pre-millennialist precepts, the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions would prepare humanity for the Second Coming by evangelizing the world. ABCFM missionaries reached the Ottoman Empire in 1820, to commence the mass conversion of Muslims. Despite their unrelenting optimism and dedication, the missionaries made few converts. Beginning in the 1830s, ABCFM missionaries turned their attention towards Armenians, Nestorians, and other Christian minorities living under Ottoman Rule.

Over the course of a century of engagement with the Ottoman Empire, the ABCFM representatives developed close ties with the Armenian Christians. Though

³ See Jon Butler, *Awash in a Sea of Faith: Christianizing the American People* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1990)

their conversion rates remained low, their establishment of schools brought Western-style education to the Near East. In the mid-19th century, the Ottoman Empire was in the midst of the *Tanzimat* (or reorganization) to reform the empire through Western modernization. The American missionary schools were valuable resources for creating an elite population familiar with Western concepts of government and society. When the *Tanzimat* ended and the new Sultan Abdul Hamid II turned to a Pan-Islamic vision for the empire, these schools and their masters were seen as a foreign influence interfering with Ottoman sovereignty. Instead, the Ottoman state sponsored their own Western-style schools that infused the curriculum with Islamic subjects and loyalty to the Sultan.⁴ Since Muslims generally avoided exposing their children to proselytizing at missionary schools, these Ottoman schools increased the level of education in the upper echelons of Muslim society.

In addition to education, the *Tanzimat* reforms took on the justice system as well as the military to imitate a Western bureaucracy. The *Tanzimat* ended in 1876 with the introduction of a constitution that the Sultan abrogated in 1878. Despite the modernization and reforms made during the *Tanzimat* era, the Ottoman Empire lost the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-8. Sultan Abdul Hamid II then re-established control over the bureaucrats running the country, turning away from Westernization to embrace Pan-Islamism. Under the influence of his Pan-Islamic beliefs, the Sultan Abdul Hamid II turned against the Armenian population as a fifth column. After the loss to Russia, the Sultan had grown more suspicious of the Armenian communities that straddled the border between Russia and Turkey. Because Ottoman Armenians were Christians and situated

⁴ William Cleveland, *A History of the Modern Middle East* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2009), 120-1.

close to an enemy Christian nation, the Sultan made assumptions about their loyalties. He sent the Hamidiye Kurdish Militias to deal with his Armenian problem in the Hamidian Massacres of 1894-6. The Hamidiye units of Kurds massacred Armenians for other reasons than the Sultan's orders. As Janet Klein demonstrates, the Armenians and Kurds had been living together for centuries and had centuries-old issues over land ownership and taxation. These conflicts—more so than the Sultan's words—influenced their actions towards Armenians.⁵ In 1908, the Young Turk Revolution toppled the Sultan to reinstate the parliament and the constitution. Despite a short-lived counter-coup in 1909, the Second Constitutional Era continued under the leadership of the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP). The CUP was influenced by Western ideas of nationalism and attempted to reform the Ottoman Empire in line with European nations. From their Pan-Turkish platform, the CUP meant to homogenize the Ottoman Empire so that minorities such as the Armenians would not be able to rise up in protest. They accomplished this through demographic engineering and genocide.⁶ These conflicts provide important background for studying the challenges facing the Near East Relief's first incarnation as the American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief (ACASR).⁷

⁵ Janet Klein, *The Margins of Empire: Kurdish Militias in the Ottoman Tribal Zone* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2011)

⁶ Taner Akçam, *The Young Turks' Crime Against Humanity: The Armenian Genocide and Ethnic Cleansing in the Ottoman Empire* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2012).

⁷ Congress incorporated the organization as Near East Relief in August 1919. The ACRNE was the short-lived successor to the American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief (ACASR). In the final months of World War I, ACASR expanded its activities to the refugees fleeing from Ottoman territories to Russian/Soviet Armenia. In reference to its widened scope, the organization changed its name to the ACRNE in 1918. For simplicity, I use the NER moniker for all incarnations of this organization except when the distinctions are pertinent to the discussion. See James L. Barton, *The Story of Near East Relief*, (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1930) and "U.S. Act to Incorporate Near East Relief" (http://www.armenian-genocide.org/Affirmation.228/current_category.7/affirmation_detail.html)

For many Evangelical Protestants, the Armenians suffered as martyrs within a larger conception of Christian redemption. There was an entire mythology of the Armenians as the “oldest Christian nation” that urged Americans to consider themselves duty-bound to their co-religionists of the Bible lands.⁸ Between these beliefs and ABCFM investment in the Ottoman Empire, missionaries often reviled the ‘Terrible Turks’ even as they sustained hope for their conversion.⁹ This led to a naturalization of the hatred between Christianity and Islam, Christians and Muslims. In fact, those religions had lived together in the Ottoman Empire for centuries with little interreligious conflict.¹⁰ As a result of their divided interests, however, ABCFM missionaries were among the Armenians’ most loyal supporters but rarely called for political intervention against the Turks.

On the twenty-fourth of April, Armenian communities gather to commemorate the Armenian genocide. These ceremonies recall that spring night in 1915 when Ottoman authorities arrested around 250 prominent Armenian men in Constantinople under orders from Minister of the Interior Talat Pasha. Among those detained on ‘Red Sunday’ were clergymen, physicians, editors, journalists, lawyers, teacher, and politicians. All were men at the core of Armenian intellectual and civic life. This was specifically done to

⁸ “The Oldest Christian Nation—Shall It Perish?” New York: Near East Relief, 1920. See also William Walker Rockwell, “The Deportation of the Armenians,” New York: American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief, 1916; “The Cry of Armenia,” New York: American Armenian Relief, 1895.

⁹ Justin McCarthy, *The Turk in America: The Creation of an Enduring Prejudice* (Salt Lake City: The University of Utah Press, 2010). On American missions to the Near East; Hans-Lukas Kieser, *Nearest East: American Millennialism and Mission to the Middle East* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2010), Ussama Makdisi, *Artillery of Heaven: American Missionaries and the Failed Conversion of the Middle East* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2009), Thomas S. Kidd, *American Christians and Islam: Evangelical Culture and Muslims from the Colonial Period to the Age of Terrorism* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2008), William R. Hutchison, *Errand to the World: American Protestant Thought and Foreign Missions* (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 1993).

¹⁰ Justin McCarthy, *The Ottoman Peoples and the End of Empire* (London: Arnold Publishers, 2001): 2-3.

separate the Armenian population from its leaders so that the consequent deportations would proceed as smoothly as possible. Few from this first wave returned from their arrests and deportations to the interior: most were tortured then murdered in subsequent months. Similar operations in other cities and provinces targeted the Armenian leadership before moving on to the remaining population. The ensuing massacres, death marches to the Syrian desert, and the Islamization of Armenian children make up the Armenian genocide of 1915-1917 (some extend this date to 1922 in recognition of continuing massacres and adoption of Armenian children into Turkish homes). Turkish gendarmes and the Hamidiye Kurdish Calvary carried out the deadly orders from Ottoman authorities, acting under instruction from members of the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP). The CUP was a nationalist political party that favored the homogenization of the Turkish homeland and the modernization of Turkish society. Under CUP guidance of its “Special Organization” for murdering Armenians, 1 to 1.5 million Armenians perished in massacres, from starvation, and other violent acts. In the aftermath of World War One, the bulk of the survivors became refugees forced to flee from Turkish Nationalist troops during the Turkish War of Independence.

Ronald Grigor Suny attributes the beginning of scholarship on the Armenian genocide to increasingly harsh denials of genocide by Turkish spokesmen and the violent actions of Armenian terrorists from 1973 to the early 1980s. These events raised political and academic consciousness on the Armenian genocide and encouraged scholars to begin exploring that history.¹¹ Richard Hovannisian released *The Armenian Holocaust* in 1978

¹¹ Ronald Grigor Suny, “Writing Genocide: the Fate of the Ottoman Armenians” in (eds.) Ronald Grigor Suny, Fatma Muge Göçek, and Norman M. Naimark, *A Question of Genocide: Armenians and Turks at the End of the Ottoman Empire* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2011): 15-41.

as a bibliography of sources that pointed towards primary sources as well as the “thinness” of academic research on the genocide. At that point only Yves Ternon, a French physician who had studied Nazi medical atrocities, offered a history in his 1977 *Les Arméniens: Histoire d'un Génocide*. A number of Armenian scholars such as Richard Hovannisian, Vahakn Dadrian, and Levon Marashlian as well as non-Armenian scholars like Robert F. Melson, Leo Kuper, and Ternon, began writing about the genocide in the 1980s.¹² Their contributions were countered by Heath Lowry, Stanford Shaw, and Justin McCarthy who disagreed with their conclusions on the statistical data, involvement of the Committee for Union and Progress, and whether the event was the unfortunate fallout of war, or was actually genocide.¹³ Meanwhile, certain Holocaust scholars rejected equivalencies between the Armenian cases and the extermination of European Jewry.¹⁴

¹² See Robert F. Melson, *Revolution and Genocide: On the Origins of the Armenian Genocide and the Holocaust* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992); Levon Marashlian, "The Armenian Question from Sévres to Lausanne: Economics and Morality in American and British policies," (PhD dissertation, University of California-Los Angeles, 1992); Richard G. Hovannisian, ed., *The Armenian Genocide: History, Politics, Ethics* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992); *The Armenian Genocide in Perspective* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Books, 1986); Leo Kuper, *Genocide: Its Political Use in the 20th Century* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1981); Richard G. Hovannisian, *The Armenian Holocaust: A Bibliography Relating to the Deportations, Massacres, and Dispersion of the Armenian People, 1915–1923* (Cambridge, Mass.: National Association for Armenian Studies and Research, 1978); Yves Ternon, *Les Arméniens: Histoire d'un Génocide* (Paris: Éditions de Seuil, 1977).

¹³ For denialist literature, see Stanford J. Shaw and Ezel Kural Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 2:315–16; Justin McCarthy, *Muslims and Minorities: The Population of Ottoman Anatolia and the End of the Empire* (New York: New York University Press, 1983); *Turks and Armenians: A Manual on the Armenian Question* (Washington, D.C.: Committee on Education, Assembly of Turkish American Associations, 1989); *Death and Exile: The Ethnic Cleansing of Ottoman Muslims, 1821–1922* (Princeton, N.J.: Darwin Press, 1995); *The Ottoman Turks: An Introductory History to 1923* (London: Longman, 1997); *The Ottoman Peoples and the End of Empire* (London: Arnold, 2001); and Justin McCarthy et al, *The Armenian Rebellion at Van* (Salt Lake City: Utah Series in Turkish and Islamic Studies, 2006); Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961; 2nd ed., 1968), 356.

¹⁴ Suny, "Writing Genocide: the Fate of the Ottoman Armenians," 23. Suny quotes historian Peter Novick on Holocaust Scholar Lucy Dawidowicz: "Lucy Dawidowicz (quite falsely) accused" an Armenian writer "of 'turn[ing] the subject into a vulgar contest about who suffered more.' She added that while Turks had 'a rational reason' for killing Armenians, the Germans had no rational reason for killing Jews."

By the late 1980s, academic scholarship on the Armenian Genocide had developed that was shaped by the concerns of the denialists. Those who supported the idea of an Armenian genocide focused their work on proving the denialists wrong rather than expanding knowledge of the genocide itself. Neither did they focus on causation as the denialists were uninterested in discovering the reasons for an event that did not happen. Denialists argued that the so-called Armenian genocide was a measured response to the actions of a rebellious fifth column that threatened the very survival of the state engaged in total war. In short; the violence was not too bad; the Armenians were treacherous and undermined Ottoman defenses; and it all took place as part of a devastating war. Those who disagreed with the denialists chose to paint the Armenians as innocent victims of irrational violence at the hands of the Young Turks. Neither side would venture beyond the laid tracks as that might concede ground to the opposition. As a result, little progress was made.

Not until the late 1990s and 2000s did the historiographic concerns shift away from denialism to discuss the origins of Young Turk policy against the Armenians. Historians, increasingly non-Armenians and even Turkish scholars like Taner Akçam began asking questions about intention, radicalization, the decisions which led to the genocide. When Turkish scholars entered the fray, they brought with them expertise on the late Ottoman period, language skills, and access to Turkish sources. Historians are still digging through the Ottoman archives and making inroads between the Turkish and Armenian communities on this issue. Rather than succumb to the politicization of this history, historians such as Norman Naimark, Ronald Grigor Suny, and Fatma Muge

Gocek are leading the charge to allow historians to explore diverse questions without fear of denialism.¹⁵

Founding the American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief

American Ambassador to Turkey Henry Morgenthau laid the cornerstone for the NER with a failed attempt to rescue the Armenians before the first massacres in 1915. Morgenthau negotiated with Enver Pasha, Turkish Minister of War, to relocate the surviving Armenians in the United States. In a September 1915 telegram to Secretary of State Robert Lansing, Morgenthau announced his triumph and asked that Lansing recruit a few well-known philanthropists and religious leaders “to form committee to raise funds and provide means to save some of the Armenians.”¹⁶ The State Department relayed Morgenthau’s message to Cleveland H. Dodge.¹⁷ As a personal friend to President Wilson, father of two missionaries in Turkey, and President of Phelps Dodge Corporation, Dodge served at the nexus of religion, business, and government. On September 16th, prominent men from all three circles gathered at Dodge’s Fifth Avenue office to discuss Armenian relief. After a briefing on the deteriorating situation in the

¹⁵ Vahakn N. Dadrian and Taner Akçam, *Judgment at Istanbul: The Armenian Genocide Trials* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2011); Raymond Kévorkian, *The Armenian Genocide: A Complete History* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2011); Norman M. Naimark et al, *A Question of Genocide: Armenians and Turks at the End of the Ottoman Empire* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2011); Uğur Ümit Üngör, *The Making of Modern Turkey: Nation and State in Eastern Anatolia, 1913-1950* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011); Taner Akçam, *The Young Turks’ Crime Against Humanity: The Armenian Genocide and Ethnic Cleansing in the Ottoman Empire* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2012); *A Shameful Act: The Armenian Genocide and the Question of Turkish Responsibility* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2006); *From Empire to Republic: Turkish Nationalism and the Armenian Genocide* (London: Zed Books, 2004); Donald Bloxham, *The Great Game of Genocide: Imperialism, Nationalism, and the Destruction of the Ottoman Armenians* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2005); Richard G. Hovannisian, ed., *Remembrance and Denial: The Case of the Armenian Genocide* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1999); Vahakn N. Dadrian, *Warrant for Genocide: Key Elements of Turko-Armenian Conflict* (New Brunswick, N.J., and London: Transaction Publishers, 1999) and *The History of the Armenian Genocide: Ethnic Conflict from the Balkans to Anatolia to the Caucasus* (Providence, R.I.: Berghahn Books, 1995).

¹⁶ “Telegram from Morgenthau to Sec. of State Robert Lansing, Sept. 3, 1915,” NA/RG59/ 867.4016/117

¹⁷ Alvey A. Adey, Second Assistant Secretary, Department of State, Washington, D.C. to Mr. Cleveland H. Dodge, New York, 8 September 1915, NA/RG59/867.4016/117. Identical letters were also sent to Rabbi Stephen Weiss, John R. Mott, and Charles R. Crane.

Near East, the men established an ad-hoc committee to provide the necessary funds. Upon Dodge's insistence that Rev. James L. Barton had the best credentials, the ABCFM representative was appointed chairman. The newly-founded NER elected educator Samuel T. Dutton as secretary and industrialist Charles R. Crane for treasurer. With officers in place, the members then voted to set the emergency goal at \$100,000.¹⁸ Members contributed half that sum before the meeting adjourned.

Just days later Barton convened a second meeting to discuss the troubling lack of information on the situation. The Committee chose Barton and Crane to "ascertain all accessible facts" in Washington, D.C.¹⁹ Crane was a natural choice to accompany Barton as he had acquired useful contacts in D.C while pursuing his youthful interest in foreign affairs. As heir to the Crane Company plumbing firm, the eighteen-year-old Crane worked himself to exhaustion. A salutary tour abroad revived the young man so much so that he continued traveling through Asia and Europe for the next seven years. Crane discovered a passion for international affairs that he later asserted through his wealth and business clout. An aborted diplomatic appointment to China under President Taft soured Crane on the conservative Republican and impelled him towards the Progressive movement. President Wilson would recognize his hefty contributions in the 1912 campaign by indulging Crane's special interests in the Middle East and Eastern Europe.

¹⁸ Barton, "The Story of Near East Relief," 8-9.

¹⁹ Rev. Barton to William W. Peet, Bible House, Constantinople, Turkey, 5 October 1915, Microfilm A467: Reel 136, American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions Archives, 1810-1961 (ABC 1-91) Houghton Library, Harvard University.

Endowed with Wilson's favor and his son serving as assistant to Secretary of State Lansing, Crane's presence eased the task at hand.²⁰

Barton and Crane were given full access to everything the State Department had received from Turkey. Over two days they "secured copies of the consular reports in detail and of all the enclosures [they] asked for."²¹ The pair returned to the Committee with scores of confidential dispatches detailing the Turks' alleged efforts to exterminate the Armenian population. Barton selected portions of these documents for inclusion in the *Report of the Committee on Armenian Atrocities*. Identifying details were redacted to protect the sources who remained in Turkey from retribution. On October 4th, the galleys were released to the press. Barton revisited the *CAA Report* in his 1930 memoir *The Story of Near East Relief: An Interpretation*. The elder Barton claimed to have removed "all reports referring to the tragic end meted out to the men" as "the Committee could be officially concerned only with the numbers and condition of those still living."²² He further recounted censoring the more gruesome details to avoid shocking the public. In actuality, the accounts were faithful to the original texts in their graphic depictions of genocidal violence against Armenians.

The CAA Report publicized Turkish atrocities against Armenians with horrific descriptions of torture, rape, and trails of rotting corpses. While prior articles covered these massacres, the media had little knowledge of these events. Upon its release, *The CAA Report* thrust the Armenian plight into the limelight with a barrage of shocking

²⁰ Crane would later serve as co-chair of the King-Crane Commission. For a biography of Crane see David Hapgood, *Charles R. Crane: The Man Who Bet on People* (Washington, D.C.: Institute of Current World Affairs, 2000).

²¹ Barton to Peet, 5 October 1915.

²² Barton "The Story of Near East Relief," 40.

revelations. Certain cruelties stood out from the rest, often appearing in multiple accounts. Accounts VIII and IX describe methods of torturing Armenian prisoners. Miss Frieda Wolf Hunecke, a German missionary and author of VIII, reported that many prisons used the bastinado for interrogations. She described how gendarmes whipped the prisoners' feet until they swelled and bled profusely. When a prisoner passed out, the tormentors revived him with buckets of cold water until they tired. Other prisoners carried the victim back to bed, where his open injuries stained the linens. Hunecke learned these details after asking about a strange pattern of blood "running in long streams" on a sheet from the prison. Witnesses alerted her to other torture methods for inflicting heat and chemical burns.²³ An American teacher at Marsovan independently confirmed that "the bastinado was used frequently, as well as fire torture" in Account IX.²⁴

Nearly every account differentiated genocidal acts against Armenian men from violence perpetrated against women. This suggests that the experience of the Armenian genocide was gender-specific so that able-bodied men were largely massacred while women were deported and often became victims of sexual violence.²⁵ U.S. Consul in Aleppo, J.B. Jackson Account XXII clearly states that "the men and boys have been deported from their homes in great numbers and disappeared en route" before confirming "the killing of the males."²⁶ Others make reference to "the removal of the breadwinners" or note the gender imbalance among surviving refugees. The CAA offered far more

²³ Ara Sarafian, "The Paper Trail: the American State Department and the Report of the Committee On Armenian Atrocities," *Revue du Monde Armenien* 1(1994): 137. This article contains a reprint of the entire Report of Committee On Armenian Atrocities of 4 October 1915.

²⁴ *ibid*, 138.

²⁵ Katharine Derderian, "Common Fate, Different Experience: Gender-Specific Aspects of the Armenian Genocide, 1915-1917," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 19 no.1 (Spring 2005): 1-25.

²⁶ *ibid*, 153.

information on the mass killing of men than it does about the sexual violence against women. Rather than specifying *rape* most accounts mention that women were *outraged* or kidnapped by Turks and other men. This euphemistic language stands in opposition of overt allegations of rape made against the German Army in their treatment of Belgian women. Chapter Two will discuss those cases in greater detail.

Victoria Khatchadour Baroutjibashian's testimony in Account XVIII expounded on the victimization of Armenian women. In June 1915, the wealthy widow, her mother, and eight-year-old daughter obeyed deportation orders by leaving Bayburt, a city in northeast Turkey. Two hours into the journey, "bands of villagers and brigands" surrounded the exiles and robbed them of everything. Mujadeers chose the most attractive women and girls, including Baroutjibashian's sister, and "carried them off" to the mountains. Baroutjibashian was most disturbed by the "unimaginable horrors" she witnessed "at the banks of the Euphrates and in the Erzingian Plain." All those previous experiences of death did not prepare her for the "mutilated bodies of women, girls, and children [that] made everybody shudder." Though familiar with the bandsmen's cruelty, Baroutjibashian makes her only reference to God when describing them "doing all sorts of awful deeds to the women and girls that were with us, whose cries went up to heaven."²⁷ Baroutjibashian may render the most thorough depiction, but she and the other authors rely on vague phrasing when referring to sexual violence. Societal standards of propriety limited discussions of violations of female bodies and, later, changing publicity tactics would render such topics off-limits. Soon thereafter the NER adopted similarly discreet language to temper their portrayal of other Turkish atrocities.

²⁷ *ibid*, 150-151.

Expanding Armenian Relief

As the Armenian crisis deepened, publicity strategies increasingly discouraged the use of graphic details in fundraising. Near East Relief's plan initially assumed—according to both diplomatic and missionary reports—that this emergent situation would be resolved within a few months of relief work. By the end of 1915, the continuing displacement and deterioration of the surviving Armenians indicated that far more funds would be necessary. In the beginning of 1916, the Committee set out to raise half-a-million dollars in three months.²⁸ With increasing obligations and an indefinite timeline, the NER had to rethink its approach to fundraising. *The CAA* report served its immediate purpose to shock and inform the public. Once Armenian relief efforts intensified, the NER warned their representatives to withhold the “more gruesome details” in their public interactions. Barton later explained that “The Committee could be officially concerned only with the numbers and condition of those still living.” It stands to reason that donors respond to causes that require contributions to meet pressing needs. As opposed to recycling past atrocities, evidence of current Armenian suffering provided fresh material for relief funds.

Latest News from January 25 1916, the first newsletter in an occasional series, demonstrates how the NER kept its representatives on message.²⁹ *Latest News* primarily contained excerpts from recent reports on the Armenian situation similar to those in the *CAA Report*. The January issue focused on winter's impact on refugee conditions, including instructions for using these accounts. In their opening message, the Committee

²⁸ “Latest News Concerning the Armenian and Syrian Sufferers: January 25, 1916,” (New York: American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief, 1916).

²⁹ Barton, “The Story of Near East Relief,” 375.

announced the aforementioned turn away from detailed accounts of massacres and death. Instead, the Committee asked supporters to stress the continuing struggle to meet the Armenians' basic needs, arguing that:

Horrible as were the massacres, more horrible are the cruelties which have been inflicted upon the thousands of men, women, and children who escaped these massacres only to live in the power of the persecutors.³⁰

In addition to keeping donors up-to-date with the difficulties facing surviving Armenians, the newsletter also outlined plans for expanding the organization. By January 1916, the NER had sent nearly \$250,000 for relief work and intended to raise half-a-million more. These lofty goals required the added support from emerging auxiliary committees.³¹

From the beginning, Secretary Samuel T. Dutton intended to create auxiliary committees in every state and as many communities possible. Correspondence with Barton also detailed plans for additional groups for women and Armenians in New York City, the Boston Area, Southern California, and other places where they lived. He convened such a meeting with Armenian community leaders in New York City on January 31, 1916.³² Dutton, however, had difficulty balancing his expanding vision for Armenian relief with his role as Treasurer to Constantinople College for Women. Although a \$10,000 donation to the College eased his responsibility to raise funds, Dutton was exhausted. Still, he was not ready to cut back his obligations to his outside interests. After a long, successful career in education, the Professor retired from Teacher's College, Columbia University in 1915. Retirement allowed Dutton to dedicate

³⁰ "Latest News: January 25 1916," 12.

³¹ "Latest News: January 25 1916," 12.

³² Charles Herbert Levermore, *Samuel Train Dutton: A Biography* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1922): 160.

more time to his work with multiple peace societies, relief funds, and various institutional boards. Soon after turning down a position with the Red Cross to assess battlefront operations in Europe, Dutton became involved with Armenian relief. When Dutton's position as Secretary became too onerous for him, Committee hired Walter H. Mallory to assist Dutton. After graduating from Columbia University the prior May, Mallory volunteered with The Columbia Relief Expedition to Serbia. Dutton occasionally helped out the Serbian Relief Committee as their offices were both at 70 Fifth Avenue. Mallory may have met Dutton in this context after returning to the U.S. in October 1915.

As General Field Secretary, Mallory coordinated a team of field workers who traveled nationwide to get auxiliary committees up and running. Local churches and community philanthropies supplied the ACSAR with lists of donors, members, and volunteers. These contacts were invited to attend informational meetings on the Armenian crisis. After assembling groups of interested men, field agents worked with the elected officers and membership to begin fundraising. As liaison between the National Committee and these auxiliary groups, Mallory supplied "official data, material for news stories, and suggestions for work."³³ In addition, he booked speaking tours for returned missionaries from Turkey to give personal accounts of the atrocities against Armenians at fundraising events. In February 1916, there were auxiliary committees in 14 cities; by April, that number had doubled to 29 city committees spread throughout 15

³³ "Armenia: February 21, 1916," (New York: American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief, 1916), 12.

states.³⁴ Each new committee extended these local networks to transform Armenian relief into a national movement.

While the field agents focused on long-term strategy, Secretary Dutton attended to the Committee's immediate needs. Dutton expedited fundraising by calling upon his most influential contacts to solicit large donations. The Rockefeller Foundation was one of the NER's first and most generous contributors. Despite concerns about "not being able to say more definitely how the money is used," the Rockefeller Foundation allotted \$30,000 for immediate use by Armenian and Syrian relief in October 1915. The philanthropy's secretary, Jerome Greene attributed their decision to "our confidence in the wisdom of the American Ambassador and of the representations of the American Board [of Commissioners for Foreign Missions]."³⁵ Greene requested "as concrete a statement as you can give of the way in which it is possible to spend money effectively."³⁶ The NER response proved persuasive as the Rockefeller Foundation contributed another \$40,000 by the year's end. Dutton continued appealing to Greene until the secretaries settled on a monthly contribution so that the Rockefeller Foundation donated \$490,000 in 1916.³⁷

The Rockefeller Foundation Board's initial reservations were fueled by a survey conducted by their War Relief Commission. Before committing financially, the War Relief Commission sent its agents to investigate the needs and feasibility of proposed humanitarian aid. In the summer of 1915, Eliot Wadsworth and Jeremiah Smith Jr. were

³⁴ "Armenia: February 21, 1916"; Latest News Concerning the Armenian and Syrian Sufferers: April 5, 1915," (New York: American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief, 1916).

³⁵ "Letter from Jerome D. Greene to James L. Barton, 1915 October 04," *100 Years: The Rockefeller Foundation*, accessed April 30, 2013, <http://rockefeller100.org/items/show/2487>.

³⁶ "Letter from Jerome D. Greene to Charles R. Crane, 1915 October 04," *100 Years: The Rockefeller Foundation*, accessed April 30, 2013, <http://rockefeller100.org/items/show/2486>.

³⁷ The Rockefeller Foundation, "Annual Report for 1916" (New York: Rockefeller Foundation, 1916), 428. When Belgian Relief began in 1914, the War Relief Fund allocated nearly one million dollars for food supplies. ("Annual Report for 1916," 428-9).

sent to observe conditions in the Ottoman Empire and the surrounding regions. War on the Eastern Front in conjunction with the many population migrations of Russian Muslims and Circassians to the Ottoman Empire created a drastic refugee situation throughout the Near East into the Caucasus. Famine and disease wrought havoc in the Caucasus Region. Turkish atrocities left the surviving Armenians, Nestorians, and Syrians particularly prone to continued deprivations. The Russian Empire readily agreed to collaborate with the American Red Cross and ACASR in civilian relief. Their official report was optimistic about prospective Rockefeller projects in these regions. Wadsworth and Smith were considerably less sanguine about Turkey. After confirming reports of mass violence against the Armenians, they easily determined that the surviving remnant were in dire need of humanitarian aid. The Turkish authorities galled the investigators with their obvious desire for Rockefeller money. Instead of accepting help from the Red Cross or other neutral organizations, they demanded complete government control over the relief work and its funding.

The Turkish authorities made international humanitarian programs untenable at every step, limiting the relief work within its borders. At the same time, waves of deportations and violence prevented the permanent settlement of Armenians, Syrians, and other non-Turkish peoples in Anatolia. Large refugee populations remaining in flux rendered a sustained humanitarian operation impractical. A relief organization might invest resources in a 'safe' city when thousands of Armenians were suddenly evacuated. Since relief stations do not spring up overnight, the displaced Armenians would likely find shelter in places without such services. Neither could the Americans go to the Armenians. Continuing war on the Eastern Front complicated travel throughout the

region. Turkish authorities imposed further travel restrictions on foreigners that generally blocked areas proximal to deportation routes. Relief agents could not accompany the refugees in flight; nor could they operate roaming soup kitchens or clinics. The Rockefeller Foundation took on these territories, but continued their financial support of Armenian relief work in Turkey under ACSAR. The organization proved uniquely suited to this difficult field by enlisting American diplomats and missionaries as their representatives in Turkey.

Despite their official neutrality in this period, the Americans in Turkey struggled under the increasing scrutiny of Turkish censorship. When the massacres began in 1915, the Turkish mail service slowed considerably as authorities attempted to curb the flow of information. The entire interior was virtually sealed off when mass murder reached its height in the Summer of 1915. Telegrams were repeatedly intercepted so that the Embassy heard practically nothing from Consul Leslie A. Davis at Harput. Only short, coded letters might pass through the postal service censors. Permission to travel was difficult to secure so that missionaries could not leave their posts without intervention from higher authorities. Despite these restrictions, Consul J.B. Jackson at Aleppo succeeded in eluding censors. Jackson coded all of his telegrams and dispatches that were sent by hand to Morgenthau.³⁸ Missionaries in the Turkish Caucasus region sent messages via F. Willoughby Smith of Tiflis (now Tblisi, Georgia) and then forwarded to the Embassy in Constantinople. Eventually messages began trickling through, providing information for fundraising.

³⁸ Peter Balakian, *The Burning Tigris: The Armenian Genocide and America's Response* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2003): 290.

The State Department and the ACASR Constantinople Committee also arranged secure modes of sending large amounts of money to distant provinces. When the ACASR began their remittances in 1915, the money for Turkey was wired from New York to a European bank and cabled to the Committee in Constantinople.³⁹ The diplomats, educators, and missionaries on the Constantinople Committee decided how to divide the money based on the latest reports from the Embassy. The Committee would then transfer the money to the mission through foreign banks to avoid the Imperial Ottoman Bank. Larger amounts and mounting suspicions necessitated greater precautions at both ends. At that point, the State Department handled the international transfer through its embassies in neutral countries and onto the Embassy in Constantinople. The Ambassador then informed the Consuls to withdraw their allotted amount and confirm their receipt. In 1916, the Ambassador directed the Consuls to leave all the relief work to the missionaries and discouraged Armenians from visiting the compound. A social call between an American diplomat and missionary would not raise suspicions or give the Turks opportunities for interfering. These measures were taken as the Turkish authorities refused to allow foreign relief unless they controlled the funds. At certain points, American relief work was tacitly allowed though the Sublime Porte insisted upon its domestic sovereignty. As the U.S. moved closer to war, the relief work was left to Scandinavian and German Missionaries and facilitated by the Swedish Legation. These machinations illustrate not only the immense caution of the time, but also the blurring of state and non-state humanitarian intervention.

³⁹ Barton, *The Story of Near East Relief*, 401-3.

The extent of State Department involvement in relief work was largely unknown at the time, though Ambassador Morgenthau received wide acclaim for avoiding war with Turkey. In February 1916, Morgenthau took a leave of absence to help Wilson's campaign for re-election. New York City Mayor James Purroy Mitchell appointed a committee of 40 prominent citizens to greet Morgenthau at the port with a hero's welcome. Cleveland H. Dodge chaired the committee that included ACASR Executive Officers Dutton and Crane as well as several members of the National Committee.⁴⁰ Days before the ambassador's ship docked in New York, Secretary of State Robert Lansing wrote a letter asking that Morgenthau refrain from public events "in recognition of the splendid work which you are doing" as unplanned remarks might damage his rapport with the Turks. Lansing further cautioned him with "regard to newspaper reporters, who may misrepresent you and whom it is well to avoid as far as possible."⁴¹ At around 8 AM on February 22nd, the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter *Manhattan* rendezvoused with the steamship Frederick VIII in New York Harbor. "A dozen cameras and two moving picture machines" documented the scene as Morgenthau walked the gangplank to join his family and the Mayor's Committee on the *Manhattan*. *The New York Times* deemed Lansing's warning "an unnecessary precaution" as the Ambassador was "sufficiently reserved when questioned by reporters" prior to receiving the letter.⁴² After the remaining committee members greeted him at the pier, Morgenthau and his retinue continued on to an informal reception at the Office of the Dock Commissioner. Speaking

⁴⁰ "To Welcome Morgenthau: Mayor Appoints a Committee to Greet Returning Ambassador," *New York Times*, 16 February 1916: pg. 22.

⁴¹ Lansing to Morgenthau, 17 February 1916, Box 7, General Correspondence, *Papers of Henry Morgenthau, Sr.*, Division of Manuscripts, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

⁴² "Honor Morgenthau As World Diplomat," *New York Times*, 23 February 1916: pg. 5.

on behalf of the Mayor's Committee, Chairman Dodge delivered an emotional tribute that ended in tears and a hug. Citing the poignancy of Dodge's remarks, Morgenthau scrapped his prepared speech to thank the President for his guidance from afar:

"Whenever I felt weak and sought renewed strength, I would look up at the picture of Woodrow Wilson on one side of my desk and at the picture of Abraham Lincoln on the other." In drawing this parallel between Wilson and his revered predecessor, Morgenthau adeptly switched into campaign-mode. His profuse praise for Wilson focused attention on the upcoming election rather than address more sensitive topics. Neither speaker discussed the Armenian situation, though Morgenthau suggested that "things have quieted down in Turkey now."⁴³ These assurances failed to impress the print media in light of Lansing's imposed limitations and contrary reports. *The Washington Post* expressed disappointment that "the enthusiasm of home coming was tempered down to dry formula by warning from the State Department head."⁴⁴ Morgenthau similarly chafed beneath Lansing's gag order, submitting his resignation for approval in March. His first act as a private citizen was a speaking tour for the ACASR in April.

One of Morgenthau's final dispatches from Constantinople had upped the campaign goal to five million dollars. Such a vast increase required the Near East Relief to look to larger philanthropic foundations for guidance. Under advisement from Jerome D. Greene, the Near East Relief took measures to increase the scope of its fundraising. A month after Henry Morgenthau returned from Constantinople, Barton proposed a meeting at the former ambassador's home to initiate "a practical plan of aggression" that would

⁴³ *ibid*, 5.

⁴⁴ "Morgenthau Reticent: Ambassador Warned by Lansing, Guards Remarks," *The Washington Post*, 23 February 1916: pg. 3.

garner the money necessary “for repatriating the Armenians.”⁴⁵ At that meeting the Committee voted to raise their goal but not to engage in paid advertising. Facing the unprecedented crisis at hand, however, the April 7th conference resulted in another \$50,000, a series of speaking engagements for Morgenthau, and a request for public relations assistance from the Laymen’s Missionary Movement.⁴⁶

The Laymen’s Missionary Movement

Barton reached out to William B. Millar, Executive Secretary of the Laymen’s Missionary Movement for assistance with publicity and fundraising. A letter recounting their April 13th discussion opens by stressing the extensive need for relief with their current knowledge of the situation in Turkey. Consul Jackson at Aleppo reported that nearly 500,000 Armenian refugees had settled between Aleppo, Damascus, and Der-el-Zor constituting most of modern-day Syria. ACASR representatives in Aleppo and Damascus were able to reach all of the refugees, but many were still dying of disease, starvation, and exposure. Any hope of their survival required exponentially more relief funds.⁴⁷ William Peet in Constantinople estimated that 300,000 or more people in Turkey needed relief and had requested a million dollars.⁴⁸ In addition, the Committee predicted an oncoming famine as only 10 to 15% of fields in Turkey were under cultivation. A similar situation was reported in Persia and the Caucasus as some of the 200,000 refugees were returning home without seeds to sow and animals to plow their

⁴⁵ Simon Payaslian, *United States Policy Toward the Armenian Question and the Armenian Genocide* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 110.

⁴⁶ Barton, “The Story of Near East Relief,” 271.

⁴⁷ Telegram 534 from Consul Jackson to Morgenthau, 8 February 1916, NA/RG59/867.48/271.

⁴⁸ Telegram 1633 from Philip to Lansing, 6 March 1916, NA/RG59/867.48/259; relayed Alvee A. Adey, Second Assistant Secretary, to Barton, 21 March 1916, NA/RG59/867.48/259.

fields.⁴⁹ Demands for more relief were streaming in from every corner of the former Ottoman Empire and the organization needed to step up their efforts. Barton singled out local auxiliaries for expanding the numbers of potential donors.

Though the ACASR had established 38 subcommittees in 16 states by mid-1916, these outposts varied widely in their readiness for active fundraising.⁵⁰ Some groups had sought further guidance but the National Committee lacked the human resources necessary to meet their needs. Secretary Dutton and Assistant Secretary Mallory were buried in administrative work that stymied any further expansion. Barton proposed that the ACASR commission a few Laymen secretaries to provide executive assistance for two or more months. The borrowed staff would work from the Laymen's office, but the Committee would pay their salaries and any overhead costs. More hands on deck would allow for intensive preparation of existing auxiliaries and the formation of new subcommittees so that they might create "a real, aggressive force in all large centers of population, ready to act." Barton further requested that the Laymen's organization marshal their "splendid machinery and organizing force" to direct attention towards the looming crisis and "materialize that interest in substantial gifts." Though he recognized that Millar did not represent a "money collection agency," Barton called upon the organization to make an exception for these desperate circumstances.⁵¹ All of these requests were well within the scope of the Laymen's activities. After meeting with the Committee later that week, Millar agreed to collaborate with the ACASR. The Laymen

⁴⁹ Barton, *The Story of Near East Relief*, 372.

⁵⁰ Joseph L. Grabill, *Protestant and the Near East: Missionary Influence on American Policy, 1810-1927* (Minneapolis, Minn.: University of Minnesota Press, 1971), 75.

⁵¹ Barton, *The Story of Near East Relief*, 373. Barton reproduces his letter to William B. Millar of 14 April 1916.

assigned 12 full-time and 20 part-time men—virtually their entire staff from their Executive Office--to work on the ACASR campaign for three months.⁵²

The Laymen's Missionary Movement was a non-denominational Christian organization that channeled businessmen's expertise towards evangelical concerns. Founded by evangelical leaders John R. Mott, J. Campbell White, and businessman John B. Sleman in 1906, the Laymen structure and ideology were inspired by the Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions (SVM). The SVM paved the way for the Laymen and ecumenical Christian activism by reengineering the missionary endeavor to broaden its appeal. In the late 19th century, American mission boards faced declining support for foreign evangelical work, termed a "crisis of missions" in evangelical parlance. In 1886, the college-based groups of the YMCA hosted a month-long retreat for 251 promising young men at Northfield, Massachusetts. After four weeks of intensive training, one hundred of these students pledged to become foreign missionaries. Within two years, graduates from these retreats had mobilized over 2,200 of their peers to form the Student Volunteers Movement for Foreign Missions (SVM). The numbers of SVM members taking pledges soared to around 6,200 by 1892; increasing to 13,789 by 1904.⁵³ Though as few as one quarter actually became foreign missionaries, the SVM remains a crucial innovation in the development of ecumenical religious institutions. The organization trained the next generation of evangelical leaders who would revive and reconceptualize the missionary enterprise. While the clergy dominated the American Board and other denominational mission boards, the leadership of the SVM, YMCA, Women's Christian Temperance Union, the United Society of Christian Endeavor, and

⁵² "Morgenthau Urges Aid for Armenians," New York Times, 15 May 1916: pg. 9.

⁵³ Tyrrell, 62.

the Laymen were laymen rather than ordained ministers. John R. Mott, General Secretary of the YMCA, never attended theological seminary yet coordinated the 1910 Edinburgh Meeting. Both famed YMCA missionary Sherwood Eddy and Robert E. Speer of the Federal Council of Churches attended Princeton Theological Seminary, though neither pursued ordination. Speer later expressed pride in his lay-status, “My friends what is the church? I have a place-card here that labels me ‘Reverend.’ I am not reverend, I am nothing but an unsanctified layman like the rest of you, and we are the church. It is not the priests and the clergy that constitute the church. We are the church.”⁵⁴

Ecumenical Christian institutions thus operated beyond the confines of doctrine in favor of practicality and inclusiveness. These organizations embraced a broader definition of evangelical work that emphasized education and medicine over theological conversion. Doctors, nurses, teachers, and professors were not ordained, but were effective advocates for Christian moral reform. Non-denominational Christian institutions similarly benefitted from lay expertise in business and administrative efficiency. While churches employed the clergy, the lay leadership were often gainfully employed in the highest echelons of American industry. Missionary revivalist agencies thus imitated the organizational structure and scientific management techniques of early 20th century private enterprise. As a result, SVM, YMCA, and similar institutions functioned more like corporations than mission boards. These distinctions were particularly noticeable in fundraising activities by men like Charles V. Vickrey.

⁵⁴ cf. John F. Piper, Jr., *Robert E. Speer: Prophet of the American Church* (Louisville, Kent.: Geneva Press, 2000), 47; Rick Nutt, *The Whole Gospel for the Whole World: Sherwood Eddy and the American Protestant Mission* (Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 1997), 338-9. “Yet he is never professional, ecclesiastical, or pious, but a layman of attractive and winsome personality.”

Charles V. Vickrey supervised the temporary staff as office secretary, implementing an administrative and organizational structure for the promotional work. Prior to working as a Secretary for the Laymen's Movement, Vickrey coordinated mission education programs for denominational youth organizations. His career in Protestant organizations began as a member of the Student Volunteer Movement at Nebraska Wesleyan College and Yale University. While continuing his education at Drew Theological Seminary, he took on a leadership role in the Epworth League—the Methodist Episcopal Church's association for young adults. Vickrey and two other Drew students established a separate branch encouraging young Christians to support missionary work at home and abroad. As a former Student Volunteer and recent Seminary graduate, Vickrey might have sought ordination or a commission as a missionary. Instead, he chose to promote mission work by designing educational materials for the League. Vickrey rose through the ranks of the Methodist Episcopal Church to become a field secretary in 1906. For the next three years, Vickrey remained within the Methodist hierarchy before accepting an offer from the Laymen's Missionary Movement in 1909. Vickrey's secretarial position with the Laymen's Executive Committee propelled him from denominational service into the big leagues of ecumenical Protestant organizations.

Despite Millar's opposition to turning into a "money collection agency," the Laymen's Missionary Movement was the driving force behind fundraising campaigns well before their involvement with Armenian Relief. The Laymen's built up 'markets' to support fellow religious institutions by galvanizing churches on their behalf. Though the Laymen did not collect funds or sponsor missionaries, the movement trained men to

facilitate these nationwide campaigns in their locales. These local Laymen were encouraged to gather personal and financial information about fellow church members for files kept by National Laymen headquarters in New York City. These files were an invaluable resource of inside knowledge for outside canvassing teams. Historian Valentin H. Rabe describes how the organization used this information in practicing a form of psychology called “applied personality.” Laymen were trained to maximize donations “send[ing] canvassers first to those least able to contribute, in order to have their sacrificial example to set before wealthier prospects,” also “insist[ing] that all solicitations be made by teams” as part of “a pattern of exploiting weaknesses.”⁵⁵ Having a group of people all expecting a pledge made it more difficult for the targeted man to give only a small amount or refuse to give at all. Other strategies meant to heighten embarrassment for “those who had been lax in church attendance” by issuing a personal invitation to a prayer meeting. Canvassers used the background data “to deal with excuses or to stir vanity or shame through subtle comparisons.” Rabe offers the example of a prospective donor who belonged to an expensive private club. Such a man “might be asked how he squared this with a token contribution to missions.”⁵⁶ The Laymen’s influence solidified this use of “applied personality” into NER strategy during the 1916 Campaign.

Planning the 1916 Fundraising Campaign

When the loan period elapsed, Vickrey and a number of his staff would stay on with the Committee. By then Dutton had ceded his responsibilities to Vickrey while

⁵⁵ Valentin H. Rabe, *The Home Base of American China Missions, 1880-1920* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1978), 160.

⁵⁶ *ibid*, 160-1.

remaining active as Chair of the Board of Trustees. Under Vickrey, ACASR extended its pool of donors from the privileged recipients of Barton's press releases to the Laymen's local networks of churches.⁵⁷ As a result of this connection, biblical imagery and religious themes were more prominent in Armenian relief publicity prior to 1917 than in later years. Though religious groups proved a fruitful market, ACASR also attempted to interest a broader audience.

In February 1916, the Senate passed a resolution urging President Wilson to "designate a day on which the citizens of this country may give expression to their sympathy by contributing to the funds now being raised for the relief of the Armenians in the belligerent countries." About a month prior, the Senate had passed a nearly identical resolution on behalf of Jews in the war zone that President Wilson then acted upon. As opposed to the Jewish Relief Resolution, its Armenian counterpart was submitted as a concurrent resolution that required both houses' approval before becoming official. At hearings held by the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, Armenian-American Counsel Miran Sevasky testified that its submission as a concurrent resolution was an error rather than an attempt to gain more privilege than other causes. Even without precedent, Sevasky maintained that the worthiness of the Armenian cause and immediate need for humanitarian relief justified its approval.⁵⁸ He explained that Barton, Dutton, and others had assured them that:

the passage of this resolution will have a great moral effect on the people and that it will really disseminate throughout the country

⁵⁷ On the Laymen's Missionary Movement; Tyrrell, 70-1; Rabe (1978); John E. Lankford, "Protestant Stewardship and Benevolence, 1900-1941: A Study in Religious Philanthropy" (Ph.D. diss.: University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1962).

⁵⁸ House of Representatives, Committee on Foreign Affairs, *Hearings on Relief of Armenians*, 64th Congress, 1st Session (Washington, D.C.: US Government Printing Office, 1916), pg. 6

the importance, the necessity, and the urgency to contribute. It will, as it were, be ratified by the State and by the President, and that will give it moral importance which it would not otherwise have.⁵⁹

Pushing for a concurrent resolution informed Congressmen about Armenian relief before gaining the official status the ACASR Board sought. Though the Senate had approved the resolution without discussion, the House listened to witness testimony, collected information, and discussed the resolution. During the floor debate Chairman of the Committee on Foreign Affairs Rep. Henry Flood (D-Va.) corrected his colleagues' many misapprehensions. When another representative lumped the genocide together with prior massacres, Chairman Flood retorted that "there has never been a time before when seven or eight hundred thousand Armenians were driven into the desert and were there starving, or living on grass and roots as they are today."⁶⁰ U.S. Senate Historian Donald A. Ritchie considers the House legislative process on the resolution to be especially significant in familiarizing those Congressmen and their staff with Armenian relief efforts and generating the reports, testimonies, and debate transcripts on record in official U.S. Government Publications.⁶¹ The Concurrent Resolution on the Relief of Armenians made a more immediate impact in buffing ACASR's credibility by publicly encouraging their private support for Armenian Relief.

By the time the House passed the resolution in July, the National Committee was already deep in planning the 1916 Campaign. When the White House delayed issuing the

⁵⁹ *Hearings on Relief of Armenians* 1916, 5.

⁶⁰ House of Representatives, Committee on Foreign Affairs, *Hearings on Relief of Armenians*, 64th Congress, 1st Session (Washington, D.C.: US Government Printing Office, 1916), pp. 4-6; Congressional Record, 64th. Congress, 1 st. Session, pp. 1 1235-6.

⁶¹ Donald Ritchie, "Congress Confronts the Armenian Genocide" in *America and the Armenian Genocide of 1915*, ed. Jay Winter, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003): 276-293.

promised statement, Vickrey sent Barton and Dutton to deliver a prepared statement for Wilson. President Wilson signed that proclamation designating October 21st and 22nd as days for Americans to express their sympathy for Armenian and Syrian refugees with contributions to ACASR. With the dates announced, the National Publicity Committee was able to establish firm dates and set goals for local fundraising. Vickrey and his team had continued Mallory's earlier work with added support from their fellow Laymen and that organization's files of possible donors.

In the lead-up to the 1916 fundraising campaign, ACASR issued memos and pamphlets that offer insights into the National Committee's expectations for local affiliates. "A National Test of Brotherhood" is worth an extended analysis as it renders the ACASR's publicity plan and targeted audience in complete detail. Copy on the front cover indicates that the handbook was designed to inform "those who deliver addresses or sermons or who make personal appeals to persons with financial ability."⁶² Like most ACASR publications of that time, the bulk of the booklet reprinted excerpts from eyewitness accounts and summaries of the organization's accomplishments. However, these familiar materials were adapted for use by ACASR publicity officers as opposed to pamphlets and news releases for public circulation. A section entitled 'Sources of Facts' customarily precedes these reports to account for the excision of identifying details as a precautionary measure. "A National Test of Brotherhood" adheres to these conventions before expressing distaste for the "many sickening details that follow." Similar statements were discussed earlier in this chapter with regard to the change in strategy following the Committee on Armenian Atrocities Report of 1915. Rather than discount

⁶² "A National Test of Brotherhood," (New York: American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief, 1916).

the appeal of graphic imagery, the committee uses these facts “to deepen the conviction” of its local representatives “in connection with the campaign to secure relief funds and not for public recital.”⁶³ None of this information was new to most ACASR supporters as it was identical to those dispatches and reports found in *Latest News*.

What was substantially different about this pamphlet was its attempt to reach a general audience through the step-by-step instructions for “How to Make the Most of Relief Days.” While the first section was directed at pastors and speakers from religious communities, the remainder catered to a general audience of volunteers. The pamphlet placed particular emphasis on gaining the cooperation of local newspapers by putting their case before editors of such publications. Other methods for gaining access to local media included letter-writing campaigns and asking businesses to sponsor advertising space. Assuming the editor was willing to cooperate, the New York Office had prepared articles ready to be placed in the papers. The local newspaper would also serve as a collecting point for donations along with “churches, hotels, banks, restaurants and public places.” Included here was a list of publicity materials available for purchase from the New York Office. A housewife may have encountered the “two-color poster, size approximately 11x14” hanging below the list of daily specials in her grocer’s window. A “large cardboard collection box (6x4x4), price 5¢” could be perched next to the till at a diner. Ushers at the local theater solicited audiences with “a neat celluloid dime coin box, pocket size, capacity of \$5.00 in dimes.” From the church to the arcade, any place where people gathered was a possible site for fundraising.⁶⁴

⁶³ *ibid*, 2.

⁶⁴ *ibid*, 31. The cost of these materials was deducted from the proceeds by the local committee.

Advice on making direct appeals was straight from the Laymen's playbook on singling out wealthy men and placing social pressure upon prospective donors. Rich men were ACASR's area of expertise, if only because its founding members were among the wealthiest men in the country. "A National Test of Brotherhood" offered suggestions for bringing in generous donations as "too much emphasis cannot be laid upon the importance of securing large gifts." The booklet advised representatives to make a list of the "prosperous, well-to-do individuals" in town as well as a target donation "commensurate with their wealth and resources." target them personally for "one thousand, five thousand or ten thousand dollars out of their abundance to relieve Armenian and Syrian distress." A second list would contain names of "smaller contributors" to whom the local committee would send a personalized letter and leaflet to reflect the secondary importance of smaller gifts.

In addition to the facts, personal solicitations would include anecdotes of admirable individuals—often those in unfortunate situations—giving to Armenian relief. In one vignette, a bereaved father duplicated his invalid daughter's last remittance to honor her memory. Another anecdote featured the sales pitch given a "well dressed but unassuming man" who responded by increasing his donation from \$5,000 to \$18,000. His impressive contribution was inspired by tales of an old penniless woman who surrendered a family heirloom to the cause and a four year-old girl who had earned 2 pennies by sweeping the sidewalk to give "one cent to the Belgian babies and the other to the starving Armenians." In the end, the wealthy man compared himself to these poor people willing to sacrifice what little they had and wrote out a check for more than three

times his original donation.⁶⁵ This was exactly the sort of calculation such stories were designed to induce: a prospective donor was meant to compare himself to his neighbors and these paragons of charity and find himself lacking. To remedy the unease evoked by these campaign morality tales he would then increase his own contributions. Thus, the pamphlet advocated that ACASR representatives use the Laymen's psychological approach to maximize contributions.

Local committees followed these guidelines closely as Armenian and Syrian Relief Days approached. Vickrey assembled a memo with details of preparations in different cities. In Mitchell, South Dakota, all daily papers would include a copy of the ACASR pamphlet "Cry of Millions." Brooklyn, New York had 3200 streetcar placards printed and placed in the local streetcars. A call went forth from the pulpits in Washington, D.C. recruiting "several hundred of the most attractive girls in the Capital" as volunteers collecting donations on Saturday October 21st.⁶⁶ These girls were to be supervised by the Women's Auxiliary Committee in D.C. to "cover all principal traffic centres, department stores, theatres, government buildings, banks and hotels."⁶⁷ The D.C. 'female phalanx' demonstrates an early use of the traditional advertising technique of using pretty faces to sell humanitarian relief.

Despite this emphasis on the visual, the 1916 Campaign was the only appeal to focus on facts rather than imagery and emotion. The few posters were neither colorful nor interesting; most provided maps to help the public locate distant Armenia. Prior to

⁶⁵ *ibid* 24-6.

⁶⁶ "Pretty Girls to Aid Armenian Sufferers," *Washington Herald*, 9 October 1916, pg. 3. Charles V. Vickery, "Important Memoranda for Armenia-Syria Relief Workers, 17 October 1916," item 5235, Folder on American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief, 1914-1918 New York Collection, Jewish Distribution Committee Archives. Hereafter, *JDC Archives*.

⁶⁷ Vickery, "Important Memoranda for Armenia-Syria Relief Workers, 17 October 1916," *JDC Archives*.

WWI, appeals such as these were marketed to businessmen who, experts agreed, responded to reason over emotion.⁶⁸ This trend reversed once governmental propaganda campaigns by Wellington House in Britain and the Committee on Public Information in the States found success by employing professional illustrators and issuing heartrending pleas. At this point, however, Vickrey and his Laymen believed that straightforward and honest campaigns were the most appealing.

Charles V. Vickrey is a crucial character in the transition from reliance on mission boards to non-denominational Protestant Evangelism. Like many of his peers, he was not an ordained minister but was heavily involved in religious organizations. He came to ACASR after learning the ropes of fundraising in Methodist youth groups, the Student Volunteer Movement, and Laymen's Missionary Movement. As executive secretary for ACASR, he personally instituted many of the publicity techniques used during their 1916 Campaign. Though ACASR had begun to establish local auxiliary group, it was Vickrey and the Laymen that kept them abreast of organizational strategies and developments. While Chairman Barton may have been the public face of the NER, Vickrey was its engine. He was always generating new media materials to solicit donations, especially in the lead-up to the 1916 Armenian and Syrian Relief Days. Studying materials from this 1916 Campaign reveals publicity tactics Vickrey imported to ACASR. At first, the ACASR shared information received from the American missionaries via the State Department. When the well of facts from State Department dispatches ran dry, ACASR publicity recycled some reports and generated new material based on a psychological approach to fundraising. Without Vickrey, the ACASR would not have attracted so

⁶⁸ Merle Curti, "The Changing View of 'Human Nature' in the Literature of American Advertising," *The Business History Review* 41 no. 4 (Winter 1967): 335-357.

many donors and likely would not have made it past its first year.

This chapter has addressed the early years of Armenian relief efforts by the Near East Relief. The early 20th century was a time of massive change within the Protestant Evangelical Movement that saw the decline of such 19th century mission boards in favor of non-denominational Protestant organizations run by laymen who were attuned to business. From 1915-1917, American missionaries may have been the eyes and ears of the organization overseas, but the domestic fundraising activities were dominated by the representatives of this younger generation of Protestant Evangelists. Among the latter group, the Laymen's Missionary Movement produced many of the leaders of the publicity campaigns. Since the Turks made relief work difficult for Americans to conduct, the chief objective of the American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief—predecessor of the NER—was raising money for the Armenians. It is therefore integral to this study of pre-war ACASR activities to understand the Laymen's Missionary Movement, their difference from 19th century mission boards, and their publicity strategies as done in this chapter.

CHAPTER 2

The Commission for Relief in Belgium

When the American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief announced the establishment of their organization, the *New York Times* called it “the greatest American Relief Campaign to be undertaken since organization of the Belgian Relief Commission.”¹ The two organizations had much in common. Both were dedicated to the relief of non-combatants in war zones. Both were appealing to the American people for donations. Both had connections to the U.S. government, but were non-governmental agencies. Beyond these commonalities, Belgian relief could have served as a model for Armenian relief to follow. Instead, the Armenian relief agency learned what they could from its Belgian analogue, the Commission for Relief in Belgium (CRB), and then mostly went in a different direction. This was especially true in their use of publicity media, where the CRB was resistant to publishing its own sentimentalist portrait of the suffering Belgians. Instead, the CRB relied on a slew of other organizations, including government propaganda agencies, promoting their own vision of “poor little Belgium.” Armenian relief had only the American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief (ACASR) to introduce a largely foreign population to the American public.

The differences between the Belgian and Armenian situations, therefore, provide glimpses into the roots of the distinctions between Belgian and Armenia relief. Beyond the commonalities and differences, the fact remains that Belgian relief had a higher profile than Armenian relief, despite the magnitude of the latter. Historians have begun to ask why. British historian Nicolletta Gullace puts the question to future historians,

¹ “Asks for \$5,000,000 to Succor Armenia,” *New York Times*, 4 October 1916, 2.

Future research on war propaganda will need to acknowledge the reality of that suffering and to begin to ask new questions about how particular events make, or fail to make, history. Why did Belgium become such a powerful symbol during World War I, while the eastern theater, where civilians were treated with even greater brutality, failed to make an equivalent emotional impact on neutral audiences? To what degree did the prominence accorded Belgium eclipse the massacre of Armenians?²

This chapter begins to explore these questions with a comparison between Belgian and Armenian relief. Analysis of Belgian Relief posters and other publicity materials will reveal an extensive reliance on accounts of sexual violence against mothers and adult women. As a result, the ACASR, and later the Near East Relief, avoided any comparisons by minimizing the considerable aftermath of sexual violence perpetrated against Armenians with euphemistic language and outright avoidance. Belgian relief work was conducted through the CRB, a humanitarian aid organization headed by Herbert Hoover.³ This chapter will tell the story of the CRB to better understand its

² Nicoletta F. Gullace, "Allied Propaganda and World War I: Interwar Legacies, Media Studies, and the Politics of War Guilt," *History Compass* 9 no. 9 (2011): 686-700, pp. 693.

³ For more on the Commission for Relief in Belgium; "The Commission for Relief in Belgium: Executive Personnel; Balance Sheet and Accounts; French Government Accounts; Belgian Government Accounts; Supporting Schedules; Statistical Data, October 1914-September 1920" (New York: Commission for Relief in Belgium, 1921); Robert Withington, *In Occupied Belgium* (Boston: The Cornhill Group, 1921); Tracy Barrett Kittredge, *The History of the Commission for Relief in Belgium: 1914-1917* (London: Crowther & Goodman Ltd., 1920); Brand Whitlock, *Belgium: A Personal Narrative (Volumes I and II)*, (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1920); Vernon Kellogg, *Fighting Starvation in Belgium* (New York: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1918); Edward Eyre Hunt, *War Bread: A Personal Narrative of the War and Relief in Belgium* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1916). For pamphlets about the Commission for Relief in Belgium and Belgian relief; "Report of the Commissioner for Belgium," Washington, D.C.: The American Red Cross, 1918; "In Belgium Under German Rule: One Meal A Day," London: Crowther & Goodman, Ltd., 1916; Lindon W. Bates, "The Commission for Relief in Belgium: General Instructions, Fourth Edition," New York: Commission for Relief in Belgium, 1915; Thomas Hardy et al, "The Need of Belgium," New York: Commission for Relief in Belgium, 1915; "Clothe Belgium and Northern France," New York: Commission for Relief in Belgium, 1915; "Address February 10th by Mr. Lindon W. Bates, Vice-Chairman of the Commission for Relief in Belgium," New York: Commission for Relief in Belgium, 1915; *Food for Belgium: Official Bulletin of the Commission for Relief in Belgium* 1 no. 2 (16 January 1915); *Belgian Relief Bulletin* no. 2, 5 December 1914 (New York: Belgian Relief Fund, 1914); "Handbook Issued by the Commission for Relief in Belgium," New York: Commission for Relief in

origins in a shaky political climate as well as its humanitarian activities. It will proceed to examine the modes by which this organization functioned; its appeals, shipping practices, and projects overseas. This chapter will further consider political, economic, and cultural differences between the Belgian and Armenian situations in the interest of drawing conclusions about the relationship between the CRB and ACASR.

The Invasion and Occupation of Belgium

On the fourth of August 1914, the Imperial German Army crossed the border into Belgium on their way to France. Their military strategy called for a swift strike against the French before turning eastward to deal with the Russian Empire and avoid a protracted, two-front war. German troops would then sweep the countryside, claiming victory while the unprepared French struggled to mobilize their defenses. However, things did not go as planned. After an unopposed invasion of Luxembourg, the German Army faced their Belgian counterparts in the twelve fortresses surrounding the industrial city of Liège. While the battle raged, German soldiers killed more than 640 civilians living along the invasion route.⁴ Germans blamed these incidents upon armed civilians whose resistance justified the perpetrators' violent retribution. After enduring ten days of bombardments and heavy artillery fire, the fortresses crumbled. Following the fall of Liège, the Belgium Army withdrew to Antwerp as the German Army continued their advance. On their way to the French frontier, attacks on civilians increased in size and

Belgium, undated; "History of the Women's Section of the Commission for Relief in Belgium," New York: Commission for Relief in Belgium, undated.

⁴ Alan Kramer, *Dynamic of Destruction: Culture and Mass Killing in the First World War*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007): 6. This figure includes killings occurring from 4-12 August. The Battle of Liège officially ended on August 15.

scope. This period of German war crimes and their later excesses as occupiers is well-known as “The Rape of Belgium.”

Until recently, German atrocities in Belgium were considered spurious propaganda manufactured by the British government. Beginning in the 1990s, historians started revisiting these supposedly fabricated war crimes only to find reams of reliable evidence to the contrary. John Horne and Alan Kramer, historians of Modern Europe at Trinity College, collaborated on a book described as “the definitive work on Belgian atrocities” in a review by a fellow Great War historian.⁵ *German Atrocities: 1914* provides a compendium of war crimes derived from witness depositions and reports by contemporary commissions of inquiry established by the Belgian government as well as sources from various archives and published accounts. From these materials Horne and Kramer estimate that Germans murdered almost 6000 civilians during their 1914 invasion. Entire cities were destroyed and fertile land laid to waste.⁶

The German’s violation of Belgian neutrality and their war crimes—both real and exaggerated—earned them the epithet ‘Huns’. The name derives from a speech given by Kaiser Wilhelm II in response to the murder of the German minister to Peking and several German missionaries during Boxer Rebellion. In the speech the Kaiser declared “No quarter will be give, no prisoners will be taken. Let all who fall into your hands be at your mercy. Just as the Huns a thousand years ago . . . so may the name of Germany become known in such a manner in China that no Chinaman will ever again even dare to

⁵ Gullace, *Allied Propaganda*, 693

⁶ John N. Horne, Alan Kramer, *German Atrocities, 1914: A History of Denial*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001):13 and “Notes on Appendix 1.”

look askance at a German.”⁷ This statement circulated widely in European newspapers so that the Kaiser’s comparison to the Asiatic Huns who invaded Europe in the 5th Century would come to haunt the Germans during the Great War. ‘Hun’ became a popular derogatory term to describe the Germans.

Nicoletta Gullace writes, “While the term could be used either facetiously or ominously, it became iconographic shorthand, evoking themes of ‘racial otherness’ and primitive atavism that recast a modern European adversary as something far more menacing.”⁸ Above all, World War I was a modern war in its weaponry, mass culture, and the dawn of nation-states. The Huns were depicted as the very opposite of modernity, their barbarism contrary to the mores of Western Civilization. Gullace uses cartoons and posters to show “the complex juxtaposition of the primitive and the modern in wartime iconography.”⁹ An advertisement for the Fourth Liberty Loan placed in *Boys Life Magazine* depicts the Huns as “Worse than the Turks.” In the text of the ad an Armenian peddler relates the destruction of his home, his parents’ deaths, his brother’s murder, and how his sisters were sold into sexual slavery. At the end of his tale, the peddler remarks that the Turks are almost as bad as the Germans. The ad then addresses the audience, “Remember, you boys who read this, that the cruelty of the Hun stops at nothing. His track is red with blood. Your country needs your help.”¹⁰ In effect the ad uses the Turkish atrocities against the Armenians to indict the Germans. This creates purposeful confusion that equates the Turks, already seen as barbaric, with the European

⁷ *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, “Hun” from *The Times (London)*, 30 July 1900, www.oed.com (accessed 13 February 2014).

⁸ Nicoletta Gullace, “Barbaric Anti-Modernism: Representations of the ‘Hun’ in Britain, North America, Australia, and Beyond” in *Picture This: World War I Posters and Visual Culture*, ed. Pearl James (Lincoln, Neb.: University of Nebraska Press, 2009): 62.

⁹ *ibid.*, 63-64.

¹⁰ “Worse than the Turks,” *Boys Life* 7 no. 10 (October 1918): 38.

and formerly civilized Germans.¹¹ Associating these two cultures undermines their differences and lumps them together as unrepentant murderers.

Worse Than the Turks


This Story is True

AN Armenian peddler was displaying his wares to one of his customers. This lady was eager to hear what he knew about the war. The Armenian's dusky face grew darker. His eyes began to smolder. In simple, pitiful language he told that he had learned from survivors how the home of his parents in Armenia had been burned to the ground, how the old people had been murdered, how his brother had been tortured and then shot, and how his two young sisters had been carried away as slaves. His story made the listener tremble with horror.

"Madam," concluded the Armenian, "you can hardly believe the brutality of those Turks. Why, they are almost as bad as the Germans!"


Remember, you boys who read this, that the cruelty of the Hun stops at nothing. His track is red with butchery. Your country needs your help. The fellows at the front are helpless without your help. Your time has not yet come to fight. But your time has come to earn money and save money to help buy Liberty Bonds.

Help your parents cut down household expenses. Don't holler every day for pie. Look around for odd jobs. Make every Saturday count. Earn all the money you can. The best thing you can say to your father is: "Dad, here's some money I've saved. Put enough with it to buy me a Liberty Bond, won't you?"



Buy U. S. Government Bonds

FOURTH LIBERTY LOAN

Contributed through Division of Advertising

United States Gov't Comm. on Public Information

This space contributed for the Winning of the War by

THE PUBLISHER OF BOYS' LIFE

38

BOYS' LIFE
Copyright material

Figure 1: "Worse Than the Turks," (1917). Courtesy of Boys' Life Magazine.

¹¹ Justin McCarthy, *The Turk in America: The Creation of an Enduring Prejudice* (Salt Lake City, Utah: The University of Utah Press, 2010).

Posters such as H.R. Hopps "Destroy This Mad Brute" depict the Germans as barely human, capable of despicable acts of violence against women and children. Hopps' poster features a simian beast wearing an Imperial German helmet and carrying a cudgel labeled "Kultur," an ironic use of the term for German culture and civilization. His other arm clutches a partially-clothed European woman in the grips of terror and distress. The word "America" lies under his feet meaning that the beast has traversed the Atlantic Ocean to reach U.S. shores.

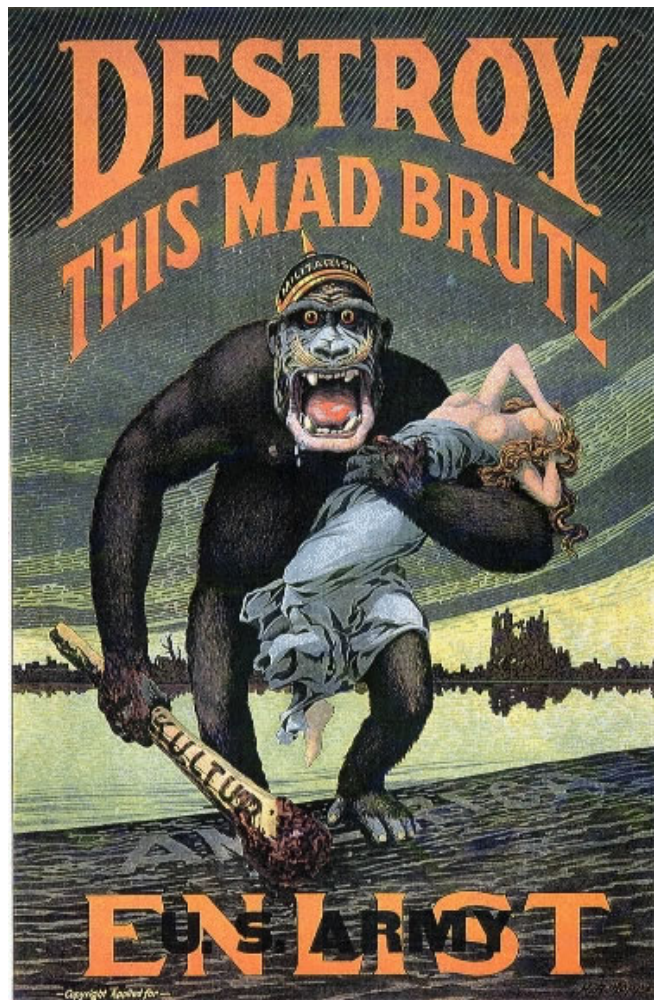


Figure 2: "Destroy This Mad Brute," H.R. Hopps (1917). Courtesy of Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

This is an enlistment poster meant to scare Americans into joining the war effort to “Fight this Mad Brute” and protect their women and their homeland. More than that, this poster offers a highly sexualized perspective on German militarism where a helpless, comely girl thrashes in the arms of a sexual aggressor. It is meant as a warning that the Allies fight not just for Belgian women but for all women’s safety from the ape-like Huns.

Rape played a large role in the construction of German atrocities by Allied propaganda. Wartime rape in Belgium was over-reported by the media and underreported in the findings of Allied war crimes commissions. Horne and Kramer note that the Allied commissions believed that rape occurred with an “unheard-of frequency” but were unsure how to classify the act: “They felt it had less connection than other types of ‘atrocities’ to what they saw as the German policy of systematic terror and they placed it at the individualist end of the spectrum of war crimes.”¹² Rape was part of a pattern of destruction and abuse, terrorizing multiple persons by the rape of an individual. Family members watching the sexual victimization of a loved one would also be traumatized. Male family members were often forced to watch as Germans violated their female relatives to demonstrate their inability to protect ‘their women’.¹³

At the same time, women were reluctant to come forward to report rape as such violation was considered shameful. One woman who reported her rape to the police in Nancy said “that she had never complained to the German authorities ‘due to fear and shame’, and the same motives might well have kept her silent had she not been

¹² Horne and Kramer, 196.

¹³ *ibid*, 199.

pregnant.”¹⁴ After looking at the instances of rape mentioned in witness testimonies versus other types of violence, Horne and Kramer nonetheless conclude that “it would be improper to assume that rapes were a dominant feature of German behavior.”¹⁵

In contrast to the Belgian situation, sexual violence against women was part and parcel of the Armenian Genocide. Katherine Derderian argues that violence against Armenians was gendered so that men were deported and killed while the women were raped, kidnapped, and held in forced marriages. As a result, sexual violence was a central element of the Armenian Genocide. Where the media was vociferous in its condemnation of the raping in Belgium, euphemistic language alluded to the “outrages” perpetrated against Armenian women. Derderian writes: “Contemporary observers often cited their discomfort openly discussing sexual violence, and some accounts explicitly expunge passages recounting it, or else summarize it only superficially.”¹⁶ Rape appeared often in primary documentations of the Armenian genocide, so much so that Derderian points to sexual violence and rape as central concerns in the experience of the genocide. However, those publicists writing about the Armenian relief went out of their way to avoid using the term ‘rape,’ despite the common use of the term in relation to the German atrocities against the Belgians. Since their stories were fed to the print media, neither did “rape” appear often in newspapers and periodicals. As discussed in Chapter One, the NER likewise resorted to euphemism when discussing the sexual violence against Armenian women. The relative absence of straightforward reporting on rape in the Armenian situation suggests that this was a conscious choice, perhaps influenced by

¹⁴ *ibid*, 196.

¹⁵ *ibid*, 196.

¹⁶ Katherine Derderian, “Common Fate, Different Experience: Gender-Specific Aspects of the Armenian Genocide, 1915-1917,” *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 19 no. 1 (Spring 2005): 6.

the overemphasis on the “Rape of Belgium.”

Sensationalized and mythologized by Allied propaganda, the “Rape of Belgium” became a call-to-arms against the barbarous Huns.¹⁷ British propaganda repeatedly referred to this event as a means of increasing popular disdain for Germany. Accounts of rape, mass executions, and wanton destruction disseminated through mass media outlets influenced public opinion throughout the Anglo-American world.¹⁸ Horne and Kramer suggest that this aggressive propaganda campaign soured the public against these reports of German abuses. Over the following years, that disgust turned into denial as public memory reclassified the “Rape of Belgium” as mythology.¹⁹

The Commission for Relief in Belgium

With the outbreak of war in Europe, Americans traveling throughout the continent soon found themselves trapped in a war zone. Unfortunately, generally well-off tourists and businessmen were short on cash as Europe soon placed a moratorium on letters of credit, drafts, and checks. Since few travelers carried large amounts of cash, thousands were left stranded without funds to pay for food, shelter, or transportation.²⁰ Walter Hines Page, the American Ambassador in London turned to Herbert Hoover, a mining engineer based there to “take charge of getting 100,000 stranded American tourists out of Europe.”

¹⁷ Larry Zuckerman, *The Rape of Belgium: The Untold Story of World War I*, (New York: New York University Press, 2004).

¹⁸ Nicoletta Gullace, “Sexual Violence and Family Honor: British Propaganda and International Law during the First World War,” *The American Historical Review* 102 no. 3 (June 1997): pp. 714-747.

¹⁹ H.C. Petersen, *Propaganda For War: The Campaign Against American Neutrality, 1914-1917* (Norman, Ok.: University of Oklahoma Press, 1939); Harold D. Lasswell, *Propaganda Technique in the World War* (New York: Peter Smith, 1938).

²⁰ Leonard P. Dileanis, *Herbert Hoover's Use of Public Relations in the United Food Administration, 1917-1919* (MA Thesis: University of Wisconsin, 1969), 14.

Hoover used his own money to fund an organization to help his fellow countrymen return home.²¹

Hoover's next project, The Commission for the Relief of Belgium (CRB), began in association with the Belgian *Comité Central de Secours d'Alimentation* (Central Committee of Assistance and Provisioning). The *Comité* was the combined effort of Belgian and American businessmen under the aegis of the neutral Spanish and American ministers in Belgium. At its first meeting on September 1, 1914, a sub-committee was formed "to have direct charge of obtaining and distributing the food supplies" in the city of Brussels and its environs.²² Despite the industrialized nation's impressive array of canals, trains, light rails, the German occupation had shut down much of Belgium's transportation system. As a result no trains were available to bring flour from the mills an hour away at Louvain back to the hungry crowds in Brussels. During this first crisis, one of the American businessmen was able to requisition trucks from the fire department to bring the flour from Louvain to the connecting tramline from Tervueren to Brussels. Louvain soon ran out of flour leading the *Comité* to search the surrounding province for additional supplies. German requisitioning coupled with the demands of the citizenry forced the *Comité* to look outside the country for a more permanent solution.²³

Brussels was hardly alone in its need for foodstuffs as other Belgian cities were also suffering. Belgium was an industrialized nation that only produced a quarter of the grain necessary to feed its population. As a result, Belgians were reliant upon imports to

²¹ Dileanis, 15; Vernon Kellogg, "The Authentic Story of Belgian Relief: Americans to the Rescue," *The World's Work* 34 no. 2(June 1917): 173. Kellogg places the number of stranded Americans at 150,000.

²² Vernon Kellogg, "The Authentic Story of Belgian Relief: Americans to the Rescue," *The World's Work* 34 no. 2(June 1917): 172.

²³ *ibid*, 171-2.

feed themselves.²⁴ The Americans on the subcommittee decided to take up the issue with the German military officials in hopes of restarting the importation of necessary items to the occupied country.²⁵ Though the subcommittee members worked out an arrangement to import food through the Netherlands, the Dutch Government needed all the food it could produce for its own people. However, the Dutch agreed to facilitate the transfer of food from England to Belgium through the port at Rotterdam. Millard Shaler, a representative of the *Comité* and American engineer, accompanied by the Secretary of the American Legation at Brussels, Hugh Gibson, went to London in hopes of purchasing 2,500 tons of wheat, rice, beans, and peas for exportation to Belgium.²⁶ While in London, Shaler became acquainted with Herbert Hoover, who took on the Belgian cause as his own.

Already well known for his interventions on behalf of American travelers, Hoover worked with Ambassador Page to establish a neutral humanitarian agency to provide sustenance for the besieged civilians in occupied Belgium.²⁷ The Commission for Relief in Belgium (CRB) would finance, purchase, then transport and distribute much needed supplies to the Belgians. Hoover quickly adapted his corporate experience to the diplomatic negotiations necessary to facilitate aid across battle lines. Those negotiations over transporting and distributing food proved complicated as the English needed to protect its naval blockade and Germany suffered from its own food shortages. After

²⁴ *ibid*, 170.

²⁵ *ibid*, 172.

²⁶ *ibid*, 173.

²⁷ *Ibid*, 173-4.

much debate, Hoover managed to win concessions from both sides to transport large amounts of food to Rotterdam and on to Belgium.²⁸

Propaganda

British propaganda on behalf of Belgian relief reduced the need for the CRB to tear at American heartstrings to get the supplies they needed. In an effort to bring the U.S. into war against Germany, the British government's propaganda wing, Wellington House, produced materials that provoked sympathy for Belgium. In fact, Wellington House worked so closely with the Belgian Legation in Britain that historian Gary S. Messinger contends that the British office "functioned as virtually the entire ministry of propaganda for Belgium in the early months of war."²⁹ Later on, the Belgian Legation contributed its own propaganda for American consumption.

Propaganda on behalf of the Belgians aimed to demonize the Germans and encourage Americans to pity the Belgians. Nicolette Gullace points out that early propaganda focused on Germany's abrogation of international law with its invasion of Belgium. The fuss over that "scrap of paper" known as the 1839 Belgian Neutrality Act died down quickly once propagandists realized its limited potential. Nicolette Gullace writes, "In an attempt to popularize the meaning of the war, the highly legalistic discussion of the 'scrap of paper' gave way to a discourse that expressed the travesty against international law in ever more human terms."³⁰ Those "human terms" included legitimizing the accusations against Germany by referring to the violation of the family

²⁸ Johan Den Hertog, "The Commission for Relief in Belgium and the Political Diplomatic History of the First World War," *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 21(2010): 593-613.

²⁹ Gary S. Messinger, *British Propaganda and the State in the First World War* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1992): 40.

³⁰ Nicolette Gullace, "Sexual Violence and Family Honor: British Propaganda and International Law during the First World War," *American Historical Review* 102 no. 3 (June 1997): 724.

and the female body, in particular. Rape played a large role in the construction of German atrocities by Allied propaganda. Sexual violence against Belgian women was reported in the press and featured in many war posters and cartoons. For example, Ellsworth Young's poster depicted a silhouette of a German soldier dragging a woman behind him against the fiery background of a burning village. With the implication of widespread rape, the poster urged Americans to 'Remember Belgium' by buying Liberty Bonds.

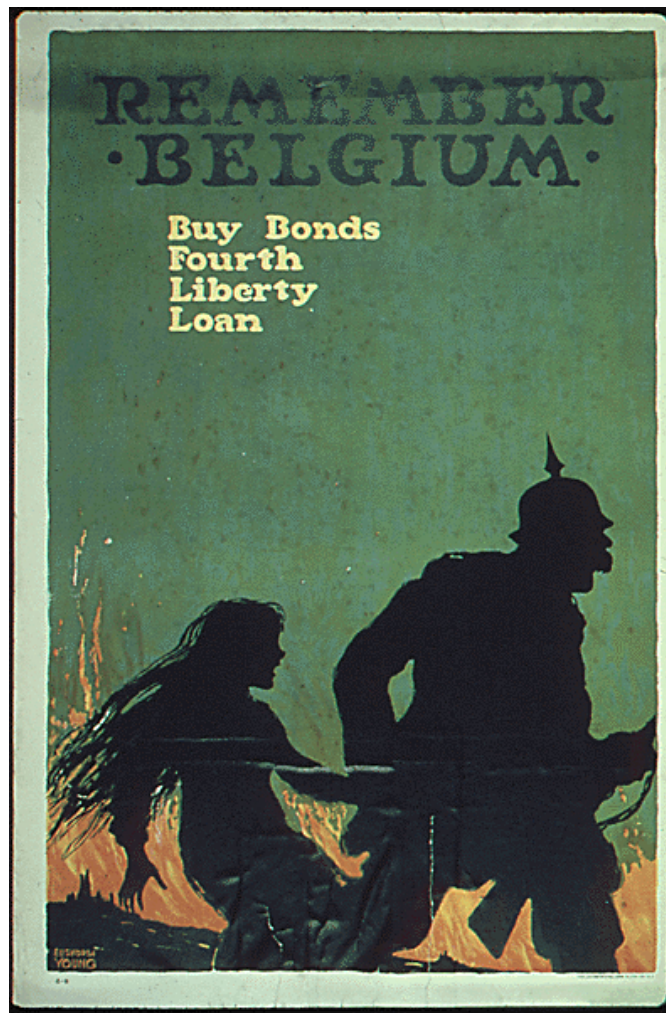


Figure 3: “Remember Belgium” by Ellsworth Young (1918). Courtesy of Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

The Dutch cartoonist Louis Raemaekers also drew disturbing images of German actions against Belgian civilians that made their way to the U.S. A book featuring Raemaekers’ cartoons “with accompanying notes from well-known English writers” was published by Doubleday, Page & Company in the U.S. Given the commentary from British writers and an “appreciation” by British prime minister H.H. Asquith, it is likely that British propagandists compiled the book to share Raemaekers’ cartoons with the

American public. Asquith alludes to the book's purpose in reinforcing the Allied mission, "Mr. Raemaekers' powerful work gives form and colour to the menace which the Allies are averting from the liberty, the civilization, and the humanity of the future. He shows us our enemies as they appear to the unbiased[sic] eyes of a neutral, and wherever his pictures are seen determination will be strengthened to tolerate no end of the war save the final overthrow of the Prussian military power."³¹ The included cartoons serve as indictments of German barbarity, featuring Belgian women and children facing all sorts of horrors.



Figure 4: "Seduction" by Louis Raemaekers. From *Raemaekers' Cartoons: With Accompanying Notes from Well-Known English Writers* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1916): 79.

Figure 4 depicts a German soldier saying to his young, female hostage, "Ain't I a lovable fellow?" The woman is on her knees in an upright posture that suggests her pride and disgust for her captor. Her right breast is exposed and she is bound and gagged with a gun pointed at her head. English writer G.K. Chesterson called the illustration "one of

³¹ *Raemaekers' Cartoons* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1916): 7.

the most pointed and vital of all pictorial, or indeed other, criticisms on the war. It is very important to note that German savagery has not interfered at all with German sentimentalism. The blood of the victim and the tears of the victor flow together in an unpleasing stream.”³² Raemaekers had drawn an illustration of deviance where the captor desires affection from his captive. This dynamic indicates the perversion of the German mentality in which one could abuse another and expect adoration in return. The implication of her torn dress and the title “Seduction” alludes to the sexual nature of the German Rape of Belgium. It was a reflection of the Belgian situation in which they were expected to welcome their violators into their country, homes, and bodies. Unfortunately for the German, he cannot win over her heart, just as the occupying Germans could not conquer the Belgian spirit.

Propaganda regarding the rape of Belgium was just one aspect of the media campaign supporting Belgian independence. The more pertinent issue for the C.R.B. was the feeding of Belgian children. Appeals for such donations were replete with pictures of gaunt Belgian children and crying mothers. These posters, more so than those with rape imagery, are reminiscent of similar photos and posters of Armenian mothers and children. As Michaël Amara sees it, Belgium earned a reputation for such misery through propaganda which tapped into American sympathies. Amara writes, “Undoubtedly, the C.R.B. allowed Belgium to remain at the front of the media scene by systematically using wells of emotion and sentimentality, distributing photos of malnourished Belgian children or girls crying for their families, the organization contributed a stereotyped

³² *ibid*, 78-9.

image to the American mind that Belgium will never rid itself of.”³³ There were many posters with “malnourished Belgian children or girls crying for their families,” but they were not created by the CRB. Instead, organizations such as the U.S. Food Administration and various Belgian relief funds produced posters that recalled Belgian starvation.



Figure 5: “Hunger” by Henry Raleigh (1918). Courtesy of Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

³³ Michaël Amara, “La propagande belge et l’image de la Belgique aux Etats-Unis pendant la Première Guerre mondiale,” *Revue belge d’histoire contemporaine* 30 no. ½ (2000): 177. “Incontestablement, la C.R.B. permit à la Belgique de se maintenir au devant de la scène médiatique mais, en usant systématiquement des ressorts de l’émotion et de la sensiblerie, en distribuant sans cesse ces photos d’enfants belges amaigris ou de fillettes pleurant leur famille, elle contribua à figer dans l’opinion américaine une image clichée dont la Belgique aura peine à se débarrasser.”

This poster from the U.S. Food Administration depicts a desperate mother and her children drawn in black-and-white. Underneath the illustration, the copy reads: “Hunger. For three years America has fought starvation in Belgium. Will you eat less—wheat meat—fats and sugar that we may still send food in shiploads?” The poster implies that cutting back Americans’ food consumption will allow the U.S. to continue helping the starving Belgians. This appeals to Americans’ proven sympathies for Belgians—especially mothers and children—so that the U.S. Food Administration should fulfill their goals of conserving food. It is the image of the mother and children that provides the impetus to change behaviors, and the creators of the poster believed that such an image would have the power to motivate its observers.



Figure 6: “Forget Me Not” by Josef Pierre Nuytens (1917). Courtesy of Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Another poster from the publicity department of the Belgian Military Mission in Washington, D.C. shows a Belgian child sitting among ruins, holding a bouquet of forget-me-nots. Like the name of the flower, this poster aims for the observer to remember the Belgian babies by giving to Belgian relief. It is significant that the Military Mission chose an illustration of a child to promote itself, rather than a Belgian soldier or some other more representative image. This demonstrates the use of children in appeals for donations and other support. It is no coincidence that childhood and motherhood represent universal aspects of human life. Both were considered innately good: childhood in its connection to innocence and motherhood as the giving of life. The images depicting these virtues were anything but ideal as they stressed the desperation inherent to the deprivation in Belgium. Children and mothers were a staple of Belgian relief publicity materials, just as they were for Armenian relief.

Notice, however, that none of these posters were created by the CRB. Though the CRB profited from publicity about the ‘Rape of Belgium’ and Belgian families, the organization did not rely upon sympathy to win the public. Instead, the CRB placed press releases and cooperated with newspapers to ensure that its needs were met. The “Hand Book Issued by the Commission for Relief in Belgium” recalled the beginning of CRB public relations: “The representatives of the great American papers and news agencies were called together, and their help and direction asked in placing the plight of the people in Belgium before the public of the world. All sense of rivalry or personal prestige has been buried by these men, with the same sense of devotion to a great cause

which has actuated every other member.”³⁴ The CRB was able to pull together many journalists because they had a former Associated Press reporter doing the publicity. Ben Allen, formerly of the AP in London, was managing the CRB advertising along with Hoover confidante and journalist Will Irwin, who had control of the Press Department.³⁵ Together, Irwin and Allen were able to keep the press on the CRB’s side and influence American public opinion through the news.

One of the first press releases that were distributed dealt with combining multiple Belgian relief committees into the single Commission for Relief in Belgium.³⁶ Prior to Hoover’s intervention, there had been some effort to raise relief funds for Belgium. These were local relief committees with no affiliation between them and quite a bit of rivalry:

“M. Havenith, the Belgian Minister in Washington, had similarly assisted in the organisation of committees throughout the United States to raise funds to relieve the sufferings of his countrymen. In New York some of the recognised leaders in charitable work had organised a New York Belgian Relief Committee, which collected more than \$250,000 in two months. Similar committees had been organised in other cities. All these efforts, however, had been scattered and uncentralised. The various activities often overlapped. There was no common object to which the various committees were devoted. There even existed invidious jealousy and competition between the various committees.”³⁷

Once the CRB was established, the organization made an effort to absorb all of these local campaigns. Soon they were all centralized through the CRB and were working as a unit to raise funds for Belgium. Even if they had wanted to remain independent, they still

³⁴ “Hand Book Issued by The Commission for Relief in Belgium,” New York: Commission for Relief in Belgium, undated.

³⁵ Dileanis, 18-19.

³⁶ George I. Gay and H.H. Fisher, *Public Relations of the Commission for the Relief of Belgium, Volume 2* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1929): Document 545.

³⁷ Tracy Barrett Kittredge, *The History of the Commission for Relief in Belgium: 1914-1917* (London: Crowther & Goodman Ltd., 1920): 61

would have had to send all their contributions through the CRB as the organization was the only authorized relief agency outside of Belgium's *Comité*. Though there were still miscommunications and mistakes between the local and national committees, Kittredge notes that the process of combining these different levels went fairly smoothly.

The CRB was more interested in the big picture of getting large amounts of food to Europe and less so in the collection of food in the U.S. Rather than establishing local committees to run campaigns within communities, they pursued appeals at the state level through governors. Neither were they interested in affiliating with such philanthropic organizations as the American Red Cross or Y.M.C.A. that had highly organized branches at the local, state, and regional levels. Despite their exclusion from the CRB, the ARC had their own project working with Belgian soldiers after the U.S. entered the war.³⁸ Though the CRB would accept donations from existing charitable agencies, Hoover had no intention of establishing a network of its own. The organization was not soliciting money, but rather foodstuffs. The CRB created a network of warehouses and shipping depots where individuals and organizations could send food and clothing to be sent to Europe. Shipping was handled at the state level so that each state had a place to send its donations. They did not involve themselves in any grassroots organizing, but kept their engagement limited to the *transportation* of necessities to Belgium.

The CRB's "General Instructions" gave information about the process of packaging and handling parcels for shipment as well as guidelines on what kinds of food to buy and what to avoid. For instance, starches such as flour, cornmeal, barley, and oats were listed under "foods containing maximum amount of calories and proteins at least

³⁸ "Report of the Commissioner for Belgium," Washington, D.C.: American Red Cross, 1918.

cost” and were to be given in the largest quantities possible.³⁹ Under the “do not buy” lists were canned fruits, vegetables, and soups because they contained too much water to be worth the shipping costs. Also, purchasers were instructed to buy “pork fat backs, bacon, and oleomargarine” as they were considered “food containing maximum amount of fats at least cost.” Purchasers were to avoid other meats as “calories purchased as meat cost two to eight times as much as the same quantity of nutriment bought as grain.”⁴⁰ This food guide was intended to maximize the amount of calories in the smallest amount of space. Meats and dairy products were less valuable to the CRB than starches because their goal was to feed people as many calories as possible, not necessarily a balanced diet. As Nick Cullather writes in “The Foreign Policy of the Calorie:” “When a group of engineers organized a massive food drive for occupied Belgium, they turned to the new ‘science of dietetics’ . . . The commission calculated purchases and rations on the basis of calories, which it considered ‘almost the only thing to be considered’ in managing famine relief.”⁴¹ The food guide illustrates the extent to which the CRB counted and calculated its food supplies as a method of scientific management.

The “General Instructions” do not just indicate what kinds of food to send, but also dictate how to send quantities of food. Donors were not expected to pay transportation costs for their donation, but rather to submit to the process designated by the CRB. There were forwarding agents, or “State Assembling Depots” located in most cities and, in the most populous states, multiple forwarding agents in different locales.

³⁹ *ibid*, 6-7.

⁴⁰ *ibid*, 7.

⁴¹ Nick Cullather, “The Foreign Policy of the Calorie,” *American Historical Review* 112 no. 2 (April 2007): 347.

For example, there were three forwarding agents in Massachusetts: the New England Belgian Relief Fund in Boston, Taunton Teaming Company in Taunton, and Bay State Storage & Warehouse Company in Springfield. Most of these facilities were warehouses that would collect all inland donations and load them into carload lots for transportation to the seaboard.⁴² After these donations were packaged in carloads at the “State Assembling Depots,” the forwarding agent or State Executive Committee was to telegraph the CRB headquarters in New York “to obtain route, cheapest rate and desired port.”⁴³ There were separate instructions for billing the storing charges, classifying the shipments, returning the stamps to the donors, and sending the detached tags to headquarters.⁴⁴ All of these instructions demonstrated the immense amount of paperwork and bureaucracy that went in to readying a shipment for transfer from the donor to the American seaport to Rotterdam, and finally to Belgium. This represented the majority of the CRB’s work as the *Comité* handled most of the distribution within Belgium.

There were American representatives of the CRB who facilitated the distribution of the shipments from the U.S. Thomas Westerman writes about the approximately 150 Americans who worked for the CRB in Belgium as “neutral arbiters of relief aid” who he identifies as “neither combatants, nor victims; neither occupied or occupiers.”⁴⁵ These men lived in this liminal space ‘between’ civilian and belligerent where they observed much of war, but experienced little of its dangers. But who were these men? And what did they do? According to Westerman, “most were a ‘good type’ of early twentieth-

⁴² *ibid*, 16-9.

⁴³ *ibid*, 14.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, 14-5.

⁴⁵ Thomas D. Westerman, “Touring Occupied Belgium: American Humanitarians at ‘Work’ and ‘Leisure’ (1914-1917),” *First World War Studies* 5 no. 1 (30 April 2014): 44.

century Anglo-American, upper-class man—the first volunteers were mostly American Rhodes Scholars on holiday from classes in the winter of 1914-1915. Later participants included men who, while older, more mature, and seasoned in life and business, still fit into that particular masculine cultural idea promoted by Cecil Rhodes, the Boy Scouts, and even Teddy Roosevelt’s Rough Riders.”⁴⁶ The men would work behind the trench lines that demarcated German territory, in major cities, small towns, and villages throughout Belgian. They were charged with supervising the *Comité* in their distribution of the food supplies from the U.S. and overseas. This entailed “detailed bookkeeping at offices” throughout Belgium and “inspection tours of CRB warehouse and Belgian-run distribution centres.” Ultimately, they reported to the CRB authorities in Brussels, who reported to the CRB authorities in London.⁴⁷

While Hoover ensured that the food operations remained in the hands of trustworthy men, he allowed women to participate in aspects of the work relating to children and mothers. Historian Katherine Storr writes:

Hoover saw the work being naturally divided by gender. Financing, organising shipments, giving assurances that the Germans were not getting the food, were ‘a man’s job’. Women’s work was providing canteens, undertaking mothers’, babies’ and children’s relief, counseling and undertaking ‘actual executive labour from early morning till late at night with cheerfulness, sympathy, and tenderness’.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ *ibid*, 46.

⁴⁷ *ibid*, 44.

⁴⁸ Katherine Storr, *Excluded from the Record: Women, Refugees, and Relief, 1914-1929*, (Oxford, UK: Peter Lang, 2009): 115.

Charlotte Kellogg, wife of Hoover confidante Vernon Kellogg, was the only woman officially associated with the CRB in Belgium.⁴⁹ As a result, much of the work funded by Americans was conducted by volunteers with the *Comité* and other agencies.

American women supported the relief through the ‘Women’s Section of the CRB’ which Storr states “was probably the biggest women’s organization in America concerned with foreign relief” as women came together from conflicting political organizations in support of Belgian Relief. The organization’s executive committee ranged from the heads of the National American Woman Suffrage Association to the National Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage. Together with the *Literary Digest* the Women’s Section established a Belgian Flour Fund that raised enough money to purchase 20,000 barrels of flour. The Women’s Section also “sent five cargoes of supplies, established sewing camps for Belgian women refugees in Holland and undertook relief work in Poland and Northern France.”⁵⁰

The “sewing camps” to which Storr refers were a core part of Belgian Relief, run solely by women. In her book *Women of Belgium Turn Tragedy to Triumph* (1917), Charlotte Kellogg described different sewing workshops in which Belgian women produced various garments, quilts, and lace. These workshops provided work to the unemployed and a means of repaying their debt for the food. Former public buildings such as the Brussels Hippodrome, the Liège skating rink, and the Antwerp Music Hall functioned as warehouses for the clothing supplies as well as giant workrooms. Belgium was well known for its lace industry but the war threatened to put the lace-makers out of

⁴⁹ Charlotte Kellogg, *Women of Belgium Turn Tragedy to Triumph*, (New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1917): 8.

⁵⁰ Storr, 114-5.

business. Lace, after all, is an adornment and not a necessity. Instead, the CRB made a special agreement with England to supply thread in return for selling the lace in England, France, and the U.S.⁵¹

The CRB also relied upon sympathetic nations for loans and donations of food, clothing, and other supplies. Vernon Kellogg, one of Hoover's close associates in the CRB, wrote a series of articles on the organization for *The World's Work*. In his article, "How Belgium was Fed," from September 1917 Kellogg described how the CRB raised "more than 300 million dollars' worth of food, and the transportation and handling of the more than two and a half million tons of foodstuffs that were bought with this great sum" up until June 1917. Much of those funds were contributed by the British and French governments in the form of loans to the Belgian government. Nearly 30 million of the total 300 million dollars was given as charity from private sources: \$17,000,000 from the British Empire and \$11,500,000 from the United States.⁵²

In the funding of the CRB we see a significant distinction from those funds raised by the NER. While the Belgian government was largely intact, there was no such official Armenian government as most Armenians were citizens of the Ottoman Empire. As a result, there was no central authority that could be relied upon to repay loans on behalf of the Armenians. Furthermore, the Ottoman Empire was a belligerent nation so that even a neutral nation such as the U.S. before April 1917 could not take sides by contributing funds. The NER, therefore, had to rely entirely on private donations. This fact, more than any other, determined the manner in which the organization portrayed itself to the U.S. and the world. Armenians had to appeal to the public to such an extent that their

⁵¹ Charlotte Kellogg, 158-166.

⁵² Vernon Kellogg, "How Belgium was Fed," *The World's Work* 34 no. 5(September 1917): 528.

entire existence depended upon it. Belgians, meanwhile, had a government to act on their behalf.

The Belgian government not only backed the subventions given them by Britain and France, but also aided the CRB in distributing the food and clothing in a fair manner. After the formation of the CRB, the *Comité Central de Secours d’Alimentation* re-formed itself as the *Comité National de Secours d’Alimentation*.⁵³ This second iteration of the *Comité* joined the CRB in apportioning the imported food according to a rationing system based on “scientific dietetic principles.”⁵⁴ While the *Comité* had “forty or fifty thousand official members, and the eagerly proffered[sic] services of nearly all the seven and a half million other unofficial Belgians,” the CRB never had more than 40 volunteers in Belgium at any one time.⁵⁵ Despite its small numbers, the CRB accomplished a lot by cooperating with the Belgian *Comité*.

Historian and Hoover biographer George H. Nash characterized the agency’s work as “an undertaking unprecedented in world history: an organized rescue of an entire nation from starvation.”⁵⁶ Armenian Relief might then be construed as a successor movement to Belgian Relief. Both dealt with starving populations that required outside help to feed civilians. That outside help required diplomatic finesse to find long-haul cargo ships to transport much needed supplies. Belgian Relief found aid in the Dutch

⁵³ Kellogg, “The Authentic Story of Belgian Relief, 174-175.

⁵⁴ Vernon Kellogg, “Getting England and Germany to Agree,” *The World’s Work* 34 no. 4(August 1917): 410-411; Kellogg, “The Authentic Story of Belgian Relief, 176.

⁵⁵ Kellogg, “Getting England and Germany to Agree,” 411; Kellogg, “The Authentic Story of Belgian Relief,” 176. The former articles places the population of Belgium at 7 ½ million while the latter article claims 9 ½ million people. The CRB volunteers were mainly Hoover’s close associates and Rhodes Scholars who were based in London when the war broke out. Hoover’s circle of trust was quite small and did not include women or missionaries like the NER volunteers. He treated humanitarian work as a business and considered those without corporate experience as amateurs.

⁵⁶ George H. Nash, “‘An American Epic’: Herbert Hoover and Belgian Relief in World War I,” *Prologue* 21 no. 1 (Spring 1989): 75-86.

fleet and navigated the treacherous waters of the English Channel and North Sea; while the Near East Relief relied most often on American ships with permissions from Allied Naval forces to reach occupied Constantinople and Beirut.⁵⁷ Both organizations ran soup kitchens, provided food rations, and took a special interest in child welfare.

While both Belgian and Armenian Relief performed the requisite humanitarian tasks, there were considerable differences in the level of the intervention. Prior to the German invasion, Belgium was a profitable, industrialized nation. Its reliance on imported food was a weakness exploited by war so that the population was brought to the brink of starvation within weeks. All industry was halted due to the occupation so that unemployment became a problem. When the CRB succeeded in getting food and supplies to reach the country, the transportation infrastructure had remained intact enough for distribution to the entire country. The Belgians were fortunate enough to have a government to advocate on their behalf as well as the *Comité National* to deal specifically with the apportionment of the food supplies. Numerous funds were established in Britain, the U.S., Australia, New Zealand, and other nations to provide further support to the Belgians. Though the German Occupation was harsh, there was a system in place to ensure survival.

Despite the Near East Relief's best efforts, the organization was unable to establish humanitarian operations as effective and efficient as Belgian Relief. The large expanse of the Ottoman Empire was nowhere near as industrialized or modernized as tiny Belgium. Perhaps the greatest complication was the overall level of destruction wrought by the military battles. The large refugee population posed multiple challenges. After the

⁵⁷ JDC Archives on Mercurius

Ottoman surrender in October 1918, Armenian refugees descended upon the cities in hopes of finding family, friends, and food. The American Red Cross and the NER were unable to provide proper shelter for most of these refugees. As a result most settled in abandoned warehouses, churches, and homes. There was no guarantee of a clean water supply so that refugees without parasites were few and far between. In those cramped quarters, diseases spread like wildfire so that epidemics of typhus and cholera were common and deadly. Other common ailments included scabies, trachoma, and Aleppo button, also known as cutaneous leishmaniasis—a parasitic skin disease transmitted by sandfly bites.⁵⁸ While there were outbreaks of tuberculosis among the Belgians, the gravity of that situation was nowhere near as serious as the Armenians' plight.

Another arena in which Belgians had the advantage was international law. Existing international law contained provisions for a neutral agency to administer humanitarian and medical aid within the war zone. Founded on the front lines, the International Red Cross (IRC) and its national affiliates marshaled tremendous resources from government, philanthropies, and individuals. Though reputed to serve all humanity, IRC operations mainly served the active, injured, and captive combatants of belligerent nations. As neutral international humanitarian organizations, the Commission for the Relief of Belgium and International Red Cross held similar ideologies but differed in their obligations. The IRC often provided aid to civilians but combatants remained their first priority. Without such military ties the CRB concerned itself with the increasingly desperate refugees amassing in Northern Europe.

⁵⁸ George L. Richards, "The medical work of the Near East Relief; a review of its accomplishments in Asia Minor and the Caucasus during 1919-20," New York: Near East Relief, 1923.

As a result of international law (or lack thereof), the CRB was the only agency taking responsibility for the Belgian civilians. The 1907 Hague Convention on the *Laws and Customs of War on Land* afforded consideration to civilian populations living on occupied land in guidelines “On Military Authority Over Hostile Territory.” Section III, Article 46 states “Family honors and rights, individual lives and private property, as well as religious convictions and liberty, must be respected.”⁵⁹ Other clauses protected the occupied territory’s necessary resources from requisition, prohibited pillaging, and treated institutions of arts and sciences as off limits but there was no regulatory force to protect these rights, leaving the civilians of occupied territory without formal recourse. Since the neutral Belgians faced outside belligerents, the German occupiers presumably held responsibility for their national well-being over a neutral agency. Belgium was intended as a satellite German state so the German government took some interest in preventing starvation. Unfortunately, their own food shortages undermined any internal efforts to sustain the Belgians.

Occupied Belgium was at least given consideration in international law, unlike the Turkish Armenians. There were no provisions for citizens facing attack from their own government. As victims of their own belligerent government, the Armenians’ plight had no legal precedent to foster an international response. Armenians had to rely on the Turks to allow the Near East Relief to distribute humanitarian aid during the war. Though this was complicated enough while the U.S. remained neutral, it became impossible once they declared war on Germany. To solicit aid from the U.S. government, the Armenian relief

⁵⁹ Hague Convention of 1907, “Annex to the Convention: Regulations Respecting the Laws and Customs of War on Land” http://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th_century/hague02.asp#iart2 (accessed 10 December 2013).

activists would have had to convince the U.S. government to look beyond their status as Turkish citizens and grant them succor. Given the financial demands on the U.S. government from their allies, giving handouts to their “enemies” was out of the question.

Despite the severity of the situation in the Near East, the Belgian cause overshadowed Armenian relief efforts. In order for people to care about distant suffering they had to identify with the sufferers. Geographical, cultural, and religious differences fostered psychological distance between Americans and Armenians, impeding the Americans’ empathic responses to Armenian suffering. The 19th century missions to the Armenian Christians helped prime Americans to help the Armenians by facilitating a long-term relationship with them, but the fact that American missionaries had referred to Armenians as “nominal Christians” extended the perception of religious difference among the Protestant majority in the U.S. Most documents on Armenian relief included a map so that Americans could locate the Armenian provinces of the Ottoman Empire. It was this sort of basic knowledge about Armenians that Americans lacked. Thus, the psychological distance between Americans and Armenians prevented the former from feeling morally responsible for the latter’s suffering. It was the ACASR’s job to convince Americans otherwise.

Another advantage Belgium relief had over Armenian relief was the simple fact that the invasion of Belgium occurred before the Armenian genocide began. While the German Army entered Belgium in August 1914, Henry Morgenthau didn’t begin calling for Armenian relief until the spring of 1915 when the first Armenian victims were deported from their homes. Even then, the details of the Turkish campaign were not fully known. In the lag between the two events, Belgian Relief programs were established and

resources allocated for their use. Large public appeals were issued for donations of food and clothing for the Belgians beginning in 1915. Meanwhile, Armenian Relief was a project of a few wealthy men and Protestant churches until the 1919 Campaign introduced the facts to the entire American public. By that point, concern for the Belgians was well entrenched throughout the U.S.

Protest meetings on behalf of Belgium illustrate the preferential treatment shown the Belgian cause. Like the Armenians, Belgians were subject to “deportations” to German territories for work in labor camps. For Armenians, however, “deportations” meant death marches through the Syrian desert to unknown locations. Belgian men were taken specifically for their ability to contribute to German industrial and other military needs. From August 1914 on, at least 10,000 French and 13,000 Belgians accused as franc-tireurs were taken to labor camps in Germany.⁶⁰ Horne and Kramer write that “we do not know whether deportations were intended as a measure of security, punishment, or deterrence.” Since the deportees included women, children, and the infirm, Horne and Kramer conclude that “the motivation cannot have been purely security, but must also have been collective punishment.”⁶¹ According to Imperial Germany historian Isabel Hull, “deportation for forced labor did not cross the German administrative mind until early 1916. Indeed, until June 1915 security concerns had outweighed need, and thereafter first efforts concentrated on enticing volunteers.”⁶² Germans were unable to

⁶⁰ Horne and Kramer, 166.

⁶¹ Ibid, 166.

⁶² Isabel V. Hull, *A Scrap of Paper: Breaking and Making International Law During the Great War* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2014), 128.

attract many volunteers for reasons of patriotism and “C.R.B. food allotment, however meager, lessened the impetus to work.”⁶³

When large numbers of Belgian volunteers failed to materialize, a deputy war minister called for the deportation of 400,000 Belgian civilians to Germany. Those forced laborers would allow German munitions workers to head to the front lines. Thus began deportations of Belgian civilian for forced labor in Germany as well as the world’s outcry against what one British pamphlet deemed “acts of wholesale slavery.”⁶⁴ Cardinal Desire Mercier of Belgium also equated deportations with slavery in his address to neutral countries, “thus are another thousand Belgians reduced to slavery, without previous trial, condemned to the penalty which comes next in cruelty to the death penalty—deportation.”⁶⁵ The pope even made a “direct reference to the deportations of the Belgians by the Germans as a war measure without precedent in the history of civilized nations.”⁶⁶ The American people were outraged by what they saw as the enslavement of an innocent people for the betterment of their enemies. *The Washington Herald* compared the deportations to “the blood curdling atrocities of the days of Babylon.”⁶⁷

Many events were organized in protest of these deportations. *The New York Tribune* reported that “Carnegie Hall will be thrown open to those who desire to join in a

⁶³ Hull, 128.

⁶⁴ “Slavery in Europe; A Letter to Neutral Governments from the Anti-Slavery Society,” London, Hodder & Stoughton, 1917. From the pamphlet’s content and this copy’s donation to the University of Michigan by Sir Gilbert Parker who designed and distributed British propaganda to the U.S., it is likely that this pamphlet is a piece of such publicity that originated at Wellington House, the British propaganda headquarters.

⁶⁵ Cardinal Mercier, “Germany’s Policy of Deporting Belgians to Germany,” 7 November 1916, http://www.firstworldwar.com/source/belgium_mercier1.htm [accessed 11 May 2014].

⁶⁶ “Pope Denounced Deportations,” *New York Times*, 7 December 1916, 3.

⁶⁷ “Deportations Brutal, Gerard Told Holweg,” *The Washington Herald*, 29 April 1917, 9.

mass meeting condemning the leading away of a nation into captivity.”⁶⁸ Three thousand people attended the meeting where “the hall was packed to capacity. There was not a seat left on the stage, in pit or in boxes or galleries.”⁶⁹ Former Secretary of State, former U.S. Senator, and current leader of the preparedness movement, Elihu Root spoke of the German actions against Belgium, “If the civilized world of the twentieth century is willing to stand silent and see these things done, in cumulative progression, in violation of the laws of humanity and of nations, then the civilization of the twentieth century is worse than the savagery of the Romans.”⁷⁰ Speakers were keen to connect the Belgian deportations to lesser levels of civilization to emphasize their horror and barbarism.

A program from a mass meeting in Philadelphia demonstrates the manner in which these meetings were organized. The meeting began with the Belgian National Anthem and continued with high profile speakers including an invocation by Bishop Philip Rhinelander of the Episcopal Diocese of Pennsylvania and addresses from the prominent Philadelphia attorney Walter George Smith, essayist Agnes Repplier, former Assistant Attorney General Hon. James M. Beck. These speakers were all Philadelphia natives as opposed to those luminaries on a speaking circuit. Since this event was based in Philadelphia, there were many allusions to the city as the birthplace of liberty, “this great historic city is also an appropriate locality for this meeting, for had not the people of Philadelphia met in common with their brethren of other American cities to protest against infamy, the ‘very stones of the street’ would have cried out against them.”⁷¹

⁶⁸ “New York Will Voice Protest for Belgians,” *New York Tribune*, 2 December 1916, 2.

⁶⁹ “Thousands Meet to Demand Action for Belgium Now,” *New York Times*, 16 December 1916, 1.

⁷⁰ “Thousands Meet to Demand Action for Belgium Now,” 3.

⁷¹ “Proceeding of Meeting to Protest Against Deportation of Belgian Citizens into Servitude in Germany,” <http://libcudl.colorado.edu/wwi/pdf/i73722601.pdf> [accessed 13 May 2014], 17-8.

Speaker Agnes Repplier made the requisite comparison to prior barbarous acts, comparing the protest Belgian deportations to the abolition movement, “The slave-raids in Belgium bear the most amazing likeness to the slave-raids which Europe deemed it her duty to suppress in Africa. Hon. James M. Beck went further back in history: “In the thirty years’ war . . . there happened the siege of Magdeburg, and before that the sack of Rome by the mercenaries of Charles the Fifth, two of the wickedest atrocities up to that time which history has recorded; but mankind now witnesses not the pillage of a city like Rome nor Magdeburg, but the deliberate, cold-blooded and selfish spoliation of a whole nation.”⁷² Again, the audience was reminded of the barbaric nature of the crimes against Belgium through uncivilized past events.

Beck considered Belgium “but one chapter of the blackest volume of human history.” He reminded the crowd of other tragedies during the war including the Lusitania, deportations from Poland, and the Armenian genocide. As he states, “If 6,000 Belgian non-combatants have already been slaughtered, why 600,000 Armenians have fallen in the last two years under the same ruthless frightfulness. . . Why, then, do we make such an especial feature of the damnable wrongs done to Belgium?”⁷³ Beck answered himself, “I think the answer is obvious. In the first place, there is a greater certitude to the facts . . . But, ah! There is a greater reason than that why Belgium has such a peculiar appeal to our pity and sympathy. It is because the striking down of that nation is possibly and probably the most malignant act in modern history. (Applause)”⁷⁴ According to Beck the international laws that Germany violated in their treatment of

⁷² *ibid*, 22.

⁷³ *ibid*, 18-19.

⁷⁴ *Ibid*, 19.

Belgium made it “the most malignant act in modern history”. The Armenian genocide could not compete with Beck’s level of outrage regarding the Belgian situation because the exact facts and statistics of the Armenian situation were unknown and the Ottoman Empire did not violate international law as it existed at the time. It was this disregard for the law that this trained lawyer and his followers found as detestable as the actions perpetrated by the Germans.

While there were some mass meetings on behalf of the Armenians, none specifically protested the deportations or received a similarly high profile in news reports. Belgian relief was a more active and well-known cause, helped by familiarity between Americans and Europeans. It would become the ACASR’s, and later the Near East Relief’s responsibility to similarly familiarize the American public with the Armenians. One of the key components of this approach was to introduce connections between Americans and Armenians through their love of children or the shared importance of motherhood. Belgian relief committees used these same motifs, along with allegations of rape against the Germans, to induce sympathy towards the “poor little Belgians.” The CRB, however, did not approve of such sentimental advertising, but instead ensured that the American public knew the ‘facts and figures’ of their organization. At the same time, the CRB benefitted from this sentimentalist propaganda so that Americans felt pity towards the Belgians and donated to the CRB. The ACASR did not have such proxy organizations creating propaganda about the Armenians. As a result, the ACASR had to moderate their message by toning down any explicit discussion of rape and using children and mothers as the face of their organization.

CHAPTER 3

Posters, Photography, and the 1919 Campaign

On December 11th 1918 the American Committee for Relief in the Near East announced its 1919 Campaign for \$30,000,000. The announcement included a statement from President Wilson asking Americans “to help re-establish these ancient and sorely oppressed people in their former homes on a self-supporting basis” by making “even more generous contributions than they have made heretofore.” Wilson’s appeal placed the numbers in need of “outside help to sustain them through the winter” at 4,000,000 Armenians, Syrians, Greeks, and other war sufferers, “including 400,000 orphans.”¹ The campaign was originally planned for November 1918, but postponed to January 1919 so as not to conflict with the United War Work Campaign² that aimed to raise over \$170,000,000 on behalf of the Salvation Army, YMCA, YWCA, the Knights of Columbus, American Library Association, the War Camp Community Service, and the Jewish Welfare Board. The ACRNE did not join the communal fundraiser since its overall needs would far exceed the rest of the organizations’ needs combined.

Although small in comparison with fundraisers by the Red Cross and the United War Work Campaign, the ACRNE’s appeal for \$30,000,000 represented a vast sum in consideration of their past campaigns. Their efforts had begun in October through December 1915, when a small contingent of philanthropists had contributed \$176,929 in emergency funds. With help from the Laymen’s Missionary Movement and the 38 local

¹ “Wilson Aids Relief Fund,” NYT, 12 December 1918.

² “The American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief, November 1918,” Item ID 5240, American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief File, New York Office Collection, 1914-1918, *American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee Archives*, New York, New York. Hereafter, *JDC Archives*.

committees, the first public appeals in 1916 brought in \$2,404,000. The 1917 drive collected nearly five million dollars for disbursal by agents of neutral countries. In 1918, the campaign had garnered \$7,022,000, most of which was raised in the second half of the year as the agency prepared to enter the field.³ In light of these prior results, the 1919 Campaign's tremendous expectations seem untenable, even foolish. After all, this was "the greatest charity fund ever asked in America for other than our own people."⁴ The committee estimated that they would need to provide at least 6 months of food, shelter, medicine, and "clothing for at least 2,900,000 needy," transportation and "houses for 1,770,000 returning refugees," complete care for 400,000 orphans, facilities, and materials for reestablishing agriculture and industry in the affected regions of Transcaucasia, Persia, Anatolia, and the former Ottoman territories in Syria, Lebanon, Mesopotamia, and Palestine.⁵ Dealing with this magnitude of disaster in Western Asia required the ACRNE to pursue such large amounts of money, a feat that necessitated a comprehensive strategy of outreach designed to arouse the American public's compassion and commitment.

Planned during the latter half of 1918, the 1919 NER Campaign drew upon resources cultivated by the federal government for propaganda purposes.⁶ NER's collaboration with the Committee for Public Information's Division of Pictorial

³ Barton (1930), 408-9.

⁴ "The Need of a Complete Publicity Organization" in "1919 Campaign Portfolio," File 12HA-F16: Publications of the American Committee for Relief in the Near East, 12/1918 - 01/1919, U.S. Food Administration, Educational Division, (06/1917 - 01/1919), The Records of the U.S. Food Administration, 1917-1920, Records Group 4, National Archives at Kansas City, Missouri. Hereafter, *U.S.F.A. Educational Division Records*.

⁵ "Practicing Bible Precepts in Bible Lands: Handbook for Busy Pastors," New York, N.Y.: American Committee for Relief in the Near East, 1918: 7-9. Discrepancies between these figures and those quoted on page 1 likely reflect updated numbers or additional affected areas added to NER responsibilities in the interim between calculating the budget in Fall 1918 and the final preparations for the January campaign.

Publicity would extend the organization's contacts to commercial artists and non-Evangelical publicists. As a result of outreach through mainstream publicists, the 1919 Campaign looked and sounded different than prior campaigns that had been wholly overseen by Charles Vickrey and other Laymen's Missionary Movement veterans. This chapter explores that transformation, then interrogates the subsequent transformation in visual publicity from illustration to photography.

Like their peers in the relief business, the Near East Relief commissioned and produced posters to raise funds for Armenian relief efforts.⁶ Analyzing publicity posters by Near East Relief offers direct insight into the changing political expediencies of Armenian relief efforts. This chapter primarily explores the organization's portrayal of suffering Armenians from 1918 through 1919. It will further explicate the themes chosen for the 1919 Campaign, as illustrated in publicity posters. Illustrators Douglas Volk, W.T. Benda, Ethel Franklin Betts, and W.B. King drew some of the most memorable images of the Armenian relief movement in the United States. All 1919 posters conform to the general theme of preventing the Armenian from 'perishing,' but these posters individually highlight more specific issues dealing with the convergence of advertising with humanitarian aid, American duty towards other nations, children in peril, and motherhood. These illustrations echo similar themes in posters for the American Red

⁶ In this context, referring to the Near East Relief is a concession to simplicity. The Creel Committee and the Division of Pictorial Publicity was established in April of 1917 and dissolved in 1919. During this period, the original American Committee for Syrian and Armenian Relief (ACSAR) was officially renamed the American Committee for Relief in the Near East (ACRNE) in the fall of 1917. The ACRNE moniker was in use through most of 1918 until August 1919 when it became Near East Relief. These name changes took time to implement especially given the time lag between poster commission and production. Absent any other evidence, the named organization can confirm the earliest possible date of its creation. The latest possible date is harder to nail down as the organizations' prior names remained in circulation long after they were officially discarded. Despite that caveat, I can state with certainty that only posters that solicit contributions for the ACRNE are fruits of their collaboration with the Division of Pictorial Publicity.

Cross (ARC). During the period from 1918 to 1919, the ARC and NER cooperated in caring for refugees in Palestine, Syria, and portions of the Near East under Allied control. In general, the ARC provided the medical staff and other workers, while the NER contributed a portion of the supplies and sponsored former missionaries to address the logistical challenges. Just as they shared responsibility for these relief efforts, so too did their publicity reflect these mutual concerns through thematic unity.

Within months of the U.S. declaration of war, there was no escape from the estimated 40 million war-related posters plastered on bulletin boards, store windows, trains, and even buildings. While articles and speeches provided far more information, even the most influential writers and charismatic speakers could not reach as many people as a well-placed, well-designed poster. Art director and writer, C. Matlack Price, described the inextricable link between posters and politics:

War, destroyer of many things, has brought the poster into its own, has made the poster fulfill its greatest destiny . . . as a more forceful aid to nationwide publicity than any other means employed by the Government or by any war activity to reach all the people, every day, everywhere.⁷

War posters created a sensation among fields affiliated with public relations. Trade journals for advertisers, publishers, and the art world kept abreast of the uninterrupted flow of posters, offering critiques and devoting entire articles to the creation of the most popular posters. This interest partially explains why so many posters of this era were preserved when similar ephemera often lasts until garbage day. As a medium considered

⁷ Charles Matlack Price, *Poster Design: A Critical Study of the Development of the Poster in Continental Europe, England, and American* (New York: George W. Bricka, 1922), 251.

accessible and provocative to the general public, posters were the dominant form of visual media used for publicity purposes by a wide range of philanthropic organizations.⁸

Posters were designed to galvanize support for war through their visual appeal and inspirational messages. The popular understanding of the Armenian plight was largely shaped through visual materials manufactured by professional advertisers. Depictions of Armenians emphasize their vulnerability to trigger sympathy and donations. Such a simplistic approach downplayed the complexity of the Near East crisis, meeting fundraising goals without political repercussions. As a result, much of the American public came to pity the “Starving Armenians,” basing much of their knowledge on the publicity posters.

The 1919 Campaign was the last Near East Relief fundraiser that centered around poster art. Once treasured tools in the publicity arsenal, illustrated images were rapidly supplanted by photography. After armistice, representatives from various American relief agencies surveyed the desperate conditions throughout the Near East to plan an extensive humanitarian operation. These committees brought back numerous photographs, some of which were passed on for publicity purposes. From then on, visual publicity was dominated by photographic images of Armenian refugees sent by relief

⁸ For more on World War I war posters see Pearl James (ed.), *Picture This: World War I Posters and Visual Culture* (Lincoln, Neb.: University of Nebraska Press, 2009); Anne Classen Knutson, “The Enemy Imagined: Visual Configurations of Race and Ethnicity in World War I Propaganda Posters,” in *Race and the Construction of Modern American Nationalism*, ed. Reynolds J. Scott-Childress (Boston: Garland Press, 1997): 195-220; Peter Paret et al, eds., *Persuasive Images: Posters of War and Revolution from the Hoover Institution Archives* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1992); Walton Rawls, *Wake Up, America! World War I and the American Poster* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1988); Maurice Rickards, *Posters of the First World War* (New York: Walker and Company, 1968); Matlock Price and Horace Brown, “How to Put in Patriotic Posters the Stuff That Makes People Stop—Look—Act!” Washington D.C.: National Committee of Patriotic Societies, undated (ca. 1917-8).

workers, journalists, and professional publicity photographers. These new resources set new rules in a quest for consumer appeal in humanitarian work.

Background

This section emphasizes the effect of war upon the situation in the Near East, deepening the crisis that humanitarian agencies would take on in peacetime. It is important to understand that the Armenian genocide took place in a war zone so that much of the Ottoman Empire was in distress. War began in the Near Eastern Theater from October 1914 and lasted until the Armistice of Mudros in October 1918. The major military confrontations included campaigns in the Sinai and Palestine, Mesopotamia, the Caucasus, Persia, and Gallipoli. With General Allenby's forces capture of Jerusalem (December 1917) and Jericho (February 1918), humanitarian relief activities in the Near East extended from Port Said, Egypt, outside of Cairo, to Western Palestine. By 1918, the British had secured much of modern Iraq and concentrated their troops to advance on modern Syria, Lebanon, and Israel. From there they continued fighting battles from the Mediterranean Coast inward, penetrating into the Judean Hills and Jordan River Valley in the Fall 1918. Armenian, Arab, Russian, and Turkish refugees crossed over the battle lines in the Jordan Rift Valley to seek food and medical services in Jerusalem.

As of June 1918, the NER was helping around "twenty thousand individuals" in Jerusalem alone. Still, refugees were streaming in from the "Northern villages" of the Galilee as well as 6,000 more from Es-Salt, a Palestinian city from which British troops had recently retreated. Among them were 1,700 Armenians from the Armenian towns of Marash, Adana, Aintab, Kessab, etc. who one ACASR worker in Jerusalem deemed "the

most pitiful sight I ever saw.”⁹ Fifteen hundred of the Armenian refugees were transported from Jerusalem to Port Said, Egypt to relieve some of the crowding. The Relief Committee in Jerusalem asked for 80,000 dollars to aid the indigent refugees remaining in the area.¹⁰

In the final days of battle, the British captured Damascus and Aleppo where the Armenians deported to the Syrian deserts had gathered en-masse.¹¹ The American Red Cross and ACASR expanded their relief network based in the region to care for this large number of refugees now under Allied control. Fifteen relief units reported to Constantinople, not including those in Persia and the Caucasus where over a million people suffered from famines caused by the military campaigns and political upheaval.¹² In view of these large numbers of Persian, Kurds, Arabs, and Turks they intended to serve, the American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief changed their name to the American Committee for Relief in the Near East (ACRNE) in Fall 1917. This name would last until August 1919, when the organization would officially take on the name Near East Relief. By that point, the American Red Cross had left the region entirely to NER recovery efforts.

In the reports from Palestine, the ACRNE envisioned the challenges yet to come and began strategizing for their post Armistice operations. Such a project would require far more funds that would—in turn—require more publicity. Facing the rising expectations for 1919, Barton emphasized “that the publicity given this great enterprise

⁹ *News Bulletin 1*, no. 14, 25 June 1918, pg. 1 (unnumbered).

¹⁰ *News Bulletin 1*, no. 14, 25 June 1918, pg. 7 (unnumbered).

¹¹ James L. Gelvin, *Divided Loyalties: Nationalism and Mass Politics in Syria at the Close of Empire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998): 43.

¹² *News Bulletin 1*, no. 14, 25 June 1918, pg. 7 (unnumbered). *News Bulletin 2*, no. 6 (November 1918), pg. 5 (unnumbered)

will largely determine its ultimate success.”¹³ William B. Millar, general secretary of the Laymen’s Missionary Movement and organizer of the Army and Navy Y.M.C.A. campaigns, returned to join forces with his former colleague, Charles Vickrey, as the directors of this “special nation-wide campaign.”¹⁴ Since its first official campaign in early 1916, the organization had developed an impressive publicity department. The “latest news reports” that had earlier circulated among a select few became the *News Bulletin*, a newsletter edited by Nora Waln of the National Publicity Bureau. For 10 cents a year, subscribers stayed informed about Armenian relief efforts through the Bulletin’s articles, stories, and pictures. The News Bulletin kept subscribers abreast of developments in the Campaign, particularly regarding the money raised.

Each state and major city had a quota for donations that varied by population, number of participating committees, and past giving. Though few states actually met or exceeded their quota, establishing quotas allowed local groups to work for a concrete goal rather than solicit donations generally. This made an organized publicity campaign important to fostering an environment conducive to large-scale giving to the NER. Holding each state responsible for “their share” of the necessary funds also turned the campaign into more of a national project than when it had a lesser presence in most states.

The National Publicity Bureau also issued a portfolio “contain[ing] a complete newspaper advertising campaign, some cartoons and photographs, a page of editorials

¹³ James L. Barton, “Advertising the Campaign,” *News Bulletin of American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief* 2 no. 7 (December 1918): pages unnumbered.

¹⁴ Barton, *The Story of Near East Relief*, 409. “Preliminary Statement on Field Organization,” *News Bulletin of American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief* 2 no. 6 (November 1918): pages unnumbered

and a complete outline of a publicity organization,” further offering instructions for their use by the over two thousand local committees. As opposed to “A National Test of Brotherhood” in 1916, this collection of publicity materials was far more sophisticated and contained material for use in newspapers and periodicals rather than providing information only for inspiring the representatives.¹⁵ Analyzing this portfolio reveals the extent to which the ACRNE had stepped away from the Laymen’s appeals of those early years to enter a new age of advertising. The 1919 Campaign Portfolio was designed and distributed by the National Publicity Committee to help the hundreds of local committees conduct a professional campaign. The overall tone of the Portfolio is captured in the title to one advertisement: “In the Name of Pity—Give!”¹⁶ Most articles depict the distant sufferers in desperate circumstances, picking food out of garbage pits, scavenging for “orange peels from the mud”, and “scratching in the dust beneath the feed bags of the army mules” for errant “kernels of oats and barley.”¹⁷

The Portfolio also included a weeks’ worth of editorials by NER’s head of newspaper publicity, David Hinshaw, advertising executive Bruce Barton, Supreme Court Justice Charles Evans Hughes, and former President William Howard Taft. Most of the editorials made the case for donating by appealing to Americans’ sympathy for the Armenians children: “Shall the fathers and mothers of America fail to hear the call to help these orphans? If they do so, they shall fail to be parents of children who are world

¹⁵ See Chapter 1 for “A National Test of Brotherhood,” New York, N.Y.: American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief, 1916.

¹⁶ “Advertisement A8” in “1919 Campaign Portfolio,” File 12HA-F16: Publications of the American Committee for Relief in the Near East, 12/1918 - 01/1919, *U.S.F.A. Educational Division Records*.

¹⁷ “Five Thousand Persons Fed On Rise—Salt and Water Soup,” News Clip Sheet No. 1 in “1919 Campaign Portfolio,” File 12HA-F16: Publications of the American Committee for Relief in the Near East, 12/1918 - 01/1919, *U.S.F.A. Educational Division Records*.

brothers and sisters of their own American children.”¹⁸ In addition to promoting paternalistic concern, the editorials played upon ideas of American exceptionalism to depict donations as a matter of national moral integrity: “Tolerant, Helpful, Kindly Generous America would never permit relief workers to sign death warrants for thousands of people, did it but realize the situation.”¹⁹ Hinshaw further argued that the devastation stemmed from the Great War, thereby obligating Americans to finish what they started so “that autocracy might be forever crushed from the earth.”²⁰ In appealing to Americans as parents and citizens, these editorials provided crucial models for emphasizing a “special” relationship between Americans and Armenians.

In addition to office staff like Hinshaw and Millar and big name endorsements from William Howard Taft and Charles Evans Hughes, the Board “spared no pains in securing the most experienced help available.”²¹ For illustrating the campaign posters, this meant recruiting artists from the Committee of Public Information (CPI), the government’s own public relations agency. The CPI led philanthropic agencies to step up their game by professionalizing public giving. The government agency’s employees went on to define the field of public relations in the postwar era by working as experts in that field. The Laymen’s Missionary Movement, meanwhile, would cede some control over the NER to this emerging crop of publicity men.

Committee of Public Information

¹⁸ David Hinshaw, “Armies of Starvation Not Yet Demobilized,” in “1919 Campaign Portfolio,” File 12HA-F16: Publications of the American Committee for Relief in the Near East, 12/1918 - 01/1919, *U.S.F.A. Educational Division Records*: A18.

¹⁹ David Hinshaw, “Stay These Executions,” in “1919 Campaign Portfolio,” File 12HA-F16: Publications of the American Committee for Relief in the Near East, 12/1918 - 01/1919, *U.S.F.A. Educational Division Records*: A16.

²⁰ *ibid.*

²¹ *News Bulletin*, March 1919, pg. 4.

In April of 1917, President Wilson reversed his prior neutrality and asked Congress to declare war on Germany. Once obliged, the President who “had kept us out of war” steeled himself for backlash by a resentful public. While the American military prepared to ship out, Wilson laid the groundwork for a domestic campaign fought with words and images. Executive order 2594 established the Committee for Public Information to produce propaganda that would inspire the public to support the much-reviled war effort. At the helm stood George Creel, an unexceptional journalist and public relations man who had impressed Wilson with his vision of “voluntary censorship” through cooperation with media outlets.

Heartened by Creel’s faith in the press, Wilson chose not to proceed with censorship legislation intended to curtail press coverage of the war. In turn, Creel exceeded all expectations by building a veritable publicity machine so attuned to its chairman’s specifications that the agency took on his name. Creel and his mission were often the only things that connected the various overlapping sub-committees that comprised the agency.²² This haphazard organization, however, did not hinder the Creel Committee’s prodigious output of effective propaganda that arguably defined the historical legacy of World War I in the United States.²³ Of all these departments and

²² Rachel Conescu, “A Portrait of the Division of Pictorial Publicity,” Archives of the Society of Illustrators, New York, New York: 10-11.

²³ The Committee’s work was cut back after July 1, 1918. Its domestic activities ended after the armistice was signed on November 11, 1918, but its foreign operations continued until June 10, 1919. The fundamental studies of the Committee are James R. Mock and Cedric Larson, *Words that Won the War: The Story of the Committee on Public Information 1917–1919* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1939); and Stephen Vaughn, *Holding Fast the Inner Lines: Democracy, Nationalism, and the Committee on Public Information* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1980). Creel’s talent for self-promotion calls for a cautious approach to sources that rely upon his version of events, in particular Creel’s oft-cited *How We Advertised America*. It is important to emphasize that *How We Advertised America* is both a memoir and a response to the postwar criticism of wartime propaganda. Look no further than the unsubtle subtitle—*The First Telling of the Amazing Story of the Committee on Public Information that Carried the Gospel of Americanism to Every Corner of the Globe*—to justify some measure of concern.

projects conducted by the agency, none contributed more to this reputation than the posters designed by the Division of Pictorial Publicity. Creel claimed that the division “was inspirational rather than planned,” though Eric Van Schaack, a scholar of art and art history, found some discrepancy between Creel’s published recollections and the “surviving records.”²⁴ Those records revealed the extensive negotiations between Creel and the DPP illustrators over control of their product. Creel envisioned the DPP as a pool of artists available for publicity needs. He tapped Charles Dana Gibson, President of the Society of Illustrators, as chairman of the department. Founded in 1901, the Society sought professional advancement for professional illustrators whose work in advertising and periodicals was often deprecated for its commercial conventions. Wartime effectively elevated the status of illustrators by calling them to “wake up America” with their war posters. Many of the Society’s members, including Gibson and other top illustrators, were also members of the Vigilantes, an association of writers, painters, poets and other artists involved in the Preparedness movement. Their participation in the war effort began before the U.S. declaration of war—and certainly before Creel created his propaganda machine.

The DPP attracted many members of these groups as a vehicle for advancing their artistic credentials while serving their country. Under the guidance of one of their own, the DPP attracted both known and unknown artists to work together to design

How We Advertised America is best used for objective facts and insight on Creel’s own perception of his work. See George Creel, *How We Advertised America* (New York and London: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1920).

²⁴ Eric Van Schaack, “The Division of Pictorial Publicity in World War I,” *Design Issues* 22 no. 1 (Winter 2008): 33. It is estimated that 75% of the Committee’s records were destroyed by the Army’s Bureau of Useless Papers or lost. Executive Correspondence; Executive Division, Committee on Public Information; Records of the Committee on Public Information, Record Group 63; National Archives in College Park, College Park, MD.

appealing posters and other materials. The Division of Pictorial Publicity issued seven hundred of these posters, with multiple printing runs totaling in the millions for the most popular examples. All in all the 318 artists issued a total of 1,438 posters, cards, newspaper ads, cartoons, seals, and buttons for 58 governmental departments and organizations.²⁵

Early on, Creel struggled to maintain control over the structure of the Division but conceded to Gibson and his board's insistent adaptation of the Society's organization to the task at hand.²⁶ A *New York Times* article promoted "C.D. Gibson's Committee for Patriotic Posters" as an efficient, noble organization with only passing mention of the Creel Committee. This suggests that the Division of Pictorial Publicity had a measure of autonomy in the public's eye. As the official liaison between the government and his fellow artists, Vice-Chairman Fred De Sales Casey, the Art Editor for *Collier's Weekly*, held an important post:

²⁵ Committee on Public Information and George Creel, *Complete Report of the Chairman of the Committee on Public Information* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1920). The numbers break down to 700 posters, 122 cards, 310 newspaper ads, 287 cartoons, and 19 buttons. Historians have debated the DPP's total number of printed posters to gauge its share of American war propaganda. Most historiography cites Walton Rawls' estimates that showed that the United States printed more war-related posters than all the other combatant nations combined with approximately 20 million copies of 2500 designs. According to these figures, the DPP designed almost 30 percent of American war posters (Rawls, 12). This is the origin of the oft-cited one-third estimate. While the DPP kept track of the number of different designs in circulation, it did not record exact production runs. Based upon the sizable, but roughly equivalent numbers of individual DPP and Naval posters preserved, Knutson suggests that the DPP production runs were likely comparable to that of the Navy's 11 million copies of 30 posters. Extrapolating from these numbers would suggest that the DPP's total number of copies definitely exceeds Rawl's supposition of 20 million posters total. Since Rawls only did not even consider unpublished numbers, Knutson makes relatively conservative estimates to place the number of war-related posters at 40 million, double Rawls' already incredible total. Knutson and more recent scholars have relied upon the Hoover Institution Library and Archives for their thorough sampling of over five thousand American WWI posters. Anne Classen Knutson, *Breasts, Brawn and Selling a War: American World War I Propaganda Posters* (Ph.D. thesis, University of Pittsburgh, 1997): 2-5.

²⁶ Van Schaack, 33-35. Van Schaack quotes extensively from Creel's correspondence with Gibson to illustrate this argument. For original correspondence and related material see Executive Correspondence; Executive Division, Committee on Public Information; Records of the Committee on Public Information, Record Group 63; National Archives in College Park, College Park, MD

At each meeting Mr. Casey reported the requests for posters, cartoons or illustrations received from the Government, or from patriotic organizations throughout the country. Each request was put in charge of a "Captain," whose duty it was to see that idea-sketches were received, on time, from such of the artists as were judged best fitted to carry out the work. These idea-sketches were then passed through the committee headquarters to Washington, and, when approved, were promptly executed in finished paintings.²⁷

So as not to stifle creativity, any member could submit their design for consideration. In addition, requests often came with specific instructions or predetermined campaign slogans. Such requirements often resulted in considerable thematic overlap between sketches from different artists of varying abilities. Though the Captains had some control over the sketches, they could not ensure that the commissioning agency would choose their preferred submissions. Nor could the chosen artist retain influence over the production of the original design as the sponsoring agency took complete control for turning the proposal into a finished poster. This resulted in complaints by artists and art critics alike over the deficiencies of war posters.

The Treasury Department's Liberty Loan campaigns sparked artists' feelings of frustration on account of its choice of winning posters and the amendments made to the submitted designs. For the first competition, the uncultured bureaucrats chose a poster by political cartoonist C.R. Macauley that featured a disapproving Lady Liberty in peril. Critics of the poster apparently cringed privately so as to 'get behind the government.' That posture lasted nearly two months before *The Nation* broke its silence. In an article decrying the mediocre quality of both visual and textual publicity, Lady Liberty stood directly in the line of fire. On behalf of himself and others, the author admitted to "a vast sense of irritation aroused by the wild-eyed female who shouted from the store

²⁷ Price, "Poster Design," 278.

windows.” He went on to compare her to an angry shrew, her “minatory finger darting out at the poor man who dared cross her path.”²⁸ Indeed, Lady Liberty bears a confusing message between her tense jaw, widened eyes, and accusatory pose. Her projecting finger and intense gaze clearly mimic Uncle Sam’s stance in J.M. Flagg’s “I Want You” recruitment poster.²⁹ When performed by a woman, however, the gesture read as hysterical to artists and art editors alike.³⁰

²⁸ “Posters and Slogans,” *The Nation* 104 no. 2712 (21 June 1917): pg. 728.

²⁹ Macauley would have been familiar with this wildly popular image as a fellow commercial artist.

³⁰ “Posters and Slogans,” 728.

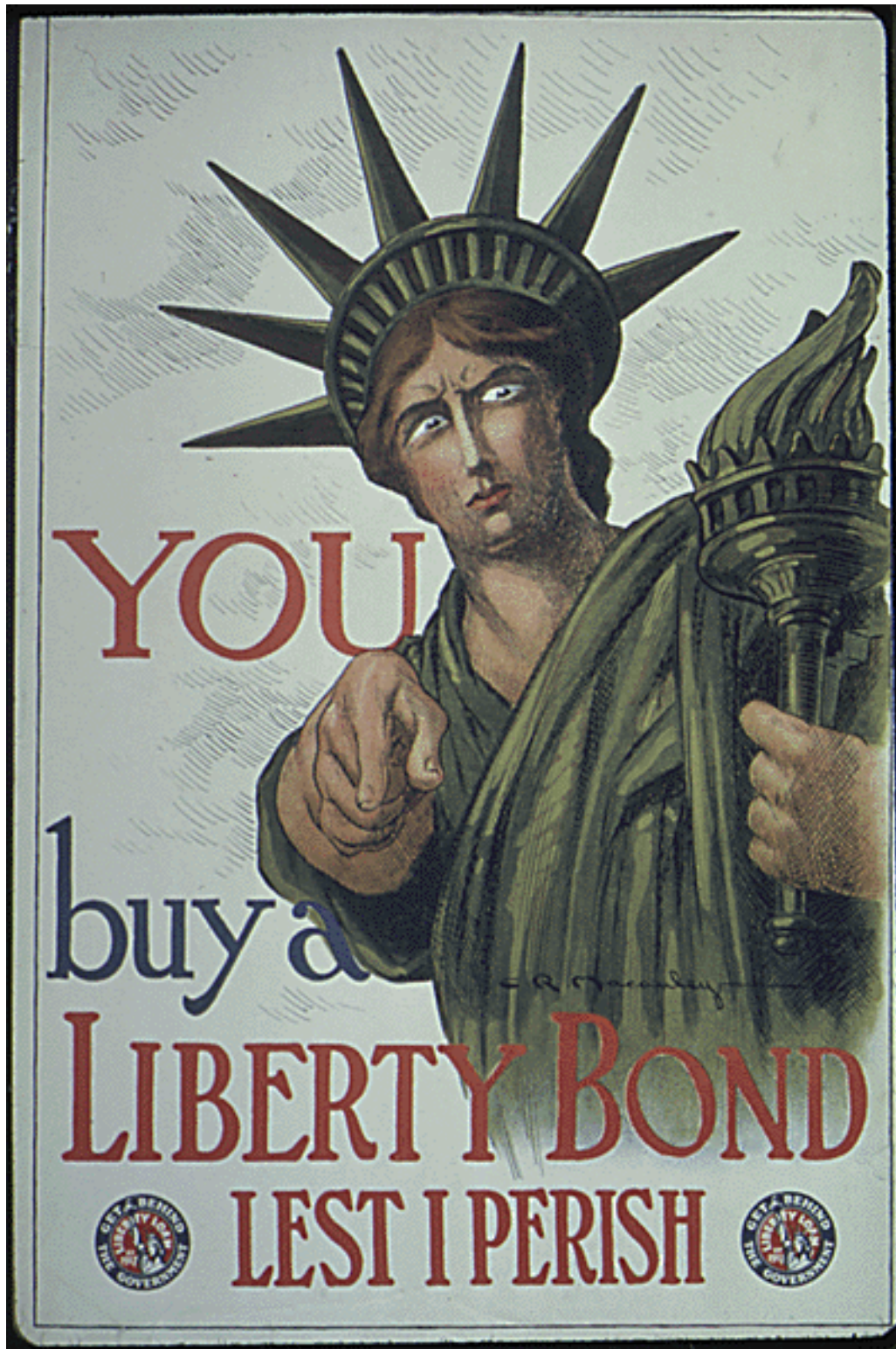


Figure 7: "Lest I Perish," C.R. Macauley (1917). Courtesy of National Archives, Washington, D.C.

Though Macauley's imperiled heroine failed to impress, the Treasury officials stumbled upon a winner with the Fourth Liberty Loan in Fall 1918. Joseph Pennell, Associate Chairman of the DPP, submitted an apocalyptic vision of the Statue of Liberty and New York harbor aflame. In preparing the poster for production, the printers made some adjustments that also got Pennell fired up. Displeased with this interference, Pennell wrote a short book on poster design in which he aired his grievances. After providing a brief lesson in poster design and production, Pennell told of his travails at the hands of clueless government officials and "wholly artless" lithographers. Rather than present a simple drawing like the majority of submissions, the well-connected artist rendered his original illustration on lithographic plates to submit a print. The printers and lithographers reviewing the approved contributions failed to distinguish Pennell's lithograph from the hand-drawn designs. This oversight struck Pennell as "the most awful joke and giveaway on some members of the American lithographic trade."³¹ Once chosen by the Treasury Department Jury, these so-called professionals took control of editing and production the posters. Set below the image of New York burning, Pennell's original text warned 'Buy Liberty Bonds or You Will See This.' The Committee scrapped that title in favor of 'That Liberty Shall Not Perish From the Earth—Buy Bonds.' While acceding that "the spirit of it is inspiring like its author," Pennell contended that "in relation to my design [the text is] meaningless."³² The brilliance of Pennell's work shone through these perceived flaws, so that the poster was one of the most circulated and popular World War One posters.

³¹ *Joseph Pennell's Liberty Loan Poster, A Textbook for artists and amateurs, governments and teachers and printers, with notes, an introduction and essay on the poster by the artist, Associate Chairman of the CPI, DPP* (1918), 7.41.

³² Pennell, 44.



Figure 8: "That Liberty Shall Not Perish From the Earth," Joseph Pennell (1918). Illustration courtesy of Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

1919 Campaign Posters

As the Fourth Liberty Loan ran its course, Near East Relief was gearing up for their record-breaking 1919 Campaign for \$30,000,000. They commissioned the Creel Committee's Division of Pictorial Publicity to supply the necessary posters for the campaign. Upon receiving the Near East Relief order, the Division of Pictorial Publicity designated J. Thomson Willing as Captain. At that time, Willing held positions as Art Manager for the American Lithographic Company, Art Editor of the Associated Sunday Magazines, and Treasurer of the American Institute of Graphic Arts. Willing's previous work with the Y.M.C.A. and Salvation Army earned him a sterling reputation among ecumenical Christian organizations.³³ He was currently engaged with the 1918 United War Work Campaign, a much larger project that included several philanthropic organizations, so it is surprising that the Near East Relief secured his services. Willing's vast experience and solid connections would serve the Near East Relief well. Some of the Division's most talented artists would contribute compelling, evocative works of art that put their previous publicity posters to shame.

As in the past campaigns, each poster bore a slogan in accordance with Vickrey's chosen campaign theme. Slogans were a crucial element of war posters as words could contain the concise messages to which illustrations gestured. The prior year's emphasis on hunger was marked with incessant cries: "You Can't Let Us Starve," "You Won't Let Me Starve, Will You?" "5 Dollars a Month Saves A Life." Posters from the 1919 crop stress the need for American aid to prevent the Armenian people from "perishing." Expressed through fragmented ultimatums, the slogans do not command action: "Lest We

³³ "War Artists As Seen By William Oberhardt," *The International Studio* 69 no. 273(November 1919), pg. xlviii.

Perish,” “Lest They Perish,” “They Shall Not Perish.” Each slogan alludes to the last line of the Gettysburg Address in which Lincoln reaffirms “that government of the people, by the people, for the people *shall not perish from the earth*.” Lincoln apparently borrowed the phrasing of his final clause (in italics) from the Bible. The conditional formulation of “perishing” appears in John 3:16: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” Perish also appears in the context of famine, which resonates with the prevailing food shortages in the Near East.

The best way to ascertain the general characteristics of these posters is first to account for the artists’ personal style. After identifying these individual qualities, the communal message will emerge. Considering their work separately and together will elucidate the particular elements of the NER’s 1919 Poster Campaign. For our purposes, three posters by different artists serve to represent the contrasting styles used by DPP artists. Douglas Volk, W.T. Benda, and Ethel Franklin Betts created the three most memorable posters based on the given theme of “perishing.” A fourth poster by W.B. King will lead into a discussion of the transition from illustration to photography.

W.T. Benda was the most commercially successful illustrator of the three under consideration and represents the commercialization of American philanthropy.



Figure 9: "Give Or We Perish," W.T. Benda (1918). Illustration courtesy of Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Soon after his emigration from Poland to New York City, W.T. Benda made a name for himself drawing attractive women for advertisements and magazines. During the war years, Benda was a prolific and highly-paid magazine illustrator. His drawings appeared in *Harper's Weekly*, *Collier's Magazine*, and other popular weekly periodicals.³⁴ Benda earned more money working for advertisers of such products as Crisco (1918) and S.S. White Toothpaste (1919, 1920). In the grand tradition of Charles Dana Gibson and Howard Chandler Christy, Benda's illustrations idealized feminine beauty for commercial purposes. Where the 'Gibson Girls' and 'Christy Girl' were apple-pie American, 'Benda Girls' worked a different angle. As described in a 1921 article:

The very contour of her face was radically different from that of the regular pictured magazine girl. She had rather high cheekbones. She did not smile as much as did the other girls. There was something sweetly grave about her expression, a spirituality which the others lacked.³⁵

Inspired by the romanticism of 19th Century Polish art, Benda drew Slavic beauties or Oriental women with deep-set almond eyes and dark swirling hair. In another life, the Armenian heroine might too have been a 'Benda Girl.' These illustrations appealed to the public's growing fascination with the exoticism of foreign lands and women. With commissions for his work piling up, Benda ascended into the top echelon of American illustrators.

Benda—like many illustrators in the "Golden Age of Illustration" from 1880 to 1930—was able to straddle the two worlds of magazine and commercial art. Of course, art critics often dismissed the value of such illustrations as technical drawing rather than

³⁴ On the role of periodicals in the creation of American national culture see: Richard Ohmann, *Selling Culture, Magazines, Markets and Class at the Turn of the Century* (New York: Verso, 1996); Matthew Schneirov, *The Dream of a New Social Order: Popular Magazines in America 1893-1914* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994).

³⁵ Carol Bird, "New Faces For Old Ones" in *Theatre Magazine* 33, no. 239 (February 1921): 91. 138

art. The rise of poster art during the war, however, cemented Benda's reputation as an artist. He also contributed posters to the Red Cross, Y.W.C.A., and United War Work Campaign. None of these posters featured a beautiful, exotic young girl who resembled a Benda girl.



Figure 10: "You Can Help," W.T. Benda (1918). Illustration courtesy of Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Despite Benda's own prominence, his poster was not featured as prominently as Volk's "They Shall Not Perish" or Betts' "Lest We Perish." His design was intended for window display rather than large billboards; printed by photogravure rather than multicolor lithography. By developing an illustration on a single plate, photogravure reproduced larger quantities of one-color prints more cheaply than colored lithographs. Relative to

the many Volk and Betts prints preserved in public and private collections, Benda's "Give or We Perish" posters are scarce. Indeed, the 1919 Campaign Portfolio warns that the Benda posters should be "used with discretion." One can only speculate on the reason why this poster was classified differently than the colored posters. Benda's work is admittedly more grim in style and content. Perhaps the poster was deemed suggestive in its presentation of a vulnerable, beautiful young woman, or else there was a logistical explanation for their caution. Without further information, however, only conjecture is possible.



Figure 11: “They Shall Not Perish,” Douglas Volk (1918). Illustration courtesy of Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Douglas Volk’s “They Shall Not Perish” depicts Columbia poised for battle in anticipation of onslaught from beyond. An allegorical female representation of

‘American Ideals,’ Columbia “descend[s] not only from classical antiquity but also from the French Revolution.”³⁶ Her accessories further gesture towards connections with other images of Columbia and, specifically, Delacroix’s *La Liberté guidant le peuple*. Stretching out her ‘sword of justice’ and clad in Phrygian cap, Columbia symbolizes her willingness to resort to violence in pursuit of liberty.³⁷ She fights not for her personal liberty, but intercedes on behalf of others. Volk plays upon Columbia’s traditional embodiment of “masculine” ideals with an uncharacteristic demonstration of sympathy. Columbia’s fierce pose is softened by her tenderness towards the dark, frightened child clinging to soft folds of her white gown. She shelters the child with her shawl, an American flag.

Volk’s poster likewise asks Americans to protect the Armenians by donating to ACRNE. The illustration promotes the idea of humanitarian aid as an American duty. Historian Julia Irwin writes about similar attitudes within American Red Cross fundraising campaigns: “In the Great War years, [the ARC] undertook a concerted publicity campaign, flooding the American cultural landscape with two distinct yet intertwined messages. First they advanced the idea that all loyal U.S. citizens had a civic duty to support their nation’s civilian relief efforts. To be a good American citizen now demanded more than showing concern for one’s compatriots; it required coming to the aid of fellow democratic citizens wherever in the world they happened to reside.”³⁸ Much of this perceived duty also derived from American neutrality throughout the war so that

³⁶ Jakub Kazechi and Jason Lieblang, “Regression Versus Progression” in *Picture This: World War I Posters and Visual Culture*, ed. Pearl James (Lincoln, Neb.: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), 127-8; James, 278.

³⁷ Kazechi and Lieblang, 128.

³⁸ Julia Irwin, *Making the World Safe: The American Red Cross and a Nation’s Humanitarian Awakening* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2013?)

Americans recognized that their country remained in a position to give to war-ravaged countries. The same reasoning behind U.S. Food Administration posters against wasting food applies here as Americans were constantly asked to compare their own good fortune at living far outside the war zone. Volk's poster presents a similar message showing Armenian children reaching out to a feminized, symbolic America. Together with the slogan, the poster suggests that Armenians lives lie in American hands and it is the public's obligation to prevent further disaster.



Figure 12: "Lest We Perish," Ethel Franklin Betts (1918). Illustration courtesy of Library of Congress, Washington D.C.

Ethel Franklin Betts' "Lest We Perish" romanticizes childhood in her depiction of an Armenian girl staring out, palms open and reaching beyond the frame. Betts trained at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts as well as with renowned illustrator Howard Pyle at the Drexel Institute and the Howard Pyle School. Pyle was best known for illustrating



Figure 13: Illustration by Ethel Franklin Betts for Frances Hodgson Burnett, *A Little Princess* (New York, 1916), 113.

Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island*, defining the modern image of pirate dress and swagger. Ethel Betts and her sister, Anne Whelan Betts, were both trained by Pyle at a time when the field of illustration was attempting to professionalize by weeding out dilettante women.³⁹ While her gender could have ended her career before it began, Betts managed to prove herself a serious student so that Pyle took her on. Pyle's female students were among the only women artists who were included in the Division of Pictorial Publicity. Her work

was more defined by her course of study than her gender. Like her mentor, Betts drew vivid illustrations of fairy tales and other children's literature. Her illustrations for Frances Hodgson Burnett's *The Little Princess* bear particular resemblance to her poster subject in color and composition. Both of Betts' illustrations depict lone children, Sara Crewe, supposedly orphaned when her widowed father contracted jungle fever, and the

³⁹ Michelle Bogart, *Advertising, Artists, and the Borders of Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 30.

Armenian girl by genocide. As such, Betts turns our attention toward masses of orphaned children who needed help from the NER.

Though difficult to pin down statistics on the number of children cared for by the NER, the organization initially estimated that 400,000 were in need of aid. Figures from NER relief stations in 1920 indicate that their orphanages and child feeding programs were only reaching one fourth of the original estimates.⁴⁰ One reason for this discrepancy was the huge numbers of Armenian refugees fleeing from Turkish troops during the Turkish War of Independence. Certain stations in Anatolia were unable to produce accurate figures at all. More disconcerting was the fact that the organization lacked the resources to reach all the children who needed help. Many within proximity to NER relief stations were going hungry simply because there was not enough room, nor enough food to go around. Given the innocence and helplessness attributed to children, this aspect of relief work figured heavily in publicity campaigns. In the 1919 Campaign Portfolio, for example, most of the proffered photographs and newspaper stories feature children still in need of aid.

Many of these children were not strictly orphaned, but born of widows and single women. This is the version of maternal imagery displayed in W. B. King's "Lest They Perish," revealed only with the photography upon which the poster was based. On the surface, "Lest They Perish" depicts the devastation of Armenian neighborhoods and villages that turned survivors into refugees. This background, ironically, is the most imaginative aspect of the design. Though the previous posters bear the Division of Pictorial Publicity's seal, King's print displays no such seal. Even without that mark, the

⁴⁰ "Near East Relief Handbook," 17.

poster unquestionably belongs to this series. Both the slogan, “Lest They Perish,” and the text—right down to the lettering of “CAMPAIGN *for* \$30,000,000”—conform to the other posters. The Division of Pictorial Publicity likely dissolved before King’s poster could be approved. The Creel Committee suspended its domestic activities, including the Division of Pictorial Publicity, shortly after Armistice was declared on the November 11, 1918. While all the other posters appear in the December 1918 issue of the *News Bulletin*, “Lest They Perish” is conspicuously absent.⁴¹



Figure 14: “Lest They Perish,” W.B. King (1919). Illustration courtesy of Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. Figure 15: Photograph courtesy of Maurice Missak Kelechian.

⁴¹ James L. Barton, “Advertising the Campaign,” *News Bulletin of American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief* 2 no. 7 (December 1918): pages unnumbered. This includes additional posters by Harold Pfeifer and M. Leone Braeker that do not appear in this chapter.

The News Bulletin does include a photograph featuring a woman and child who look nearly identical to King's subjects. Both women wear light headdresses secured with a darker swatch to keep their hair covered. Each woman lowers her gaze to the ground with her hands clasped together. The babies strapped to their backs peer forth from beneath blankets to reveal their tiny faces. These appreciable similarities suggest that the Armenian mother and child depicted in the photograph served as models for W. B. King's subjects in "Lest They Perish." In King's version, smoldering ruins stream towards the bright sky. Behind the other pair, however, a crowd of curious men and children gather in a narrow alleyway. By replacing the crowd gathering in the background with a pile of rubble, King adjusted the context to portray sympathetic refugees in dire circumstances. As a result, the poster reiterated the call for American aid articulated by Benda, Betts, and Volk's posters for Near East Relief.

There remains one crucial distinction between "Lest We Perish" and its counterparts: King's subjects were illustrations of actual Armenian refugees. Moreover, other Near East Relief publicity identified the pair as beneficiaries of American relief. According to Barton, the photograph depicts:

An Armenian mother, whose child was born during the exile in the wilderness east of the Jordan. She has come to the Relief Fund headquarters for the tin of condensed milk which is given twice a week.⁴²

Assuming this caption is correct, the Armenian woman was likely one of the fifteen hundred Armenians whom the Turks exiled to this area until their recovery around March or April 1918. British trucks brought the refugees to camps in and around Jerusalem,

⁴² Barton, "Advertising the Campaign," unnumbered.

where relief agencies were up and running.⁴³ Most of the incoming Armenians stayed only a few weeks to rule out illness before moving on to the district refugee center for Armenians in Port Said, Egypt.⁴⁴ In September 1918, all the remaining Armenian refugees were sent away from encroaching battle lines to Port Said. These movements suggest that the original photo was taken in Jerusalem or Port Said between April and September 1918. Long after the moment passed, however, the captured image lived on in NER publicity work.

An illustration of the photograph also appeared in an advertisement for the 1919 Campaign. The advertisement was directed towards “Mothers of America” and asked them to consider whether they would give up their baby to the Near East Relief or allow the baby to starve. By asking this question, the ad placed American women in the shoes of their counterparts in Western Asia. The Armenian woman’s baby becomes everyone’s baby as the ad interrogates its audience: “Would YOU have let that baby starve? Would you let any baby starve if you had the means to save it?” This is a rhetorical question that aimed to bridge the distance between American spectators and suffering Armenians. In doing so, the ad puts forth a moral quandary for which the only answer is to save the baby by donating to the Near East Relief. The ad further shifts the hypothetical to the actual situation facing “poor, terror stricken Armenian, Syrian, and Jewish mother[s] in Bible lands.” Some of the terrors facing these mothers include those wrought by the Turk over “hundreds of years.” At this point the ad turns into an anti-Muslim tract, noting that

⁴³ Henry P. Davidson, *American Red Cross in the Great War* (New York: Macmillan, 1919), 261-7. The American Red Cross received notice of this recovery from NER in April 1918. The Capture of Jericho on 20 February 1918 became the British Occupation of the Jordan Rift Valley, but the Allies did not control territory east of the Jordan River until final Battle of Megiddo in September 1918.

⁴⁴ American National Red Cross Nursing Service et al, *History of American Red Cross Nursing*, 897-9.

“the Turk has fed these unfortunates on cruelty and oppression. He has crushed them by evil misrule. He has polluted them with devilish Muslim practices.” This anti-Muslim rhetoric was common in NER propaganda from this period, though the claims were usually sensationalized rather than realistic interpretations of the political situation. Here, these dramatic claims were mere background to the more insistent call for aid based upon the needs of mothers and children as the “devilish Muslim practices” simply increase the direness of the cause. Illustrating this advertisement with yet another iteration of this image of mother-and-child demonstrates just how important maternal sympathy was to the 1919 Campaign.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ “Advertisement A5” in “1919 Campaign Portfolio,” File 12HA-F16 Publications of the American Committee for Relief in the Near East, 12/1918 - 01/1919, *U.S.F.A. Educational Division Records*. After appearing in print and poster, the photograph circulated as a lantern-slide on the organization’s speaking circuit. An Armenian-American engineer named Missak Kelechian found a batch of NER lantern-slides in the archives of the Armenian Orthodox Church in Antelias, Lebanon. The slides came from the collection of Maria Jacobsen, a Danish Missionary/Nurse stationed in Harpoot, Turkey. Jacobsen arrived as a young woman in 1907 who dedicated her life to the Armenian orphans under her care. After witnessing the genocide, she spent seven months on the Near East Relief publicity circuit in 1920 before returning to her work. Long fascinated by the American relief work, Kelechian added images of the slides to his large collection. It was not until he encountered the “Lest They Perish” poster at the University of Minnesota Library that he recognized the uncanny resemblance between King’s illustration and an image in his collection. When he returned home, Kelechian identified the photograph made from Jacobsen’s lantern-slide and went public with his finding in August 2006. Author’s correspondence with Maurice Kelechian. See also Maria Jacobsen, Ara Sarafian(ed.), Kristen Vind(trans.), *Diaries of a Danish Missionary: Harpoot, 1907-1919* (London, UK: Gomidas Institute, 2006).

Mothers of America— What Would You Have Done?

EARLY one morning, in tear-soaked Western Asia, an American found a wee baby on his doorstep. The note pinned to it said, "I cannot feed it. I know you'll not let my baby starve!"

Would YOU have let that baby starve?

Would you let any baby starve if you had the means to save it?

Suppose that happened to your baby — it won't; but suppose it did—wouldn't you pray God to melt all the hearts in the world, to save your baby?

Every poor, terror-stricken Armenian, Syrian, and Jewish mother in Bible lands is praying now just as you would.

For hundreds of years the Turk has fed these unfortunates on cruelty and oppression. He has crushed them by evil misrule. He has polluted them by devilish Moslem practices.

Now that the Turk has been fought to harmlessness, they call to America for help.

\$30,000,000 must be raised for immediate relief, for food, clothing, fuel, medical attendance and employment.

We know our American mothers will be the first to give—and their husbands, sons and daughters will be very close behind.



(FROM ACTUAL PHOTOGRAPH)

It costs only 17 cents a day, \$5.00 a month, \$60.00 a year, to feed one famishing baby

Every dollar subscribed goes to the Relief Work. All expenses are privately met. All funds are cabled through the Department of State. All funds are distributed through U. S. Consuls or American Agencies. Our Government is prevented from giving aid. The Red Cross is not organized for Relief Work in these sections.

Won't You Save At Least One Life?

American Committee for Relief in the Near East

(Formerly American Committee Armenian-Syrian Relief)

Figure 16: "Mothers of American," (1918). Illustration courtesy of National Archives, Kansas City, Missouri.

Sympathy directed at mothers and motherhood expresses universal ideas about the importance of the family. Mothers are the cultural caretakers of children and their suffering leads directly to children suffering. When a mother is the lone adult in charge of her children, her ability to feed and clothe her children is imperative. Children are often seen as helpless to preserve themselves without adult intervention. In one way, maternal sympathy is an extension of sympathy for children. On the other hand, there is an element of sympathy all its own whereby the observer identifies with the mother's inability to provide for her own children. That responsibility is one universal to parents in that every parent wants to protect and nurture her child. When the NER appeals to

parents, the organization is therefore appealing to adults as parents, themselves, and as an extension of the universal sympathy for children as innocents.

Photography

The photographic image of mother and child was one of the first to emerge from Allied-controlled regions of the Near East. Initially, Red Cross representatives like Major Stephen Trowbridge or future *New York Times* editor John H. Finley in Palestine sent back photographs of children and young mothers in the final months of 1918. Glen Russell Carrier, a photographer and future cinematographer, was hired to take some of these early photographs. A press release from his employers, International Film Service Co. Inc., indicated that Carrier would be taking both still and motion pictures on an expedition of the Near East during the first half of 1919. The International Film Service advertised that “the result of his photography will be available to this company exclusively for showing to the public.” In addition, “motion pictures of the conditions, as they actually exist, will be shipped back by Mr. Carrier for use in the Hearst News, The Universal Current Events and the Screen Telegram,” all newsreels which were shown regularly in movie theaters across the country.⁴⁶ As the first hired photographer in the region, most of the 1919 and 1920 publicity photographs were also developed from Carrier’s negatives. Relief workers, journalists, and others would send hundreds more back to the Committee’s New York headquarters where they were turned into publicity material.

Transitioning from illustration to photography added to the “realness” of the Armenians’ suffering and, therefore, the need for donations. Artists and drawings can

⁴⁶ Press release courtesy of Vicken Babkenian.

depict people in situations that never existed or add emotion with just shading or color. In fact, one art enthusiast dismissed photography entirely as “the camera cannot feel.” Robert Cortes Holliday, an editorial staff member at *The Bookman*, argued that the artist has “the power to seize upon those things before him the interest of which is universal and eternal, and to let drop away those things which are ephemeral and accidental.”⁴⁷ For Holliday, strict realism was an undesirable quality that rendered photography unfit for inclusion as an art form. Of course, Holliday’s analysis assumed that the camera was an objective source of truth and the photographer was a mere button-pusher. Photographers influence the image far more than Holiday allows through framing, posing, perspective, lighting, and the like.

In Susan Sontag’s essay “On Photography,” she writes that “photographs alter and enlarge our notions of what is worth looking at and what we have a right to look at.”⁴⁸ When a photograph shows a group of street children dressed in rags or women escaped from Turkish homes, the distant observer enters a world not his own. Though the photographer may have been given entry, the subjects have no control over their own image. While this is ethically problematic, many would dismiss these concerns as the NER photographs theoretically benefitted the unfortunate women and children as a group. Ariella Azoulay has more recently postulated that a photograph constitutes a civil contract where the subject signs over their image for a specific use. Azoulay’s work tracks the relationship between rights and photography where a subject whose rights are being violated is unlikely to exert control over their image.⁴⁹ This is certainly the case as

⁴⁷ Robert Cortes Holliday, “Posing the War for the Painter,” *The Bookman* 47 (July 1918): 512-516.

⁴⁸ Susan Sontag, “On Photography,” 3.

⁴⁹ Ariella Azoulay, *The Civil Contract of Photography* (New York: Zone Books, 2008).

far as NER publicity photographs are concerned. They targeted the pathetic and helpless, using those images to solicit donations without directly involving the original subjects. Chapter Four will deal with the process of producing these photographs in greater depth.

CHAPTER 4

Creating Humanitarian Media in the Field, 1919-1923



Figure 17: Dr. Mabel E. Elliott with patient. Courtesy of Drexel University, College of Medicine, Archives and Special Collections.

This chapter focuses on the creation of publicity media in the midst of humanitarian aid operations in the Near East from 1919-1923. Up until this point, the advocacy efforts remained largely separate from the actual work of giving humanitarian aid. With the establishment of field operations the publicity media transformed from posters into photographs; stilted diplomatic dispatches turned into descriptive personal accounts from NER personnel working with the refugees. Together, photography and literary reportage altered the personae of Armenians into starving, diseased orphans. These horrific images were made palatable by portraying Americans as saviors whose contributions brought redemption.

This dynamic is clearly displayed in this photograph of an American physician and one such starveling. In Figure 1, Dr. Mabel Elliott is examining a patient suffering from malnutrition and contracted tendons for a publicity still. The doctor's correspondence offers insight into the pressure placed upon Elliott to contribute to publicity efforts. All NER staff were asked repeatedly to participate in the 'selling' of Armenian relief to the folks back home. Our protagonist may be the most historically visible due to her published memoirs—*Beginning Again At Ararat* (1924)—and the papers preserved at Drexel University's Special Collection of Women in Medicine in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. When coupled with these sources, the interpretation of the photograph moves from sheer pathos to a deeper perspective on humanitarian aid, philanthropy, and media.

This photograph became an iconic image for Armenian relief efforts in the U.S. First published in the November 1922 issue of *New Near East*, this photograph went on to appear in some of the fundamental works on American relief efforts in the Near East. Dr. Elliott included the picture in *Beginning Again At Ararat*, perhaps the most well-known personal account of Armenian relief. The same photograph reappears in Esther Pohl Lovejoy's 1927 account of the American Woman's Hospitals, *Certain Samaritans*, an important text in the history of women in medicine and the Great War.¹ However, the image truly gained immortality in *The Story of Near East Relief* by NER Chairman Rev. James L. Barton. Scholars have since appropriated the photograph to document subjects

¹ Esther Pohl Lovejoy, *Certain Samaritans* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1933), 127-8.

such as the Armenian Genocide, American International Humanitarianism, and contemporary women's literature on Armenian orphanages.²

This visual image depicts a cooperative effort between the American Women's Hospitals and the Near East Relief as well as their shared mission. At the same time, its creation and subsequent use betrays the underlying inequities between the two organizations. As detailed in earlier chapters, publicity experts were an integral part of the Armenian relief movement due to the many philanthropic demands on the American public. Successful fundraising required concerted efforts and appealing material to gain public support and solicit donations. Without a publicity department to orchestrate the annual fundraising campaigns, such organizations as Near East Relief, the American Red Cross, and other large-scale humanitarian agencies would have been unable to send much-needed aid to Armenian refugees. Therefore, the proffered photograph points to the impact of NER's professionalized publicity on affiliated organizations without such resources.

Smaller, more specialized humanitarian relief groups struggled to find their place in a philanthropic scene dominated by veritable publicity factories. The American Woman's Hospitals (AWH), an organization of female physicians that coordinated medical care for the Near East Relief, exemplifies such agencies. This organization had a peculiar relationship with the NER in that it was both an independent agency and one working under the auspices of the NER. It both was and was not part of the NER. While

² Rebecca Saunders and Shushan Avagyan, "(Un)Disciplining Traumatic Memory: Mission Orphanages and the Afterlife of Genocide in Micheline Aharonian Marcom's 'The Daydreaming Boy'," *Contemporary Women's Writing* 4 no. 3 (November 2010): 197-219; Peter Balakian, *The Burning Tigris*, 232-3. Balakian misidentifies Elliott as "A Near East Relief Nurse," thereby understating the significance of AWH physicians working in cooperation with the larger relief operation.

the organization enjoyed many opportunities as part of NER work, the AWH received limited financial support from NER and had to do its own fundraising. As one David among a phalanx of Goliaths, AWH successfully raised funds to support their medical relief missions in the Near East. While professional “publicity men” trolled the region to find material for stylized accounts of suffering, the AWH chairwoman gathered tidbits from correspondence with physicians and nurses in the field. Rather than maintaining an entire department of artists, writers, photographers, and public relations experts, the AWH employed a few professional consultants and interested medical women. This allows for a reconstruction of the process of making publicity in the field. Despite these enormous differences in publicity operations, the AWH held its own in the competitive philanthropic scene and continued their humanitarian work long after the Near Eastern crisis ended.

After years of massacres, rape, and deportation into the desert, the surviving Armenians from Turkey desperately needed medical care, food, and shelter. When Armistice with Turkey came into effect in October 1918, the Near East Relief stepped in to provide humanitarian aid. By 1919 the organization was financially secure enough to provide for relief and recovery overseas. Furthermore, the organization’s federal charter noted that only the NER had the contacts and knowledge necessary to conduct such work in the region. In effect, NER had a virtual monopoly over Armenian relief efforts that provided both credibility in the field and among American donors. Prior humanitarian organizations lasted only as long as the disaster remained relevant to the American public. Near East Relief, however, continued dispensing humanitarian aid long after the

fallout from its precipitating crisis—including the Genocide, World War I, and the Greco-Turkish Wars from 1919-1923—ran its course.

Background

At the ‘eleventh hour on the eleventh day of the eleventh month’ of 1918, Allied and German troops laid down their weapons to end over four years of fighting. Crowds gathered across Europe, the United States, and the British Empire gathered to celebrate the Armistice signed in a railway car deep in the forest of Compiègne. Some 2,240 km Southeast of Compiègne, French troops prepared to descend upon Constantinople based upon their interpretation of the Armistice of Mudros. British troops joined them in the conquered capital the following day on November 13th. By early December, the Allied High Commission to Constantinople administered the military occupation, using their authority to install a new government. With the Young Turks’ Pan-Turkish regime in retreat, the Commission reinstituted a nominal Sultanate, appointed a Grand Vizier, and organized Parliamentary elections. One of the Parliament’s first acts was to repeal the deportation laws as Article IV of the Mudros Armistice stipulated that “Armenian interned persons and prisoners . . . be collected at Constantinople and handed over unconditionally to the Allies.” The agreement contained other clauses signaling Allied intentions to protect Armenians. Article XI ordered Turkish troops to withdraw from Northwest Persia and parts of Trans-caucasia; Article XXIV reserved the Allies’ rights to occupy the six Armenian vilayets “in case of disorder.” Deportations had so ‘Turkified’ Eastern Anatolia that any “disorder” was contingent upon Armenians returning home en masse.

For these refugees and their international supporters, redemption seemed close at hand. However, though relief operations and food aid were initially successful, the resurgence of Turkish nationalism threatened Armenian rehabilitation. From January to June 1919, the Allied victors negotiated terms for the formal end of war at the Paris Peace Conference. Partitioning the former Ottoman Empire led the Allied Powers to squabble over territorial control. While the French consolidated their holdings in Syria and the British in Palestine and Mesopotamia, a growing independence movement opposed Allied authority. The Turkish National Movement established its base in Ankara, a remote city in central Anatolia. In Ankara, the National Movement rebuilt the Turkish Army, equipping them with munitions smuggled in from Constantinople. Far from disarming the Turkish forces as charged, Mustapha Kemal Pasha used his position to raise awareness of Allied territorial ambitions and make contacts with sympathetic officials.

Kemal's National Movement undermined the legitimacy of the Grand Vizier and Ottoman Parliament as an Allied puppet government. In late-January 1920, the National Movement persuaded the Parliament to ratify a "National Pact" that asserted Turkish sovereignty. The British responded by attempting to discourage nationalist sentiment and forcibly imposing the Treaty of Sevres to legalize Allied control over the region. By Spring 1920, the Turkish Nationalist established the Grand National Assembly as the Parliament for a provisional government in Ankara. Thus officially began the Turkish War of Independence, a conflict that also included the Turkish-Armenian, Franco-Turkish, and Greco-Turkish Wars. Each of these wars held grave consequences for

Armenian refugees and complicated the work of Near East Relief with changing battle lines and renewed massacres.

Armenian Relief in the Near East

In November 1918, the American Committee for Relief in the Near East (ACRNE) assembled a group of missionaries and businessmen “to make a complete study of the problem of rehabilitation of the Armenians, Syrians, and other destitute people of the Ottoman Empire.” The Barton Commission (named for its chairman James L. Barton) invited investigators from the Rockefeller Foundation to join the survey.³ In January 1919, the Commission departed for London where they spent 10 days meeting with various British officials who offered the ACRNE “the free use of the warehouses, docks, wharves and railways under British control in the Near East.”⁴ British officers and men on the ground would also cooperate with the relief organization. The Commission then proceeded to Paris where they received similar assurances regarding the French military as well as access to French ships. This errand coincided with the opening weeks of the Paris Peace Conference where industrialist Arthur Curtiss James remained to act as a conduit between American officials and ACASR. After a stop in Rome to receive approval from the Italian government, the Commission proceeded to Constantinople. Upon arrival, the Commission met with the American Allied High Commissioner Rear Admiral Mark Lambert Bristol and the organization’s local relief committee. From there, the Commission split up to cover the Caucasus, the Turkish Interior, Syria, Palestine, and Persia. Upon returning to the U.S., the Commission translated their personal

³ Payaslian, 143-4.

⁴ Barton, *The Story of Near East Relief*, 111.

observations into a series of “recommended methods and policies of operation” that would guide the relief work.⁵

The organization had more than logistics to consider. ACRNE was one of many wartime organizations concentrating on fundraising rather than providing humanitarian services. From the initial massacres of Armenians in 1915 to their 1918 surrender, Turkish authorities stymied attempts to coordinate effective means of aiding constant streams of refugees. American Board missionaries and their colleagues distributed supplies but remained frustrated by their small-scale efforts. These limitations lifted with the Allied victory so that the American Red Cross or another existing international humanitarian agency could have worked on the ground. When the war drew to a close, hundreds of thousands of Armenians were scattered throughout the deserts of Syrian and Mesopotamia. Dying of starvation and disease, refugees gathered in Aleppo, Damascus, Beirut, Jerusalem, Baghdad, and other cities where the American Red Cross was dispensing aid. Though the ACRNE was prepared to launch a cooperative agency in June 1918, the ARC declined to participate in such an effort based on advice from their Committee on Coordination. The ARC bowed out in favor of concentrating on returning soldiers and domestic public health as obligated in their federal charter to receive government funding. Furthermore, the ARC recommended that the ACRNE “continue its existing organization; because its field of activity was distinctive; because of the existence in Turkey of the Red Crescent Society; and because relief was already being

⁵ *ibid*, 117.

effectively administered.”⁶ Despite their wartime development into the premiere international humanitarian agency, the ARC was unable to address the tremendous needs in the Near East. As they testified before the House Committee on the Judiciary during the hearings for the ACRNE’s federal charter, providing aid to all of the refugees “would practically exhaust the entire fund of the American Red Cross.” That money was furthermore “contributed largely for the relief and comfort of our own soldiers and sailors and those of our allies.”⁷ Besides, “the two organizations are thoroughly one in their purpose and ideals, different only in the territory served and the form of its organization.”⁸

In recent years, the American public had grown accustomed to the competing calls for donations to aid the suffering Belgians, French, Dutch, Serbians, Poles, and so forth. Those countries also benefitted from the millions of dollars in aid or loans that the U.S. government had appropriated for their respective governments to care for its civilians. As the Armenians, Syrians, and Greeks had no such representative governments eligible for U.S. loans, their suffering had advanced to levels far beyond those nations. The ACRNE went on to establish its own corps of volunteers “to restore these once prosperous but now impoverished refugees to their former homes.” With “the period of rehabilitation at hand,” the additional personnel, facilities, equipment,

⁶ House Committee on the Judiciary, *American Committee for Relief in the Near East*, report prepared by Warren Gard, 65th Cong., 3d sess., 22 February 1919, H.rp. 1125, Serial 7455, 4.

⁷ *ibid*, 4.

⁸ *ibid*, 4.

medicine, food, clothing, and other supplies necessitated “vastly larger sums . . . than were required for merely to sustain life in their desert exile.”⁹

The organization’s external transformation from a philanthropic fund to an international humanitarian aid agency led its trustees to seek formal recognition from the federal government. The ACRNE argued that since only private philanthropy was available to them, the U.S. government should officially throw its weight behind the organization by granting the organization a federal charter of incorporation. A Congressional Charter would “[give] to the charity the prestige and unity essential for the efficient administration and distribution of the funds among the people for whom the relief is intended.” The Near East Relief, formerly the American Committee for Relief in the Near East (ACRNE), received its federal charter from Congress in August 1919.

In February of 1919, The U.S.S. *Leviathan* had departed for Brest, France with a party of 240 volunteers. This group included doctors, nurses, missionaries, agricultural and industrial experts, Mennonite conscientious objectors, and recent college graduates. Over the next four years, nearly a thousand men and women would join them in service with the NER.¹⁰ Some members of these corps would run hospitals, clinics, rescue homes, and orphanages. Others worked in occupational training programs and agricultural initiatives to prevent dependence on American aid. Many held logistical positions as drivers, administrative, and other support staff. NER personnel were predominantly female, under thirty, and college-educated. Of course, there was a large contingent of former missionaries to Turkey who were older and more experienced in

⁹ *ibid.*, 5.

¹⁰ Stanley Elphinstone Kerr, *The Lions of Marash*, xvi.

relief work than the average worker. Apart from the missionaries, many came from wealthy homes as most volunteered without wages. The organization would rely upon its field personnel to help retool its identity as a philanthropic fund to support its postwar endeavors overseas.

Most strikingly, these volunteers were neither universally sympathetic to Armenians nor hostile to the Turks. Proximity to American diplomatic circles in Constantinople often fostered skepticism as to the extent of Armenian suffering. Elsie Kimball, for example, served as stenographer to Allied Relief Commissioner William N. Haskell in Tiflis, Georgia.¹¹ Basking in the Bosphorus sun, playing tennis, and eating plentiful meals at various diplomatic events, Kimball found herself turning brown and packing on pounds. In a country with so many on the brink of starvation, her increasing bulk testified to her distance from the field. Kimball's position working as a stenographer was rare in an organization where most volunteers worked among the refugees. Haskell was a racist who detested both Turks and Armenians, but found the latter more objectionable. As he wrote in his memoirs, "I give it as my measured opinion that as a race the Armenians in Armenia are a grasping, avaricious and cruel people, entirely lacking in veracity, and as a rule oblivious to the sufferings of even their own people."¹² Kimball absorbed this message from her superior and wrote home with little regard for the "wild, loathsome creatures" she encountered while touring a hospital.¹³

Kimball's and Haskell's hostility towards Armenians and their privileged status among

¹¹ Now Tblisi, Georgia.

¹² "Draft 1," Box 1, Folder 1, *William N. Haskell Memoir*, Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford University, Palo Alto, California: 47-8.

¹³ Elsie Kimball to Family, 30 August 1919, Box 1 Folder 1, *Elsie Kimball Papers, 1887-1972*, Archives and Special Collections, Mount Holyoke College, South Hadley, MA.

the diplomatic corps marked them as outliers in an organization concerned with Armenian relief.

On the other hand, staff assigned to work in close contact with refugees generally developed more sympathetic views towards their charges. Once Kimball went into the field, her view of Armenians softened. When reflecting upon the filthiness surrounding Armenian homes from her new station in the Caucasus, Kimball declined to pass final judgment upon the refugees: “I suppose they can’t be blamed for the wretchedness of their homes. All ambition they may possess is killed in them by the constant fear of massacre. . . they beg and steal and lie, but really, they are forced to it. They can’t live like decent people because they aren’t treated decently. They are given little more consideration than animals.”¹⁴ Kimball’s mix of disapproval and pity for the Armenians was common among her peers who worked with refugees at their worst. True affection for Armenians was rare, even among those who might be expected to sympathize with the persecuted Christians. Stanley Kerr, a Protestant minister’s son from Central Pennsylvania, had connections to the missionary workers through his father. He nonetheless expressed suspicions of the Armenian population, quoting a co-worker with gusto “the Bible should have said—All men are liars, especially Armenians.”¹⁵ He indicated that many among the NER ranks were skeptical of the necessity for extended relief work, “Lots of the A.C.R.N.E. here think that the Armenians should soon take care of themselves.”¹⁶ He further noted after a presentation on the relief work in the Caucasus

¹⁴ Elsie Kimball to Mother and Rose, 15 November 1919, Box 1 Folder 2, *Elsie Kimball Papers*.

¹⁵ Stanley Kerr to Father, 6 July 1919, Stanley Kerr Archives 92, *Stanley E. Kerr Archives Project*, Zoryan Institute for Contemporary Armenian Documentation and Research, Arlington, Massachusetts.

¹⁶ Stanley Kerr to Father, 18 July 1919, Stanley Kerr Archives 94a, *Stanley E. Kerr Archives Projects*.

that “some of the Americans had the idea that we were not needed here.”¹⁷ Kerr, however, was convinced that NER was a vital organization and began showing off the relief work to traveling publicity men and journalists.

As a tour guide, Kerr interacted with journalists and used his skills as an amateur photographer to provide them with illustrations for their articles. Kerr showed around Jackson Fleming, a writer for *Harper’s Weekly*, and Christian journalist William T. Ellis of the *New York Herald*. After taking some of his charges out to rescue Armenian girls and women from Arab homes, conducting them around the refugee barracks, and taking pictures for them, Kerr grew impatient with the never-ending parade of “inspectors”:

There have been so many “publicity men coming thru here lately that we are sick of them now. It seems as if more men are coming around to inspect things than there are workers. Some people have a continual joyride around the country “inspecting” and criticizing. I get my share of the bother and have to supply the publicity men with photos of the work. I like to take pictures but hate to develop them for other people.¹⁸

Despite his earlier enthusiasm for playing photographer, Kerr had met so many writers in need of photographs that he tired of the routine. Still, Kerr fulfilled his role in helping bring good press to the NER work.

American Women’s Hospitals and Publicity

At the behest of the Publicity Committee in New York, the overseas personnel produced media material that helped bridge the psychological distance between the American public and the suffering Armenians. Calls for submissions in *The Acorne*, the staff newsletter published in Constantinople, were also opportunities for aspiring writers or amateur photographers such as Kerr to display their talents. Without access to

¹⁷ Kerr to Father, 31 July 1919, Stanley Kerr Archives 94b, *Stanley E. Kerr Archives Projects*.

¹⁸ Kerr to Father, 7 September 1919, Stanley Kerr Archives 98, *Stanley E. Kerr Archives Projects*.

journalists and publicity men, more modest relief agencies had only their own personnel to carve a niche for themselves in this increasingly professionalized world of philanthropy. Unlike many similar organizations, the American Women's Hospitals managed to adapt to the new business of relief work and parlayed their work in the Near East into international medical projects that continue to the present day. Though many physicians, nurses, and philanthropists played integral parts, it was the partnership of Dr. Esther Pohl Lovejoy and Dr. Mabel E. Elliott that ensured its success. With little more than their own talents, Lovejoy and Elliott finessed the new publicity techniques to raise their organization's profile. In doing so, they brought AWH from the margins of Armenian relief efforts to its very center.

Founded in 1917 by the Medical Women's National Association, the early work of the AWH focused on providing care to civilians in war-torn Europe and promotion of women in medicine.¹⁹ At first, the AWH Board demonstrated their distaste for publicity by rejecting a suggestion to publish a newspaper story. Dr. Rosalie Slaughter Morton, the chairwoman, feared that advertising would compromise their integrity as a "doctors' organization."²⁰ Only months after the ARC's successful First War Fund Drive, Morton

¹⁹ The Medical Women's National Association (MWNA) was, itself, created to protest the exclusion of women physicians from the American Medical Association. With the onset of hostilities in World War I, the MWNA formed a War Services Committee in 1915 and appointed Dr. Rosalie Slaughter Morton as its chair. Dr. Morton initially offered the services of medical women to the U.S. Department of War, but was rebuffed. In response, Dr. Morton conceived of the American Women's Hospitals as a means of contributing to the war effort while raising the professional stature of women physicians. For more on the American Women's Hospitals see Esther Pohl Lovejoy, *Certain Samaritans*, Ellen S. More, *Restoring the Balance: Women Physicians and the Profession of Medicine* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001): 134-147; Kimberly Jensen, *Mobilizing Minerva: American Women in the First World War* (Champaign, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 2008): 80-87.

²⁰ "General Meeting, 13 September 1917," pg. 5, Box 30 Folder 293, *American Women's Hospitals Records*, Drexel University Library Special Collection on Women in Medicine, Drexel University, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Hereafter, *AWH Papers*.

could not deny that publicity was an effective means of fundraising and additional funds were necessary. The AWH hired a publicist and planned its own fundraising campaign for the spring of 1918. Meanwhile, the increasing need for physicians at the front left the NER scrambling for more medical professionals. Though the campaign fell short of its lofty goals, the AWH raised enough to begin their work overseas and continue raising funds.²¹

The AWH work in Europe received enough public acclaim to attract the attention of the American Committee for Relief in the Near East (ACRNE). With the Armistice between the Turks and the Allies signed in October 1918, the ACRNE began planning for their return to the Near East.²² According to AWH histories, the ACRNE recruited the organization of female physicians specifically to meet the higher standards for female modesty among observant Muslims.²³ This “feminist Orientalism” was a familiar trope throughout the history of women in medicine. In the 19th century, Westerners visiting the Middle East, India, and the Far East condemned the treatment of women in these rigidly sex-segregated societies. Beyond female illiteracy and exclusion from the public sphere, cultural and religious practices such as footbinding, suttee, and purdah were deemed barbaric. To raise the lowly status of women as emblematic of Oriental ‘backwardness,’

²¹ More, 649-51.

²² Barton 1930, 107-119.

²³ Dr. Mary Merrit Crawford, Chairman, “Report of the War Service Committee of the Medical Women’s National Association for the Year 1918-1919,” 10 June 1919, Box 1 Folder 5, *AWH Papers*. This is a familiar trope in the history of women physicians as a justification of female medical education and Euro-centric criticism of “Oriental backwardness.” See Antoinette Burton, “Contesting the Zenana: The Mission to Make ‘Lady Doctors’ for India,” *Journal of British Studies* 35 no. 3 (July 1996): 368-397. Barton’s 1930 history of the NER does not address this particular concern in his discussion of medical relief. In practice, AWH physicians rarely treated such Muslim women as their hospitals and clinics mainly served Christian refugee populations. Barton, *The Story of Near East Relief*, 188-203. Nonetheless, the predominantly female refugees—often survivors of sexual violence—benefitted from the care of women physicians.

Western missionary group and other social movements worked to bring their Eastern sisters into the light. “Women’s work for women” was an expression of feminist Orientalism that remained a popular cause among the progressive women who sought medical training.²⁴ It is no wonder, then, that the AWH Executive Board construed their Near East work in such terms. In practice, however, Armenians and other minority Christians received the vast majority of AWH medical care. Women physicians, nonetheless, would fill an important role in treating a refugee population nearly bereft of adult men.

Arriving in March 1919, the Leviathan passengers were the first large contingent of relief workers to step foot on the land since Americans were expelled from Turkey in 1917. The NER coordinated all the relief organizations—including the ARC—in the region using long-standing missionary connections to establish humanitarian operations. With armistice, the U.S. began sending soldiers home so that the American Red Cross had fewer obligations in Europe. The Near East, however, remained an unresolved site of political conflict and humanitarian need. As a result, the Near East Relief earned a higher profile in the American philanthropic scene. The roles had reversed between the NER and the American Red Cross, so that the NER controlled the relief work in the Near East and gained prestige as a result of their authority in the region.

The AWH became an important beneficiary of the NER’s ascension. Dr. Esther Pohl Lovejoy, the recently appointed head of the AWH, was ready for this shift. Though her position was initially temporary, Lovejoy quickly earned a permanent post. Thanks

²⁴ Lisa Joy Pruitt, *A Looking-Glass for Ladies: American Protestant Women and the Orient in the Nineteenth Century* (Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 2005).

to the experience she had gained working for the suffragists during the victorious 1912 Oregon suffrage campaign, Lovejoy knew how to run an organization. In both the movement for Oregon suffrage and the AWH fundraising, Lovejoy inherited a stalled campaign from accomplished women activists whose reputations had outlasted their energy and publicity techniques. For instance, the legendary Oregonian suffragist Abigail Smith Dunwiddy abided by her “still hunt” strategy of quietly courting influential men while eschewing the public demonstrations led by her younger colleagues.²⁵ Dunwiddy and her AWH counterpart, Dr. Morton, were overruled by a younger contingent who demanded more active campaigns. Both women ended their public careers before the campaigns were over.²⁶

From her earliest roles as small cog in the suffragist machine, Lovejoy exhibited legendary reserves of stamina. The internationally renowned activist, Alice Stone Blackwell, admired her as a “tower of strength.”²⁷ Under the tutelage of other feminist luminaries such as Anna Shaw Howard, Lovejoy honed her innate abilities as an advocate for women’s suffrage. Though she remained politically active throughout her life, the Great War led her away from advocacy for a time. In 1918, her newfound appreciation for the politics of philanthropic organizations along with prior experience on the campaign trail made Lovejoy a natural choice to head the AWH. Lovejoy’s polished presentation complemented her keen sense of public relations and aggressive tactics that—when given the right conditions—raised philanthropic leadership to an art.

²⁵ Kimberly Jensen, “‘Neither Head nor Tail to the Campaign:’ Esther Pohl Lovejoy and the Oregon Woman Suffrage Victory of 1912,” *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 107:3 (Fall 2007): 350-383.

²⁶ Dunwiddy took ill, while Dr. Morton simply faded from public view.

²⁷ Jensen, “Neither Head Nor Tail,” 56.

Such an opportunity for public relations would arise once the AWH personnel reached the field. Gladys L. Carr of Brookline, Massachusetts, Caroline Rosenberg of San Francisco, Elsie R. Mitchell and Clara Williams of Berkeley, California, Ruth A. Parmelee of Harpoot, Turkey, and Mabel E. Elliott of Benton Harbor, Michigan made up the pioneering troop of women physicians to the Near East. Over the voyage from New York to Constantinople, the AWH women had grown close to one another as the few established professionals among the largely young and inexperienced NER volunteers. Upon reaching the Sublime Porte in March, tons of medical and relief supplies were unloaded haphazardly from the cargo hold to the NER warehouses at the nearby wharf in Derinje. In their frenzy, the dockworkers had made a mess of the carefully-packed equipment. As a result, the new arrivals spent their first weeks sorting out the materials for each post.

Meanwhile, the NER medical committee revisited the personnel assignments. As a long-serving medical missionary to Turkey, Dr. George H. Washburn was appointed Medical Director shortly after Armistice. His original plans called for 15 medical units operated out of former missionary hospitals in posts throughout Allied-controlled territory. Most of these posts were still viable, but others were still considered dangerous or medical relief was well-in-hand.²⁸ Drs. Carr and Rosenberg left first in roaming units, the former setting up X-ray equipment and the latter assessing public health conditions. Drs. Mitchell and Williams were then sent to the Caucasus region where famine conditions were wiping out the large numbers of refugees in the small Armenian

²⁸ Dr. George L. Richards, "The Medical Work of the Near East Relief: 1919-20" *Journal of American Medical Association* 1923, 5.

Republic. At last, only two remained: Dr. Elliott, who was no longer needed in Beirut, and Dr. Parmelee, who waited for Allied permission to return to her birthplace in the Anatolian Interior.²⁹

Neither woman, however, could stand to be idle long. Instead, Elliott and Parmelee lent their expertise to the Armenian Red Cross Orphanage in Scutari, Turkey to examine the 50 young women enrolled. Billed as Armenia's best and brightest, these women were specifically chosen for schooling because they hailed from wealthy and highly educated families. Elliott and Parmelee conducted personal interviews and physical examinations of each of the girls (Elliott through an interpreter). Their reputed high status certainly had aided their survival as the elite class of Armenian had financial reserves and prior relationships with influential Turks that could make the difference between life and death during the genocide. Previous enrollment in American schools gave some girls connections to seek refuge with American missionaries. Despite these advantages, the vast majority gave patient histories that included sexual violence, forced marriage, and disease. Some had escaped certain death or rape on multiple occasions. Those with Turkish husbands reported past pregnancies, some gave birth and others aborted or miscarried. Only one mother fled with her child. Another two girls were currently pregnant. Elliott and Parmelee attempted to screen the women for syphilis and gonorrhea "because the experiences of the exile journey through which these girls passed

²⁹Born outside London to a former British Army officer and his American wife, Elliott and her many siblings were raised in South Florida. Elliott graduated from University of Chicago and its Rush School of Medicine with her sister, Grace Elliott Papot. Dr. Papot attempted to sign with the AWH, but age regulations prevented anyone over 45 years to apply. At least one brother and another sister likewise practiced medicine. "Dr. Mabel Evelyn Elliott," *Encyclopedia of American Biography* 40 (1970): 198-9.

were such as to make one suspicious of venereal disease.”³⁰ Scarce supplies meant that only 19 Wasserman tests could be located, 3 of which were positive for syphilis. None of the vaginal smears for gonorrhea were positive. Given the extent of the sexual abuse these women suffered, the physicians considered their rates of venereal disease particularly low.

Ruth Parmelee dedicated much of her time as an AWH physician to women who had escaped from Turkish homes. As a medical missionary who was raised by Reverend Moses Parmelee, a fixture in the Armenian community of Harpoot, Parmelee was predisposed to see the moral strengths of the Armenians. She had lived among the Armenians for the first ten years of her life and sporadically thereafter so that she spoke fluent Armenian, a skill which no other AWH physicians could claim. As a result, Parmelee interacted with Armenians without an interpreter and built many meaningful relationships within the community.³¹ During her service in Harpoot, Turkey, Parmelee established a flourishing obstetrical and gynecological service, a girls’ orphanage, and a home for women recovering from venereal disease. From June 1919 to July 1920, Parmelee’s Women’s Medical Department examined 722 women over the age of thirteen. 680 of those women gave histories of marriage with Turks, service in Turkish homes, or were “exiled long distances under their protection.” Based on laboratory and physical exams, Parmelee diagnosed 15.5% of the 680 women with some form of venereal disease.³² In a later report to Lovejoy, Parmelee commented on her findings:

³⁰ “Report: Armenian Red Cross Orphanage; Scutari, Turkey,” Box 10, Folder 73, AWH Papers.

³¹ Ruth A. Parmelee, *A Pioneer in the Euphrates Valley* (Reading, England: Tadedron Press, 2002).

³² “Report of Women’s Medical Department, Harpoot Turkey: June 1919-1920,” Box 10, Folder 73, *AWH Papers*.

Although in a generally weakened state, the women may not suffer at all and the pelvic examination may not show any signs of the disease except for the discharge. It may be that these eastern races are more or less immune, although Armenians have always been noted for their morality.³³

Parmelee's explanation perhaps reflected her upbringing among Armenians more than logical reasoning. As interesting as she found venereal disease rates, Parmelee was emotionally devoted to "our babies [who] are our bane and our blessing!" She quickly corrected herself by criticizing the Armenian mothers as "the bane, rather." Parmelee expressed frustration at their unwillingness to learn the basics of American baby care, though she blamed their time in Turkish homes for many of these deficiencies.³⁴

Elliott filled her days with relief work in the area until she was called to run a mobile dispensary on a train line to Angora, now the Turkish capital Ankara. While she was preparing her supplies, it became clear that her services were sorely needed in the Aleppo district. Elliott was sent some 150 miles north to Marash,³⁵ a town of 40,000 residents at the foot of the Taurus Mountains.³⁶ Like Parmelee and the other women physicians, Elliott's primary assignment was to run the maternity and gynecology clinics. Elliott, however, was less critical of the mothers than the dangerous care provided by native midwives. She described the horrors of uterine, bladder, and rectal prolapse that affected nearly all their post-partum patients. Given the serious nature of such

³³ Ruth Parmelee, Harpoot, Turkey to Lovejoy, NYC, 7 September 1920, Box 10, Folder 73, *AWH Papers*.

³⁴ *ibid.*

³⁵ Marash is now known as Kahramanmaraş, capital of the eponymous province in southeastern Turkey.

³⁶ Mabel Elliott, Marash, to Dr. Mary Crawford (Interim Chairman) and AWH Headquarters, New York City, 22 June 1919, Box 14, Folder 112, *AWH Papers*.

complications, Elliott recommended that “a large share of a women physician’s relief work in this district might be given over to instruction in midwifery.”³⁷

Nearly two months after Elliott’s arrival in Marash, new AWH Chairman, Esther Pohl Lovejoy replied to Elliott’s earlier letters that had gone unanswered during the transfer of power to Lovejoy. In addition to the monthly reports and bookkeeping expected by a well-run philanthropic organization, Lovejoy thanked Elliott for the pictures she had already sent and urged her to continue writing and sending pictures for publicity. As further encouragement, Lovejoy suggested that such tidbits from the Near East would be welcomed by Americans at home who were “far more interested at this time in the Southeastern part of Europe than they seem to be in France and Belgium.”³⁸ Here, Lovejoy alluded to the shift of humanitarian focus from European war zones to the Near East. From the German invasion of Belgium in 1914, American humanitarian philanthropies were largely concerned with the hungry Belgian and French civilians. Herbert Hoover’s Commission for Relief in Belgium—an agency with funding from the U.S. government—coordinated publicity campaigns that played on American sympathy for these Western European victims. Armenian suffering took a backburner during wartime as they were citizens—albeit persecuted—of the Ottoman Empire. In peacetime, the Near East Relief used these same tactics by emphasizing the “starving Armenians” and glorifying American relief workers as their saviors. Lovejoy recognized that the AWH stood to gain further funds by adopting sympathetic motifs in line with the NER approach to publicity.

³⁷ Richards “The Medical Work of the Near East Relief,” 26.

³⁸ Lovejoy to Elliott, 25 August 1919, Box 14, Folder 112, *AWH Papers*.

Though Lovejoy had pleaded for publicity materials from all AWH physicians in the Near East, Elliott would go unmatched as the eyes and ears of the organization through her evocative correspondence.³⁹ Despite a massively successful fundraising campaign at home, the relief operations were still woefully unable to handle the never-ending stream of refugees. During the first months of her service in Marash, Dr. Elliott supervised wards overflowing with more patients than beds. Some arrived gravely ill after traveling nine or twelve hours strapped to the backs of donkeys. A surge in malaria and the toxicity of quinine treatment rendered the nursery nearly empty as the busy maternity ward delivered the dead and premature babies of sick women. That winter, her staff of Armenian nurses-in-training—themselves refugees—shuttled between various clinics and refugee camps. Their gingham uniforms and sleeveless sweaters made poor stand-ins for coats. When reflecting upon these daily struggles, Elliott was uncharacteristically candid:

³⁹ Mabel Evelyn Elliott, *Beginning Again At Ararat* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1924). There is reliable evidence that Dr. Elliott's memoir combined elements of her correspondence with the work of an unknown ghostwriter. The AWH Executive Board discussed its publication during their June 1923 meeting: "Some time ago it was reported to the Board that Dr. Elliott had been requested to sign a book as author which was being written by another person and paid for by another organization. It was moved by Dr. Bentley and seconded by Dr. Mosher that "as medical women we request Dr. Elliott not to sign a book of which she is not the author because of the ethics involved, and as her employing Board we instruct her not to sign a book that is paid for by another organization which which was written during the time she was in the employ of the AWH. The motion was carried." "Minutes from AWH Executive Board Meetings," 14 June 1923, Box 31 Folder 296, *AWH Papers*. Dr. Elliott resigned over the matter and was immediately replaced by Dr. Sarah Foulks.

Elliott prefaces the book by admitting "the idea of this book, and the making of it are not mine alone." Though she claims the material as gathered from her own "notes and reports and letters during four busy years," Elliott acknowledges the joint efforts of "arranging and editing" these sources. Among her collaborators, Harold Jacquith, managing director of the NER, Gertrude Battles Lane, the editor of *Women's Home Companion* (Mary Ellen Zuckerman, "Pathway to Success: Gertrude Battles Lane and the Woman's Home Companion," *Journalism History* 16 (Spring 1990): 78-87), either C.D. or J.S. Morris of the Near East Relief publicity department, and Asa K. Jennings of the YMCA in Smyrna. Although the AWH Board refused to endorse the book, Dr. Grace Kimball (President of the Medical Women's National Association from 1922-3) confirmed Dr. Elliott's record of achievement in a brief introduction.

Hospital space like every other kind of relief work in this matter has nothing to do with the word 'finish' or 'enough.' It's like pouring sand in a rat hole—if you give our 5,000 blankets, you know that there are 15,000 people who still have nothing to wrap around them.⁴⁰

Of all the sorrowful stories Elliott recounted in her letters, none seem to have exposed this underlying frustration at the unyielding demands of humanitarian relief. Her inability to help her patients and students was beyond her control, but deeply rankled the altruist within. This anecdote illustrates the real problems facing relief workers as a counterpoint to the unrestrained optimism necessary for productive publicity material.

During the Kemalist Army siege of Marash in February 1920 Dr. Elliott was forced to evacuate the city.⁴¹ Her brush with danger seemingly imbued her with the confidence for a second stint with the NER. While waiting for her assignment, Elliott petitioned the NER authorities in Constantinople for “real work” worthy of an experienced professional.⁴² Elliott cautioned the male officials that “I would be one mad woman if they hesitated to send me in [to the Interior] because I was a woman.”⁴³

Elliott was sent to Greek-occupied Ismid,⁴⁴ a city in flux between the Kemalist and Greek armies. In the wake of battle, the city emptied and refilled with another cycle of refugees. On her arrival, Elliott estimated that 14,000 Greek and 3,000 Armenians

⁴⁰ Elliott, Marash, Turkey, to AWH Headquarters, NYC, 10 December 1919, Box 14, Folder 112, *AWH Papers*.

⁴¹ See Elliott's account: Elliott, *Beginning Again At Ararat*, 98-114. When Elliott arrived in Marash, the British and French Armies jointly occupied the city until the former withdrew in December 1919. From January 21 to February 13, 1920, Kemalist forces challenged the largely Armenian French troops and began massacring Armenians civilians. Vastly outnumbered, the French joined the hordes of refugees fleeing the city with their withdrawal on February 10th. Richard G. Hovannisian, "The Postwar Contest for Cilicia and the 'Marash Affair' " in *Armenian Cilicia*, eds. Richard G. Hovannisian and Simon Payaslian, Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers, 2008, p. 497.

⁴² Elliott, Constantinople to Lovejoy, 11 December 1920, Box 14, Folder 112, *AWH Papers*.

⁴³ Elliott, Constantinople to Lovejoy, 28 December 1920, Box 14, Folder 112, *AWH Papers*.

⁴⁴ Now Izmit, a city between the Sea of Marmara and the Black Sea.

refugees now lived in the area. Their needs greatly exceeded the ill-equipped clinics, orphanages, and hospitals under her charge. Elliott made an immediate appeal for ten thousand dollars by cable to the AWH. By post, she explained her “big order” in concise, but diplomatic sentences that laid out her confusion over the financial situation: “I understood from things said in New York that there were plenty of funds for this year and out here all we hear is about cutting down the work on account of shortage of funds.”⁴⁵

Despite the continuing success of fundraising drives, increased public scrutiny on spending by relief organizations led Lovejoy to remain cautious with AWH funds. After the unrestrained giving of the war years, by 1921 the American public had become more circumspect of philanthropies. With the revelations of extravagant spending by charities, relief organizations were regularly audited and made public. In her capacity as fundraiser, Lovejoy had to reassure such groups that the AWH spent wisely and accomplished as much as possible. With an empty treasury and the AWH expansions into the Caucasus, Lovejoy despaired at her colleagues who “seem to feel that there is some mysterious power able to turn on some sort of a financial faucet.” That “mysterious power” suffered under the knowledge that it was “in large part, up to [Lovejoy] to get the money to carry it on.”⁴⁶

Publicity and Photography

Even with this pressure, Lovejoy considered sending publicity people abroad an unnecessary expense. This resistance did not waver, even when the Serbian Child Welfare Association (SCWA), with whom the organization collaborated in Serbia, raised

⁴⁵ Elliott, Ismid to Lovejoy, 5 January 1921, Box 14, Folder 112.

⁴⁶ Lovejoy to Elliott, Ismid, 1 February 1921, Box 5, Folder 37.

funds by misrepresenting AWH work as their own.⁴⁷ To Lovejoy, the AWH personnel in Serbia had an exemplary sense of what was “valuable material.” They understood that potential donors were not interested in photos of “good looking well-dressed American women,” but rather the sickly patients “who are being benefitted.” The SCWA, however, sent publicity men who went “through the land taking pictures of the children that our American Women’s Hospitals physicians are caring for and bring them to the United States and cash in on them.”⁴⁸ These professionals brought their superior equipment and journalists to write up anecdotes. As a result, they were able to publish their work in a fraction of the time it took the AWH to send a roll of film across the Atlantic. In a competitive philanthropic market, the SCWA apparently had no qualms about taking credit for work done by the AWH in Serbia.

By the time similar materials reached Lovejoy in New York, the AWH had—in news terms—long since lost the race. Still, she refused to send publicity people abroad: “In view of the difficulty in raising funds at the present time, I am sure the Board would not approve of sending any publicity people overseas. As a matter of fact, we have had some exceedingly good publicity people request the Board at former times to be sent over and the attitude has always been against this plan.”⁴⁹ She pleaded with Elliott to lessen her burden with explicit instructions on proper publicity photographs:

The pictures that have money value are those of patients lined up at your dispensary, pictures of cripples, pictures of girls who have benefited, pictures of

⁴⁷ William J. Doherty, Commissioner of Serbian Child Welfare Association, “Helping to Reconstruct a Nation,” in *The American Review of Reviews* 65 no. 1 (January 1922), pgs. 77-80. Doherty credits the ARC and ARA for their cooperation, but makes no mention of the AWH. At the same time, he praises AWH medical personnel and even includes a picture of Dr. Mary Bercea, practicing dentistry.

⁴⁸ Lovejoy to Elliott, Constantinople, 11 January 1922, Box 14, Folder 112, *AWH Papers*.

⁴⁹ Lovejoy to Elliott, 1 March 1921, Box 14, Folder 112, *AWH Papers*.

little children and mothers with infants in their arms. The pictures of markets and other photographs showing national costumes and such things is just so much postage wasted because they have absolutely no financial benefit whatever in a news pictorial. Send only the kind that can be used and usually these have to be carefully posed.⁵⁰

Elliott, however, was in no position to submit photos that could compete with those taken by professionals. Given the volume and intensity of her medical work, taking time for photography—let alone ‘carefully posing’ her subjects—seemed impossible.

Furthermore, her amateur Kodak camera and lack of developing supplies limited Elliott’s ability to produce quality images. Elliott’s personal camera had no flash and could not be used in cloudy or rainy weather. The NER likewise solicited photographs from its workers, but had difficulty arranging the logistics. *The Acorne* announced their intention to provide the field workers with film. They offered this service on the condition that the staff send “copies of all pictures which would be of general publicity value” to headquarters. This was an effort to encourage cooperation with their publicity needs as the NER complained that “we are not receiving pictures of work in the field.”⁵¹ Though the office received orders, they had difficulty filling them when the film failed to arrive from the States as expected. Again, they noted “we are not receiving pictures from the field.”⁵² When staff tried to buy film in town, they found that prices were three times in excess of those in the States. Their price list offers a glimpse into the types of cameras the field personnel brought with them. Among those cameras were regular or folding Brownies and other small models manufactured by the Eastman Kodak Company.⁵³

⁵⁰ Lovejoy to Elliott, 1 February 1921, Box 5, Folder 37, *AWH Papers*.

⁵¹ “This and That,” *The Acorne* no. 4, 26 June 1919, pg. 6.

⁵² *The Acorne* no. 8, 26 July 1919, pg. 4.

⁵³ *The Acorne*, No. 14, 6 September 1919, pg. 4.

Even when the lighting and camera cooperated, film for these cameras had to be sent as far as Constantinople, Aleppo, or Jerusalem to be developed. In the process, the rolls were often ruined before they could be turned into negatives.

Among the first batch of photos Elliott sent was a picture of “the most emaciated [patient she] had ever seen” alongside an AWH nurse and her interpreter. Conscious that the image was unsuitable for publicity, she sent along the film so that it could be reprocessed in the States. After finally producing a set of passable images, Elliott made a plea for professional help: “Please remember, however, doctor that I am no photographer and the other organizations who get such wonderful pictures have publicity men and women who do nothing else, not to speak of the many Commissioners mentioned in your letter.”⁵⁴

Elliott’s next attempt was even less successful when she entrusted the films to a Greek officer rather than the Constantinople laboratory. Unfortunately, the officer bungled the process and ruined the films.⁵⁵ Despite that setback, Elliott sent the publicity stories she had intended for this and earlier rolls of film.⁵⁶ These descriptions first appeared in the April 1921 issue of *The Medical Women’s Journal*. A cropped version of Elliott’s devastatingly thin patient appeared in the accompanying article (Figure 2). While the original photo made its way to AWH headquarters, Lovejoy issued a specific request for a picture of “some of those children who are in such sad need on account of

⁵⁴ Elliott to Lovejoy, 4 March 1921, Box 14, Folder 112, *AWH Papers*.

⁵⁵ Elliott to Lovejoy, 14 March 1921, Box 14, Folder 112, *AWH Papers*.

⁵⁶ See Appendix A for full transcripts of Elliott’s publicity stories.

malnutrition.”⁵⁷ No matter the decidedly grainy quality of the photo—Elliott had unwittingly provided an image that fit Lovejoy’s vision.



After Six Weeks' Feeding!
The condition of this patient when taken
to hospital is beyond imagination.

Figure 18: Malnourished patient from *Medical Woman's Journal* 28, no. 4 (April 1921)

The skeletal patient illustrated the severity of such cases, “This picture was taken after six weeks of feeding. When she was first brought in she was unable to raise her head or

⁵⁷ Lovejoy to Elliott, 19 March 1921, Box 5, Folder 37, *AWH Papers*.

feed herself; she has improved under proper feeding so that she can almost stand alone. We can't call her "fat" exactly, yet, but she is considerable filled out compared to what she was."⁵⁸ She went on to describe 'contracted tendon,' one of the many horrific conditions facing such children:

Many of these children are brought into us with their knees drawn up to their chins, and they have lain such a long time in this position trying to keep or get warm that it takes days of oil rubbing to loosen up the tendon sufficiently to draw their legs down straight. Many of them die within a few hours after their arrival, but usually if we can get them over the first strain of their first two or three meals, they gradually begin to take a little interest in life, and it is a wonderful satisfaction to see them slowly get a grip on life and learn to smile.⁵⁹

Although the original image of the frail patient fit Lovejoy's need at the time, it was not nearly as appealing as the text that it inspired.

Elliott continued to work the publicity angle by enlisting visiting photographers and journalists to enhance the reputation of the AWH. She could never be sure, however, that the AWH would get its due. Given her difficulties with photography, she promised that when "the first 'picture' man comes along I will beg a few for us. I don't think the N.E.R. will mind."⁶⁰ In April 1921, she got her chance when an NER "publicity lady" visited the Ismid operations and "took a number of pictures of [her] work" of which Elliott intended to ask for permission to use two or three.⁶¹ Indeed, the photographer complied and a few photographs of the orphans and staff exist in the AWH archives.

Soon thereafter, all the Christian refugees fled as Turkish troops took over Ismid.

After serving the few Turks in need of American medicine, the AWH discontinued their

⁵⁸ Esther Lovejoy, "Report of the Armenian Service of the American Women's Hospitals," *The Medical Woman's Journal* 28, n. 4 (April 1921), pg. 94.

⁵⁹ Esther Lovejoy, "Report of the Armenian Service of the American Women's Hospitals," *The Medical Woman's Journal* 28, n. 4 (April 1921), pg. 94.

⁶⁰ Elliott to Lovejoy, March 4, 1921, Box 14, Folder 112, *AWH Papers*.

⁶¹ Elliott to Lovejoy, April 9, 1921, Box 14, Folder 112, *AWH Papers*.

work in the “abandoned city” and sent Elliott to the Caucasus region. Large groups of Armenian refugees fled eastward from Anatolia and the moribund Armenian Republic into this mountainous terrain southwest of the Soviet Union. As a result, the Caucasus was flooded with potential patients when Elliott established operations in Erivan.⁶² In late November 1921, Elliott was attempting to bring order to the chaos in Erivan. She wrote in a letter for publicity use:

All day long you can hear the groans and wails of the little children out side our office building in hopes we can and will pick them up. If the sun shines for a little while it quiets down and then when it rains they begin again. One day the rain turned to snow and it was awful to listen to them. The note of terror that came into the general wail was distinctly perceptible although my office is upstairs and I have the window closed. They well knew what a night out in the snow would mean to them. We are picking them up as fast as possible.⁶³

Lovejoy later estimated that this paragraph alone earned “thousands of dollars” for the AWH and NER.⁶⁴ One hundred of those dollars came from a Mrs. A.W. Hook of Phoneton, Ohio, a consistent donor to the Armenian cause for six years. As she wrote to Charles Vickery of the NER, “this is the first request I have made as to where it is to be used, and I sincerely hope and pray that every dollar of it will be used to help feed those dear suffering children.”⁶⁵ Such was the power of Elliott’s stories that she could “deeply stir hearts” and open pocketbooks without the gloss of a professional journalist.

Over the next year, Elliott organized medical relief in and around Erivan.

During the deadly winter of 1921, the AWH took approximately 2000 street children from the overflowing Erivan orphanages and hospitals. Mrs. Dorothy H. Sutton,

⁶² Erivan is now Yerevan, capital city of Armenia.

⁶³ Elliott, Erivan, to Lovejoy, 29 November 1921, Box 14, Folder 112, *AWH Papers*.

⁶⁴ Lovejoy to Elliot, 19 April 1922, Box 14, Folder 112, *AWH Papers*.

⁶⁵ Mrs. A.W. Hook, Phoneton, Ohio, to Mr. Charles Vickery, March 26, 1922, Box 14, Folder 112, *AWH Papers*.

the head nurse of the Erivan orphanages, described recruiting these desperate cases for treatment in the *New Near East* magazine: “I started out at night with three people to help me, to gather in the flock. They were not hard to find. The first forlorn bundle consisted of three mites, two girls and a boy rolled up in one filthy rag in a doorway.”⁶⁶ These children were removed to nearby Etchmiadzin where the Armenian Orthodox Church had lent NER a building on their grounds. Life on the streets rendered the Etchmiadzin children the worse for the wear. In her response to Mrs. Hook, Elliott described them as “almost all dead from starvation” before funds were raised for their recovery.⁶⁷ She further remarked to Lovejoy that “they didn't look like human beings,” a description that calls to mind the iconic photograph of Elliott examining an unidentified patient.⁶⁸

What little information is known about this picture is suggestive in its very absence. The photograph was not one of a kind in its content and use, but part of a larger trend of creating poster children to represent the many needy children in the Near East. Noorilhida, for example, was one of 300 orphans living in a Red Cross orphanage in Damascus, Syria. Red Cross Volunteer Anna L. Fisher brought the “tiny bit of a thing” to national attention in a letter published in *The New York Times* in June 1919.⁶⁹ In that letter Fisher introduced Noorilhida as “by far our most interesting child [and] the only Arab I have.” In another context, the fact that Noorilhida was an Arab and not an Armenian might show some glimmer of inclusiveness. Here that fact was ignored in favor of treating her as just another orphan. The girl entered the orphanage “in a frightful

⁶⁶ “Harvesting By Night,” *New Near East* 7 no. 12 (November 1922), 6.

⁶⁷ Elliot to Mrs. A.W. Hook, 29 May 1922, Box 14, Folder 112, *AWH papers*

⁶⁸ Elliott to Lovejoy, 2 April 1922, Box 14, Folder 112, *AWH Papers*

⁶⁹ “Orphans of Damascus,” *The New York Times*, 15 June 1919.

condition, starving, alive with vermin, covered with scabies, filthy beyond belief.” After numerous baths, and Fisher “began curing her physically and morally” so that Noorilhida revealed her “astonishing intelligence” and “lovely nature.” Fisher marveled at her transformation, concluding that “at home if we ever saw such a child properly clothed we should undoubtedly associate her with generations of gentlefolk.”⁷⁰

These attempts to ply American donors with tales of lovable, yet tragic orphans were undone by presenting audiences with a full photograph of Noorilhida (Figure 3).

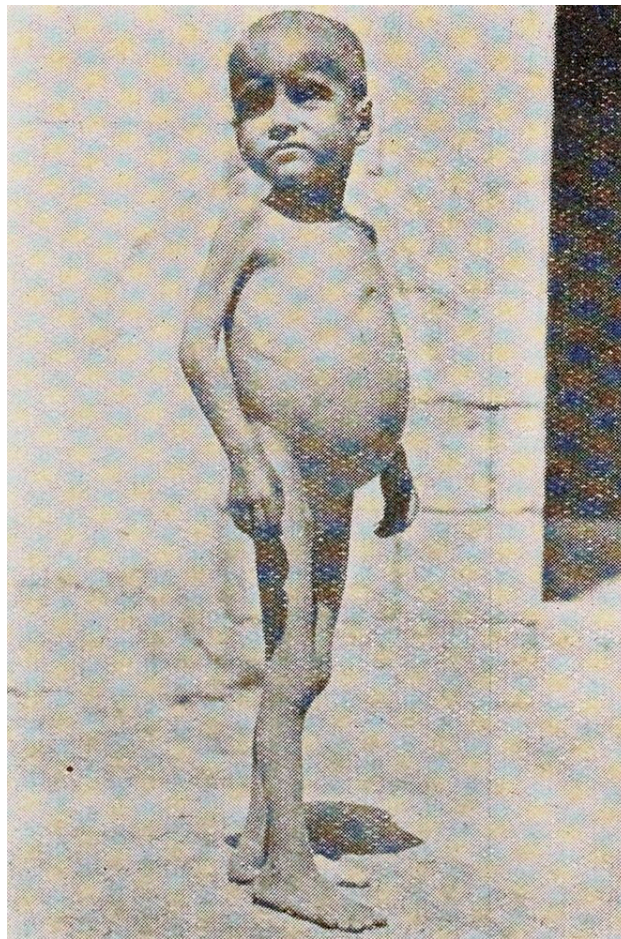


Figure 19: Noorilhida in *Australian Christian World*, 15 September 1922, p.iv.

⁷⁰ “Orphans of Damascus,” *The New York Times*, 15 June 1919.

As the original story in *The New York Times* was not illustrated, it seems likely that there is no connection between the real Noorilhida and this photograph. This picture of a starving child was likely taken by Glen R. Carrier, photographer and later Hollywood cinematographer who accompanied the Barton Commission on their survey of possible venues for NER stations.⁷¹ That photograph was displayed as part of slideshows prepared by the NER Publicity Committee to raise money in local communities. It was in this context that audiences were officially introduced to “Noorilhida,” the starving orphan who needed Americans’ cast-off clothing. Who better than a naked girl to advertise the need for used clothing items?

Noorilhida’s obituary, “Only One of Thousands,” was an entirely separate article published in the April 1922 edition of *The New Near East*. That article mourned “*poor* little Noorilhida, *immortal* little Noorilhida, dead at five yet having fulfilled a mission in life that would do honor to an active adult of a hundred and five.”⁷² What did Noorilhida do to deserve such elegy? Her photograph brought in donations—clothing and money—for the NER. With “her emaciated little face made beautiful by her soul-filled eyes,” “no one could refuse the demands she mutely made. Noorilhida’s photograph said to all who saw it, ‘I am only one of thousands, Give! Give! Give!’” Plucked from a batch of photos of similarly starving children, the picture was chosen to represent all those dependent on NER for aid. What was different about her picture? One thing is certain: it wasn’t her eyes. Noorilhida’s nudity was unusual for this genre of photographs. Most were pictured in rags or at least a piece of cloth to cover their genitals. On the other hand, Noorilhida—

⁷¹ Courtesy of Vicken Babkenian.

⁷² “Orphans of Damascus,” *The New York Times*, 15 June 1919.

like Elliot's patient—is defined by her body in showing the ravages of hunger on a young child. She is described as “naked, abandoned, her thin little legs with their enlarged joints supporting a torso distorted by a scavenged diet too awful to contemplate.”

Noorilhida's “obituary” more explicitly demonstrates that the Publicity Committee chose her body specifically to represent the humanitarian crisis in the Near East.⁷³ Noorilhida and her successor, Dr. Elliott's patient from Figure 1, have bloated abdomens and legs so thin that every muscle is revealed. Kwashiorkor secondary to severe malnutrition and various parasitic infections negate the cuteness that might endear to prospective donors. Nor do they resemble the 1919 poster children with deep-set eyes, prostrating themselves while fully clothed. Unlike Douglas Volk's *They Shall Not Perish*, Ethel Betts Bains' *Lest They Perish* and other 1919 Campaign posters, Noorilhida and Dr. Elliott's patient do not overtly plead for help. Instead these Armenian subjects make their appeals through the frailty of their bodies. Noorilhida and Elliott's patient are spectacles of tragedy in the same way as East African children were during the famines of the 1980s and 1990s.

Barbie Zelizer critiques the standard photojournalism that captured images of the Ethiopian, Zimbabwean, Somalian, and Sudanese Famines in *About to Die: How News Images Move the Public*. Her analysis is useful in drawing conclusions about the photograph of Dr. Elliott and the Patient. Zelizer distinguished images of presumed, possible, and certain death from each other to find differences in their presentation, framing, and content. When focused on bodily frailty as in images of possible or likely

⁷³ “Only One of Thousands,” *The New Near East* (April 1921): 17-8.

death, identity matters less than the overall message.⁷⁴ Noorilhida's full photograph was presented as an image of possible death, while her obituary photograph featured only her face. In this way, Zelitzer would argue that she was turned from a symbol of many starving children into an individual at her death. The accompanying photos and text reminds us that there are still many more "Noorilhidas" whose likely death may be prevented by humanitarian aid. As Zelizer writes, "the function of bodily frailty, then, is to cue a larger story than the possible death of those depicted."⁷⁵

What, then, is the larger story? Why were these children starving? The Armenian genocide is not discussed in Noorilhida or the Patients' stories, but the Turkish role in orphaning and scattering children far from home was well known in the U.S. It was therefore not necessary to invoke the slaughter for the genocide to factor into NER photos. In contrast to earlier campaigns, those ads devised from the Armistice onwards were categorically less anti-Muslim and anti-Turkish than those from the 1919 Campaign and before. This accords with literature on U.S. relations with Turkey showing that American diplomats began building a relationship with their Turkish counterparts in the postwar period.⁷⁶ In view of this new era of cooperation, it would suffice to blame these deaths from starvation on famine rather than dredge up anti-Turkish rhetoric. As Thomas Keenan, Alex DeWaal, and others have shown, famines are caused by political upheaval

⁷⁴ Zelizer, 186-8, 194-6.

⁷⁵ Zelizer, 165.

⁷⁶ Thomas Bryson, "Admiral Mark L. Bristol, An Open Door Diplomat in Turkey," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 5, no. 4 (Sept. 1974): 450-467. Payaslian, *United States Policy*, 185-188.

and often accompanied by violence.⁷⁷ At the time, however, a ‘famine’ such as that in the Caucasus and Near East would have been perceived as a natural disaster. Wars, however, would have exacerbated any catastrophic event as they impeded humanitarian work. Therefore, it is reasonable to expect that many Americans still blamed the Turks for deaths by starvation.

As Elliott’s patient is pictured in the care of the NER, his possible death offers an additional message about humanitarian aid. Like Noorilhida, Elliott’s patient is a symbol for all the starving orphans sustained by NER work in the Near East and the Caucasus. He is arguably made less real because the patient lacks an identity to differentiate him from the crowd. Bereft of name, date, place, even sex, there is nothing to stop the spectator from projecting their own idea of tragic upon Elliott’s patient. The main focus, however, is on Dr. Elliott caring for the patient. She gives him the possibility of life, rather than inevitable death. Her ability to heal echoes the public’s ability to give. They, too, hold thousands of lives in their hands, all dependent upon American donations to receive medical care, food, and shelter. Thus the NER uses Dr. Elliott to represent itself as the courageous physician, caretaker, and guardian of Armenian lives. At its core, the picture of Dr. Elliott is an image created and distributed by the NER and AWH to portray its organization in a favorable light. All the hiring photographers, sending film, and encouraging workers to share their pictures was done to make this one photograph.

This chapter has articulated some of the ways publicity work was integrated into relief work. Journalists sent to report were escorted personally, relief workers were

⁷⁷ Thomas Keenan, “Mobilizing Shame,” *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 103, no. 2/3 (Spring/Summer 2004): 435-449; Alex DeWaal, *Famine That Kills: Darfur, Sudan*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2005 (revised edition, first published 1989).

encouraged to share their experiences through their writing and photography, and the NER hired professional photographers to frame perfect shots like the ones above. These methods may have interfered with the workers' daily schedules, but publicity was perceived as part of humanitarian aid. Those same workers who escorted journalists through clinics, refugee camps, orphanages, and other NER institutions were kept constantly aware of the need for funds and had experienced campaigns prior to volunteering for the organization. If anyone understood how vital those images were for the cause, it was those relief workers in the field. To ensure that fundraising would be successful, these men and women took time from their days to cooperate with these calls for media.

Yet for all this maneuvering, the publicity created in the field was simple in comparison to the media originating in the States. The next chapter will look at the films, cooperative marketing plans, and product placement that the Publicity Committee created on their own turf. While the themes of famine, pity, and duty remained similar, the modes of conveying them changed to appeal to an individual's conscience as a consumer. These techniques heralded the modernization of humanitarian media from forms used by social movements such as Protestant revivalism and Suffrage into celebrity spokesmen and vertical integration that consumers recognize to this day. In this final chapter, I will argue that this represents a transformation from selling ideas and politics to advertising humanitarian aid as consumer product.

CHAPTER 5

Film, Celebrity Spokesmen, and Product Placement

Publicity generated in the U.S. benefitted from popular films as well as celebrities who offered their services in the name of Armenian relief. Names like Jackie Coogan, Norma Talmadge, Irene Rich, and Charles Ray found their way into NER literature and other publicity. Jackie Coogan, in particular, lent his name and eight weeks of his life to a publicity junket that took him across the country and overseas to Europe and the Near East. Each move was carefully produced to get the most mileage out of this young screen star's numerous fans. The polish exhibited in Jackie's tour extended to advertising campaigns conducted in cooperation with food manufacturers. A large percentage of the food sent overseas for use in the orphanages came directly from donations by manufacturers. Food companies enjoyed publicity in trade and popular journals for their cooperation with the cause. At a time when brand name foods were still new, this publicity was invaluable for such companies as Borden Milk and Karo Corn Syrup. Their collaboration with the NER allowed them to make claims about the nutritional value of their products in the popular press. These particular publicity campaigns—all produced in the U.S.—demonstrated the commodification of humanitarian service. Each event represented an exchange where the possibility of donations was traded for legitimization by this humanitarian agency. We talk today about “brand aid” and “celebrity sponsorship,” but here we find the roots of those marketing plans.

Films represented the commodification of humanitarian sentiment in a slightly different manner. Apart from the publicity blitzes organized yearly, films served as the main means of advertising Armenian relief to much of the American public. The NER

contributed to several films, including *Auction of Souls*, *Alice in Hungerland*, *Uncle American Sees It Through*, *Or Seeing Is Believing*, and *Miracles in Ruins*, but only a section of one film survives today. The NER films began in 1919 with *Auction of Souls*, a film version of a young Armenian woman's memoirs. That film was given wide and overbearing publicity that distressed the young star. Another film, entitled *Alice in Hungerland*, featured an even younger star who was originally found in a Constantinople orphanage. Upon reaching the United States, this girl lost her birth name and was called Alice after her character in the film. Comprehensive publicity surrounding these films and their stars exhibited a true "exploitation campaign," as publicity campaigns then known. The films themselves benefitted humanitarian relief by opening up new portions of the public to Armenian Relief. As Mrs. Oliver Harriman, head of the National Motion Picture Committee put it, "the screen was selected as the medium because it reaches the millions, where the printed word reaches the thousands."¹ The screen version of the Armenian Genocide and its aftereffects was highly sensationalized through graphic violence and sexuality in *Auction of Souls*, and the innocence of childhood in *Alice in Hungerland*. Despite the fact that neither was an objective reporting of the events, both presented a pitiful picture of Armenian refugees for the benefit of the audience. In this way, both films were designed to elicit sympathetic response to Armenian Relief and thereby turn a complex event into a simplistic affair.

To understand how this was accomplished, we must first know the source material for *Auction of Souls* and the circumstances surrounding its release. *Ravished*

¹ "Ravished Armenia in Film," *New York Times*, 13 February 1919, 4.

Armenia, the original book written by Harvey L. Gates from which *Auction of Souls* was adapted, opens on Easter Sunday 1915 in Tchemesh-Gedzak, a village in the Armenian vilayet of Mamuret-ul-Aziz between the Euphrates and Murat Rivers.² Aurora Mardiganian lived with her father, a prosperous banker, mother, and six siblings until that fateful Spring day when the Turks began arresting the Armenian men. Her father and eldest brother were taken from home that night and died in a prison fire within days. With the men disposed of, the Armenian women were given three days to pack before they were deported from the village. The remaining family members, including Aurora's two aunts, set out on a journey that only Aurora would survive.³

Along the way, Aurora and her family contended with thirst, hunger, illness, and exhaustion. The hardships of the road, however, did not compare with those foisted upon them by their guards. At fourteen, Aurora was considered of marriageable age, and she was without protection from the Turkish guards who preyed upon the young Armenian girls. For a time she and Lusanne, her seventeen year-old sister, were able to keep the soldiers at bay by spreading mud on their faces to hide their beauty.⁴ After Lusanne's death at the hands of a guard, Aurora and a group of girls and women were kidnapped by Kurds who carried them away on horseback. Once they had escaped into the desert, the

² Now known as Çemişgezek in the Tunceli Province of Eastern Anatolia, Turkey. The village is near Elâzığ, the former town and province of Harput.

³ Anthony Slide (comp.), *"Ravished Armenia" and the Story of Aurora Mardiganian* (Lanham, Md.: The Scarecrow Press, 1997): 45-75. This book includes an introduction written by Slide based upon historical research and oral history interviews with Aurora Mardiganian before her death. The main portion of the book is a reprint of the H.L. Gates' original text including a prologue by Nora Waln of the Near East Relief and an introduction by Gates. The text of Mardiganian's memoir was based upon interviews between Gates and the girl, with her temporary Armenian-American foster family acting as translators. This family was later replaced by H.L. Gates and his wife as Mardiganian's chaperones.

⁴ Slide, *Ravished Armenia*, 75.

women were stripped, beaten, and presumably raped. Still naked, they were tied up and bound to a horse so that neither animal nor woman could escape.⁵

The Kurds escorted Aurora's party to Egin in the province of Erzincan where they were held in a government building with hundreds of other young Armenian women. Twenty at a time they were paraded in front of two Turkish officials who offered them protection if they converted to Islam. When Aurora refused, she was beaten with "long, cruel whips." She was then left in a courtyard for four days before continuing to march on to Malatia.⁶ As her party approached Malatia, they encountered a gruesome sight:

At the side of the road, in ridicule of the Crucifixion and as a warning to such Christian girls who lived to reach Malatia, the Turks had crucified on rough wooden crosses sixteen girls. I do not know how long the bodies had been there, but vultures already had gathered. Each girl had been nailed alive upon her cross, great cruel spikes through her feet and hands. Only their hair, blown by the wind, covered their bodies.⁷

This image was to play an important part in the film version. Armenians converged in Malatia "from Sivas, Tokat, Egin, Erzindjan, Kerasun, Samsoun, and countless smaller cities in the north, where the Armenians had had their homes for centuries."⁸

After the men were gathered and killed in Malatia, the women were told to prepare for the journey to Diyarbekir, a hundred miles away on the banks of the Tigris river. "Fifteen thousand women, young and old," were assembled to begin the long march. Aurora and her group of 200 "apostates" traveled at the front of the pack, guarded closely by specially assigned soldiers.⁹ Again, Kurds came to rape the helpless

⁵ *ibid*, 103.

⁶ *ibid*, 108-111.

⁷ *ibid*, 113.

⁸ *ibid*, 114.

⁹ *ibid*, 123.

women whose “screams and cries for mercy and the groans of mothers and sisters filled the night.” Aurora later reflected, “I saw terrible things that night which I cannot tell. When I see them in my dreams now I scream, so even through I am safe in America, my nights are not peaceful.” Despite her abiding trauma, Aurora and her party were kept safe by their guards.¹⁰

Upon reaching Shiro, a departure point for caravans to Damascus, Aurora’s luck ran out. She was claimed by Hadji Ghafour, a devout and wealthy Muslim who had made the pilgrimage to Mecca.¹¹ In Hadji Ghafour’s harem Aurora outwardly lived as a Muslim, while dreading the night of her “betrothal.” On that fateful night, her master would call her to his bed and she would be forced to submit to his will or die. Aurora reveals little of that night except that her desire for a “happier future depended upon her submission.” It was with this hope that she “went and sat upon the cushion at Hadji Ghafour’s feet!” Her next statement betrays a sense of shame, “It is needless to say more of that terrible night!” Aurora thereby signals her victimization without using words to describe her ordeal. According to Katherine Derderian, such phrasing is commonly used in narratives of the Armenian Genocide to implicitly indicate rape and sexual violence.¹²

Aurora escaped to a monastery soon after her encounter with Hadji Ghafour. She rested there for two weeks until a group of Chechens abducted her to Diyarbakir. Aurora was then given to a group of German officers who kept her as a captive in a house given to them for that purpose. This aspect of Aurora’s story indicted the Germans for

¹⁰ *ibid*, 125-6.

¹¹ *ibid*, 128.

¹² Katherine Derderian, “Common Fate, Different Experience: Gender-Specific Aspects of the Armenian Genocide, 1915-1917,” *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 19 no. 1 (Spring 2005), 6-7.

participating in crimes against humanity. When the Germans were ordered to Harput, near Aurora's hometown, they abandoned the remaining Armenian girls and took off. After three days Turkish gendarmes discovered the girls, but Aurora fought her way out and found safety with a kind Turkish woman. The Turkish woman helped her to rejoin a group of refugees who were headed to Ourfa.¹³ At Ourfa, Aurora was reunited with her mother and three surviving siblings. When set upon by a group of Kurds, Aurora's mother was unable to convince them that Aurora belonged with her. As a result, she was taken to Moush as a captive of Bekran Agha, "the notorious slave dealer." Aurora was sold for one medijidieh—eighty-five cents—to a wealthy man who demanded that she convert to Islam. Many of the film's advertisements featured the slave market and Aurora's price of 85 cents as titillating details for marketing. This identified *Auction of Souls* with other white slavery films like *Traffic in Souls* (1913) that were popular in the 1910s.

When she refused to convert, Aurora was given to Ahmed Bey whose "interest seemed not to be so much in the young women themselves, as in the children he wanted them to bear to his sons—children in whom the blood of the noble Armenian race might be blended with that of the savage Turk, and who might live to perpetuate and improve the blood of his family."¹⁴ Such a depiction of Ahmed Bey's purposes in seeking out an Armenian woman to improve his family's bloodline reinforces stereotypes that Armenians were Caucasians and, therefore, superior to the Asiatic Turks. These racial stereotypes were common in Near East Relief publicity so that Armenians seemed less

¹³ Ourfa is a city in the southeast of modern day Turkey known as Şanlıurfa.

¹⁴ Slide, *Ravished Armenia*, 182.

foreign than the Turks. Aurora was then given to Ahmed's son Nazim, who "had the same gentleness of his father" that "hurts more than blows."¹⁵ Nazim attempted to sweet talk her into accepting Islam, but she again refused. As punishment, he brought her family to the house and though she promised to "belong to Allah," the gendarmes killed the other Mardiganians in front of her eyes.

In the days that followed, Aurora recanted her profession of faith in Allah and mourned her family with frightening intensity. Though Nazim and his father spoke to her "with the same cruel gentleness," she rebuffed their efforts at conversion. A shepherd from her hometown eventually freed Aurora from Ahmed Bey's dungeon and sent her to the Dersim Kurds, a tribe of Kurds whose purview spanned into Russian territory. The Dersim were unlike the Kurds she had previously met in that "they do not have the lust of killing human beings common with the tribes of the south."¹⁶ She wandered through their territory for a year before reaching Erzurum, where the Turks were retreating from the Russian Army. In Erzurum, Aurora met the missionary physician Dr. F. W. Macallum who arranged for her voyage to New York through Oslo, Norway.

Upon reaching Ellis Island on November 5, 1917, Aurora was taken in by an Armenian family living in New York. This family helped her adjust to life in the U.S. and aided her attempts to trace a surviving brother by placing advertisements in various newspapers.¹⁷ She did not find her brother but reporters for the *New York Sun* and the

¹⁵ *ibid*, 181-2.

¹⁶ *ibid*, 193. The difference between Dersim Kurds and other Kurdish tribes is a complex issue that requires far more attention than can be given at this juncture. See Janet Klein, *On the Margins of Empire: Kurdish Militias in the Ottoman Tribal Zone* (Palo Alto, Cal.: Stanford University Press, 2011).

¹⁷ The identity of this brother is unknown as Aurora mentioned no surviving sibling in *Ravished Armenia*. It is possible that such a living relative existed, but was purposely excluded from the book to increase the

New York Tribune located her via these advertisements and published her story in their pages. The press attention alerted screenwriter Harvey Gates and his wife Lucille Gates to the potential commercial interest of a firsthand account of the events in Armenia.¹⁸

When the Gateses approached Aurora, she was already in the charge of Nora Waln, the publicity secretary for the American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief. Though she planned on working in a dressmaking factory, the Gateses promised her that “You don’t need to work, we’re going to take care of everything—for you, for your nation, for your people.”¹⁹ Mr. and Mrs. Gates became her legal guardians, changing her first name from the Armenian, Arshaluys, to the English, Aurora, and her last name from Mardikian to Mardiganian to preserve her anonymity.²⁰ They set up headquarters in New York’s Latham Hotel where Aurora recounted her experience in Armenian with her original foster family acting as translators. The non-English speaking Aurora was then sent to

audience’s sympathy. A heroine who lost her entire family is marginally more pitiful than one who lost all save one.

¹⁸ Justin McCarthy confuses the screenwriter Harvey Harris Gates with the American missionary and President of Robert College in Constantinople, Caleb F. Gates. Justin McCarthy, *The Turk in America: The Creation of an Enduring Prejudice* (Salt Lake City, Utah: The University of Utah Press, 2010), 198. In reality, Harvey Harris Gates was the son of Jacob F. and Susa Young Gates, who were serving as missionaries in Hawaii for the Church of Latter-Day Saints at his birth. Susa Young was a daughter of Brigham Young, President of the Church of Latter-Day Saints from 1847-1877. See entry for Susa Young Gates, Brigham Young University, http://eom.byu.edu/index.php/Gates,_Susa_Young [accessed 8 March 2014].

Anthony Slide also errs in naming Gates’ wife Lucille as “Eleanor Brown Gates.” Lucie J. Gates, Year: 1930; Census Place: Los Angeles, Los Angeles, California; Roll: 158; Page: 12A; Enumeration District: 0615; Image: 24.0; FHL microfilm: 2339893, United States of America, Bureau of the Census. *Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930*. Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1930.

¹⁹ Slide, *Ravished Armenia*, 7.

²⁰ “Aurora Mardiganian: Armenian Heroine Remembered, Honored,” *The Armenian Mirror-Spectator*, February 21, 2014, <http://www.mirrorspectator.com/2014/02/21/aurora-mardiganian-armenian-heroine-remembered-honored/> [accessed 25 March 2014].

camp in Connecticut for three weeks so that she could pick up some basic understanding of her new language.²¹

When she returned from camp, Mrs. Gates asked Aurora to sign some papers so that she could go to Los Angeles and “have her picture taken.” As Aurora told film historian Anthony Slide late in her life, she was unaware that Mrs. Gates meant that she would be filmed and thought that she was just having a still-picture made. Besides, her uncle Steven Long (an Anglicized name) lived in Fresno so that Aurora assumed that she would be reunited with her living relative. Instead, she was to star in the film version of her life for \$15 a day. In her later years Aurora recalled her confusion at the papers and the explanation given by Mrs. Gates, “I said I don’t understand my language much. I don’t understand your English. And they said \$15 was a lot of money. I was naïve. I didn’t know nothing.”²² As Slide commented, “she was to become the victim of another form of exploitation—capitalism and a society looking for a cause worthy of its white, Christian wrath.”²³

Col. William N. Selig, a veteran producer who began his film career in the 1890s, had acquired the rights to *Ravished Armenia*. This was to be his last production. Though the film was ostensibly produced for the ACASR, Slide found that Selig claimed complete ownership of the film rights and only gave a percentage of profits to the organization. Frederick H. Chapin received credit for the screenplay in the publicity materials, but Slide states that Waln and Gates were also involved in writing the script.²⁴

²¹ Slide, *Ravished Armenia*, 7.

²² *ibid*, 7.

²³ *ibid*, 6.

²⁴ *ibid*, 8.

Confusion surrounding rights and credits point to a complicated relationship between the Hollywood team and the ACASR. Unfortunately, there is no known documentary evidence that could further flesh out these potential conflicts. Apart from the book and a twenty-four minute clip circulated within the Armenian community, little remains to piece together this fascinating episode in the American public reception of the Armenian Genocide.²⁵

Auction of Souls was accompanied by intense publicity campaigns that used traditional advertising techniques as well as more theatrical attempts to stir up audiences. *Motion Picture News* reported on the production of these campaigns in localities throughout the U.S. An article on Indianapolis held that the “the new idea [that] appears to be probably the most important in exploitation is *the creation of publicity items by the attractions and by incidents surrounding its presentation.*”²⁶ The film’s distributors, the First National Distributors’ Circuit, began marketing *Auction of Souls* by “taking star spots on all billboards and in all newspapers.” This was not altogether new as the Indianapolis-based English Theater’s own promoter S. Barret McCormick, later art director for *Citizen Kane* (1941), commonly used such paid advertising in his “exploitation campaigns.” McCormick and his partner Robert Liber were revolutionary in their use of unpaid publicity to run alongside the paid advertisements in the week before opening. They created and planted news stories about Aurora and the Gateses to drive ticket sales by building fascination with the young woman.

²⁵ That clip is available on the internet at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uTnCaW-Uo_s [accessed 25 March 2014].

²⁶ “Keeping Both Eyes Open? Or Are Exhibitors Missing Some Good Bets That Flourish Under Their Noses,” *Motion Picture News* 20 no. 9, 23 August 1919: 1605. Emphasis in original.

By the time Aurora arrived in Indianapolis—escorted by the Gates—for a weeklong press junket, the city’s journalists were chomping at the bits to get a piece of her. As the threesome moved into their hotel room “several score of newshounds [were] begging for the privilege of carrying their grips, hat boxes, portfolios and Aurora’s bathrobe, which she had forgotten to enclose in her grip.”²⁷ It was this sort of attention that eventually took its toll on the reluctant movie star, leading the studio to hire “seven Aurora Mardiganian look-alikes to appear with the film” when the original model proved unsuited to the constant public attention. An article from the *New York American* had captured Mardiganian’s discontent during a dinner at the St. Francis Hotel in San Francisco, “Miss Aurora seemed to be annoyed; she avoided answering the questions put to her; she evinced a desire to be, as she expressed it, ‘let alone.’” To those who pressed her for a word or two, that they might go away and say that they had ‘spoken to Aurora Mardiganian, the Joan of Arc of Armenia,’ she refused to reply.”²⁸ The fact that it took seven girls to replace the one speaks to the enormous burden placed upon Mardiganian’s shoulders. This complete loss of autonomy coupled with the isolation of her life on the road must have seemed a cruel rejoinder for someone who had ostensibly escaped captivity before. Mardiganian made her last public appearance in Buffalo, NY in May 1920, upon which Mrs. Gates sent her off to a convent school.

In the summer of 1919, however, both Mardiganian and Indianapolis remained besieged by publicity for *Auction of Souls*. *Motion Picture News* notes the publicity given Harvey Gates as “a native son” of Indianapolis. Census data on Gates asserts that

²⁷ *ibid*, 1611.

²⁸ “News Item,” *New York American*, 9 March 1919.

he was born in Hawaii to missionaries of the Church of Latter-Day Saints, raised in Utah, and lived in California. There is no evidence that Gates ever lived in Indianapolis either as a child or adult, let alone that he was a “local boy” as *Motion Picture News* asserts. Given the tenor of the publicity campaign, Gates’ loose or non-existent connection to Indianapolis was a gambit to attract local audiences. This ploy apparently worked, as did others that kept Indianapolis newspaper editors busy. *Motion Picture News* commented, “It is enough to say that the combined newspapers of Indianapolis soon learned to spell Aurora’s last name in the twinkling of an eye. (And that is some job.)”²⁹

James H. Shallcross, a businessman and NER representative in Omaha, Nebraska, had no experience as an exhibitor, but pulled together a comprehensive publicity plan for *Auction of Souls*. Originally, the film was to be exhibited by the general manager of the A.H. Blank Enterprises, owners of the First National Distributors’ franchise for Nebraska, Iowa, and Kansas. The promise of a heatwave and difficulties inherent in attracting audiences to sit close together in a hot, windowless room convinced the manager to sell exhibiting rights for the city.³⁰ Shallcross took the initiative on behalf of the local NER chapter and purchased those rights. Instead of sponsoring the film as part of a philanthropic campaign, Shallcross announced, “We want it as a straight, strictly amusement affair, without approvals, without a special society night, without anything but crowds. We want to jam the theatre at regular prices, and we want the entire city to go. Then—here’s the secret—we’re going to wage a city-wide campaign to raise funds

²⁹ “Keeping Both Eyes Open?” *Motion Picture News* 20 no. 9, 23 August 1919: 1611.

³⁰ “Business Man Buys a Picture and Gives it Vast Exploitation,” *Motion Picture News* 20 no. 3, 12 July 1919: 509.

for Armenian relief.”³¹ By exhibiting the film prior to the NER publicity campaign, Shallcross hoped to interest audiences in Armenian relief before announcing the actual fundraiser. The NER would then receive proceeds from the film at regular commercial rates that were set as high as \$10 a seat in some cities.³²

Shallcross further created a theatrical atmosphere for showing the film. Despite some early confusion about the exhibitor’s obligations, Shallcross learned that he needed to hire an orchestra, an operator for the projection machine, ushers, and a cashier to sell tickets. He later discovered that “the lobby should be decorated; that a stage setting was a necessary adjunct.”³³ Shallcross went beyond simple ‘decoration’ to “paint the canopy out in front to resemble a great Arab tent” and hired “a quartet of fiendish looking Arabs, mounted on Arabian horses, and carrying Arabian spears with banners attached telling about the show.” It seems that “the madly yelling Kurds of the Desert were given a dozen summonses each for speeding during the week they reached the streets of Omaha.” Instead of hiring the usual male ushers in plain garb to direct the audience to their seats, Shallcross engaged female ushers dressed as “ostensibly beautiful harem inmates” to lend further Oriental flavor.³⁴ In doing so, Shallcross exhibited a production within a production, all tailored to create a spectacle of Orientalist imagery.

Auction of Souls was similarly feted in Minneapolis, Minnesota where a “little group of elderly spinsters” had attempted to block the showing of the film for propriety’s sake. It seems ‘the spinsters’ had read the serialized version of *Ravished Armenia*

³¹ “Business Man Buys a Picture and Gives it Vast Exploitation,” *Motion Picture News* 20 no. 3, 12 July 1919: 509.

³² “‘Auction of Souls’ is a Washington Hit,” *Motion Picture News* 20 no. 7, 9 August 1919: 1248.

³³ “Business Man Buys a Picture and Gives it Vast Exploitation,” 509.

³⁴ *ibid*, 509.

published in Twin Cities' newspapers and felt that the sexual violence and slavery made for unsavory viewing. Their objections were overruled by the Federation of Women's Clubs, "a big, broad-minded organization" who "listened to the 'reformers' and then attended a private showing of the production." The committee that reviewed the picture proclaimed it "a splendid production and wonderful propaganda for the cause of Armenia" and dismissed 'the spinsters' complaints.³⁵ A complete 'exploitation campaign' followed, culminating in yet another Orientalist spectacle. *Motion Picture News* reported that:

Special stage effects included an extremely realistic desert sandstorm. A camel, borrowed from the local zoo, was chauffeured by a driver dressed in Armenian costume, who performed the ceremony of the Mohammedan prayers while the orchestra played Oriental music. About the driver during this atmosphere stunt, were clustered a group of girls in Armenian garb. Night tints were used in the lighting effects. These faded to red and then to pink as the sand storm started. Sand whipped furiously across the stage, and moving clouds gave greater realism to the presentation. It was one of the most unique stage effects that Minneapolis theatre goers had ever seen.³⁶

These sorts of sideshows were a confused mangling of Christian and Muslim, Armenian, Kurdish, and Arabian stereotypes that played up the exoticism of Oriental life. Though these promotional stunts were inaccurate, they succeeded in lending a sense of atmosphere to the proceedings.

Auction of Souls presented graphic images of violence against Armenian Christians at the hands of Muslim Turks. It recreated visual evidence of the Armenian genocide with the addition of sensationalized scenes for American (and British)

³⁵ "Protest Only Stirs Up a City to Throng 'Auction of Souls,'" *Motion Picture News* 20 no. 2, 5 July 1919: 318.

³⁶ *ibid*, 320.

audiences. Judges and police commissioners across the U.S. attempted to ban the film for these reasons. Detroit, Atlanta, and the state of Pennsylvania initially banned the production, only to reverse their decision within weeks. Cinema magazines covered the overturning of these bans as part of their coverage of publicity for *Auction of Souls*. Police Commissioner Dr. James W. Inches initially banned *Auction of Souls* during the film week of “pre-release” showings. His decision to reopen the production was perhaps motivated by popular demands as *Exhibitors Herald and Motography* noted that this announcement “was cheered to the echo by 10,000 persons in Cadillac Square” in downtown Detroit.³⁷ *Auction of Souls* then proved so popular that “the Police Commissioner further accommodated the management of the Washington Theatre by posting extra patrolmen to prevent throngs of Detroit people from blocking traffic. Several times it was necessary to order ticket sales stopped for short periods.”³⁸

In Atlanta, the ban placed on *Auction of Souls* by the local Board of Review and Board of Trustees of Carnegie Library was overruled in an opinion by Judge George L. Bell of the Fulton County Superior Court. Bell’s ruling “provided the most phenomenal advertising matter in the history of the state” when news outlets picked up the story and a newspapers published the full opinion “headed by a seven-column streamer—‘Superior Court Lifts Ban.’” with multiple exclamation points.³⁹ Other newspapers also announced the decision in double columned articles so that “in all it was a development that gave ‘Auction of Souls’ the greatest amount of gratis publicity in the annals of Atlanta motion

³⁷ “Detroit Police Commissioner Lifts Ban on ‘Auction of Souls,’” *Exhibitors Herald and Motography* 9 no. 5 (26 July 1919): 74.

³⁸ *ibid*, 74.

³⁹ “‘Auction of Souls’ Is Given Boost by Decision of Court,” *Exhibitors Herald and Motography* 9 no. 5 (26 July 1919): 116.

picture theatres.”⁴⁰ The Pennsylvania State Board of Censors also banned the film, only to be overruled by Judge Patterson of Common Pleas Court in Philadelphia. A trial ensued between the producers and distributors versus the Board of Censors, but Judge Patterson decided to review the film himself. He found that “there is nothing in the scenes which make them sacrilegious, obscene, indecent or immoral, or of such nature as to tend to debase or corrupt morals. Viewing the picture as a whole, the court finds as a fact that it is educational in character. It is not only a vivid portrayal of the story entitled ‘Ravished Armenia,’ but it is also a picture of conditions as they existed in Armenia a few months ago.”⁴¹

Judge Patterson’s opinion that *Auction of Souls* was an educational film accords with the findings of the National Board of Review of Motion Pictures, an unofficial censorship agency that reviewed films before release. In the report issued to the National Motion Picture Committee of the American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief, *Auction of Souls* was found “impressive” in its entertainment value and “unusual” in its educational value. The Board’s general comments called *Auction of Souls* “[a] frank straight-forward exposition of sufferings of Armenians which makes a sincere and powerful appeal to every drop of red blood in America’s manhood and womanhood.”⁴² A copy of this report appeared in an epic eight-page advertisement for *Auction of Souls* in *The Moving Picture World*. That advertisement also featured a letter from Marcus Loew, owner of at least twenty-five Loew Theatres in New York City alone. He wrote that the

⁴⁰ *ibid*, 116.

⁴¹ “Keystone Censors Again Reversed,” *The Moving Picture World* 40 no. 11 (14 June 1919): 1636.

⁴² Advertisement, *The Moving Picture World* 40 no. 10 (7 June 1919): 1449.

box office reports from those theaters indicated “that this production, without a single exception, is the biggest business getter that has ever played our theatres.”⁴³

In addition to Loew’s letter extolling the business benefits of hosting *Auction of Souls*, that same advertisement contained a letter from the former president of Harvard University, Charles W. Eliot. Eliot was involved with the NER’s fundraising efforts and wrote a letter that explained the meaning of the film for Armenian relief:

The sight of this motion picture is capable of implanting in many millions of thinking and unthinking Americans three convictions which may reasonably determine the public conduct of the American people in the near future: First, that the Armenian people deserve to be rescued, comforted, and made free and secure for the future by the use of the full power of the democratic western peoples: secondly, that the Concert of Europe, which since the Crimean War, at least, has signally failed to protect the Christian populations of the Near East and to establish justice in that part of the world, should now be replaced by a more effective international organization; and thirdly, that if this enterprise of restoring Armenians be a crusade, that is, an enterprise undertaken in a good cause with unselfish enthusiasm, it is a crusade in which the American people should ardently desire to take part.⁴⁴

Eliot suggested that the film would move the American people to support Armenian relief as well as the League of Nations. He criticized Europe for not halting the persecution of Christians under the Ottoman Empire, but did not consider the U.S. negligent in failing to intervene. Eliot hoped that seeing this film would cause Americans to open their hearts to the Armenians on a grand scale so that the NER’s “crusade” would flourish. The ad concluded by summarizing the production, “That \$10 per seat picture ‘Auction of Souls’

⁴³ *ibid*, 1447.

⁴⁴ *ibid*, 1448.

holds audiences spellbound. 8 reels, several thousand people, a vivid living presentment of the fact that makes the blood of American women boil.”⁴⁵

With only parts of one reel in circulation it is difficult to know exactly what was shown that made “the blood of American women boil.” However a list of subtitles from the Selig Collection at the Margaret Herrick Library of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences was reprinted in Anthony Slide’s *Ravished Armenian and the Story of Aurora Mardiganian* (1997). This list allows us to reconstruct the narrative elements of the film and suggests likely content of certain scenes. In addition, photos from the film as well as the lone surviving clip offer glimpses into the tone and look of the film. Reel five, for example, depicted a scene where “the Turkish gendarmes “marched 9,000 women and children to the banks of the Tigris, killed them all and threw the bodies into the river.” This scene refers to a report Viscount James Bryce made to the House of Lords in which he stated, “According to my information there was, at Mush in particular, a very extensive massacre; at another place all the male population that could be seized were brought out and shot, and women and children to the number of 9,000 were taken to the banks of the Tigris and, thrown into the river and drowned.”⁴⁶ In the film, the subtitles continue: “(15) The boat is overloaded. Throw out the children. (16) It will take at least three trips to carry them across. (17) Make them swim. (End of reel five).”⁴⁷ On this occasion, the scene reenacted allegations put forth in the public realm and were

⁴⁵ *ibid*, 1450.

⁴⁶ U.K. Hansard Parliamentary Debates, HL Deb 28 July 1915 vol 19 cc774-8, http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/lords/1915/jul/28/reported-massacres-in-armenia#S5LV0019P0_19150728_HOL_134 [accessed 26 March 2014].

⁴⁷ Slide, *Ravished Armenia*, 211.

brought to life on screen. In other instances, the scenes were largely manufactured from Mardiganian's heavily edited text.

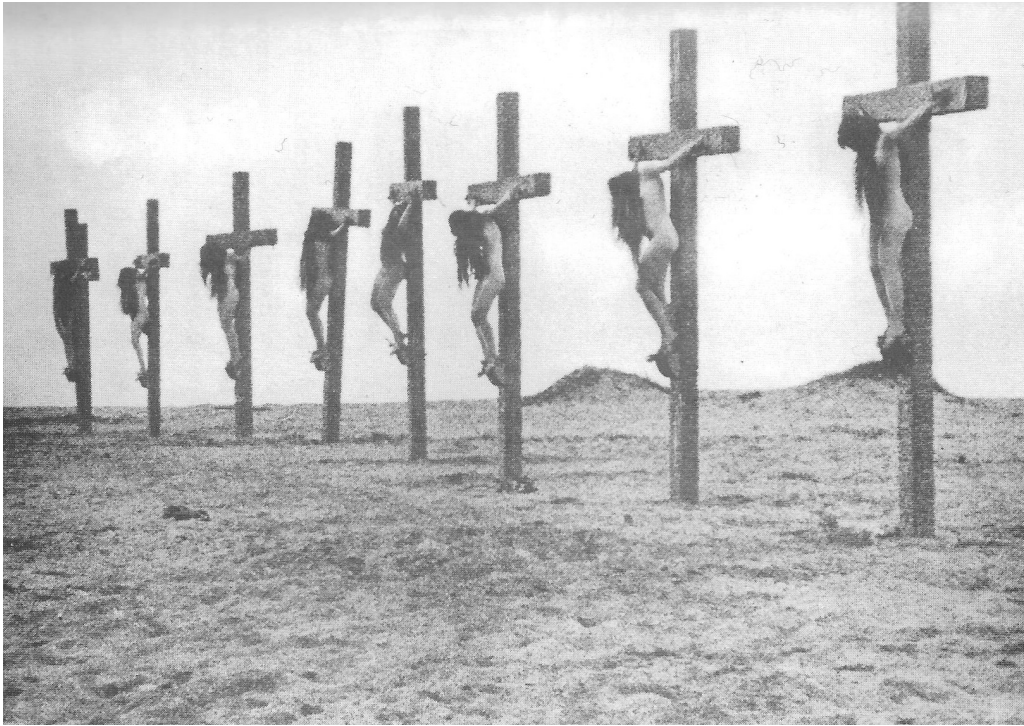


Figure 20: Crucifixion of Armenian Women. Still from *Auction of Souls* (1919).

For instance, the haunting image of young women crucified in the desert was an invented scene from Mardiganian's book. According to Mardiganian in her later years, "The Turks didn't make their crosses like that. The Turks made little pointed crosses. They took the clothes off the girls. They made them bend down. And after raping them, they made them sit on the pointed wood, through the vagina."⁴⁸ Besides being sexually explicit and unfilmable, Mardiganian's version lacked the symbolic power of showing Armenian victims in the same position as Jesus Christ on the Cross. This image invited a comparison between those Romans who crucified Jesus and the "Unspeakable Turk" who

⁴⁸ *ibid*, 6.

made innocent Christians suffer for the love of Jesus and God. It is a powerful indictment of Muslim hatred, even if patently false.

Though *Auction of Souls* was by far the most well known film of the Armenian Relief Movement, NER released several other ‘photoplays’ including *Alice in Hungerland*. *Alice in Hungerland* was shown in schools, churches, and theaters nationwide as part of the 1922 NER campaign. This take off on Lewis Carroll’s *Alice in Wonderland* features another orphan in the titular role. Alice Duryea, née Esther Razon, starred in *Alice in Hungerland*, a NER film release in the Fall of 1921. The NER cast the eight-year-old Razon from among the wards of the Jewish National Orphanage in Constantinople. Like Mardiganian, a representative of the NER, Mrs. Florence Spencer Duryea, took her in and became her foster mother.⁴⁹ It was not uncommon for women who visited NER orphanages to adopt a child and bring them to the U.S. Such adoptions were later discouraged by the NER, presumably because the legalities were murky at best and the women generally single. The fact that Esther Razon was Jewish—not Armenian—led Rabbi Stephen S. Weiss of the NER Executive Board to raise objections to her adoption by a non-Jewish woman. According to the *New York Times*, the application for adoption was endorsed by the NER with the “stipulation that the adoption should be ‘under the consent and advice of such Jewish members of our committee as

⁴⁹ Passport Application of Florence Spencer Duryea: NARA Series: *M1490*; Roll #: *1673*; Collection Number: *ARC Identifier 583830 / MLR Number A1 534*; *Passport Applications, January 2, 1906 - March 31, 1925*; National Archives and Records Administration (NARA); Washington D.C. Mrs. Duryea was marked as a divorcee on her passport application.

Hon. Henry Morgenthau, Abram I. Elkus, Oscar M. Strauss, Rabbi Stephen S. Weiss, and Rabbi Tietelbaum [sic].”⁵⁰

Rabbi Weiss held that Mrs. Duryea only sought advice from him but did not abide by his direction. He stated his belief that Mrs. Duryea “has the intention of weening [sic] the child away from her religion and inducing her to embrace another religion.”⁵¹ As a result, the Jewish National Orphanage attempted to have Razon removed from Duryea’s custody and released into the care of Rabbi Weiss until an appropriate Jewish home could be found. Mrs. Duryea surrendered Razon to Rabbi Weiss temporarily, but remained part of the child’s life. Razon was removed from her school in Westchester County and spent her time divided between Rabbi Weiss’ home during the week and Mrs. Duryea on the weekends. Once Rabbi Weiss located a Jewish foster family, Mrs. Duryea was to have her say in the matter of adoption. The row assumedly died down as the next piece of news relates to Alice Duryea’s engagement to John I. Kinney.⁵² From the engagement announcement it seems that Mrs. Duryea eventually got her way; Esther the Jewish orphan became Alice the American girl.

In *Alice in Hungerland*, Alice played a young girl who follows her father overseas to his work with the NER. Alice stows away on a cargo ship filled with food, clothing, and supplies donated by the American people and bound for the Near East. After “certain vicissitudes” she reaches her father in Constantinople and continues with him “over the Black Sea to Batum and then into the interior, to Tiflis, Alexandrapol,

⁵⁰ “Wants Little Alice Raised As A Jewess,” *New York Times*, 28 April 1922, <http://query.nytimes.com/mem/archive-free/pdf?res=F30C11F9355810738DDDA10A94DC405B828EF1D3> [accessed 19 February 2012].

⁵¹ *ibid*, 28 April 1922.

⁵² “J.I. Kinney to Wed New York Girl,” *The Kingston Daily Freeman*, 17 January 1939: 5.

Erivan.” The film intersperses unscripted footage from NER cinematographers who traveled through these areas with Alice’s scripted visits to various orphanages in the Near East. She encounters the poor NER orphans “parentless, homeless, ragged, starving and ill.” An article in *The New Near East* tells us that “sometimes she saw them lying still in the street, dead for want of actual food. Sometimes she saw them living in caves with dogs because there was no roof in all that desolate land.”⁵³ These scenes did not drive the narrative, but offered an opportunity to show the desperate circumstances in which the Armenians lived. Other scenes—those more likely to feature narrative action—pictured the work of the NER with children who had found sanctuary in their orphanages. Inside NER institutions “she saw hundreds of healthy children at long tables eating. She saw children in classrooms and workshops industrious and happy.” This juxtaposition between the children under NER supervision and those “living in caves with dogs” testified to the substantial work the organization did in caring for such orphans.

⁵³ “Alice in Hungerland,” *The New Near East* 7 no. 1 (November 1921): 4.



Figure 11: Alice (in white) hands out bread to Armenian children in *Alice in Hungerland* (1921). Courtesy of *The New Near East*.

Yet there were still limitations to NER's ability to aid the poor children in such need of food and homes. When Alice sees the "great truckloads of flour roll into the orphanage compounds" she initially thinks that this enormous amount of food must feed those begging outside the gates as well.⁵⁴ She then watches as that flour is baked into bread so that she understands the vast quantity of supplies necessary to keep those thousands of children simply nourished, not overfed. This realization is meant to impress the audience with the insufficiency of current donations. If the American people want to help all Armenian children, they must give more money, more food, more often. It is also important to realize that this film focuses on children rather than all refugees. At this point in the NER campaign, adult refugees were less attractive beggars than poor, innocent children. Alice, in particular, emphasizes the interest in children as a child

⁵⁴ *ibid*, 4.

herself. As both Alice and Esther Razon, she is the new poster child for Armenian Relief. Where once she might have appeared on an actual poster, now she is animated in film. This helped bring her alive to American children like those in White Plains, New York who contributed 5,000 cans of milk at a screening of *Alice in Hungerland* sponsored by local Boy Scouts.⁵⁵ *Alice in Hungerland* also spoke to the schoolchildren of Manchester, New Hampshire, where the NER State Director distributed tickets to a screening. When the children returned to school they “ask[ed] their teachers if they may not be permitted to bring to the schools, as collecting places, money to buy food and clothes for the hungry children of Armenia.”⁵⁶ Eleven-year-old Elizabeth Hayes of Wellesley, Massachusetts saw the film and was inspired to put on a play of her own to raise money for “the poor starving children over there.” She and two other girls raised four dollars from the thirty people who attended the play.⁵⁷

Alice, the character, also appeared in her own play entitled “Shadows: A Children’s Play for the Near East Relief” by Elisabeth Edsland. The content of the play, while not the same as the film, provides further insight into the moral of the film. In Edsland’s version, Alice is an American girl who “falls through the looking-glass” to find herself among a group of Armenian orphans. The play begins with Alice’s beloved mother telling her of Armenia: “And in that land, so far away, in that land of starving children, our Lord Jesus was born many years ago.”⁵⁸ Of course, Jesus was born in Nazareth in the former Ottoman territory of Palestine, but connecting Armenia and the

⁵⁵ “Are They a Worthy People?” *The New Near East* 7 no. 4 (February 1922): 16.

⁵⁶ “The Power of Children,” *The New Near East* 7 no. 2 (December 1921): 14.

⁵⁷ “Children Help,” *The New Near East* 7 no. 11 (October 1922): 12.

⁵⁸ Elisabeth Edsland, “Shadows: A Children’s Play for the Near East Relief,” *The New Near East* 7 no. 3 (January 1922): 12.

Armenian to the Bible helped bridge the cognitive distance to that foreign land for Americans, especially children. Calling Armenia “the Cradle of Christianity” also legitimated American Christian support of the Armenians, who were seen as successors to early Christians. Alice wishes that she could see the little children of Armenia and soon finds herself among a group of “sparsely clad” children “huddled together” in a barren field. Stage directions note that “*They are tired, and we wonder why they are so old-looking and why they are dressed so poorly in such cold weather.*” Alice cuts a strange figure in comparison, well-dressed and well-fed. She approaches the group and begins interacting with them. Much of the conversation concerns the differences between the average American girl and the many Armenian orphans:

Oldest Girl: You do not look like the girls of this land. Did you get those clothes at the orphanage?

Alice: The orphanage! No, my mother made me this dress.

A Very Little Girl: Mother! What is a mother?

(The very little girl looks questioningly at the Oldest Girl.)

Oldest Girl: *She* doesn’t. I had one once. But it was so long ago I have forgotten. None of these children have mothers.⁵⁹

Alice comes to realize that she has taken her blessings for granted. When she awakes in her mother’s arms, she hugs her tight and promises never to waste food again. American children were reminded of their many blessings through their less fortunate peers.

Armenian relief marketed itself to children to draw young Americans into the cause. Children’s plays, stories, and contests were published in *The New Near East* to

⁵⁹ Elisabeth Edsland, “Shadows: A Children’s Play for the Near East Relief,” *The New Near East* 7 no. 3 (January 1922): 12-15.

provide entertainment for both generations. The Boy Scouts of America and other groups for children repeatedly organized milk drives and bundle days to collect old clothes for the Armenian orphans. Their accomplishments resulted in accolades by the NER as well as local officials. Jackie Coogan, the child movie star, was part of this effort to reach children when he was commissioned to lead a “Children’s Crusade for the Near East” in 1924. He has been dubbed “the first celebrity humanitarian” by one scholar for his efforts on behalf of Armenian Relief.⁶⁰ It is hardly possible to overstate the heights of Coogan’s celebrity in the 1920s. From the time he appeared with Charlie Chaplin’s *The Kid* in 1921, Coogan was a consistent draw at the box office. In that film he played an orphan taken in by Chaplin’s Tramp to become his sidekick. It was Chaplin’s full-length feature debut as director and a huge success. Coogan parlayed that role into other vehicles such as *Peck’s Bad Boy* (1921), *Oliver Twist* (1922), *Circus Days* (1923) so that he was making two to three films per year throughout his childhood. He later made the transition from silent to talking film with *Tom Sawyer* in 1930. At his peak, Coogan was featured on merchandise ranging from peanut butter jars to dolls so that his audience could literally take a piece of him home.

As early as July 1921, Coogan was involved in advocating for Near East Relief, as reported in an article published in *The New Near East*. This article states that the “Infant Phenom” woke up one morning, found that his bathrobe was snug, and read in the newspaper “that a million and a half people in the Caucasus have no clothes for next winter.” After his father “convey[ed] to Jackie’s mind the picture of a million and half

⁶⁰ Vicken Babkenian, “Hollywood’s First Celebrity Humanitarian that America Forgot,” *Armenian Weekly*, 7 January 2011, <http://www.armenianweekly.com/2011/01/07/hollywoods-first-celebrity-humanitarian-that-america-forgot/> [accessed 3 February 2014]

ragged, starving people facing the bitter winter in the high lands of Transcaucasia,” Jackie exclaimed “There are altogether too many clothes in this house.” The child star proceeded to clean out the house “and a huge bundle of clothing was sent to the warehouse of Near East Relief in New York at the very beginning of the clothing campaign.”⁶¹ Other movie stars were also listed as contributing their old clothing, but they played second fiddle to the six-year-old. Bundles of old clothing were also contributed by children attending a production of Coogan’s 1922 film *Trouble* at New York’s Strand Theater. The cost of admission was one bundle each and the event raised thirty-five hundred bundles of clothing. *The New Near East* reported that “A similar plan may be carried out in all the principal cities of the country” with the help of the Jackie Coogan Productions Exploitation Manager, Paul Gray. The team at Jackie Coogan Productions went on to sponsor other events that combined Coogan’s films with philanthropic work for NER.

As discussed in the introduction, United Artists studios combined the filming of *Circus Days* in December 1922 with an event to collect supplies for NER in response to the Burning of Smyrna. In early December, United Artists studios turned one of their lots into a circus complete with “every kind of circus attraction from bearded lady and fat woman to skeleton-man and brave equestrienne.”⁶² The circus also featured “side shows, [a] band, bareback riders, acrobats, clowns, camels, lions, and—EVERYTHING.”⁶³ This was a complete circus that happened to include a film crew following Coogan in his role as Toby Tyler, a foster child who runs away to join the circus. While children gathered

⁶¹ “The ‘Infant Phenom’ Turns Philanthropist,” *The New Near East* 6 no. 10 (July 1921): 8.

⁶² “Benefit Circus ‘Real Thing,’” *Los Angeles Times*, December 1, 1922, J112.

⁶³ “Jackie Coogan’s Circus,” *New Near East* 8, no. 5 (April 1923), 8.

by “high schools, grammar school, women’s clubs and civic organizations” appeared in droves, Coogan worked a full day collecting donations for admission and filming various scenes. *The New Near East* judged the event a success as it raised \$3500 in food and clothing from the 7,500 attendees.⁶⁴ This was only the beginning of Coogan’s activism on behalf of the children of the Near East.



Figure 22: Jackie Coogan at Circus Benefit. Clipping from *The New Near East* (April 1923).

During the summer of 1924, Coogan traveled across the country drawing crowds and collecting donations for a cargo ship he would escort to the Near East. This campaign was dubbed “The Children’s Crusade for the Near East,” an unfortunate choice of appellation considering the original Crusades pitting Christian against Muslim during the Middle Ages. Of course, the NER might have chosen this name specifically to evoke

⁶⁴ *ibid*, 8.

those violent events and remind Americans of the “natural hatred” between the two religions that supposedly left the Armenian people in shambles. In announcing the tour, Jack Coogan Sr. discussed his edifying intentions in exposing his son to the “hardships and suffering other children of his own age have had to endure” so that he might realize “the common duty of all mankind to one another.”⁶⁵ The elder Coogan’s sentiments were echoed by educators like Cincinnati’s Superintendent of Schools who believed that “every contribution from an American child is an advance in the development of the spiritual life of American childhood.”⁶⁶ Whether or not he had an uplifting effect, Jackie Coogan’s contribution to Armenian relief directly spurred the contributions of thousands of American children.

In August 1924, Jackie Coogan embarked on his “Children’s Crusade” that took him through twenty-five American cities as well as European capitals. He also stopped in Greece to deliver the bill of lading to the cargo ship full of supplies donated by American children. Jackie Coogan’s involvement in Armenian Relief was expertly crafted and carefully executed to promote Coogan as well as promoting Near East Relief. His tour of the U.S. and voyage to the Near East came at a crucial time in his career. At the ripe old age of 10, Coogan was aging out of the cuteness that made him so popular among movie goers. Hollywood columnists such as Harry Carr lamented “no one who has observed his recent work can fail to come to the conclusion that the little boy we all loved is slipping away. . . which is another way of saying Jackie is growing-up.”⁶⁷

Advocating for Near East Relief allowed Coogan to age gracefully by harnessing his

⁶⁵ “Jackie Coogan to Aid Tots,” *Los Angeles Times*, Mar 17, 1924.

⁶⁶ Dr. Randall Judson Condon, *New Near East* 8 no. 10 (October 1923), 6.

⁶⁷ “Harry Carr’s Page,” *Los Angeles Times*, September 24, 1924, C2.

fame into charitable work. Despite the fact that he likely had little to do with the arrangements, this was a sign of maturation for a boy whose every haircut and lost dog made national news. Thus Jackie Coogan's fundraising efforts were part of a symbiotic relationship with NER wherein the organization got a tremendous boost in publicity, interests, and donations from their association with such a celebrity. Meanwhile, the celebrity received publicity, but more importantly the campaign molded his image as an ambassador of goodwill.

Like film studios, food corporations offered their assistance in the form of rice, corn syrup, condensed milk, and other foodstuffs and, in return, their contributions to a humanitarian cause were acknowledged. Some of these companies used that exchange in their advertising to improve their brand's image, much like Jackie Coogan did for his reputation. As Armenian orphans provided lessons in humanity for Coogan, NER wards also confirmed nutritional value in advertisements for food products. Food cooperatives such as the Retail Grocer's Association, Dairyman's League, Inc., and Association of Corn Products as well as certain brand name food companies are listed as generous contributors to the NER's Golden Rule Campaign. Those brands include Borden's Condensed Milk, Sun Maid Raisins, Carnation Milk, and Tharinger Macaroni among others.⁶⁸

The Borden Milk Company ran one of the best known campaigns on behalf of Armenian relief. It began when Borden agreed to match every purchased can of their Eagle brand condensed milk with another can donated by the company.⁶⁹ *The New Near*

⁶⁸ Charles V. Vickrey, "Advertising and Golden Rule Sunday" (New York: Near East Relief, 1924),

⁶⁹ "Condensed Milk Restores Half-Starved Children to Life," *The Indianapolis News* (14 June 1923), 25.

East had long referred to the Borden Milk Company in the magazine, “the camel trains are the milk carriers, crossing the interior of Asia Minor laden with boxes of Borden’s condensed milk and other brands.”⁷⁰ Borden’s milk was also the default brand for donation to various film and events run by the NER, including Jackie Coogan’s circus. The company also received a boost from Dr. J.C. Curran, Associate Director of the NER and Surgeon-Commander, U.S.N., who was quoted in a 1924 Borden milk pamphlet of “Diet and Nutrition”:

Our experience with 115,000 orphan children of the Near East shows that there is no more valuable food than condensed milk for restoring half starved children to health and strength. In the area where the Near East Relief is operated, milk producing animals are tubercular, and we cannot depend upon that source of milk supply. In a recent evacuation of refugee canned milk was of great help because of its concentrated food value. Many of the refugees were compelled to travel for days at a time with no other food to depend upon than a can of American Condensed Milk.⁷¹

While milk was certainly vital to the survival of thousands of Armenian refugees, Curran’s statement about “tubercular cows” seems peculiar. For one, there is no other evidence that unhealthy cows were a particular problem in the Near East; rather, the lack of dairy cows and temperature control coupled with the large number of dependents made canned milk a vital alternative to fresh milk. As we shall see, Curran was not judicious in his statements of praise for various foods and their manufacturers. His stamp of approval, however, was useful to companies that wanted to sell their foods on the basis of their nutritional value. Curran’s words gave them the proof so that such companies could

⁷⁰ “The Milk Route,” *New Near East* 6 no. 8 (May 1921), 7.

⁷¹ “Nutrition and Health,” New York: The Borden Company, 1929 (first printing 1924), 74-5.

benefit by advertising the dietary value of their products. In return, the Near East Relief received donations of millions of cans of milk and other products.

Food cooperatives were in a unique position to provide help for the NER. In 1921, for instance, the Retail Grocer's Association in Syracuse started a campaign called "Say It With Flour." Every groceryman agreed to put flour on sale to encourage people to buy flour and donate sacks to the Near East Relief. In addition to grocery stores, the flour was put on sale in "banks, restaurants, hotels, moving picture houses, cigar stores, and other business places" as well as churches.⁷² The "Say It With Flour" campaign was so successful that the sales organization of the Globe Grain and Milling Company made it a nationwide campaign by distributing "Coin Posters" for display to grocery stores and bakeries as they proved the most effective places for collecting donations. These coin posters were "made of heavy cardboard, size 28x22, with slots for the deposit of coins taking up the lower third of the poster. A heavy celluloid face, covering the coin slots, makes it possible for the public to see all the coins deposited."⁷³ The Coin Poster itself gave an accounting of the lives that a barrel of flour could save, "Every 5 cents you contribute towards purchasing this barrel of flour means another *day of life for a little child*."⁷⁴

The Near East Relief received many endorsements for the "Say It With Flour" Campaign. Philip A. DePuyt, trustee of the National Retail Grocers Association, wrote "the relief of distress in the Near East is a matter that concerns every thoughtful

⁷² "Say It With Flour!" *New Near East* 6 no. 5 (February 1921), 25.

⁷³ "Near East Relief 'Say It With Flour' Campaign," *The Retail Grocers' Advocate* 26 no. 19 (13 May 1921), 9.

⁷⁴ "An Investment in Human Life," *The Retail Grocers' Advocate* 26 no. 19 (13 May 1921), 8. This is a reproduction of the "Coin Poster"

American citizen. Your plan of placing a barrel of flour on exhibit in the grocery stores and attaching thereto a receptacle for the customer to contribute toward sending flour to these distressed people is to be commended.”⁷⁵ Allen B. Cox, President of the Syracuse Retail Grocers Association, gave his endorsement to the NER directly, “The Syracuse Retail Grocers Association has carefully investigated the Near East Relief, and finds that it is conducting a big work in a big, efficient way.” These votes of confidence inspired the Hecker-Jones-Jewell Milling Company in New York City and the Washburn-Crosby Co. in Wisconsin to join the campaign. More significant was the participation of silent screen star Norma Talmadge, who filmed a moving picture trailer that “[gave] glimpses of the misery in the Near East, and show[ed] Miss Talmadge in the act of helping our work by dropping a silver dollar into a Coin Poster and pleading with the public to ‘SAY IT WITH FLOUR!’”⁷⁶ At this point, Talmadge was nearing the peak of her popularity but also in the midst of a transition from New York to Hollywood. This contribution to Armenian Relief raised the profile of the “Say It With Flour” Campaign and brought it into the moving picture houses for consumption by the American film-going public.

Flour was of perennial importance to the NER and articles about its necessity for sustaining life appeared consistently in the pages of the organization’s periodical. *The New Near East* was as much an effective mouthpiece for advertising the need for food as it was for recognizing those companies that supplied it. When the NER in Transcaucasia communicated their need for 25,000 pounds of cocoa, the NER in New York began gathering bids from various cocoa companies. Instead of submitting their bid, the

⁷⁵ “Near East Relief ‘Say It With Flour’ Campaign,” 9.

⁷⁶ *ibid*, 9.

Hershey's Chocolate Company donated the entire amount and received acknowledgement and thanks in *The New Near East*. Dr. J.C. Curran made a plea to the National Macaroni Manufacturers convention:

We physicians, who have been on the ground and seen the terrible hunger of the little children who sometimes wander through the hills for weeks feeding upon weeds, old bones or whatever they can get hold of, have observed the wonderful recuperative value of macaroni to these starving little bodies. *There is no other food so nutritious*. Macaroni is high in gluten, the body and health building elements required especially by children. It is a splendid meat substitute and can be made very palatable. We would rather have macaroni than any other food for those hungry children. (emphasis mine)⁷⁷

This statement was valuable for macaroni manufacturers looking for scientific evidence that their product was healthy. At the time, nutritional scientist believed that a high caloric intake was more important than protein to feed victims of famine and American children. If the NER preferred macaroni over all other foods for feeding starving children, then mothers of America would assume that macaroni was a good choice for feeding their own children. Two Chicago macaroni companies donated 30,000 pounds of macaroni—or as winningly described, “more than 2,000 miles of the stuff”—and received thanks in *The New Near East*. Another 5,000 pounds was donated by the Charles F. Mueller Company, with more to come from other macaroni manufacturers. The article, however, did not mention Dr. J.C. Curran's statement on behalf of macaroni.⁷⁸ NER made similar pleas for raisins, canned fruits and vegetables, canned milk, corn products, and rice.

⁷⁷ “Macaroni Shipped to Near East,” *Wholesale Grocery Review* 23 no. 8 (September 1922), 12.

⁷⁸ “Two Thousand Miles of Macaroni,” *New Near East* 7, no. 10 (September 1922), 9.

Dr. J.C. Curran also sent letters that were incorporated into advertising for Karo Corn Syrup. An ad from *The Chicago Daily Tribune* republished Curran's letter: "The Food Experts of the Near East Relief Organization know the necessity of giving children energy and health through nutritious foods only. . . These experts have found that because Karo contains a high percentage of the vitalizing food element 'Dextrose' it ranks with the very best food for the upbuilding of children. In fact, Karo has helped to save the remnant of the oldest Christian nation in the world."⁷⁹ Once again, this attempt at nutritional science dubiously argued for the dietary value of sugar for the starving children of the Near East and for healthy American children. The Karo ad elaborates on the benefits of its product, specifying corn syrup as one of these "inexpensive but highly nourishing foods" that have "transformed half starved orphans into happy, healthy children."⁸⁰

Such imperishable food items formed the diet of hundreds of thousands of Armenian orphans in the Near East. In recognition of that fact, the NER and President Coolidge asked Americans to observe International Golden Rule Sunday on December 2, 1923 by eating at least one meal "approximating that which is used every day in the orphanages of the Near East."⁸¹ This meant that Americans limited themselves to foods found in orphanages, those very same foods that had been donated in tens of thousands of pounds. The NER also provided recipes from expert chefs such as "Oscar, the famous chef of the Waldorf-Astoria in New York" that included approved staples like milk,

⁷⁹ Karo Ad, *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 30 November 1923, pg. 6

⁸⁰ "A Lesson for American Mothers Taught by Orphans of the Near East Relief," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, November 30, 1923, 6.

⁸¹ "International Golden Rule Sunday," *New Near East* 8 no. 12 (December 1923), 19.

beans, rice, macaroni, cocoa, and corn products.⁸² These guidelines confirm the commercial collaboration between food manufacturers and the NER. An article in the *The Milwaukee Sentinel* further connected American excesses with Armenian starvation: “Let us think of these children who would starve if it were not for agencies like the Near East Relief and resolve that we will start tomorrow on our reducing regime again; go on a three day low calorie period, and send the money we save on those three days to help keep some children from starving.”⁸³ Golden Rule Sunday was an effective way to make Americans feel guilty about the abundance they enjoyed, while—an ocean away—Armenian refugees starved.

Whether packaged in a ‘barrel of flour’ or a ‘bundle of used clothing’, the needs of Armenian refugees were consistently reported to Americans in the guise of marketing conventions. These conventions extended to the products the NER needed to function in the U.S. Such a cozy arrangement came about as a result of the commodification of humanitarian sentiment on Armenian refugees. NER could direct the emotions of so many Americans towards events a world away and ask these same Americans to express their sympathy through their daily choices. Those “daily choices” included the consumption of certain brands of food that reified their commitment to Armenian relief. This, in essence, was how Armenian relief—and by extension, humanitarian causes—came to be consumed by the American public.

⁸² *ibid*, 6.

⁸³ Lulu Hunt Peters, “Diet and Health,” *The Milwaukee Sentinel*, 25 December 1923, 13.

Conclusion

Celebrities since Jackie Coogan have associated themselves with various charitable endeavors. One well-trodden path for philanthropic celebrities is the United Nations' Goodwill Ambassadorship programs. Various agencies within the UN take on celebrities to publicize their projects. Athletes, musicians, actors, and royalty such as Mia Farrow, David Beckham, Don Cheadle, Harry Belafonte, and Queen Rania of Jordan act as Goodwill Ambassadors for United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). Angelina Jolie, actress and former Goodwill Ambassador for the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugee (UNHCR) now works as a Special Envoy to the UNHCR. Actress Sally Struthers and other celebrities have served as spokespeople for organizations such as ChildFund—formerly, Christian Children's Fund—in long-form infomercials that depict adorable children living in squalor. Other celebrities use their influence in times of disaster. In the aftermath of the 2010 earthquake in Haiti, actor Sean Penn founded a non-profit foundation to provide humanitarian assistance in the impoverished nation. Actor George Clooney organized Tsunami Aid: A Concert of Hope to raise funds for the tsunami victims of the 2004 Indian Ocean earthquake. Performers included Elton John, Madonna, and Eric Clapton as well as appearances by former Presidents George H.W. Bush and Bill Clinton, actor Brad Pitt, and Donald Trump. Such benefit concerts originated with the 1985 Live Aid Concert organized by musician Bob Geldof for Ethiopian famine victims.

Between celebrity spokesmen, late night infomercials, and benefit concerts, international humanitarian aid has garnered much media attention in the last twenty

years. Humanitarian media itself was not new. Nineteenth century reformers made good use of illustrations and pamphlets to raise interest in others' distress. For example, historian Elizabeth B. Clark analyzed the image of slavery in literature distributed by abolitionists. By examining slave narratives and anti-slavery tracts, she identifies a turn towards the sensational by the mid-19th century.¹ Protestant missionaries brought attention to famines and disasters in faraway lands. Their methods for doing so included visual media so that Americans could viscerally experience distant suffering. World War I, however, changed the media techniques and the construction of humanitarian institutions to create more sophisticated methods of conveying distant suffering. These methods include not just photography and film, but the manner in which this media was created and distributed. By showing the transformation from earlier forms of humanitarian media to the modern commodification of Armenian relief, this dissertation demonstrates that the modern humanitarian industry has antecedents in Armenian Relief.

Humanitarianism became a business in which corporations share. In 1923, Borden's Milk matched can-for-can every donation to Armenian Relief. Today, Americans collect yogurt lids to send back to General Mills Foods so the company will donate 10 cents to breast cancer research. Every time someone purchases a pair of Toms Shoes, another pair will be sent to a person in the Third World. In this way consumer spending is directly connected to the alleviation of suffering. In the case of Armenian relief, the development of a philanthropic market lent Near East Relief moral authority that it could confer upon food companies and celebrities. This dissertation has followed the development of these forms of publicity to demonstrate the accrual of moral authority

¹ Elizabeth B. Clark, "'The Sacred Rights of the Weak': Pain, Sympathy, and the Culture of Individual Rights in Antebellum America," *The Journal of American History* 82 (September 1995): 463-493.

through the organization's actions. Though the publicity begins in a manner similar to 19th century forms of humanitarian media, by the final chapter the NER becomes the beneficiary of films, celebrity spokesmen, and an outlet for food corporations to demonstrate their goodwill.

In addition, this dissertation contributes to the literature on American international humanitarianism by focusing on the Armenian Relief movement. Although the circumstances behind the Armenian Genocide were common knowledge in the Ottoman Empire, the U.S., and Europe at the time, the Turkish government denies that genocide occurred. As a result, debates over the legitimacy of the Armenian Genocide continue to rage in political and historical discourse. Great strides are being made between Turkish and Armenian scholars towards a mutual understanding of the 1915-17 violence. At the same time, the Armenian Genocide is largely unknown within the American public. The Armenian Relief Movement and its vast organs of publicity are a piece of national memory that has been forgotten. By revisiting these fundraising campaigns, we remember a part of American history.

Efforts to resuscitate that episode in American history are not important simply because they have been forgotten, but also to enhance our understanding of the history of international humanitarianism in this country. The Armenian Genocide is one of the first genocides of the violent 20th century and one of the first international relief projects that Americans supported in droves. Publicity on behalf of the Armenian Relief Movement helped define humanitarian campaigns to this day. A media campaign of this magnitude requires a comprehensive study of its genesis, methods, and results. While historians have mentioned the range of publicity given Armenian Relief, none have subjected this

campaign to intensive scrutiny as in this dissertation.

Analyzing the Armenian relief publicity campaign leads to a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between mass media and humanitarianism. Americans—like other citizens of the First World—do not easily respond to people in humanitarian distress. The American public could not recognize the persecution of Armenian and their lack of basic human necessities without concerted efforts by various individuals and organizations to inform them of these needs. Newspapers and magazines relayed the Armenian situation in stark detail, but had little effect without the accompanying public speakers, rallies, posters, photographs, and films engineered by the NER. Simple knowledge of Armenian suffering did not readily lead to humanitarian intervention. After all, numerous civilian groups lived in areas devastated by the battles of World War I and their representatives appealed to Americans to contribute to their cause. Americans contributed piecemeal to various organizations collecting money on behalf of their personal ethnic or national group. The Armenian case was distinct because most of the donors to the cause were not Armenian—though Armenian-Americans contributed greatly to their fellow countrymen—but Americans of different religious, cultural, and economic backgrounds.

Where the NER excelled was building an argument for a special connection between Americans and Armenians—that Americans were somehow responsible for sustaining the Armenian refugees and restoring them to their lands. Prior to the Armistice of Mudros in October 1918, the main arguments for contributing to Armenian relief denigrated the Turks and Islam while celebrating the Armenians as the oldest Christian nation. This logic hearkened back to 19th century missionary appeals stating

that the United States, as a Christian nation, had a vested interest in the preservation of Christianity in Bible Lands. As Turkish nationalism successfully challenged the Allied occupation of their lands, the NER was able to continue making pleas to the American public without referring to the Genocide. Instead, the NER circulated images of starving Armenians and detailed the squalor in which they lived. This approach resonated with the American public, who were familiar enough with the Turkish atrocities to read between the lines. From 1919 to 1923, the fact of Armenian suffering when portrayed in graphic photographs and sensationalized films was enough to justify continuing donations to the NER. While it was once beneficial to draw upon a longstanding hatred of Turks in American society, the Turkish War of Independence began rendered such an approach counterproductive to their goals in aiding Armenian refugees. By periodizing the NER's portrayal of the Armenian Genocide, this dissertation suggests that the organization's biases were attributable to their need to appeal to the American public. Identifying these shifting attitudes towards Turkish guilt demonstrates the political expediencies inherent in humanitarian appeals.

This dissertation began with the formation of the Near East Relief as the American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief in 1915. The second chapter turns toward Europe to examine Belgian relief as a counterpoint to Armenian relief. Belgian relief propaganda emphasized the misery of women and children in efforts to gain sympathy for their cause. At the same time, Hoover's Commission on Relief in Belgium eschewed such sentimental campaigns and preferred to use facts and figures in representing the organization. From Belgium, we return to the Near East Relief's 1919 publicity campaign where they attempted to raise \$30,000,000. This astronomical sum

led the NER (at the time, the American Committee for Relief in the Near East) to pursue more professional publicity by commissioning the Division of Pictorial Publicity of the Creel Committee. Once the 1919 Campaign was over, the Near East Relief thereafter relied upon photography rather than posters. Chapter four continued to discuss the transition to photography by examining the process by which such photographs were taken and distributed by the Near East Relief. In the final chapter, humanitarian aid was commodified so that the approval of NER could be bought and sold in a burgeoning philanthropic market.

Of course, this philanthropic market was not as developed as it is in the modern-day, where corporate social responsibility is a necessary part of building and maintaining a brand. At the same time, the commodification of the humanitarian impulse was in its early stages so that philanthropies were in direct competition with one another for ever larger corporate resources. All the publicity reproduced in the dissertation contributed to NER efforts to brand itself as the moral authority in Armenian relief. The iconic posters, photographs, and popular films all participated in the branding of the humanitarian organization. In many of these publicity images, the NER defines itself as a trustworthy, effective organization to establish its primacy over possible competitors for funds. This in itself is not commodification. Rather the act of associating its brand of humanitarian aid with the likes of Jackie Coogan or Karo Corn Syrup indicates that there is an exchange of commodities. For Karo Corn Syrup, those commodities were real cans of corn syrup that were exchanged for the use of the NER name in their advertising. With Jackie Coogan, himself a brand, the exchange was less tangible. Coogan's participation in NER fundraising events associated Coogan with the innate good of humanitarian aid.

Meanwhile, the NER received the attention from his fans and a massive uptick in donations. It is significant that these exchanges took place decades before corporate social responsibility and celebrity activism was firmly entrenched in the philanthropic marketplace.

Moving forward, this project would continue to dig deeper and find more associations between corporations and humanitarian aid organizations. There are plenty more archives where one might find additional information on Armenian relief. For example, I was not able to consult the Near East Relief collection at the Rockefeller Center Archives or the American Committee on Armenian and Syrian Relief at Burke Theological Seminary in New York City. Additionally, there are resources on Belgian Relief available at the Hoover Institute Archives that would augment this evolving process. More clarity on the relationship between Armenian and Belgian relief might put this quest for funds into a fuller context of competition between international philanthropic projects. The next area for research would be with the advertisers themselves. Advertising agencies like J. Walter Thompson retain records from this era that may elucidate the specific negotiations over such collaboration.

Whatever the path this project takes, it is certain to involve other humanitarian relief projects both in the early 20th century and beyond. The Armenian genocide is simply a jumping off point to discuss a phenomenon that has earned increasing attention in recently years. The involvement of private enterprise with humanitarian has led political scientists like Stephen Hopgood to make observations like: “internal reorganizations enabled newly ‘branded’ humanitarian NGOs to seek corporate funds more effectively, their ‘product’—a moral brand with feel-good associations—now

marketed alongside appeals for direct program funding. Whatever moral authority humanitarian NGOs had accrued was now a lucrative resource—a vital source of income—in a world where the boundaries that had once closed off extreme suffering from commercial interests were fast eroding.”² Market-based solutions for funding humanitarian aid and development create an identity crisis for organizations that used to operate solely on voluntarism. The entrance of private enterprise forces international humanitarian organizations to restructure within and without. The question remains how far corporations can push the limits of humanitarianism. Since we have seen that corporations have long been involved with at least one international humanitarian organization, the question must be: how has private enterprise already shaped humanitarian aid? That question will require further historical research in the early 20th century rather than the late 20th century.

² Stephen Hopgood, “Saying ‘No’ to Wal-Mart: Money and Morality in Professional Humanitarianism” in *Humanitarianism in Question: Politics, Power, Ethics*, eds. Michael Barnett and Thomas G. Weiss (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University, 2007): 106.

Appendix A: Map of Turkey



Appendix B: Timeline of Significant Events

August 3, 1914: Germany declares war on Belgium, invading the neutral country and beginning the Rape of Belgium.

August 4, 1914: Britain declares war on Germany.

October 1, 1914: The Young Turk government abrogates the Capitulations.

October 30, 1914: The Ottomans join the war on the side of the Germans.

November 2, 1914: Russia declares war against the Ottoman Empire.

December 22, 1914: Battle of Sarikamış begins as Ottoman and Russian troops face off in the Caucasus region.

January 17, 1915: The battle ends with an Ottoman defeat and their loss marks an escalation of hostilities against the Armenian population.

April 24, 1915: 250 Armenian intellectuals and leaders are arrested in Constantinople. Most were later slain. This is the date commemorated as the official beginning of the genocide.

May 6, 1915: *The New York Times* reports that the Young Turks have adopted a policy to exterminate the Armenians.

September 3, 1915: American Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire Henry Morgenthau asks that Secretary of State Robert Lansing recruit a few well-known philanthropists and religious leaders “to form committee to raise funds and provide means to save some of the Armenians.”

September 16, 1915: First meeting of the American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief (ACASR).

October 4, 1915: *Report of Committee on Armenian Atrocities* released in the press.

January 25, 1916: “Latest News Concerning the Armenian and Syrian Sufferers” issued for prospective donors. At this point, the ACASR had sent \$250,000 and set out to raise half-a-million more.

January 30, 1916: The ACASR holds a meeting with Armenian-Americans in New York City.

April 6, 1917: U.S. declares war against Germany.

Fall 1917: ACASR changes its name to American Committee for Relief in the Near East (ACRNE).

December 9, 1917: The Ottomans surrender Jerusalem to British troops led by General Allenby.

February 19-21, 1918: British forces capture Jericho, beginning their occupation of the Jordan River Valley.

March 3, 1918: Russians sign Treaty of Brest-Litovsk and leave the war.

May 28, 1918: Armenian National Council declares independence to form First Republic of Armenia.

October 30, 1918: The Armistice of Mudros is signed to end hostilities between the Ottoman Empire and the Allied Powers at noon the following day.

November 11, 1918: The Armistice of Compiègne goes into effect at 11 AM, ending hostilities between Germany and the Allied Powers.

January 1919: ACRNE 1919 Campaign.

January 18, 1919: The Paris Peace Conference opens to negotiate peace between the Allied victors and the defeated Central Powers.

February 1919: *U.S.S. Leviathan* transports the first group of ACRNE volunteers across the Atlantic.

May 15, 1919: Greco-Turkish War begins with Greek occupation of Smyrna.

June 28, 1919: The Treaty of Versailles is signed between the Allies and Germany.

August 1919: ACRNE changes its name to Near East Relief (NER) as specified by the organization's congressional charter.

February 1920: Kemalist siege of Marash, Dr. Mabel Elliott writes memoir of the experience.

August 10, 1920: Allied Powers and Ottoman Empire sign Treaty of Sèvres that gave Armenia access to the Black Sea and parts of the eastern provinces of the Ottoman Empire.

September 24, 1920: Turkish-Armenian War begins.

December 2, 1920: Turkey and Armenia sign the Treaty of Alexandropol, nullifying the Treaty of Sèvres and turning over much of Armenia's land to the new Turkish Republic. In 1921, it was replaced by the Treaty of Kars.

October 11, 1922: Greco-Turkish War ends with Turkish victory.

July 24, 1923: The Lausanne Treaty formally replaces the Treaty of Sèvres, mandating a population exchange to remove Christians from Turkey and Muslims from Greece.

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