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## A Few Days in Kiev: The American Relief Administration During the Polish/Soviet War

At the end of World War I, the American Relief Administration (ARA), led by Herbert Hoover, supplied the war-torn Polish people the crucial relief they desperately needed. The ARA staff fed women, children, and refugees; they provided clothing and care for children and supported the intellectual population that could not find work. Another agency led by Hoover called the American Technical Mission (ATM) helped restart Polish industries and supported the rebuilding of commerce. The aid provided by Hoover's organizations played an important role in bringing about stability in newly independent Poland through food aid and technical advice in industry and governmental administration. The ARA's commitment to helping refugees and those affected by war took the organization's staff during the Polish/Soviet War all the way to Kiev on the heels of the Polish Army. The following is an account of several Americans' adventures to Kiev and their daring escape by train through the swarms of Bolshevik cavalry that began to surround the city.

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A major challenge to the American Relief Administration was feeding children near Poland's undefined eastern border. As the Polish Army moved eastward in 1919 and early 1920, there was a specific need for feeding the desperate children in these borderlands. The ARA responded quickly to this need and set up kitchens soon after the Polish occupation of eastern territories. The farther the Poles moved east, the ARA noticed that the greater the need for foodstuffs and clothing became. Yet, as the military situation suddenly changed in favor of the Bolsheviks, fighting in the eastern borderlands quickly proved hazardous for ARA relief workers. The ARA leadership formulated a plan to continue the ARA program of distribution, but at the same time allow for the immediate evacuation of their personnel and supplies if threatened by a Bolshevik advance. As the Red Army invaded sizable amounts of Polish territory in July and August of 1920, the ARA was faced with the possibility of either ending the food relief initiative in Poland all together or continuing under Soviet rule. In an attempt to salvage the mission, the

ARA contacted the Soviet leadership. With no other options available the ARA was drawn into a fluid political situation.

The American Relief Administration's operations were supposed to be in the stage of winding up just as the Soviet offensive got under way. The ARA had followed in the wake of the Polish Army, feeding refugees and the populace in the war-ravaged eastern areas of the newly enlarged Poland. A pamphlet entitled, "A Brief History of the ARA Children's Relief Operation in Poland," written by ARA publicity writers read:

The small Ford trucks furnished by the Joint Distribution Committee were divided into five units of three trucks each and sent to Bialystok, Wilno, Baranowice, Pinsk and Kowel. These little trucks, carrying supplies of hard bread and condensed milk, followed the Polish troops along the Eastern Front as the Polish Army advanced victoriously against the Bolsheviks. The trucks went from village to village distributing hard bread and milk to children in the most inaccessible places which could not be reached by railroad. (10)

The ARA went as far as Kiev with the Poles and had just begun operating kitchens there as the Bolshevik offensive started. But the ARA was well aware of the Bolshevik threat long before the fall of Kiev. It is hard to understand why the ARA leadership, with reliable intelligence about the size of the Bolshevik army, was not more cautious about feeding people in the Polish-occupied territories. One possible explanation that emerges through a reading of the correspondence is that the de-mobilized officers, who made up the core ARA leadership, were extremely brave. The director of operations, William P. Fuller wrote as early as January 20<sup>th</sup> 1920:

We are feeding large numbers of children in the eastern districts and, of course, have to maintain stocks of our foodstuffs to keep the feeding operation going without interruption. We have no idea that you will desire us to stop our work in order not to jeopardize our supplies through the possibility of Bolshevik successes. On the other hand, we felt it necessary to acquaint you with the general feeling that a Bolshevik offensive is forthcoming, and to add that popular opinion is not too optimistic over the chance of the Poles unassisted to resist the offensive without loss of territory. (1)

In early 1920, the ARA leadership believed that if Poland did not get help from the Allies, they most assuredly would lose to the Bolsheviks or would have to ask for peace. But with Allied munitions, the Poles might have a chance to hold off the Bolshevik onslaught, because the Red Army was so badly equipped. If the Poles could get Allied support, then the Bolsheviks could be beaten, and hopefully the Russian people would, in

response to the loss, support a government more conducive to western democracies. The ARA leadership, from Hoover to Fuller, was hostile to the Bolsheviks. They found them a menace in both peace and war. According to Fuller:

It is generally believed that, no matter what he says, Mr. Lenin has but a single object in view in everything he does: the furthering of communism through the world. And this belief is Poland's main reason for not wanting to make peace with the Bolsheviks. Poland does not trust the Russian government. Poland would not dare to withdraw her armies, peace or no peace. And she fears the propaganda that will flood the country on the opening of the frontier. (7)

### **Bolsheviks ask for Peace: Feb. 1920**

In late January 1920, the Soviet Government of Russia proposed peace to the Poles on quite favorable terms. ARA leaders, in constant contact with Polish officials, aside from Piłsudski, contemplated whether to advise the Poles to make peace or to continue fighting the war. ARA Director, WP Fuller kept in constant touch with the ARA offices in London and Washington about the political and military events that were unfolding in Poland.

On February 6<sup>th</sup>, Hoover asked Fuller to recommend to Ignacy Paderewski to make peace at once but then the same day changed his mind and rescinded the request. Still, Hoover feared that if Poland did not make peace with the Bolsheviks, then all the hard work that Wilson, Paderewski and Hoover himself had made in aiding in the rebirth of Poland would be lost. Hoover believed that communism would just bring more misery, and that the starving people were easy targets for the “communist disease” (Hoover 282-283). All who worked for Hoover understood that they were to stay out of politics, although it is obvious that Hoover did not mind opposition to communism. When Hoover withheld food from the communist government of Bela Kun in Hungary, it was clear that he meant to force Bela Kun out by enticing the people of Hungary with food in exchange for a democratic government (293). Hoover once stated: “A weak government possessed of the weapon of food and supplies for starving people can preserve and strengthen itself more effectively than by arms” (301).

As the ARA hesitated in recommending to the Poles what path they should follow, Piłsudski, and even the political party in opposition to him led by Roman Dmowski, knew in what direction they were heading – east. Everything that Poland could scrape together went toward sustaining an army of over half a million, most of which was fighting the Bolsheviks on the Eastern Front. Two or three hundred thousand of the troops

were without overcoats and more than twenty five percent had no shoes, their feet were bound in rags (Paraphrased from: Extract from Polish letter sent to Rickard, 1). Some soldiers did not even have trousers; the soldiers simply wound a blanket around their body and fastened it with ropes. (Paraphrased from: *Codzienny*, Jan. 4, 1920). The lucky ones received British uniforms, French helmets and American blankets (Paraphrased from: *The Literary Digest*, Aug. 21, 1920).

The early part of the winter of 1919 broke all Polish weather records; the temperature was below freezing continually until December, when the winter took a turn for the better. (Fuller to Adams. Warsaw to London. Nov. 20, 1919, Cablegram) The food situation for the soldiers was just as desperate as the food condition for the rest of the population. Fuller reflected this desperation when he wrote:

The food situation is critical in the most pessimistic sense of the word. It has not been possible for the government to supply even the army with decent rations and last Saturday afternoon the Prime Minister himself, with tears in his eyes and also in his voice, appealed to this office for a loan of 680 tons of foodstuffs for army use. This is conclusive evidence of the acuteness of the situation because, for an army of over 500,000 men, 680 tons would be but a drop in a bucket and a very small drop at that. (Fuller to Adams)

Nevertheless, the Polish soldiers, badly clad, without sufficient foods and having a meal only once a day, went into battle with songs on their lips. If they were wounded, they went through an operation, such as the amputation of a hand or foot, without the aid of any anesthetics during the operation (*Codzienny*, Jan. 4, 1920). These men, much as the Polish/American nurses called the Grey Samaritans who came to Poland to help the sick and destitute, were fighting for the dream of a new Poland.

According to the ARA files, the Poles captured Kiev easily on April 30<sup>th</sup>. The Poles attacked the majority Russian city under the guise as liberators and, using the little supported Ukrainian National Army led by Petlyura, under the pretense of self determination. Two days after the fall of Kiev, the ARA sent inspector John P. Gregg to investigate the newly-occupied territory and to initiate relief as far as advisable under the conditions (Fuller to Brown. Warsaw to London May 1, 1920. Confidential Cablegram). According to Gregg:

The worst feature of the whole [Bolshevik] system was the organized persecution and executions by the “Cheris-va-Chaika,” the society for the suppression of counter-revolutionary movements. One woman who had been jailed by them for some months said that the conditions were unbelievable. The women were compelled to live in a large room in the palace taken over by the society, in the basement of which was the

execution room. Those women as well as the men who were in the same building were called out to be questioned or shot and the shots and screams could be heard in the rooms upstairs as well as across the street. She said that fifty or sixty persons were killed in a night and at times as many as a hundred; that one shot for each person was all that was used, and if that was insufficient the victims would be beaten to death with the butts of the guards' rifles. The executioners would sometimes come upstairs with their hands and arms covered with blood and ask for soap, or exhibit jewelry taken from the dead. She told many stories of the horrors that took place, about officers that were skinned alive or tortured, things about which she had a personal knowledge. The execution room was cleaned up when we were there, but there were bullet holes in the wall and blood stains all over the floor and walls. (Gregg to Fuller. Warsaw June 25, 1920. Kiev Report)

Reports like these are astonishing, but what is more confounding is that the ARA leadership, with knowledge of these Bolshevik horrors before the entry of the Poles in Kiev, and with the Bolsheviks gaining momentum and numbers to the east, did not evacuate their personnel from the area as soon as they realized the Allies were not going to help the Polish Army in the fight against the Red Army.

The first reports of conditions in the Ukraine showed that in Zytomir (west of Kiev) and in Kiev, orphanages and hospitals were completely without food. The underprivileged population was suffering intolerably from lack of foodstuffs, and was compelled to eat soup of grass (Paraphrased from: *Dziennik Powszechny*, "Help for Kieff," Warsaw, June 6, 1920). The ARA informed the PAKPD to ship and distribute foodstuffs to the Ukrainian population. By May 19<sup>th</sup>, 6000 rations had been shipped to Zytomir and 10 children's kitchens opened; by June, 12,000 rations had been shipped to Kiev (Paraphrased from: *Dziennik Powszechny*, "P.K.P.D. Action in Ukraine," May 27, 1920). As more stability came to Kiev and the outlying regions, food that was hidden in cellars began to emerge; Kiev actually had more food available than Warsaw. In June, Dr. Dana Durand went to Ukraine to further inspect the territory; CA Gaskill accompanied him; both were part of the American Technical Mission<sup>1</sup> in Poland. Gaskill wrote:

The Doctor<sup>2</sup> was interested in the economic conditions of the country, foodstuffs, etc., while I was to study the transportation and shop conditions of the Russian gauge

<sup>1</sup> The American Technical Mission and the ARA were both led by Herbert Hoover and linked in many ways. In this account Durand and Gaskill arrive in Kiev in an ARA Cadillac and their accommodation is provided by the ARA. The files I reviewed at the Hoover Library on this account were under the label of ARA Europe.

<sup>2</sup> The following pages under the title "The Invasion of Kiev" comprise the history of a two week trip from Warsaw to Kiev and back that was taken through the Ukraine to Kiev by Doctor Durand and C.A. Gaskill. Interwoven is the account of inspector Gregg who was also in the area.

roads after they were used by the Bolsheviks. Each of us had our interpreters, Lieut. Kalinowski of Hallers Army, and M. Grabowski, who had formerly lived in Kieff. The ‘Bolos,’ as all the foreign Missions call the Bolsheviks, evidently had something on him as he was a mighty worried man during the troubles that were to come. We had no intimation that there were any dangers from attacks by the enemy and went on our way as innocent as lambs to the slaughter. I took my old Colt 44, while the Doctor armed himself with a German automatic that blew a hole through the ink bottle on his desk while he was learning its mysteries. I wore my old uniform once more and the Doctor was content with disguising himself in a fuzzy hat that had been left with him by some Austrian who had had first pick down in Belgrade. (C.A Gaskill. An untitled narrative of events in Kiev in June of 1920)

They traveled to Kiev in an old Cadillac touring car (W-71) that had been through “many wrecks” and was “pretty well banged up, but you cannot kill those machines” (Gaskill 1). They were warned that the Kiev *chaussee* (main road) was riddled with roadside thieves and to be on guard against stray bands of Bolshevik troops. The *chaussee* was the only road connecting Kiev with the west. The road was built of stone, very broad and in places very good, but in others full of holes. The road was filled with refugees, gypsies, country people with produce, beggars and other war-torn rabble. There were so many people on the road, Durand and Gaskill considered it unlikely that any bandits would try to rob them, even though they had a car full of money to lose (Paraphrased from Gaskill 2-3).

Not knowing what kind of money to take to Kiev, they brought sixteen thousand Czarist roubles, “a stack a foot high that they stowed in all [their] pockets, musette bags, and had a big roll in the lunch basket” (Gaskill 1). A rouble cost 2.6 Polish marks in Warsaw, but in Kiev they were evenly traded. Kiev, in 1920, had many different currencies representing different governments, such as Duma, Kerenski and to some extent Soviet roubles. German-issued Ukrainian money was the most valuable. There was also the Griven, Petlyura money, Karbovanci and Denikin money issued just before his flight, and therefore called “aeroplanes” which had only a small value. Besides these currencies, there were local issues, thus completely confusing the monetary system and forcing people to use the barter system (Paraphrased from Gaskill 1).

Kiev was in much better shape than the other smaller towns around it, for it was clean and seemed prosperous as much as it could under the conditions. Durand and Gaskill were told “that there was plenty of food... but it was hidden and now that the country was under Polish rule it was beginning to come out” (Gaskill 3). Under Bolshevik rule, the peasants feared taking foodstuffs to the cities because in many cases food was con-

fiscated along with the peasants' horses and wagons. As the people began to believe that the Poles were going to stay, every day more food and clothing came out of peoples' cellars; thus, the market place was full of all sorts of foodstuffs such as flour, milk, and butter, but at prices which were out of sight to the people whose available cash happened to be in one of the previously mentioned monetary notes (Paraphrased from: Gregg to Fuller, June 25, 1920, Cablegram). The people for this reason, as well as the confusion over all the currencies, had to rely on barter, or if they were lucky, cash from rich foreigners who were in the country.

When Durand and Gaskill arrived in Kiev, they went to a large park on the Dnieper that was at an elevation from which they could see over to the Bolshevik lines, where, according to Gaskill, "a Polish captive balloon was taking observations, only about twelve kilometers away where the Polish army had its bridge head" (Gaskill, 4). During their first evening, while at dinner, their chauffeur barged into the room, excited and rambled that "at the Staff garage, where [they] kept [their] machine, they had received orders to put all the cars in order to run and not to take any more of them apart, but to be ready to move on short order as the Bolshevist army was trying to surround the city" (4). The Poles, by June 6<sup>th</sup>, were in a precarious position in Kiev. The city was in danger of being surrounded, trapping all who were inside, including the ARA relief workers.

On the nights of the first and second of June, a Bolshevik force of one brigade of Bashkir cavalry combined with the first, second, seventh and twenty-fifth Infantry Divisions crossed the Dnieper. The troops marched directly down the river, but were stopped temporarily by Colonel Ribbeck, along with a force from Kiev at Dyman. Colonel Ribbeck fortunately was able to capture a copy of a report detailing the Soviet plan, which explains why the Polish third division was able to escape from Kiev when they were seemingly doomed to be surrounded. According to Gaskill:

[The] orders captured showed that the [Bolshevik] objectives were to cut the northern railroad at the three bridges near Malin, Makaljewitschi, and Drushny... Afterward we learned that the southern force consisted of six cavalry divisions, the fourth, fifth, sixth, ninth, eleventh and fourteenth, under the celebrated leader Buddenie. Of course the object was for the two forces to meet and cut the three means of communications, the southern railway, the chausee (main stone road) and the northern railway. Why they didn't succeed no one seems to be able to figure out except that the Poles put up too strong a defense and they lost their nerve. These were the same tactics that drove Denikin out, only he didn't put up any fight leaving all the refugees to be massacred. We had heard lovely tales of people in Kieff going to meet the returning refugee trains and finding the naked, frozen and dismembered bodies of their friends. (5-6)

Early on June 7<sup>th</sup>, the Polish Red Cross evacuated everyone apart from two officers, taking with them a large body of refugees (Gregg to Fuller). The Polish Commander in Kiev General Edward Rydz-Smigly wanted to hold the city, but his orders were to the contrary. At 10:30 the morning of June 9<sup>th</sup>, the first explosions were heard as the Poles blew up the beautiful Kiev bridges over the Dnieper. As the bridges burned, the Bolsheviks fired shells to clear out all the soldiers left in the Polish withdrawal from the Dnieper (Gaskill 6-7). The Bolsheviks gave the Poles no time to breathe and anticipated surrounding the Poles, ending the Polish resistance in Kiev.

Piłsudski fooled himself into thinking that Poland had the resources to re-conquer the Jagiellonian Polish-Lithuanian Empire of the past and failed; however, the General realized his folly in time to pull Polish forces out of Ukraine before the Soviets ended the war in Kiev. The Americans, although brave, understood the circumstances they were in. Their only choice was to use their heads and to save their own necks. Durand and Gaskill would claim to be part of the relief effort in Poland, and thus neutral, if they were captured. On the night of the June 9<sup>th</sup>, Colonel Gaskill slept in the busy Red Cross headquarters, in order to be in touch with the military situation (Paraphrased from: Gregg to Fuller). In Kiev, the electric lights kept going on and off. Gaskill lit candles to eat dinner and then – blink blink – the electric lights would come on. The electric companies were powered by wood because coal was so scarce; thus, if peasants did not bring wood, there would be no power. On the night of the 9<sup>th</sup>, Gaskill did not need candles to eat his dinner, for not only was “the sky illuminated with a magnificent sunset, the light of the burning bridges, but also by a large fire in the city itself” (Gaskill 8). The large fire in the city was at the Ukrainian Headquarters; the Poles, according to Gaskill, “had rounded up a band of suspects and during the interrogation one of them had thrown a bomb and then jumped out of the third story window” (8). Since there was no water to put out the flames, the building burned to the ground.

On the morning of the 10<sup>th</sup>, the general order was given to evacuate. Durand, Gaskill and ARA inspector JP Gregg began making preparations to leave the city. As Gregg and Gaskill were walking upstairs to the ARA apartment to get Gaskill’s luggage, they heard a plane overhead. The Soviet Air Force was no match for the Polish Kosciusko Squadron featuring two American pilots; consequently, Gaskill and Gregg thought that the hum of the propellers was from friendly fighters. Gaskill claimed that he and Gregg “had just assured two old ladies that it was Polski... when WHAM off went two bombs it had dropped. Everybody started to run; they didn’t know why or where, but they wanted movement” (7). The two Americans quickly filled the Cadillac W-71 full of baggage and started for the station. According to Gaskill:



All this time there was the grandest racket going on, the Bolos were shelling the city with three and six-inch shells, one plane was dropping bombs, many fires had started, the Poles were replying with their guns along the river front and from a battery of six inchers near the railway, a very large depot near the freight yard was going up in a cloud of fire and smoke, so when I did arrive at the yard and couldn't find the train the situation was interesting. It was a very big yard full of trains of refugees and all their stuff, troops loading and unloading, much yelling in Polish and the racket from the guns. (9)

The Bolsheviks, or Bolo's as the ARA men and women called them, eventually crossed the Dnieper south of Kiev. The attack force was Budyenny's cavalry, a group composed of 16,000 lances infamous for its brutality, but the Poles were fighting for their lives and checked them. Since their translators had all left ahead of them, thirty minutes passed in bedlam as Gaskill, Durand and Gregg tried to use hand gestures to communicate with the frantic Poles at the rail yard, before locating their train cars and associates. Gaskill's Cadillac was loaned to Polish staff officers and sent out with the auto column which followed very close "on [a] very bad sandy road" on the north side of the train (8). Gaskill and Durand had three excellent large boxcars captured from the Soviet Government, one for the men, and one for the women. The third was set up as a kitchen with a stove and as much food and milk as they could take from the ARA warehouse. From the warehouse stocks, they took coffee, hard bread, cocoa, chocolate, cigarettes, milk, cans of sardines, beans, soups and a large bag of oatmeal. One of their train cars contained the wife of General Rydz-Smigły, but she decided to leave the train and ride on horseback next to the motorcade. The train pulled out at two o'clock with other trains following closely behind and alongside, on the double track, as the Poles in Kiev were under full attack by the Red Army. (9) According to Gaskill:

When we left the town, there were four good fires in progress and the night before the communists had set fire to the Ukrainian Kommenda Miasta. There was little or no water in the town and the flames flew merrily upwards. That night about midnight from thirty kilometers out the whole horizon was lit up by fires. (Gregg to Fuller)

Their progress was very slow because the train had to remain beside the motorcar column and its escort on the road to the south, and to the north they kept pace with a column of cavalry also paralleling the train line (Gaskill 9). According to Gaskill: "The Poles handled this evacuation in a very capable manner, there were eight trains moving together from station to station and at all times protected by armored trains and troops on

all sides” (13). Also the American’s train had a strong engine and a full load of wood. The greatest danger they faced were the scattered bands of Bolshevik cavalry that were behind the Polish lines; but these marauding horsemen the train guards were supposed to take care of. Nevertheless, in the refugee trains that were crowded particularly with women and children, the excitement was horrifying as the trains passed under gunfire. Twice during the night of June 10<sup>th</sup> priests gave the last rites of the Catholic Church to the people packed in boxcars on the trains (*The New York Times*. “Americans in Kiev Get Safely Away,” June 18, 1920).

At eight that evening, the train carrying Gaskill, Durand and Gregg came to a big railroad yard, where they encountered a train that left Kiev a day before. On this train, they found Dr. Durand’s interpreter, who, at that moment, abandoned his family and traveled with the Americans the rest of the trip. They had two Polish soldiers guarding their cars, and while they waited at the train depot, the guards began to pile “the greatest collection of guns, ammunition, hand grenades, a bag of lentils, and a lot of salt herring” into the car (Gaskill 9). The two Americans could not figure out where the supplies were coming from, so they strapped on their weapons and went out. They found a train car with the doors open being looted by villagers and soldiers alike. There was a young boy, not more than twelve dressed as a Poznanian soldier, in one car passing out ammunition and weapons to anyone. One of the soldiers had an armful of German “potato masher” grenades. He dropped one, as he was shuffling away. Seeing this Durand and Gaskill got away as fast as possible. The Polish troops were close to anarchy; whenever the officers turned their backs self-interest was the order of the day.

On the morning of the 11<sup>th</sup>, the Americans found they had traveled only twenty-five miles and “were still in sight of the towers of Kiev that were shining bravely in the early morning sunshine” (9). There was heavy firing in the direction of the city, and a column of smoke rose from the skyline. The place where they stopped was not far enough for them to be out of danger. Even so, the several thousand people in the trains around them stepped out, lit fires and began to make breakfast and tea with their samovars.

It soon looked like a small city, some of the girls even heated curling irons in the fires and fixed up their hair. All kinds of people were on the train, rich and poor, some had food and some hadn’t, but the ones with plenty had no intention of sharing theirs with those who had none, it was a horrible example of selfishness. (10-11)

Toward dusk on the 11<sup>th</sup> of June, firing broke out in front of the train. According to Gregg a battle raged: “After some thousand rounds of ammunition had been shot away in all directions, the battle was ended by a Polish officer who came down the line and an-

nounced that they had been firing on their own troops with a casualty list of four Polish soldiers” (Gregg to Fuller). The Poles had reason to panic, as there were large numbers of Bolshevik troops only 30 kilometers away.

In the early afternoon of the 11<sup>th</sup>, the train steam engine ran out of water. Fortunately, the train had a small force pump, like an old-fashioned fire pump, which was placed in a stream thirty feet below the train. All available soldiers pumped for about an hour, and toward the end, the soldiers forced reluctant volunteers to help pump. At this time, the Red Cross made an inquiry on who was on the train and found that “there were eight small children and two hundred and forty seven people without food, so that they proposed to start to issue rations” (Gaskill 10). The trains’ delay was quickly ended when an airplane flying low and in circles dropped a note; soon afterward, the train began speeding westward. The speed and movement ended as suddenly as it started when shots and an officer waving a flag in a field stopped the train. A group of soldiers had formed a battle line and were moving toward a small village from which shots had been fired at them. The train, with guards deployed on each side, traveled slowly for a half mile until it stopped near the bridge at Malin. At this bridge, the train was caught on the edge of a battle between the Poles and Bolsheviks about twenty-five kilometers ahead. That evening there was intense fighting during which the Poles won out by a narrow margin (Paraphrased from: Gregg to Fuller).

On the night of June 11<sup>th</sup> the train didn’t move; orders were given to stay in the cars with the doors closed and without lights. Around three in the morning, which was close to daybreak, there was “very heavy firing... that continued for some time” (Gaskill 12). The delay was caused by the damage of the big bridge at Malin. It would take until the next afternoon for the bridge to be repaired. As the Americans waited for the repair, Dr. Durand used this delay to figure out the number of calories in the food on the train and how much each person required to sustain life until the train reached safety. Gaskill and five others that night slept in the kitchen car, for the men’s car was crowded. The floor was hard and cold, but the machine gun fire was what kept Gaskill awake the entire night.

On June 12<sup>th</sup> at 1:30 in the afternoon the train began to slowly move. Polish engineers had repaired the damaged bridge, and the armored cars and troops checked the Soviets until the train passed over the bridge. There was a very intense battle at the bridge shortly after the trains’ passage, causing the Poles to abandon their position. Along the track lay the dead, some Polish, some Bolshevik. Every time the train stopped, Polish soldiers buried their fallen brethren; the Soviet troops, which were in large numbers Chinamen and Tartar cavalymen, were piled in mounds and left to be buried by the peasants. The Bolsheviks had very good rifle pits and used fast firing Browning machine

guns from the United States, which the Poles said were very hard to charge against. These guns were captured from Kolchak in the east, judging by the Asiatic troops (Paraphrased from: Gaskill 12).

When the Americans crossed the bridge, they noticed a town burning. According to Gaskill, at the next stop at Drushny:

Kalinowski [Gaskill's interpreter] appeared with the motor car looking for gasoline. He told us that the burning town was called Nowaja Grebla, that the Bolos had crossed the railroad the afternoon before, had set fire to the bridge and stationed themselves in the town with machine guns, promised the natives the loot of the refugee train and had waited for the motor car train and escort to come along. This was the fight we heard that morning and the fringe of which we were in the evening before. The natives told the Poles that there were no Bolos there so they entered the town and had dismounted in the square when the guns opened up on them. There were many killed on both sides, but the Poles finally drove the Bolsheviks back across the railway, and then set fire to the town. This victory was all that saved us as we were waiting easy prey, although the guns of our train guard would have made a good resistance. Why the bridge wasn't dynamited none of us could understand. After we had seen the dead, and the [Asian troops], all idea of non-resistance disappeared from the minds of the Red Cross, especially as the Poles were wearing American uniforms with buttons, canteens, belts and packs stenciled US we figured that claiming to be Americans wouldn't get us very much. (Gaskill 12)

At Drushny, the Americans heated up a big pot of water and made hot milk for the children. Gaskill carried a big bucket, while an assistant ladled the warm milk to the children. The Americans by this account were feeding children even while in the midst of the enemy on the last train out of Kiev. As the train moved west at a high speed, they passed an engine and cars of an earlier departure that probably hit a mine on June 10<sup>th</sup>, which meant that three days ahead of Durand, Gregg and Gaskill's train, the Bolsheviks were behind the Polish lines (Paraphrased from Gaskill 12). The Americans were truly lucky to have made it out of Kiev unharmed.

On the morning of June 13<sup>th</sup>, the train arrived at Korestin, which was fairly out of harm's way. At Korestin, the Americans distributed most of their remaining food and cigarettes, and on June 14<sup>th</sup>, they asked the Red Cross to donate all the bandages, morphine, ether, instruments and food that could be spared to the wounded and poor on the trains. The Americans then left on a special train headed to Kowel, where they arrived on June 15<sup>th</sup>. "Along the way Doc and I got busy, set up the stove again with its stack out

of the lee side of the train and concocted a stew that had in it everything that was left. It was very good and was much appreciated by the women and kids” (Gaskill 13).

Dr. Durand and Gaskill arrived safely in Kowel. They luckily and barely avoided capture by the Bolsheviks who were gaining ground against the Poles at 10-30 miles a day. The two men, with the help of ARA inspector Gregg, fed the starving refugees on the trains and showed the dedication the Americans had to saving the lives of the war victims.

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The ARA officially withdrew from Poland on June 15, 1922, after three years of efficient work during which the group was instrumental in saving the lives of thousands of Polish children and in laying a firm foundation for the continuation of relief through the PAKPD. *The New York Times* wrote, “[t]he ARA at the peak of its operation in Poland was feeding one meal per day to nearly 1,500,000, including children under 17 years of age and nursing mothers, besides making large distributions of clothing” (*The New York Times*, “American Relief Work in Poland Ends: Administration Withdraws After Saving the Lives of Thousands of Children,” July 10, 1922). The ARA also gave food and clothing to the intelligentsia classes and conducted a student-feeding program of considerable scope.

To the Polish people of the postwar era, America was the savior nation, “representing the essence of philanthropy and practical idealism” (Chickering 17). President Wilson’s illness was considered a national calamity. The American minister, Gibson, was “universally esteemed” by the Polish people (Chickering 17). Pictures of Herbert Hoover were in many shop windows, and later a statue in Hoover’s honor was erected in Warsaw by the Polish government. When Hoover arrived in Warsaw in 1919, the Polish people greeted him with incredible affection. Thousands of children in Warsaw formed a special parade for him, passing by the leader of the ARA for hours, waving the napkins with American flags on them they received from the kitchens. The parade would have lasted well into the night if a rabbit had not run by the line of children. Five thousand children ran after this rabbit and eventually caught it. They brought the rabbit to Hoover and presented it as a gift. Hoover, although a man of even temper, could not help that his eyes became glassy with water, not because the children had given him the rabbit, but because the children of Warsaw were playing in the streets once again (Kellogg 4).

Hoover and the ARA helped rejuvenate the Polish nation, a people who were caught in the middle of World War I as Germany, Austria and Russia clashed on Polish soil. By the end of the war, Poland had been destroyed more than any other country, but the peo-

ple saw a chance to once again rule themselves, and they worked hard to accomplish this feat, both socially and militarily. In western Poland, there was guerrilla warfare between the Polish paramilitary forces led by Wojciech Korfanty and the Germans in the area. In the south, the Poles were at odds over control of Teschen with the Czechs; in the north, the free city of Danzig was a sore that would never heal, and near and around Wilno the Poles fought the small army of the reborn state of Lithuania. Worst of all, the Poles tempted disaster by engaging the Soviets in the east. There, Marshal Piłsudski was under the impression that his army was stronger than the Soviets, for the Polish forces constantly pushed the Bolsheviks east, while the leaders in Moscow asked for peace negotiations. He did not take into consideration, at least not enough, that the Soviets were fighting enemies on other fronts. An over-confident Piłsudski invaded Kiev. Lloyd George wrote on Poland's mistakes:

Now there has been a resurrection, and she was starting a new life. But it was a new life without training, without discipline, with tradition lost, with none of her leaders trained either in government or in war. Of course she blundered. It was a blunder of responsibility. (*The Literary Digest*, "The Allied Policy Toward Poland." Aug. 21, 1920)

After defeating Denikin and Kolchak, the Soviets could finally concentrate their forces on the Polish-Russian borderlands. The Poles were defeated time and time again, until their backs were against the gates of their capital, where the Poles rallied and eventually, for the most part, regained the territory they had lost, but the damage had been done. Poland, already torn by the First World War, but on the verge of stabilizing its condition, was once again destroyed, and this time, it was worse than before. The Bolshevik invasion led to requisitions of livestock, equipment and the summer crops; the war pushed refugees to the west and forced the Polish Army to destroy bridges as the Bolsheviks advanced. Cities and towns were razed, and the ARA, although reluctant to leave, was forced to close down its operations and move all equipment and personnel to the west. All of the progress that the ARA had made in the year of its existence was brought to a halt. The children of Poland once again could not be heard playing in the streets of Warsaw.

The war's destruction, however, did not stop the ARA from regrouping and beckoning the American people in the United States to donate to the emergency cause at hand. During and after the Polish-Soviet War, the ARA set up refugee camps and refugee kitchens on trains. As the Polish Army pushed the Bolsheviks eastward, the ARA was close on the army's heels, feeding the cold and hungry children, refugees, students and

intelligentsia. The structure of the ARA organization established by WP Fuller proved strong, and the ARA was able to quickly set up the elaborate system of distribution and inspection they used before the War. With the help of the Grey Samaritans and a reorganized PAKPD, the work went smoothly until the ARA operations ended on June 15<sup>th</sup> 1922.

In the years of ARA operations in Poland, the relief workers acted with the utmost moral and ethical standards. The ARA kept extensive records and hired an outside auditing company to work in its offices to let it be known to the world that the ARA was a charity organization and not a company profiting from the hungry people of Poland. Hoover handpicked the men he had work for him, men who had already proven their loyalty and leadership abilities in the military and in business. In Poland, they acted with the highest discipline. These men were then helped by the Grey Samaritans, who came to Poland for one overriding reason: to help rebuild the country of their birth. They gave an extra touch of care for the children and were instrumental in organizing the rebuilding of orphanages.

The ARA in Poland was not only providing relief, but in many ways, they were establishing the American idea of voluntary charity and self-help in Poland, a land that once had been independent, although for the past 150 years leading up to the war, the Poles lived under the rules of foreign governments. Christine Zduleczna remarked on the subject:

One wondered after all if the peaceful conquest of Europe by food had not done more for the cause of democracy than all the billions of gold and thousands of lives that had been spent to make the world safe for the thing we call democracy. The simple instructions in hygiene, the first principles of accounting, the daily continuance of the ration from America to the children carries with it 'line upon line and precept upon precept' in a [simple language]... the children understand, lessons as new as the principles of democracy in this land of old aristocracy. (Zduleczna 3)

The Americans hoped to thwart the communists in the east and to help the Polish people rule themselves. In some ways, this dream failed; for although Marshal Piłsudski was in the beginning just a figurehead of power, he soon took control of the government in 1926 and held it until his death in 1935, whereupon another military leader, General Rydz-Smigły, took control of the government.

The Polish leaders might not have learned the idea of democracy from the Americans; however, they did learn the value of humanitarian aid and what it meant to hungry people. In 1922, the Polish government transported by rail, without charge, more than

26,000 tons of ARA foodstuffs across Poland to the famine-stricken children of Russia (“American Relief Administration European Children’s Fund Mission to Poland and Polsko-Amerykański Komitet Pomocy Dzieciom 1919-1922, 19). This was a truly amazing gesture by the Poles, considering they had just been at war with the Soviets. The Russians and Germans would not learn the lessons of forgiveness and humanity. It would take another World War, a war that once again left Poland destroyed; there would not be another “Miracle on the Vistula,” in 1944, and Poland would once again be controlled from Moscow. The Soviets destroyed the statue in honor of Herbert Hoover erected by the Poles when they marched into the rubble of Warsaw in 1945, metaphorically ending the spirit of the ARA in Poland.

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